

The New Age and The Portland New Age

Portland, Oregon 1896-1907

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The Portland *New Age* holds pride of place as the first African American newspaper to be published in Oregon.

In 1860, there were not more than 16 black residents of Portland. Despite efforts on the part of the majority population to exclude them from the state, African Americans moved

nesses, and the weekly *New Age*, which had been established by an ambitious young man named Adolphus D. Griffin.

Accounts of Griffin's early years are scarce and shrouded in contradiction. He was probably born in Louisiana, and seems to have come west as a young man: voting records place him in Los Angeles in 1894 and list his age as 23. Some accounts have him editing his first paper in San Fran-

claimed "only Afro-American newspaper published in Oregon." Griffin conceived the mission of his new journal as keeping readers apprised of "the crucial racial issues of the day." He summarized his approach in one issue: "We have opinions of our own, and will not hesitate in expressing them, come what may."

Despite its relatively limited circulation, the *New Age* made a favorable impression within the nas-

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Adolphus D. Griffin, editor The New Age

to Portland in significant numbers over the next few decades: the 1900 census counted 775. Although still a small minority in the Rose City, this was a population large enough to support two churches, a number of busi-

cisco, while others claim it was the *Northwest Echo* of Spokane, Washington. At any rate, Griffin had clearly relocated to Portland by 1896, when *The New Age* debuted as the self-pro-

cent field of black journalism. One reviewer characterized it as "one of the strongest papers editori-

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Ida Bell Wells-Barnett



first worked for the *Evening Star* in Washington, DC. In 1889, she became co-owner and editor of *Free Speech and Headlight*, an anti-segregationist newspaper that was started by the Reverend Taylor Nightingale and was based at the Beale Street Baptist Church in Memphis. She launched her first investigative reporting project by examining the excuses given by lynch mobs for each killing, publishing her findings in a pamphlet entitled "Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases." On May 27, 1892, while she was away in Philadelphia, a mob destroyed the offices of the *Free Speech and Headlight* in retaliation for her controversial articles. Because of the threats to her life, she moved from Memphis to Chicago. Wells continued to wage her anti-lynching campaign and to write columns attacking Southern injustices. Her articles were published in *The New York Age* newspaper. Her writings continued to investigate the incidents that were referred to as causes for lynching black men. In 1895, Wells married Ferdinand Barnett. She was one of the first married American women to keep her own last name as well as taking her husband's.

Ida Bell Wells-Barnett (July 16, 1862 – March 25, 1931) was a key investigative reporter covering the issue of lynching, which she systematically documented around the country. Her reporting made a significant impact in showing that lynching was a form of social control by white people over the black community rather than a form of crime prevention or criminal punishment, as white commentators claimed. She was born enslaved in Mississippi and

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