

Focus

A SUPPLEMENT OF

The Portland Observer

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Deadlines for submitted material:

Articles: Friday by 5 P.M.
Ads: Monday by Noon

Focus welcomes freelance submissions. Manuscripts and photographs can be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

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1999 The Portland Observer

Oregon's Black History

R.W. Morrison once commented in 1844, "I'm going to Oregon, where there'll be no slaves and we all start even." This typified the feelings of many Southerners, both black and white. Many African Americans made the long perilous journey to our beautiful Northwest only to find out that the racial climate was harsh here. Join us as we take a look at the little known black history in Oregon before it became a state and afterwards.

Did the First Black Arriving in North America Land in Coastal Oregon?

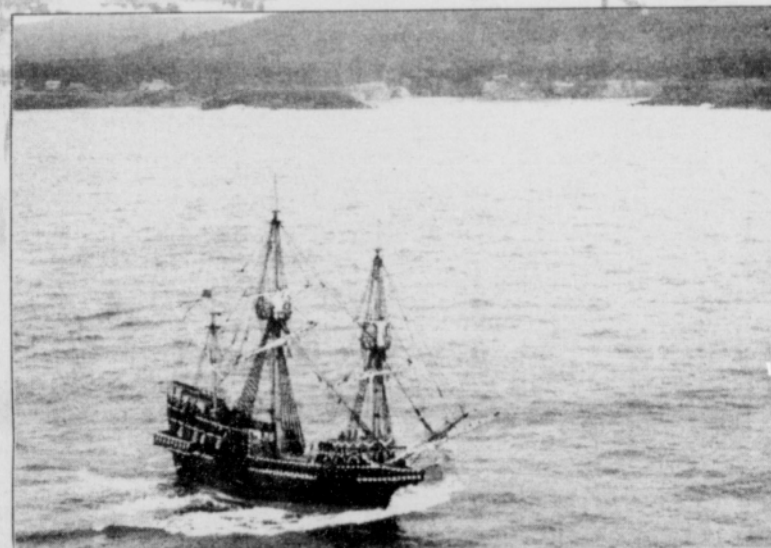
National Debate Continues Over This Historical Question

BY RON WEBER FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Four hundred and twenty one years ago, in 1579, the first African American to set foot on our West Coast soil arrived here with an English sailor. Some say it was near San Francisco, but evidence is continuing to mount that it was actually here in Oregon. Just north of Newport, in Whale Cove, might have been the last resting place of Diego, a tall free Black Pirate and friend of Sir Francis Drake. Over three hundred and fifty years later, a three-person grave was discovered a few miles from Whale Cove. Dating studies on a tree that had grown over the grave proved the bodies were buried around the time when Francis Drake was said

to have been here on the West Coast with Diego. One of the skeletons was of an unusually large man, much too tall to be an average Englishman or a local Indian. Diego was said to be around six and a half feet tall. Some history fans and researchers are beginning to wonder if the bones could possibly be the remains of Diego, the first black man in this part of the Western Hemisphere.

Diego first joined forces with Sir Francis in 1572 when Drake was trying to overtake Nombre de Dios, a rich Spanish port in the Caribbean. Diego's hatred of the Spanish and their cruel treatment of slaves made him a perfect partner for Drake who promised to be a friend. Drake's kindness and



The Golden Hines ship cruising around Whale Cove, Oregon is a reproduction of the actual ship sailed by Sir Francis Drake when he sailed the West Coast with the first African American.

Husband, Father, Healer

A Salute to Dr. John D. Marshall 1921 - 1990

Dr. Marshall established a medical practice in Portland in the 1940s when it could not have been easy to be a black man in medical school or a black man trying to establish a medical practice. But to the men, women and children he cared for in Portland, he was beloved. Many today still remember his calm demeanor and his willingness to pay house calls - any time of the day or night.

Today, one of Dr. Marshall's sons, John, works in the Housing Department at the Portland Development Commission. He hopes his father would be proud of him - not as a healer - but as a builder of safe, affordable housing for all citizens.



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