THE NEGRO AND EVENTS IN RHODE ISLAND

1696-1968

INTRODUCTION

The following are thumb nail sketches of noted people and events of the Negro race from the introduction of slaves in Newport in 1696 from Barbadoes, B.W.I., to 1968.

Our family scrap book had always been an inspiration and this was increased when a Negro group was appointed to the R. I. Tercebtenary Committee in 1935. At the home of Miss Reberta J. Dunbar on March 26, 1936, it was voted to have a short history of the Negro in Rhode Island,(she being the leading Negro historian of her time). Various members were to contribute in different categories:- Art, Churches, Law and Legistlature, the Press, Medicine and Allied Sciences, the Military, Clubs and Organizations, Inventors, etc. Due to the lack of an appropiation from the state committee, this was never published.

Much material ~~was~~ collected was from metropolitan Providence, with some from other parts of the state, some came into my hands along with the minutes of each meeting of which I was secretary.

Some day I hope to write a more detailed account of the many contributations of the Negro race in Rhode Island.

Carl R. Gross, M. D.
66 Doyle Avenue
Providence, R. I.
1968

1st major contributation of the Negro to the state of Rhode Island

1778- In February of 1778, the General Assembly voted "that every slave so enlisted shall be immediately discharged from the service of his master or mistress and be absolutely free." They also voted to pay the slave owners at a price of not exceeding 120 pounds.
One hundred sixty five enlisted, were sent to New Jersey to join Washington's army in the spring of 1778. After a brief stay thay were called back to Rhode Island, they dug in on a hill in Portsmouth in the center of the colonial line of 4000 men and when the Hessian solders charged them they held causing the British to withdraw.
This was the battle of Rhode Island, August 29, 1778 and a boulder and surrounding area was dedicated July 4, 1967 to their memory by the Newport branch of the N.A.A.C.P.,and their graves can be found there. (Richard Hirst-Eve Bul 7-67... C.R.G.)

THE NEGRO IN RHODE ISLAND

1696-1968

1696- The first cargo of Negro slaves reached Rhode Island from Barbadoes, B. W. I. (address by William P. H. Freeman, 1-1-37, in the Beneficient Congregational Church, Providence, R. I.)

1717- A tax of 3 pounds was imposed on the sale of each slave to help pave the streets of Newport, R. I. This was repealed by the General Asswmbly in 1732. (W. R. Cyr)

1730- The earliest census in Providence showed 128 Negroes and 3707 whites. (R. J. D.)

1732 From 1732 to 1760, Newport was the chief slave market in America, 115 gallons of rum for a healthy male and 95 for a Female. There were more than 25 distilliers making rum in Newport and more than 184 ships making Newport there home port. (W.P.H.F.)

1735- The population of Rhode Island was 17935, of these 1648 were Negroes and 985 Indians. (R. J. D.)

1769- Emanuel, an ex-slave had one of the most successful ale Buisnesses in Rhode Island. (R. J. D.)

1774- Traders were prohibited from entering slaves into the Colony longer than one year. (W.P.H.F.)

1776- The Revolutionary War resulted in almost a total loss of the slave trade in Rhode Island. (W.P.H.F.)

1776- Rev. Hopkins church in Newport voted to exclude all slave holders and were aided by the Episcopals and Quakers. (R.J.D.)

1778- On August 29, 1778 at the battle of Rhode Island, the first Negro Regiment was formed in America under the command of James M. Varnum. These men were slaves and were given their freedom foe serving. Several ot their graves can be found in Portsmouth, R. I. (W.P.H.F.)

1779- Sale of slaves outside Rhode Island was prohibited. (R.J.D.)

1783- Newport had the largest Negro community in Rhode Island. (W.F.)

1783- From 1783 to 1790, Negores and Indians were not counted separetly in the census. (R.J.D.)

1784- Slave holders has a law passed forbidding inter-marriage, the reason, 65 slaves ran away in Newport, Bristol and Providence. (R.J.D.)

Negro slaves were used as house servants as well as on the fields. In some homes on the east side can be found slate slabs inbedded in the walls for slepping and an auction block in the center. Tunnels led to the river. (C.R.G.)

1783- The beginning of the first Negro church was in Newport where a few religious souls met at the home of Newport Gardner, a black who had been entrusted to a white ship captain to bring to America for an education but was sold to Caleb Gardner. This group finally joined with the Congregational faith in 1859, becoming the Union Congregational Church. (J. Earl Clauson article in the Prov. Journal, 5-20-36 and a book by William Battle of Newport.) (Robert Glenn Scherer, Jr., mentions an Indian Church in Newport in 1741 which many Negroes attended.)

1795- Bethel A. M. E. Church, the first church in Providence started as a mission in 1795 and in 1800, joined with four other affilitates, " Mother Bethel " in Philadelphia, Bethel in Baltimore, Bethel in New York and Bethel in Charleston, S. C. The only Negro faith owned and operated by Negroes. (See the phamplet of the 161st Anniversatory of Bethel Church in Providence in 1956,)Rev. Lasselle Watts, pastor.) (Notes on Negroe Churches by Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Tinsley and Carl R. Gross.)

1808- The R. I. General Assembly passed a law abolishing slavery in the state. (R.J.D.)

1816- George Henry, 1816-1900, a slave was born in 1816 in Virginia, he left the plantation to go to sea in 1831 engaged in running timber from Virginia to Baltimore and was promoted to command of the schooner, Llewelyn. The knowledge of different grades thus acquired was so great that when the aqueduct was built across the Georgetown River, the selsction of all the piles was left entirely to him.
Came to Providence in 1847, secured employment as sexton of St. Stephens Episcopal Church and was there for 25 years.
In 1859 founded a society, Henry & Brown, the sole purpose of which was to educate colored people in the higher branches of learning, denied them at that time.
From 1855 to 1866, fought successfully to desegregate the schools in Rhode Island.
In 1872, drawn for jury duty for 5 weeks, the first Negro to serve on a jury in Rhode Island.
Repeal of the intermarriage law:- John F. Toby, Chr. House Judici Judiciary Committee opposed. On account of his stand and remark marks, Henry and others fought and he was defeated in the next three elections.
In 1895, he presented to Livingston College his entire library of many rare books on the history of the Negro during the first half of the century., an oil painting of himself, portraits of Touissant L8Overture, John Brown, Charles Sumner and others.
This gift is among, if not the greatest that Livingston has ever received from a member of the race. (Biography by William A. Heathman, Esq.)
The Providence Evening of January 24, 1900 in their article rate him as one of the wealthyest Negro of that time.

1819- The African Union Meeting House and School House Society was started on a piece of land given by Moses Brown a Quaker on Meeting Street as a non-denominational body. (William J. Brown book.)

1830- The Sec ond Free Will Baptist Church was first called Abbysinia Baptist Church and in 1835 connected with the Rhode Island Quarterly Conference and became the Second Free Will Baptist Church and commonly called the Pond Street Baptist Church. (see folder of Negro Churches in Rhode Island.)

1834- Michael Tillinghast .....-1841 "I Michael Tillinghast, a man of color do make this my last will.4.21.34left hsi estate a house at Beacon Avenue and Pine Street, the profit from which to be used for the indigent colored people of Providence.(I was one of the trustees and the Junior Service League, col,, are the present trustees under court order. C.R.G.)

1839- The A. M. E. congregation left the African Union Meeting House in 1839 and incorporated. (see churches)

1940- The Calvinist Baptists being left in physical charge of the property of the African Union Meeting House, incorporated in 1840 as the Meeting Street Baptist Church, later swapping a lot of a Mr. William Hale for their lot,(under court order) acquiring the lot where the present Condgon Street Church now stands. (William J. Brown book)

1859- John Howland , the last Negro slave died 1-3-59. (R.J.D.)

1860- The first Negro Church, the Wadsworth Street A. M. E. Zion, now the Hood Memorial A. M. E. Church was erected in 1860 and incorporated in 1872.

1861- Nearly half of the male members of the Meeting Street Church left to go to war, leaving the church in poor financial condition bein unable to have a paid minister. (R.J.D.)

1862- 1000 colored men, Aug, 13, 1862 formed the Rhode Island 14th Heavy Artillary. (R.J.D.)

1861-*Alfred C. Perry, 1861-1931, born in Exerter, R. I. Since his boyhood he lived in Cranston. He was head of the highway department for many years and it was his span of large grey horses that he received the name of "Chief Strong Horse". he was a colorful figue among the dwindling ranks of a once mighty tribe of Indians and headed the tribe's 24 councils since their formal re-organization in 1922. His farm on Duaway Hill, now Sciatuate Avenue was the scene of many tribal gatherings and under his leadership many of the tribal customs were revived. He was elected "Grand Ssachem" of the Algonquin Council. (His daughter, Mrs. Annie (Perry) Farrow was the secretary and has in her possesion a small sum of money and the minutes up to the present altho the council is dormant now. (C.R.G.) (Prov. Evening Bulletin,Sept. 1931)

1863-*Zebedee Howland was appointed Sargeant-Major of the Rhode Island 14th Heavy Artillary, November 6, 1863. His commission was signed by Nelson Viall, C. O., and Lst Lt. Joseph A. Whiting, adjutant, issued at Dutch Island, he was also a Constable in Providence. His Indian name was Howling Lands. (Mrs. Gilbert) He attended the segregated schools here and meeting his white teacher on the street one day, doffed his hat to him. He was severely reprimanded by the teacher who did not want an acknowledgement publically. (Prov. Sunday Journal.....)

1863- Negroes coming north during the Civil War were called Contraband, being housed in barracks on Dexter Training Ground. Many of the white community went there to select some to come and work for them, thereby earning a little money to support themselved until they could do better. (Told to me by Mrs. James A. Gilbert, paternal great grand daughter of Zebedee Howland. She also told me of the Neptune Yacht Club which was located in the Gaspee plateau area.)

1869- Mme. Matilda Sissieretta (Joynor) Jones, 1869-1933 was born in Portsmouth, Va., the daughter of Reverent Jereniah M. and Henrietta B. Joynor, January 5, 1869?. In 1876 he received a call to a Methodist church in Providence which was the scene of the first musical triumph of "Sissy" as she was called. She first sang at entertainments at the Pond Street Baptist Church Sunday School, living on Pond Street.
While delivering laundry to the white folk, her mother would say, sing for the lady. She was sent to the Providence Academy of Music at 15, to the New England Consevatiry of Music at 18, then to New York under Mme Cappanni. After a concert at Wallacks Theatre with such success, the music critic of the New York Clipper wrote, "she sings like "Patti, (the Italian singer and called her "the Black Patti", where she sang for Abbey, Schoeffel and Grau, other managers were Morris Reno, the president of the Carnegie Music Hall Association, Major Pond who had managed Mark Twain, Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage, Henry Ward Beecher and others. Later she was managed by Nolan and Voelckel who started her under "Black Patti' Troubadours" with a hotel Pullman car traveling all over the United States.
She made her debut in Berlin, Germany, to England for a command preformance before King Edward. She also sanf for Presidents Harrison, Theodore Roosevelt and William McKinley.
Many Negro artists started in her company, Cole of Cole and Johnson, Eloyd Gibbs,etc who later became famous. (C.R.G.)
When Cole asked for more money for the cast, he was refused so he took the score which he wrote left and was blacklisted. after wild-catting they went to Canada and the press gave such rave notices, Klaw and Englander defied the black list and brought them back to New York for a date, Easter week, the worst week in the year for show buisness and crowds were turned away. Cole had won his battle. (last paragraph, Baltimore Afro-American, 7-8-33.)
Radcliff College sent to Providence for information about her wanting to include her in their "Noted American Women". I sent my short history of her which they sent to Mr. William Lichtenwanger, head of the Music Division, Library of Congress who was to write her story. (C.R.G..see short history)

1869- John C. Minkins, January 29, 1869-September 30, 1959 was born in Norfolk, Va. Newspaper-man. started writing January 1888 a column, "Among Our Colored People in the Evening Telegram, a white leberal newspaper. In the first class to graduate from Norfolk Mission College, June 1888.
Came to Providence in 1891 to manage the New England Torch-light, Joseph W. Henderson, publisher, a colored weekly. He remained precariously for three months and when the Providence News,(white) was established as a Republican organ, he sought an opening there as a penny a line reporter, receiving 50 cents the first week remaining for about one year.
He applied to the Evening and Sunday Telegram in Providence becoming its surbaban editor, handled the famous "Lizzie Borden murder trial, was made telegraph editor, later city desk copy, took over the editorship of the Sunday Telegram, all these jobs consolidated under the name, "news editor" a term then unknown in Rhode Island.
He claimed to be the only Negro editor of a white nespaper in the United States. (see file on Negro newwpapers. C. R. G.)

187?- In the early 70ths, Andrew Jackson the first Negro dentist registered in Rhode Island, had an office around Elmwood Avenue and Public Street. My father and his cousin who had a tooth-ache walked from 80 Dalhia (now Waldo) Street. (C.R.G.)

1872-*William Aron Heathman, Esq. 1872-1968 was born in Providence, public schools here, entered Brown University but later transferred to Boston University School of Law, at 11 Ashburton Place, a private home which had been converted into a school for law. Being under 21 and as he was working his way through he had to have a sponsor to take portions of his pay and the sponsor would pay the law school.
Told by one of his classmates from Providence, the Bar Association was not going to pass another Negro lawyer, he contacted some friends, one of whom (white) gave him a letter to General (Boss Brayton who ran Republican politics in Rhode Island).who being blind had the letter read to him and he came out of his inner office and told him to take the examination which he did and passed. (Told to C. R. Gross by Mr. Heathman among the many talks I had with him.)
He was a 33" Mason, Treasurer-General of the Supreme Council, Northern Jurisdiction, (PH) and served as such for 40 years, from 1923 to 1963. King Solomon Lodge, Mt Sinai Consistory, No.11, Constantine Temple No.14,(Shrine), Past Grand Master of Prince Hall Grand Lodge, Rhode Island and many other organizations.
In 1913 he was appointed to represent the State of Rhode Island at the Centenial celebration of Oliver Hazard Perry's victory at Put-In Bay, Ohio as marshall of the second division. On his staff was William Howard Taft, ex-president.
1907-1909 was asked by Govenor James H. Higgins to form a state militia company, using the State Armory as head-quarters.

1872-*William A. Heathman continued
1935, January 25th was sworn in as Standing-Master in Chancery by Presiding Justice, Jeremiah E. O'Connel of the Superior Court.
1948 Honorable mention for 50 years service to the R. I. Bar.
1967 Article in the R. I. Bar Journal of June 1967, the oldest living lawyer in Rhode Island.
He died February 9m 1968 and would have been 96 had he lived to September of this year. (C.R.G., R. I. Bar Journal and newspaper clippings,:- Prov. Eve Bul, Pittsburg Courior, etc.)
(see file on Negro lawyers, C.R.G.)

1874-*John Henry Ballou, frist Negro lawyer admitted to the Rhode Island Bar, June 3, 1874. (see file on lawyers, C.R.G.)

1875-*William P. H. Freeman, 1875- Churchman- Realtor
Second Free Will Baptist Church, one of the founders of the R. I. State Council of Churches, past board member of the Baptist Home and the Baptist Camp, former member of the board of directors and honorary member of the Providence Board of Realtors, 1967.
One of the organizers of the Providence Branch, N.A.A.C.P. and was president for eight years.
One of the organizers of the John Hope Settlement House , was its president for eight years and is a life member of the board.
Before entering the real estate buisness he was a foreman glass cutter with the Hopr Glass Company. (Prov. Sun Journal 9-3-67)

1877- Inman Levi Page, AB 77, AM 80, LLD .... Supertendent Col Sch Oklama City, Oklama. (1950 Brown cataloge)
George Washington Milford, class of 1877, LLB Howard, 1901, admitted to the D. C. Bar, 1902, principal Normal School, Christianburgh, Va., high school, Easton Md.
These two are believed to be the first Negro graduates of Brown Univ. (Historical Catalogue, Brown Univ.)
(I roomed with Mr. Milford while going to Howard Med Sch.)

1885- Rev. Malon A. Van Horn, the first Negro of five to serve in Rhode Island General Assembly. In 1897 was appointed by President William McKinley as U. S. Consul to St. Thomas D. W. I.
(see file on law and legistlature, C. R. G.)

1888-* John J. Burch was the first Negro dentist, native born to register in Rhode Island. (see file on Dentistry, C.R.G.)

1888- Catherine Tolliver, first Negro nurse to register in R. I. graduate of the N. E. Womens and Children School of nursing, Boston, Mass. She and her sister Emily Tolliver who also graduated there in 1890 were registered in the Providence Nursing Directory. (C.R.G.)

1890-* Nancy Elizabeth Proffit, 1890-1960, (see file on Art,C.R.G.)

1893- Peter L. Moore, 1st Negro to register in Medicine. (C.R.G.

1894- George Henry presented to Ives Post, No. 13, G. A. R., an immense volumn of sketches of Negro soldiers before the Civil War at a personal expense of $100.00. (W.A.H.)

1898- William Hercules Matthews, B. Phar., Howard Univ.,1898 was the first Negro and owner of a drug store in R. I., on Thames Street, Newport, R. I. Registered in R. I., 1898. (see file on pharmacists, C. R. G.)

Sarah Gardner of Newport, R. I., worked opening and closing homes of the rich. She saved her money and had a will drawn leaving it to the Newport Hospital. One day while visiting a friend she did not hear the bell for visitors to leave. She was deaf and shook her head when a nurse spoke to her, still staying an interne came and in not too complimentary language told her to leave. This she heard, had her will changed, leaving her money to a society to care for her 15 cats, $28,000.00.
The first building was in Newport and later a building was built on Fountain Street. Mr. George Riley, superintendent of the R. I. S. P. C. A., told me her money went to build the present place, a plaque is there honoring her gift. He also told me his father went to the fights in Infantry Hall, one when Sam Langford, the "Boston Tar Baby" fought and after they went to the Mahogany Palace, where Negroes were not allowed. His father has seen a colored boy throwb off a wagnon and he stopped and asked why, who said she asked for five cents for a loaf of bread. The boy whose name was Scott was taken by Mr. Riley to his barn and given a job, took him to the fightand after to the Palace. Unpon being introduced to Sam Lanford who said to Scott, no niggers are allowed in here. there insued a fight and Mr. Riley had to finally take Scott off of Langford.. (George Riley, C. R. G.)

1899- Oceola Cook, 1854?-1899, owner of a barbaeshop and boot-black parler after being a porter at the old City Hotel on Market Square, politician, worker for the Repubilican party.
He improved on the handle of the hair clipper shaping the handle to better fit the hand. He sold ½ of his patent to Brown and Sharpe Manfacturing Company for $800.00 and it became one of the best clippers in the country.
He weighed 449 pounds, had to have a special casket made which could not go in a hearse so his body was taken to his grave on a dray. (The Evening Bulletin, 3-15-99- C. R. G.) At the time of his death a friend said he made in his lifetime $50,000 .00 but the last few years had not been too prosperous.(C.R.G)

1901- Edward Mitchell Bannister, 1828-1901, famous Negro artist.
It was in his studio which he shared with a white artist at 19 College Hill that a club be formed for their mutual benefit, and out of this came the Providence Art Club, he being the second to sign the articles of incorporation. (see file on Artists. C.R.G.)

1894- George Henry presented to Ives Post, No. 13, G.A.R. an immense volumn of sketches about Negro soldiers before the Civil War at an expense of $100.00. (W.A.H.)

1896- Robert E. Johnson was the first speakers page, a position first made in 1896 and served under Speaker J. Edward Studley in 1897. (W.A.H.)

1898- William Hercules Matthews, B.Phar., Howard Univ, reg. R. I. 1898 was the first Negro owner of a drug store in R. I., in Newport, R. I. (see file on Pharmacy, C.R.G.)

1897- Rev. Malon A. Van Horn, resigned the pastorate of the Union Congregational Church in Newport ans was appointed by President William McKinley as U. S. Counsel to St. Thomas, D. W. I. He was the first Negro member of the R. I. State Legislature in 1885-1887, also was a member of the Newport school committee. (see file on Legislature, C.R.G.)

1899- Oceola Cook, owner of a barber and boot black shop after being a porter at the old City Hotel on Market Square, politician, worker for the Republican party, inventor.
He improved on the shape of the handle of a hair clipper so it fit the hand better and sold one half of the patent to Browne & Sharpe for $800.00.
He weighed 449 pounds, around five feet ten and on his death had to have a special casket made which would not fit in a hearse so his body was carried to his grave on a dray. At the time of his death a friend said he was worth $50,000.00 during his lifetime.) Prov. Eve Bul., 3-15-99--C.R.G.)

1901- Edward Mitchell Bannister, 1828-1901, Artist He was born in St. Andrews, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia in November 1828, the son of Edward and Hannah A. Bannister. Leaving St. Andrews he came to Boston, Mass. studied at the Lowell Institute with Dr. Rimmer and others. He married Christiana Carteux, a Narragansett Indian about 1856, a stately figue who wore a purple dress walking on Benefit Street in later years, comong to Providence in 1871.
In 1876 he won an award of first rank at the Centennial Exposition in Phildelphia, " Under The Oaks". He shared a studio at 2 College Hill with Edwin Lord Weeks. About 1878 George W. Whitaker, Charles W. Stetson and Bannister discussed plans of a club for their mutual benefit. From this came the Providence Art Club on Thomas Street, founded Fevruary 19, 1880 with the first signer and president, James Sullivan Lincoln, Bannister the second, George Whitaker, third followed by Stetson and others. There has not been a Negro member since.
His later years were not too successful and he contracted to paint a picture for a dentist on Snow Street for dental work for Mrs. Bannister.(Upon its completion, the dentist said the cows were too light, the artist colored it darker. Mrs. Amy (Harry) Stone who told me this was the office secretary and upon his death was given this picture, " the only doctored picture among his paintings."

1902-* Thomas R. Lewis, Jr., graduate of the School of Design 1898-1902. specialty jewelry, owner and operator of a jewelry factory in the Sabin Street arear, hiring as many as 50-60 girls white and colored.
He solved the running together of different enamels while baking and designed the compact for Richard Hudnut which sold in jewelry stores over the country.
He was one of the first Negroes to join the Y.M.C.A., but had not theopportunity of the swiming pool with the white. (C.R.G.)

1903- George T. Downing, 1819-1903 He was born in New York city, Dec. 30, 1819, died in Newport, R. I., July 21, 1903. At an early age interested in civil rights, helped to spirit away a slave in New York city, "Little Henry" and was a member of the famous Committee of 13 at the time of the Fugitive Salve law.
One of 16 to contribute toward the purchase of Touro Park which was given to the City of Newport, R. I.
Over 11 years fought the legisture to abolish the color line in the public schools ending 1871. He was a friend of Charles Sumner and throught him secured equal rights on the B. & O. railroad.
He owned a block on Bellvue Avenue in Newport where he ran a very properous catering buisness and resturant. (Biography of George T. Downing, his life and times, by S. A. M. Washington, Newport, R. I., The Milne Printery, 1910)

1901- Edward Mithchell Bannister,, 1828-1901. Artist. He was born in St Andrews, New Brunswick, the son of Edward Bannister and Hannah Alexander Bannister, November 1828, he married Christiana Carteux, a Narragansett Indian around 1856.
Leaving St Andrews he went to Boston, studied at the Lowell Institute with Dr. Rimmer and others. He came to Providence in 1871 and he won an award of first rank in 1876 at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, "Under the Oaks".
His studio at 19 College Hill, which he shared with Edwin Lord Weeks and about 1878. one evening with George W. Whitaker aker, Charles W. Stetson and Bannister discussed plans for mutual benefit from which came the Providence Art Club, founded on February 19, 1880 with James Sullivan Lincoln the first signer and first president, Bannister the second, George Whitaker, third, Stetson and others, there has not been a Negro member since.
His later years were not too successful and while at a prayer meeting at the Elmwood Avenue Baptist Church he died on January 9, 1901.
A Memorial Committee of white artists raised funds to erect a granite boulder with a pallette and scroll to honor this great Negro artist near his grave in North Burial Ground.
(Prov. Evening Bul., C.R.G., File on Art.)

1901- Bannister continued
He died while attending a prayer meering at the Elmwood Avenue Baptist Church, January 9, 1901, in Providence, R. I.
A committee met at the gallery of George W. Whitaker to do homage to one of Rhode Island's great artists, raised money, bought a granite boulder on which were a pallette with his name and a scroll with the poem by Mrs. E. W. T. Smith which she read at the memorial meeting. The boulder stands near his grave in North Burial Ground. (Prov. Eve. Bul., 3-15-

1903- George T. Downing, 1819-1903. Civil Rhights leader, resturant owner on Bellevue Avenue, Newport, R. I. Born in New York City December 30, 1819 and died in Newport, R. I., July 21, 1903. As a young man he became a member of the famous Committee of 13 which helped to spirit away "Little Henry" a slave who was in jail in New York, at the time of the Fugutive Slave Law. His father had an osyter house in New York and Congressman Dizon of Rhode Islane induced him to take charge of the House resturant (the son). Over 11 years fought to abolish the color line in the public schools in R. I., ending the long fight in 1871.
He was one of 16 persons to contribute toward the purchase of Touro Park containing the "Old Stone Mill" which was presented to the City of Newport. He also fought the intermarriage law which had been passed by the General Assembly which was recinded.
He ran a successful resturant in the Downing block which he owned on Bellvue Avenue, Newport, R. I. He was a friend of Charles Sumner and through him secured equal rights on the B. & O. Railroad. (see biography of George T. Downing by S. A. M. Washington, rewrite by C. R. G.)

1913-*Nancy Elizabeth Prophet. 1890-1860 Sculptress. She was born in Artic, R. I., daughter of the late William E. Prophet. Studied at the R. I. School of Design, went to Paris where she lived from 1922 to 1935. In 1929 won the Otto Kahn award, Congolaise,done in wood and stone, The School of Design has three of her works, one,"Discontent"in white marble awarded first prize by the Newport Art Association. Other awards were a special prize of $250.00 of work by Negro artists at the International House, 500 Riverside Drive under the Harmon Foundation and the Commission on Race Relations of the Federal Council of Churches. (Prov. Eve Bul. Feb. 1930- Prov. Journal 4-23-1945. C.R.G.)

1917-*Mary E. Jackson. Club women,Republican politics, State employe. called by the National Board of the Y.W.C.A. as a special industrial worker recruiting Negro women for war work. Active member and worker in the 2nd Free Will Baptist Church in Providence also the Fre Will Association. She traveled all over the country in the war work. She died in Providence in May, 1923. (C.R.G.)

Credit for much of the information is given to Mrs. Ulysses T. Carter, Sr., for her notes on Negro Churches in Rhode Island; Miss Reberta J. Dunbar's personal note book on her lectures; Joseph G. LeCount, Esq., William A. Heathman Esq., on law and legistlature; Mr. William P. H. Freeman who gave me three gold medals, two scrap books, one containing press releases of her concerts over the United States and Canada, (this material with a short history of her life has been given to the Jessee E: Moorland Collection at Howard University, Washington, D. C.) of Mme, Sissieretta Joynor Jones, "the Black Patti"; Mr. Sidney Brown for the 161st Anniversity phamplet of Bethel A.M.E.Church with its story of the dungeon or sub-cellar where slaves were hidden on their way to Canada; Mrs. Florence West Ward, the oldest living member of Bethel A.M.E.Church who told me she was afraid to go down there, a resident of the Bannister House; Mrs. James A. Gilbert telling me about the old Indian burial ground at Olive and Thayer Streets, slaves on Dexter Training Ground called contraband and were housed there until they could get work, the Neptune Yacht Club, her grandfather being one of the members; and many others.

1902-*Thomas R. Lweis, Jr., jewelry designer, graduate of the School of Design, 1898-1902. owner and operator of a jewelry buisness around Sabin Street hiring as many as 50-60 girls, Negro and white. He solved a process to prevent the running together of differant colors of enamel while baking, and he designed a compact for Richard Hudnut which sold all over the country. He was one of the early Negro members of the Y.W.C.A and an ardent member of the What Cheer Tennis Club, helping to put in the tennis courts on Willett Avenue, East Providence, now a post home for Riverside Post, American Legion.

1905- Ethel Esther Tremaine Robinson PhB Pembroke Col. 05. grad std Phil 34-35. the first Negro graduate of Pembroke College in Brown Univ. (Mrs. Joaquin H. Pineiro y Mora) taight at Howard Univ, D. C. Married and left for South America. Came back to Providence, worked on W.P.A., then on relief when she died. Her family lived in the Tillinghast estate house at Pine and Beacon Avenue while going to school here. (C.R.G.)

1918- One of the largest contingents around 200 draftees from Rhode Island left for Camp Devens, Mass., August 1, 1918. W.W.I.

1919- Rudolph Chauncey Fisher. Classical High cum laude, AB 19,AM 20, Brown Univ. cum laude, class orator, M. D. Howard med 24, PhBK, Sigma Xi, Delta Sigma Rho, X-ray, practiced in New York, Critics claimed him the most profilic writer of his time, The Walls of Jericho, High Yellow etc. His original manuscripts are at Brown Univ. (Browncatalogue of graduates, C.R.G.)

1920-*Chester Wellington Chinn PhB 20-AM 21,Brown Univ. MD.Mich 25. East Providence schools lived in East Providence, practices in New York city, one of the first two Ophalomogists to be licensed in New York state. (C.R.G.)

1924-*Perry Warkins RISD 1925-26 scenery design He designed all the sets for "Mamba's Daughters" a smash hit in New York. (C.R.G.)

1927-*Mary Cuppitt (Howard) Jennings RISD 27-31-32, BA Yale Sch of Fine Arts, 35 portrait painter. Won a four year scholarship while at Hope to the School of Design. She painted a portrait in oil of former Governor Theodore Francis Greene also some murals in a building at the University of Rhode Island, now a teacher in the Providence school system. (C.R.G.)

1928- Noah C. Wesley 1855-1928 Sexton and bell ringer of the First Baptist Meeting House in America, 46 years from 1882 to 1928. He died at the Rhode Island Hospital 8-20-28 and his funeral was preached by the Rev. Edward Holyoke, the pastor and the honorary pall bearers were Deacons Frederiak R. Chapin, Arthur E. Watson, Foster H. Townsend and Clinton T. Gamwell. In Revolutionary times it rang at sunrise, mid-day and curfew, now the times have changed. In the old times curfew rang twenty slow strokes. In his later years, Mr. Wesley was excused from bell ringing as a consession to his age. (see Miss R. J. Dunbar's note book also comments by Mr Arthur E. Watson,)

1929-*William Clarence Foster PhB- 29grddstd biol 29-30 Brown; MSc Minn 39; res physiologist, Hanheman Med Col, Phila, Pa. He came with Boericke from Minnesota when the change was made to a regular school of medicine with others from Penn, John Hopkins, Cincinnati etc as heads of departments. He told me he had written about 67 papers and that Brown had requested his original manuscripts. (C.R.G.)

1931-*Alfred C. A. Perry, Chief Stronghorse, Grand Sachem of the Algonquins in this section was born in Exerter in 1861, died in Cranston, September of 1931. He has headed the council for 24 years since its reorganization in 1922. Under his leadership the customs of the tribe have been revived at several annual gatherings. He had charge of the building of many of the roads in Cranston working for the highway department. His farm on Dugaway Hill (Scituate Avenue) was the scene of many tribal meetings. He was fond of horses, owning a pacer which he raced and a large span of farm horses which competed in weight dragging hence the name "Strong Horse". The council still exists but inactive and his daughter, Mrs. Annie (Perry) Farrow has the minutes since 1922.(Eve.Bul 9-31)

1931- In 1931 the U.U.S.Constitution, "Old Ironsides" tied up at the state pier and Joseph E. Brown was the only living R. I. member of her crew being piped aboard with honors. A copy of his discharge is in the files of the R. I. Historical Society. (C.R.G. - Eve Bul 7-10-31)

1938- William H. Higgins, M. D. B. 12-14-73- Marion. N. C., D Providence, 8-23-38. reg. to practice of medicine in 6-1-93. He was a member and chr. Trustee Board of Winter Street A. M. E. Zion Church; many fraternel societies, Prov. Med Ass'n, R.I. Med. Society, What Cheer Med. Society R. I. state affiliate of the National Medical Society, (Negro) of which he was a past president; Appointed as a member and became chairman of the R. I. State Board of Podiatry in 1936. (C.R.G.)

1935- At the suggestion and request of the Prov; branch of the N.A. C.P., a group of Negroes were appointed to the R. I. State Tercentenary Committee, various members assigned different catogories with the intention of writing a history of the Negro in R. I. Carl R. Gross, M. D., was secretary of the committee (original minutes in his possesion) and from notes gathered, the basis of these papers came to being. (see biography)

1946-*Emma Clarissa (Williams) Clement, native of Providence, R. I., was chosen "A,erican Mother of 1946". Mrs. Ruth M. Worrell of New York city, executive secretary of the United Council of Church Women nominated Mrs. Clement and her election was announced by Mrs, Harper Sibley of Rochester, N. Y., American Mother of 1945 from almost 60 nominees from all over the country. Member of the 2nd Free Will Baptist Church, attended local schools, left to go to Livingston College, where she met her future husband who later became bishop of the A. M. E. Zion church in Louisville, Kentucky. Seven children all graduates of Livingston, all PhD's, including the president of Atlanta University. (Prov. Eve Bul June 1946-

1953-*Reeves Ramsey Taylor,b.3-6-29; honor roll and Anthony medal winner, Hope High; Appointed to Annapolis in 1948 by Senator Theodore Francis Green, graduating in 1953 as an Ensign. He is married to Gloria Beaubean and has three boys, possibly the first native Negro appointed to a service academy. He is now at the Pentagon in the U. S. Navy Bureau of Personal. (C.R.G.*1968)

1956-* Roger Reckling Blunt, born in East Providence, 10-12-30. He was drafted in his second year at Brown and from the ranks entered West Point in 1952, became commander of the second battalion, graduating in 1956, acting regimental commander. the second R..I. Negro to graduate from a service academy, he was 72nd in a class of 479. Major Blunt in 1967 was the first Negro officer assigned to teach at the Dept. of Tactics at West Point (Prov. Eve Bul.,7-13-67). He is now a Colenol. He is married to the former Rosette Y. Hendricks and they have three children. (C.R.G.)

1956-*Reberta J. Dunbar, 18 -1956, Negro historian,club women, church woman died October 31, 1956. She was the daughter of John D. and Louisa (Cartwright) Dunbar, born in Narragansett Pier, R. I. grad. English High, Providence, R. I. A trustee of the Frederick Douglass Home, past president of the Northeastern Federation of Colored Women's Club, for 40 years a member of Grant Circle, Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic, charter member of the John Hope Settlement House, member of the Julia Ward Howe State Republican Club, more than 20 years, treasurer of the Providence branck of the NAACP., the olny woman member of the Marathon Club, president of the Women's New Century Club of Providence, which founded a Home for Working Girls, member since early childhood of the 2nd Free Will Baptist Church of Providence, had been clerk and supertendent of the Sunday School for many years.. (C.R.G.)

1957-"Prudence (Higgins) Irving gets No 2. Welfare post", Prov. Eve. bul, 3-6-57.) Classical High, Prov., Howard Univ., Simmons Col of Social Work., MA Pittsburg School of Social Work. Appointed by Edward P. Reidy, ststa director of Social Welfare as chief supervisor, Div. Public Assistance. retired from her state job and is now Staff Specialist, Bureau of Family Service Dept. H. E. W., stationed at Boston, Mass. (C.R.G.)

1957-*Arthur Benjamin Williams, BA Brown 57; STB Gen Theol Sem 64; min; Lt. jg U.S.N.; first tecileint of the Clarence H. Horner Fellowship Award, 64-65; asst to the rector, St Marks Episcopal Church, Riverside, R. I.66; appointed asst to the Dean of St. John's Cathedral, Providence, R. I.,67; Left to serve an Episcopal Church in Detroit, Mich. (C.R. G.)

1957- Okogbue Okezie, M. D. Harvard Med. 1957. first non-white to serve an internship in a general hospital in Providence, R. I. (see file on medicine, C.R.G.)

1950-Mrs. Rose (Butler) Brown cert 1919, M Ed 1929 RICE; PhD Harvard 19 ; hon DEd RICE;

1958-Mrs. Charity (Bailey).....RICE 1927, awarded MEd RICE, 1958 (Eve Bul June 1958).
She was born in Providence, elementary education here, entered RICE and graduated. She tried for an appointment to the public school system in Providence but was unsuccesful, her mother with others leading a fight only to be told " the supertendent of schools said, he would not appoint a colored teacher".(C.R.G.)
She left here to go to New York where she received many honors: WRCA-TV8s Sing a Song, half houron Sunday TV (Boston Advertiser,6-12-55); studied at Julliard and Dalcroze,N.Y., faculty of the "Little Red School House, N..Y.; lectured at Sarah Lawrence, Columbia and N.Y. University;(N.Y.Times 1-55) teaches in the Scarsdale N. Y. public schools (Eve Bul 12-27-66)

1959- Joseph G. LeCount, Esq. born in Washington, D. C. 1887? came to Providence in his early youth, Prov. elem and high schools; Howard Univ. Sch. of Law 1912, admitted to practice in 1914; still in active practice (1968); Past Grand Master, Prince Hall Grand Lodge of R. I; member of the Supreme Council 33' Northern jurisdiction, A & A. S. R; charter member and past president of the Marathon Club; Past President Prov. branch, NAACP; First president 8 years, N. E. Regional NAACP.,now president emeritous; former secretary and member of the Board of the John Hope Settlement House; member of the R. I. State Tercentenary Committee; sworn in as legal counsel of the R. I. Milk Control Bd.by Gov. Del Sesto, 4-9-59,(the first of his race to so honored);(C.R.G)

1960-*George Francis Bland, BS. Brown; Msc Ill,50; rs asst Ill; He was employed by GE upon leaving college and later went to IBM. He was in a team of engineers who worked for over a year upon an experiment under John F. Cedarholm:- "Einstein Proves Out", (Newsweek 1-18-60..."Bland's Beams" as he explained the process, "Townes commented, this experiment which has an accurance of one Million Millionth may represent the most precise experiment ever conducted by anyone.") (Newsweek...C. R.G.)

1962- Neville Beaubien named R. I. banking commissioner by Andrew A. DePrete, director of the Dept. of Buisness Regulation, the first member of his race to be appointed to a policy-making position. He went to the Industrial National Bank in 1951 from the financial section of the Veterans Administration, in 1955 he was sent to the East Providence branch and later took over as assistant manager until he received the state appointment. He later went to Los Angeles to become president of a newly formed Bank of Finance. He died May 2, 1968 at his home in Los Angeles, California. He leaves a wife, Honora (Williams) formerly of Providence, two sons, David Dumner and Michael Charles. (Prov. Eve Bul: 11-12-58;12-18-62; 5-2-68; C.R.G.)

1962- Edward L. Blue was appointed a senior bank examiner in the state Banking Division filling a vacancy after the death of John Keenan. Has been senior field examiner in the tax division of the Dept. of Employment Security since 1956. He is married and has two children and has a BS degree from Byrant College in 1952.

1963-*William Howard (Dixie) Matthews was appointed as second deputy city clrerk of the City of Providence 2-7-63. He has been a city employe since 1946, secretary of the Third Ward Democratic committee, played football at Providence College and professional football with the Providence Steamroller's. He was elevated to 1st Deputy City Clerk by Mayor Renolds in September 1963. (Prov. Journal 2-8-63...C.R.G.)

1966- Ermino P. Lisbon, Newport deputy finance director; president of the R. I. Public Finance Officer's Association; member of the Newport NAACP and many other organizations. (C.R.G.)

1968- Vernon Lisbon of Newport appointed a member and chairman of the R. I. Commission on Discrimination, the second non-white. John F. Lopez, Sr was the first non-white mamber on the first commission. (C.R.G.)

1968- Alton W. Wiley, URI 1951; former assistant U.S. District Attorney of R. I., was elected the first Negro president of the URI Alumni Association. (Sunday Journal 6-9-68 C.R.G.)

1968-*Kenneth R..Walker, ~~the first~~ Negro vice principal of a junior high school in R. I. He graduated from the East Providence Senior High, his bachelor degree from Providence College and his master's at Rhode Island College. Chairman of the E. P. Head Start advisory group; a Big Brother, member of the R. I. Guidance and Personal Association; staff member of Project Upward Bound. He is married to the former Gail Smith and have three children. (Sunday Journal-C.R.G.) 5-26-68.

1968- Frederick C. Williamson 33rd PH, was awarded the bronze Brotherhood award of the National Conference of Christians and Jews; past president Urbam League of R. I.; a director of the Porgress for Providence Inc; past Grand Master Prince Hall Grand Lodge of R. I; member of the 33' Supreme Council, A.& A. Scottish Rite, Northern Juridiction; Comminicant and former member of the vestry of St. John's Cathedral; married, one son; has a responsible job at Quonset Naval Air Station. (C.R.G.) (Eve Bul 4-26-68)

1966- " R. I. Has Navy's Highest-Ranking Negro" Eve Bul 3-22-66. He is the second Negro in Navy history to attain a captaincy, the first was Robert Smalls who piloted a Confederate ship into the middle of a Union flotilla, as a reward was made captain of the captured vessell. Captain Parham was promoted at the Naval Air Station, Quonset Point, R. I. 3-21-66. (C.R.G.)

195 -*John F. Lopez, Sr., Mortician, Civil Rights, Politician, A member of the first R. I. Commission on Discrimation until his death; ardent NAACP worker, past president of the local branch; "Mr. Democrat" of R. I., respected by stste and city officials of the party; spokesman for the long-shoreman's union here for many years; member of the John Hope Settle-House board almost from its inception; member of the Marathon Club and many others civic endeavors. (C.R.G.)

1967- Edric R. Bates, proprietor of the Edric R. Bates Pharmacy on Prairie Avenue, one of four who presented a plan to Mayor Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., to make city owned property available to an independent Negro group to rehabilitate run down properties and sell them to Negroes in the South Providence area.
The proposal was submitted last Friday by Edric R. Bates; Errol E. Hunt, director of the South Providence Drop-In Center; Albert H. Brown, supervisor of general services of the Putitan Life Insurance Co., and Gerald O. Blunt of the Industrial National Bank. All are Negroes.(Prov Eve Bul 8- 67)

1968- Rev. Arther L. Hardge, executive director of the R. I. Commission for Human Rights was appointed by Governor Chafee to be the director of the new state Dept. of Community Affairs. His staff will consist of about 75 employes and his salary will be $18,000.00, the first Negro named to a state department.
He is pasroe of the Hood Memorial A.M.E.Zuin church on Wadsworth Street, Providence and he lives at 37 Mather Street, Cranston, R. I.
He was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, his early schooling in New Jersey; BA Morgan State 1949; theology at Temple Univ; social worker NYC 48-49; child welfare social worker in Conn., 60-63; Big Brothers, Providence, 63-65 and in 63 was executive secretsry of the R. I. Commission on Discrimation. (Prov Eve Bul 7-29-68)

1968- Vernon J. Lisbon was appointed Chr. R. I. Human Rights Commission, formerly the R. I. Commission aginst Discrimation, term-expires in 1970. (Prov Eve Bul 8-19-68)(CRG)
His elementary and high school education in Newport; U.S.Navy 45-49; San Francisco College, G.I.benefits lasted two years and it took him 6 years to complete his undergraduate degree; MA, social work, Boston College 65; worked in the Dept.of Social Welfare, Newport; 65 head of the Family Service; a part time professor at Salva Regina College.
He is married to the former Janice Bell of Cranston, R. I.

BIOGRAPHY

Newspaper clippings from the Gross family scrap book

Providence Journal and Evening Bullerin

Baltimore Afro-American

Pittsburg Courier

Providence Chronicle, William D. Wiley, editor

New York Clipper music critic, "the Black Patti"

Providence Medical Ass'n Library, medicine and allied sciences

R. I. State Library, legislature and law

R. I. Council of Churches, churches

R. I..College of Education, teachers

Negroes on the Island of Rhodes, Charles Battle, Newport, 1932

The Life of William J. Brown, Angell and Co., 1883

These Plantations, J. Earl Clauson, Eve Bul 2-1-35 oldest Negro church.

Negro Churches before 1860, Robert Glenn Scherer, Jr., R. I. Historical Journal, January 1966

161st Anniversery Program of Bethel A.M.E.Church, Providence 1957

Personal notes by Mrs. Ulysses T. Carter and Mrs. Beverly Tinsley on Negro churches in R. I.

Address by William P. H. Freeman, Annual celebration NAACP, Jan. 1, 1937, Roundtop Church

Scrap book of press releases, three gold medals, six photographs, on Mme Sissieretta Joynor Jones, "the Black Patti" given to me by William P. H. Freeman, a short history of Mme. Jones by C. R. G Gross which I presented to the Jesse E. Moorland Collection in Howard Univ., Wash. D. C.

Personal note book on Negro history with notes and lecture dates by Reberta J. Dunbar, Prov., R. I.

Archives, John Hay Library, Brown Univ., Prov., R. I.

A Tercentenary History of 300 Years, arranged and illustrated by Winfred R. Cyr,(c) Prov. Eve Bul 10-8-36

BIOGRAPHY

continued

Original minute book of the Quarterly Conferences of A.M.E. Zion, (Winter Street) Church, from when it was formed in 1837 to 1859. Also a hand written note by Marshall Woods giving a lot on Gaspee Street,(where the boiler room stands on the state house grounds), for a colored Methodist church in 1850. (C.R.G.)

Anti-Negro prejudice and Discrimination in R. I., 186--1900 by Jean Girard (RIC) History Honors, June 7, 1966. (Much information was given to him by me for his paper.

George Thomas Downing, Sketch of his Life and Times by S. A. M. Washington, Newport, R. I., The Milne Printery, 1910

R. I. Bar Journal, Vol xv June 1967 Auto-biography, W. A. Heathman

INTERVIEWS

William A. Heathman, Esq. his home 111 Babcock St., Prov., R. I.

Mrs. Florence West Ward, Home for Aged Colored Women, Prov., R. I.

Mr. William P. H. Freeman, 160 Brown Street, Prov., R. I.

Mrs. James A. Gilbert 237 Meeting Street, Prov., R. I.

Mr. Oliver Burton, Newport, R. I., Dr. Wheatland's x-ray tube

Joseph G. LeCount, Esq., 15 Dunbar Avenue, East Providence, R. I.

Mr. Sidney Brown, 195 Howell Street, Providence, R. I.

Mrs. George Farrow, 108 Scituate Avenue, Cranston, R. I.

* Native Rhode Islander