THE NEGRO IN IOWA [1]

American historians have, until recently, written the history of this country in terms of the articulate dominant group — the Anglo-Saxon — that provided the country its early leadership and gave to the national culture its structure and texture. Yet in the early times every American port was an open door for persons of any race, creed, or color; and when the greatest population shift in the world's history occurred during the nineteenth century, the United States acquired millions upon millions of new peoples, representing divers cultures. The leaders of the country welcomed them for the sweaty work that had to be done, but the immigrant did not at first "signify" — to use a Yankee phrase — as an actively contributing force in the national culture.

As late as 1860 Emerson could write: "The German and Irish millions, like the Negro, . . . are ferried over the Atlantic and carted over America, to ditch and to drudge, to make corn cheap and then to lie down prematurely to make a spot of green grass on the prairie." [2] In thus taking cognizance of the new Americans, Emerson revealed — and implicitly criticized — the attitude of the dominant group toward the newcomers. But things began to change. His younger contemporary, Walt Whitman, watching the

[1] The writer wishes to acknowledge the help received in the execution of this project from numerous persons and institutions throughout the State, beginning with the staff of the Iowa State Historical Society and extending over a wide range of officials connected with institutions and organizations such as colleges and labor unions. In spite of all this generous support and in spite of its length, the present study is far from exhaustive. Important and interesting areas of subject matter have been touched but lightly or not at all.

[2] Ralph Waldo Emerson's *The Conduct of Life* (Riverside Edition), p. 21.

immigrants come from the "small shores" of Europe to the "large and present shores" of America, heard their "varied carols" and appreciated their rôle in making America "the greatest poem".

The historian's awareness of these inarticulate groups, this hidden America, was tardier than that of the poet. But early in the twentieth century Frederick Jackson Turner, and later such scholars as Marcus Lee Hansen, Carl Wittke, and Arthur M. Schlesinger, began to probe below the Anglo-Saxon surface.[3] They found that some of the profound influences upon the cultural pattern of America had issued from these immigrant people, who had fed the nation from the land they had cleared, sheltered it with lumber from the trees they had cut, and transported it on the railroads they had laid and fueled with the coal they had dug.

While these historians concerned themselves largely with the impact of the great migration from Europe, others began to study different ethnic groups. There was, for example, the American Indian. So long as this group was to be reckoned with as a belligerent element, its history had been written in abundant, if somewhat biased, detail. But when the last tribes had been subjugated, the historian lost interest and for a time failed to recognize the problem of the red man living permanently in the midst of a white man's culture, a minority problem that now challenges the anthropologist and sociologist as well as the historian.

Not long after Admiral Matthew C. Perry had forced open the doors of the Orient, a new thread appeared in the

[3] Frederick Jackson Turner's "Studies of American Immigration" in the Chicago *Record-Herald,* August 28, September 4, 11, 18, 25, and October 16, 1901; Marcus Lee Hansen's *The Atlantic Migration, 1607–1860* and *The Immigrant in American History;* Carl Wittke's *We Who Built America: The Saga of the Immigrant;* Arthur M. Schlesinger's *New Viewpoints in American History,* Ch. I, and "'What Then Is the American This New Man?'" in *The American Historical Review,* Vol. XLVIII, pp. 225–244.

social texture of the Pacific region. Americans at first welcomed the Asiatics to serve them and keep them laundered, but they were not thought of in terms of their relationship to or citizenship in the body politic. So the West very soon had an ethnic problem upon which one noted historian, Hubert Howe Bancroft, reflected as early as 1890.[4]

But Indians and Asiatics are relatively few in the United States, and their cultural impacts have been altogether minor. Tension between the old American stock and the immigrants has lessened, or is lessening, as second and third generations appear on the scene and their contributions, both as Americans and as carriers of cofluent culture patterns, are recognized and accepted. So it is, perhaps, not too optimistic to say that there is now only one major ethnic problem — the relation between white and black, Caucasian and Negro. The slavery issue was solved by main force, only to be replaced by the Negro problem. Yet, except for some spasmodic stirrings during the post-bellum years, black America, up to the first World War, remained submerged in the South and numerically as well as culturally was rather insignificant in the North and West. Today its voice is heard, clamoring passionately — and sometimes stridently — for a way out of the "American dilemma". Though the Negro element has played a relatively minor part in the development of Iowa, its history, if placed within the larger context of midwestern attitudes towards minorities, should aid in an over-all understanding of the culture of the State.

THE NEGRO IN IOWA BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR

Officially slavery never existed in Iowa. Although the area was not part of the American Republic when the Ordi-

[4] Hubert Howe Bancroft's "Mongolianism in America" in *Essays and Miscellany*, pp. 309–418.

nance of 1787 was enacted prohibiting slavery in the Northwest Territory, Iowa inherited the benefits of the Ordinance when she was joined to the Republic through the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 and her future as a free State was largely decided in 1820 when the Missouri Compromise categorically forbade slavery in the Louisiana Purchase north of latitude 36° 30′. This does not mean that the dark silhouette of a slave has never been seen against the setting sun of Iowa. A few were brought in by some of the early white traders, government officials, and miners, most of them being used as house servants.[5]

After the Black Hawk Purchase was opened for settlement in 1833 many families from nearby southern States moved into the area,[6] some bringing a slave or two. But there were not enough proslavery people to prove that George W. Jones was correct when, in the debate over the establishment of the Territory of Iowa, he told John C. Calhoun that slavery had nothing to fear in the Iowa country, settled largely by southerners.[7] He did not realize, apparently, that the majority of these people, driven north by an economic system under which they could not prosper, were largely opposed to slavery.

The southern antislavery settlers opposed slavery as an economic evil, but they were far from ready to share with

[5] Ruth A. Gallaher's "Slavery in Iowa" in *The Palimpsest*, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 158–160.

[6] Cyrenus Cole's *A History of the People of Iowa*, p. 130; *Scott County History* (WPA, 1942), p. 34; *Monroe County History* (WPA, 1940), pp. 3, 53.

[7] George Wallace Jones was a Delegate from the Territory of Wisconsin at the time (1837) he introduced a bill to establish the Territory of Iowa. In his "Autobiography" in John Carl Parish's *George Wallace Jones*, p. 127, Jones records the incident: "He [Calhoun] told me . . . he could never give his consent to the formation of a new Territory which in a few years would become a powerful abolition State. I replied that there was not, that I knew of, a single abolitionist in the whole of the proposed Territory of Iowa; that I myself was the owner of ten or twelve slaves, and that I was as much opposed to abolitionism as he was."

the Negro the rights and privileges they expected to enjoy on the new frontier. In fact, they did not want him there at all.[8] On the other hand, the caravans that came rumbling up to the banks of the Mississippi from Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York and ferried across to the newly-opened Iowa land, brought with them the antislavery attitudes of their old environments. The Quakers and the New England settlers were profoundly convinced of the equality of every human being before God as well as of the sanctity of liberty and individual freedom in the State. With their coming, the atmosphere of the southern uplands on the Iowa hills and prairies was tempered by a new spirit. The two temperaments clashed and a group cleavage persisted up to the Civil War and even beyond, although on the surface there was a certain merging of interests and outlook.[9]

As the influx of eastern settlers increased, Yankee tradition tended to assert itself more strongly. By 1860 the population figures show that 193,005 Iowa settlers had come from the States of the Northwest Territory, 103,173 from the mid-Atlantic States, 54,006 from the southern States, and 25,040 from the New England States.[10] Added to the overwhelming numbers of those whose origins were

[8] A contemporary historian of the Civil War has analyzed the slavery attitudes of the southerners who settled in the Middle West thus: "Many [of the southern immigrants] had brought with them a hatred of slavery and the plantation system which seemed to give an unfair economic advantage to wealthier men. But also — and failure to grasp this fact has led to much misunderstanding of the attitude of the Midwest toward sectional issues of the 1840's and '50's — this hatred extended with equal or greater fervor to the Negro himself, and it was coupled with the ever-present fear that any weakening of his bondage would permit him to migrate northward." — Wood Gray's *The Hidden Civil War: The Story of the Copperheads* (New York: Viking Press, 1942), pp. 18, 23.

[9] George F. Parker's *Iowa Pioneer Foundations,* Vol. I, pp. 55, 56; Gray's *The Hidden Civil War,* pp. 24, 25.

[10] U. S. Census, 1860; Cyrenus Cole's *Iowa Through the Years,* pp. 212, 213.

north of the Mason-Dixon line were 106,081 foreign-born settlers, largely from northern Europe, who chose to settle in the North because, among other reasons, they disliked the institution of slavery.

The English, coming from a country whose economic superiority rested upon the labor of its colonials the world over, looked somewhat leniently at slavery, but they tended to locate among New England settlers in the Middle West and to adapt themselves to the prevailing sentiments of their communities, which meant a dislike of slavery.

The early German and Irish immigrants joined the Democratic Party of Jacksonian tradition, which was, of course, the party of the South and proslavery. The German element gradually shifted to the Republican Party, largely through the vigorous antislavery compaigning of Carl Schurz and other liberal German leaders. The Irish maintained their allegiance to the Democratic Party, even condoning slavery, since party, to them, came before principle.

The Norwegian immigrants were strongly antislavery, but a few of the leaders, among them Laur. Larsen, founder and president of Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, received their theological training in the proslavery atmosphere of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, and, though not actually proslavery, they contended, with many southerners, that slavery was permissible under divine law and that, according to the Scriptures, it was not a sin.

On November 12, 1838, the thirty-nine members of the First Territorial Assembly, twenty-six of whom were southerners by birth, met at Burlington to draw up a body of laws for the new Territory. Following the lead of other border States and Territories, as well as their own convictions, they passed an act that practically excluded Negroes from the Territory of Iowa.[11]

[11] Cole's *A History of the People of Iowa*, p. 147; Jacob A. Swisher's "The

After April 1, 1839, no "black or mulatto" was to be permitted to settle in Iowa unless he could present "a fair certificate" of "actual freedom" under the seal of a judge and give a bond of $500 as surety against becoming a public charge. If a Negro came into the Territory without the proper certification, he fell under the jurisdiction of the county commissioners who might hire him out for six months "for the best price in cash" that could be had, the proceeds going into the county treasury. Anyone who hired a Negro not having a certificate of freedom and the necessary financial surety was subject to a fine of not less than five nor more than one hundred dollars. Travelers and visitors were permitted to bring their slaves with them into Iowa. The arrest and return of slaves "in this Territory" could be ordered by the courts upon presentation of satisfactory evidence.[12]

Not only did the lawmakers thus regulate and virtually prohibit the immigration of free Negroes into the Territory of Iowa; two years later they expressed their conviction that blacks and whites should be kept separated in the social structure. On January 6, 1840, the legislature passed an act declaring that all marriages between white persons and Negroes or mulattoes were illegal and void.[13]

Not long after the circumscription of the Negroes'

First Territorial Assembly" in *The Palimpsest*, Vol. XX, pp. 33, 34. The new Commonwealths that were formed out of western territory feared Negro migration, and Iowa was merely following the wave of legislation that withheld citizenship from "blacks and mulattoes" and prevented them from settling in the North. In Ohio the constitutional convention of 1804 required the registration of all Negroes; in 1830 they were excluded from service in the State militia, deprived of the right of serving on juries, and denied the right to be educated in the public schools. Legislation in Indiana was even more restrictive; in Illinois it was similar to Ohio; in Michigan less restrictive.

[12] *Laws of Iowa*, 1838-1839, pp. 65–67; Louis Pelzer's "The Negro and Slavery in Early Iowa" in THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. II, p. 471.

[13] *Laws of Iowa*, 1840, Ch. 27, Sec. 13.

status in 1839, a colored man, Ralph, then residing in Dubuque, was seized by slave hunters from Missouri. He was rescued on a writ of habeas corpus by Alexander Butterworth, one of the local abolitionists, and his case came before the first Supreme Court of the new Territory of Iowa. It was conceded that Ralph had been a slave in Missouri; the question was whether he was a slave in Iowa and whether he had a right to invoke the writ of habeas corpus. The Iowa Territorial Supreme Court handed down its verdict in July, 1839.[14]

The evidence indicated that Ralph had come to Dubuque to work in the lead mines, having given to his master a note for $550 in payment for his freedom. He had not paid the note at the end of the five-year period, hence the claim of the master for his return to Missouri. The Iowa court held that Ralph was not a "fugitive slave", since he had come to Iowa with the knowledge and consent of his master. Since the Missouri Compromise Act of 1820 had forbidden slavery north of 36° 30′ north latitude, slave property was not recognized in the Territory of Iowa and Ralph's master could not exercise any authority over him. He might, it was conceded, bring suit to collect on the note, but the very fact that he had accepted the note was proof that he expected Ralph to become a free man in Iowa. The Iowa court, therefore, declared that Ralph was not a slave. Had Ralph been considered a "fugitive slave", it appears that the Iowa court would, under the Federal law of 1793 and the provisions of the Missouri Compromise, been required to order his return to his Missouri master. The decision made no mention of the law concerning blacks and mulattoes which had been passed by the Iowa Legislative Assembly the preceding January.

The Ralph case is of marked historical interest when it

[14] Morris's *Iowa Reports*, 1–7.

is compared with the Dred Scott case [15] decided by the United States Supreme Court in 1857. Both cases involved similar situations. Both Ralph and Dred Scott had been slaves in Missouri; Ralph was permitted to come to Iowa; Dred Scott accompanied his master to Iowa and Minnesota. Both claimed that they became free by virtue of residence in free territory. The decisions were almost diametrically in opposition.

The Iowa court asserted that if the right of a slaveowner to permit his slave to go into free territory and still maintain his right of ownership were recognized, then all free territory would be open to slavery. The decision added, "We cannot countenance such a doctrine." The United States Supreme Court declared that Congress had no constitutional authority to exclude slavery from the area north of Missouri. It furthermore made it almost impossible for most free Negroes to live safely even in free States, since it ruled that a Negro slave or a Negro who had been a slave or whose ancestors had been slaves was not a citizen of the United States and could not bring a case before a United States court.

To account for the discrepancy between these two decisions in cases so similar in basic facts one has to go beyond the formal surface of the law. In the census of 1840 not more than 188 Negroes, 16 of whom were listed as slaves, were found to live in the Territory of Iowa. Such numbers do not produce social problems, but by 1857 slavery had come to be the foremost issue in national affairs. The principle of individual rights was the predominant factor in the Iowa decision, while economic and political considera-

[15] Jacob A. Swisher's "The Case of Ralph" in *The Palimpsest,* Vol. VII, pp. 33–43; 60 U. S. 393. Dred Scott's master, Dr. John Emerson, lived for a time during the 1830's at Fort Armstrong on Rock Island and his slave, Dred Scott, is said to have occupied a preemption shack for him on the Iowa side of the Mississippi River. Scott later based his claim to freedom on residence in Iowa and Minnesota.

tions affecting the future of the nation determined the decision by the national court.

When seventy-two delegates assembled in 1844 to draft a constitution for the proposed State of Iowa, twenty-six were natives of southern States, most of whom had lived in the Territory for some six or seven years.[16] Five days after the session began, the question of admitting Negroes to citizenship came before the convention. Most of the delegates were reluctant to face the issue, but, like a cork bobbing to the surface of the water after it has been thrust down, the problem continued to emerge throughout the session. On October 12, 1844, George Hobson, from Henry County, introduced a petition signed by over sixty citizens asking the convention "to secure to people of color all such rights and privileges, civil, social, moral and educational, under the same circumstances and upon the same conditions as are secured to others." [17]

There was a flurry of discussion before it was decided to refer the petition to a select committee of thirteen. The committee was instructed to make a report on the petition and to inquire into the expediency of excluding from the State all persons of color, or of admitting them only under severe restrictions. Three days later the committee submitted its report. The members accepted the premise that all men are created equal, but, they added, this "is a mere abstract proposition"; government is an artificial association entered into by man, the constitution of which more or less modifies his natural rights, some of which he may even have to surrender. The committee asserted that it could "never consent to open the doors of our beautiful State" and invite the Negro to settle here. Because of the exclu-

[16] Benj. F. Shambaugh's *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions of 1844 and 1846,* Appendixes A and B.

[17] *Journal of the Convention for the Formation of a Constitution for the State of Iowa, 1844,* pp. 32, 33.

sion policy of other States, "the whole black population of the Union" would be driven into Iowa. The committee, therefore, found it "inexpedient to grant the prayer of the petition." The members did not, on the other hand, think it expedient to introduce an article into the constitution to exclude Negroes from Iowa.[18]

The report was tabled, but there is little doubt, if any, that it expressed the sentiment that prevailed in the Territory at that time. *The Iowa Capital Reporter* for October 19th hoped that, after the action of the convention in tabling it, "this black subject will now rest in Iowa forever."[19]

But not many days later the same petition, signed by some forty different people, was again presented to the convention. It, too, was tabled. The next day Tennessee-born Francis Gehon expressed his exasperation at the persistency of the troublesome question by offering a resolution "That the Legislature of the State of Iowa, never shall entertain petitions in regard to negro suffrage", remarking that such petitioning was an evil that should be choked off. He was not disposed to recognize Negroes as equals and he "did not want the State he lived in agitated with petitions to give negroes the right of voting." His resolution, too, was laid on the table.[20]

One delegate, Edward Langworthy, had been instructed by his constituents in Dubuque County, where the majority of the Negroes in the Territory resided at that time, to get the convention to prohibit the migration of colored people into the State; he proposed a constitutional provision that

[18] *Journal of the Convention . . . 1844,* pp. 33, 34, 43, 44, 52–55.

[19] Shambaugh's *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions of 1844 and 1846,* pp. 220, 221.

[20] *Journal of the Convention . . . 1844,* pp. 110, 111, 121; Shambaugh's *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions of 1844 and 1846,* p. 123.

the "Legislature shall, at as early a day as practicable, pass laws to prevent the settlement of Blacks and Mulattoes in this State." The convention adopted the proposal, but the Committee on Revision recommended that the provision be dropped and the convention finally voted to strike out the section completely.[21]

The final draft of the constitution of 1844 did not permit Negroes to vote and barred them from holding legislative office and from service in the State militia. The people of Iowa rejected this constitution, so in 1846 another convention was called, this one composed of only 32 members, 15 of whom were southerners by birth.[22] The status of Negroes remained unchanged in the draft of the new constitution, which was accepted and went into effect in the autumn of 1846.

During the remainder of the forties the condition of the Negro in Iowa was fairly static, at least on the surface. A few free Negroes found their way into the State. By the end of the decade they numbered 333. For the most part they worked in the mines at Dubuque, or as laborers in the river towns of Burlington, Davenport, and Keokuk and lived in shacks close to the waterfront. Negro children were not permitted to attend public schools and, consequently, were not able to read or write unless some high-minded "abolitionist" taught them. But in spite of the meagerness of their lives, these pioneers of their race stayed on; life on free soil was preferable to life in the slave States.

[21] *Journal of the Convention . . . 1844,* pp. 82, 157, 163, 165; Shambaugh's *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions of 1844 and 1846,* pp. 155, 156; Carl H. Erbe's "The Legislative Department as Provided by the Constitution of Iowa" in THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XXIII, p. 243.

[22] Shambaugh's *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions of 1844 and 1846,* Appendixes A and B.

While the Democratic politicos were in the saddle in Iowa, they followed, as a matter of course, the party line of the southern leaders. From the debates it is evident that the constitutional convention of 1844 would have prohibited Negroes from entering the State if the delegates had thought such a clause would have been accepted by Congress. Rather than take a chance of rejection, they waited, knowing that once they were safely in the Union, the legislature could make the necessary provision against the citizenship of Negroes.[23] This was done.

The Third General Assembly, under the control of "cringing servitors of the Southern Slave-whippers", passed an act early in 1851, prohibiting — as the Territorial legislators of 1839 had done — the settlement of free Negroes or mulattoes in Iowa. Those living in the State were allowed to remain and own property; but township and county officers were ordered to notify all Negroes who henceforth came into the State to leave within three days or suffer arrest and a $2 fine for each day they remained after such notice. Something happened to this measure; it was not included in the *Code of 1851* nor in the *Revision of 1860*. The Mount Pleasant *True Democrat,* in which it was to have been published, putting it into effect, was edited by a man holding pronounced antislavery views. He was not eager to lend his assistance to the enactment of such "a legislative monstrosity"; and defective publication, it was claimed, rendered it null and void. That it was never enforced, although one attempt was made to do so, is evident from the fact that the Negro population of Iowa more than tripled in the decade from 1850 to 1860.[24]

[23] Shambaugh's *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions of 1844 and 1846*, pp. 155, 156.

[24] *Laws of Iowa,* 1850-1851, Ch. 72; *Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), January 21, 1863. The Negro population increased from 333 to 1,069. See pp. 28–30 for account of an attempt to enforce the law of 1851.

What happened in Iowa was happening all over the North, particularly in the border States. European immigrants were streaming into the country by the thousands every year, and these Irish, German, and Scandinavian laborers were cheap, industrious, and dependable. So the old-time residents decided to make citizenship [25] easy for them but to keep the Negro in the South. The two Iowa Senators in Congress voted in favor of the new Fugitive Slave Law of 1850.[26] And when Senator Dodge introduced a bill for the organization of Nebraska Territory, he, as well as his colleague in the Senate, George W. Jones, adopted wholeheartedly Stephen A. Douglas's proposal that two Territories, Kansas and Nebraska, be established and that the settlers in each be allowed to determine whether the areas should be slave or free. The antislavery people in Iowa were appalled and Horace Greeley scornfully asked: "What gain had Freedom in the admission of Iowa into the Union?" [27]

Repelled by the uncompromising southern partisanship of their Senators, Jones and Dodge, and, perhaps, frightened by a premonition of the approaching national crisis, the people of Iowa voted in a Whig Governor, James W. Grimes, in 1854. While campaigning, Grimes had promised that he would "*war and war continually* against the abandonment to slavery of a single foot of soil now consecrated to freedom." [28] This was the signal for a decided

[25] A strong element in the convention of 1846 in Iowa fought for the early enfranchisement of foreigners living in the State, but the proposal lost by a slim majority.— See Shambaugh's *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions of 1844 and 1846*, pp. 329, 331; *Journal of the Convention for the Formation of a Constitution for the State of Iowa, 1846*, pp. 52, 53.

[26] For the story of George Wallace Jones, Senator from 1848 to 1855, see John Carl Parish's *George Wallace Jones*, pp. 60–67. See also footnote 7. Senator Augustus C. Dodge was born in a slave State and was no enemy of slavery.— See Louis Pelzer's *Augustus Caesar Dodge*, pp. 7, 139–152.

[27] Quoted in Cole's *Iowa Through the Years*, p. 232.

[28] William Salter's *The Life of James W. Grimes* (New York, 1876), p. 50.

change of opinion in Iowa. The evil consequences of the compromise policy became clearer every day; dissatisfied Whigs and Democrats, Abolitionists, and Free Soilers united to form the Republican Party and the new party, under the leadership of Governor Grimes, joined the battle against the spread of slavery.

In 1855 Governor Grimes watched with intense interest the outcome of a trial under the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, in his home town. A fugitive slave named Dick had been brought to Burlington by Dr. Edwin James, a station master on the Underground Railroad and a man of high scientific distinction.[29] Abolitionists were none too popular among some southern Iowans at this time, and Dr. James was an "out-and-outer". Before long, slave catchers appeared to seize Dick. Many years later George Frazee, an eyewitness, described the incident which followed, with astute comments on the attitudes of the people who had gathered to watch:

> Every man in the crowd who was himself a native of the slave-region, or the son of such a native — and there were many such in Burlington — seemed to be very zealous in his manifestations of sympathy with the slave claimants. The amusing idea was emphasized by the fact that most of them were of the class in the South that never owned a slave, and who had migrated from that blissful land to the free soil of Iowa principally because they had become certain that if they remained in their original locality they would never be able to own one. They came here to better their

[29] Edwin James, 1797–1861, was the botanist, geologist, and surgeon for Major Stephen Long's expedition to the Rocky Mountains in 1819 and 1820, and one of the first persons, if not the first, to scale Pike's Peak. The official history of the expedition was written by Dr. James and published in three volumes under the title *Account of an Expedition to the Rocky Mountains performed in the years 1819 and '20.* In 1836 James settled in Burlington, Iowa. About 1907 his granddaughter wrote of him: "He was a great abolitionist and thought slavery a sin against God. . . . He sheltered the fugitives from oppression under his roof at any hour of the day or night".— L. H. Pammel's "Dr. Edwin James" in *The Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. VIII, pp. 160–185, 277–295; *Dictionary of American Biography,* Vol. IX, p. 576.

condition. But unfortunately they brought with them all their local prejudices and habits, and especially their imbibed hatred of the negro who chanced to believe that he had quite as good a right to his personal liberty as the man who claimed to be his master and owner.[30]

Governor Grimes wrote letters to his wife at this time giving another account of the case and presenting his point of view:

June 24th [1855] — Exciting times here. Yesterday morning Dr. James was captured on the Illinois side of the river, with a fugitive slave in his carriage. Bowie knives and revolvers were drawn on him by the Missourians in pursuit, and he and the negro were forced back to town. A process was afterward obtained, the negro thrown into jail, where he is to remain to await his trial on Tuesday. . . . I shall certainly furnish no aid to the man-stealers, and it has been determined that the negro shall have able counsel, and a resort to all legal means for release, before any other is resorted to. I am sorry I am Governor of the State, for, although I can and shall prevent the State authorities and officers from interfering in aid of the marshal, yet, if not in office, I am inclined to think I should be a law-breaker. It is a very nice question with me, whether I should act, being Governor, just as I would if I were a private individual. I intend to stand at my post, at all events, and act just as I shall think duty may require under the circumstances.

June 27th.— The negro is free, and is on his way to Canada. A great crowd yesterday in town. . . . Marion Hall was filled, and guards were stationed at the door, to prevent any more people entering, and around the house. Rorer and Crocker [31] appeared for

[30] George Frazee's "The Iowa Fugitive Slave Case" in *The Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. IV, pp. 123–128. Frazee was a young Burlington lawyer at the time of the "Dick incident" and was Commissioner of the U. S. District Court for Iowa, an office he held for some twenty years. Through this office under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 it became his duty to hear fugitive slave cases.

[31] David Rorer was born and educated in the South, where he owned slaves, but came to Burlington in 1836 and became one of the early advocates of emancipation.— Edward H. Stiles's *Recollections and Sketches of Notable Lawyers and Public Men of Early Iowa,* pp. 240–249. T. D. Crocker was also a Burlington lawyer.

the negro. When the decision was made, such a shout went up as was never heard in that hall before, and then it was caught up by the people outside the building, and the whole town reverberated. A thousand men followed Dr. James and the negro to the river, and rent the air with their cheers, as the boat was unlashed from her moorings, and started with the poor fellow on his road to freedom. Judge Lowe [32] was brought from Keokuk Monday in the night, and a writ of *habeas corpus* was ready to be served, if the decision had been adverse to us. Writs were sued out against the negro-stealers for kidnaping, assault, etc., but, unfortunately, they escaped, before service could be made upon them. I am satisfied that the negro would never have been taken into slavery from Burlington. . . .

Thus has ended the first case under the fugitive-slave law in Iowa.[33] The State, the town, and the people, thank God, are saved from disgrace. How opinions change! Four years ago, Mr. —— and myself, and not to exceed three others in town, were the only men who dared express an opinion in opposition to the fugitive-slave law, and, because we did express such opinions, we were denounced like pickpockets. Now I am Governor of the State; three-fourths of the reading and reflecting people of the county agree with me in my sentiments on the law, and a slave could not be returned from Des Moines County into slavery.[34]

During Territorial days there were so few colored children in Iowa — probably not more than about fifty — that they could be ignored. By 1847, however, they had become numerous enough to be sinned against by deliberate commission in an act of the General Assembly that made the common schools "open and free alike to all white persons in the district between the ages of five and twenty-one years." [35]

[32] Judge Ralph P. Lowe was Governor of Iowa, 1858–1860, and served on the Iowa Supreme Court, 1860–1867.

[33] Grimes referred to the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. The civil case of Ruel Daggs versus the Quakers had been based on the law of 1793. See pp. 23 and 24 below.

[34] Salter's *The Life of James W. Grimes*, pp. 72, 73.

[35] *Laws of Iowa*, 1846-1847, Ch. 99, Sec. 6. See Census of 1840 for age classification of free colored population.

In spite of the law barring them from the public schools, at least seventeen free colored children, according to the census of 1850, were attending school, perhaps in the home of a Quaker family or a Yankee abolitionist or, perhaps, some communities admitted colored children to their schools in spite of the law. There were altogether about 175 colored children of school age in the State. It should be added, however, that the legislators in 1851 passed an act that exempted colored people who owned property from tax payments for school purposes.[36]

In 1858 the General Assembly passed a comprehensive school law which included a provision that district boards of directors should provide separate schools for the education of colored youth, except where patrons unanimously consented to the admission of Negro children into the public schools. This act was held to be unconstitutional since the constitution of 1857 had created a Board of Education to which it gave authority to enact the school laws. No mention of race discrimination has been made in Iowa school laws since this act of 1858.[37] There were, however, separate schools for Negroes and whites in some Iowa districts as late as 1874.

By the time the constitutional convention of 1857 convened, the most spirited discussions took place on whether or not the word "white" should be stricken from the constitution in the article on suffrage. It was finally agreed that this question should be submitted to a popular vote of the people of the State at the time the constitution was submitted, but the voters were not ready to grant that privilege to the Negro and defeated the proposition by a large majority. Negroes were also specifically excluded from seats in the General Assembly. The Negro was not permitted to

[36] Census of 1850; *Code of 1851*, Ch. 71, Sec. 1160.

[37] *Laws of Iowa*, 1858, Ch. 52, Sec. 30; 7 Iowa 262.

serve in the militia and the suffrage disqualification kept him from holding office and serving on juries. This constitution was amended in 1868 by striking out the word "white" from the sections on suffrage, the census, on apportioning representation in the General Assembly, and the militia. In 1880 the constitution was again amended by striking out "free white" from the section on qualifications for the General Assembly.[38]

The convention of 1857 made changes in the bill of rights in the constitution giving the Negro some legal status and a measure of security. His testimony in court was to be considered as good as that of a white person; he could not be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law; and the right of the accused to a trial by jury was widened to include not only all criminal prosecutions but also cases involving the life or liberty of an individual.[39] This provision applied to fugitive slaves.

Some Democratic newspapers were almost apoplectic in their reaction to the new constitution and to the codicil which submitted to the voters the question of striking out the word "white" from the new constitution. Vociferated the Du Buque *North-West*, "What man who has one drop of Anglo-Saxon blood in his veins, and who has the spirit of a free born American, would consent to have his little sons and daughters, bound by the Constitution and laws of his State to become the associates, schoolmates and equals in every other respect, as is designed, of the thick-lipped and woolly headed negro. If there were no other objection to the nauseous dose which has been prepared for us by our late Abolition Know Nothing Constitutional Convention,

[38] Benj. F. Shambaugh's *The Constitutions of Iowa,* pp. 236–250, 314, 315, 325. The proposition to give suffrage to Negroes was defeated by a vote of 49,387 to 8,489. See also David C. Mott's "Amendments to the Constitution of Iowa" in *The Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. XIV, p. 210.

[39] Shambaugh's *The Constitutions of Iowa,* pp. 236–250, 270, 271.

it would be sufficient to deter us from casting our votes for that ill-digested and anti-Democratic and anti-White man's Code.''[40]

Other Democrats, Jeffersonian and Jacksonian rather than southern by background and allegiance, favored the new constitution. Earlier in the same year, the Democrats in their State convention had found it wise to declare that the party should not be held responsible for the Dred Scott decision.[41]

The friends of the Negro in Iowa were not content to defend him in courtroom, legislature, and convention. The more dangerous it became for slaves to make a break for freedom, the more active and daring became the resistance movement known as the Underground Railroad. Because of its proximity to the slave State of Missouri, Iowa was an important step on the road to freedom, which, for most of the fugitives, ended in Canada. The Quakers, who had settled in the southern counties of Iowa in large numbers during the thirties and forties were particularly vigilant in behalf of the Negro. Ostensibly they quietly minded their own business, going to market with their wagons piled high with bulging bags of potatoes and grain, traveling to the next village with a load of hay, the most unmeddlesome people in the community. Only a few members of the ''Underground'' knew how often these wagons held human cargo. The constant danger of having their homes searched made it unwise to keep any written records of their activity; so the historians of this movement have had to depend largely on the memories of those who participated and the

[40] Quoted in Louis Pelzer's ''The History and Principles of the Democratic Party of Iowa 1846–1857'' in THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. VI, p. 241.

[41] *The Iowa State Journal* (Des Moines), September 12, 19, 1857; Pelzer's ''The Negro and Slavery in Early Iowa'' in THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. II, p. 482.

stories handed down in the families from generation to generation.[42]

One of the most famous centers of Quaker antislavery activity was the little village of Salem, twenty-five miles from the Missouri border. The thickly wooded countryside with its many winding streams bordered by long grass and underbrush provided excellent hiding places for the fugitives. Early in the forties Missouri slaves began to make their way to the little settlement, knowing that the people with the plain gray clothes and the wide-brimmed hats would help them.

In May, 1848, nine slaves left their Missouri master, Ruel Daggs, and made their way to the vicinity of Salem. Slave catchers followed them in hot pursuit, caught up with them as they were being taken to a hiding place by some of the faithful Salemites, and seized the fugitives. The citizens insisted that the Negroes be taken before a justice of the peace and that the claimants prove that the fugitives were slaves and that the agents actually represented the slaveowner. The slave catchers were forced to yield. A crowd assembled, so large that the proceedings were moved from the justice's office to the meeting house. The slave catchers were unable to prove to the satisfaction of the justice of the peace either the ownership of the Negroes or their authority to reclaim them; consequently the justice held he had no jurisdiction to hold the Negroes. Immediately upon hearing the decision, friends of the fugitives managed the escape of the two who were present at the hearing.

Exasperated beyond all measure at the quiet effectiveness of the "nigger thieves" of Salem, a large band of

[42] Louis T. Jones's *The Quakers of Iowa,* pp. 38–47, 133–145, 187–202. For excellent anecdotal material see O. A. Garretson's "Travelling on the Underground Railroad in Iowa" in THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XXII, pp. 418–453.

Missourians, variously estimated at from 72 to 300, surrounded the town a few days after the hearing, threatening dire destruction of the place. They began a thorough search of the homes, looking for their quarry. Warned in advance, the Friends concealed the fugitive slaves beyond possibility of discovery and were imperturbably eating dinner when the slave hunters arrived. Only four of the nine slaves — two women and two small children — were returned to Missouri. In addition to the man and boy who escaped at the time of the hearing, three others — a woman, a girl, and a third man — disappeared and no doubt escaped.

In September, 1848, Ruel Daggs brought suit for compensation, under the fugitive slave law of 1793, against a number of Salem Quakers involved in the affair. The case was tried before the Federal District Court at Burlington in the summer of 1850. The jury found five of the Quakers guilty of aiding the fugitive slaves in their flight and hindering the owner's agents in their attempts to recover the Negroes and, under the directions of Judge J. J. Dyer, fixed the damages at $2,900, apparently the estimated value of the five slaves who escaped.[43] The Quakers, it appears, paid the sum fixed by the court but the penalty did not frighten them into abandoning their system of aiding escaped slaves. A common expression of discouraged slave hunters was "As easy to find a needle in a haymow as a Negro among Quakers".[44]

Near Salem were New Garden, another Quaker village,

[43] A full report of this case is given in George Frazee's "An Iowa Fugitive Slave Case — 1850" in *The Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. VI, pp. 9–45. See also Garretson's "Travelling on the Underground Railroad in Iowa" in THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XXII, pp. 430–440, and Jones's *The Quakers of Iowa*, pp. 189–191.

[44] Oscar Sherwin's "'I'se Free 'Fo' I Die'" in *The Negro History Bulletin*, Vol. VIII (June, 1945), p. 202.

and Denmark, a New England Puritan community, both of them important stations on the Underground route. With the coming of John Brown to Iowa on his visits to and from Kansas, where he and his sons were engaged in the border warfare that resulted from the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, many more stations appeared. The line started at Tabor in the southwestern corner of Iowa, continued through Lewis, Earlham, Des Moines, Grinnell, Iowa City, West Liberty, West Branch, Springdale, Tipton, DeWitt, Low Moor, and Clinton. Other centers were Washington, Crawfordsville, and Muscatine. From Clinton and Muscatine the fugitives were taken across the Mississippi to connect with the Illinois route. The following note [45] is, perhaps, typical of the many hundred sent from one station to the next and destroyed by the receiver:

Low Moor, 1859

Mr. C. B. C.

Dear Sir — By tomorrow evening's mail you will receive two volumes of the "Irrepressible Conflict" bound in *black*. After perusal, please forward, and oblige

Yours truly
G. W. W[eston]

John Brown's activities in Iowa have been so extensively dealt with elsewhere that they need not be treated here.[46] When Brown and his followers, including the Coppoc boys from Iowa, attacked Harper's Ferry on the night of October 16, 1859, thoughtful people realized that the prognosis for peace between the North and South was far from good. Very few, even among those with pronounced antislavery

[45] Jacob Van Ek's "Underground Railroad in Iowa" in *The Palimpsest*, Vol. II, p. 135.

[46] Benjamin F. Gue's *History of Iowa*, Vol. I, Ch. XXIX; S. H. M. Byers's *Iowa in War Times*, Ch. I; Cole's *A History of the People of Iowa*, Ch. LII; Garretson's "Travelling on the Underground Railroad in Iowa" in THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XXII, pp. 420–453; Jones's *The Quakers of Iowa*, pp. 191–197.

views, dared publicly to express approval of the blow Brown had struck against slavery.[47]

A few public figures, however, were more courageous than the majority. Among them was the new Republican Governor of Iowa, Samuel J. Kirkwood. In his inaugural address on January 11, 1860, he dealt at length with John Brown's raid and its significance in the contemporary political and social scene and remarked, "I cannot wonder at the recent unfortunate and bloody occurrence at Harper's Ferry. . . . It was an act of war . . . relieved to some extent of its guilt, in the minds of many, by the fact that the blow was struck for freedom, and not for slavery."[48]

The address was well received by the Republicans as "a fair exposition of the sentiments he [Governor Kirkwood] has proclaimed in every portion of the State, and a truthful exhibit of the views of the party to which he belongs", but, as was to be expected, the attitude of the new Governor drew sharp protests from several quarters and bitter resentment was expressed in the southern press.[49]

Even in the Iowa legislature there was disagreement. Democrats took to the floor and heatedly opposed a resolution to print, for distribution, 7,500 copies of the address in English, 1,500 in German, 1,000 in the Holland language, and 1,000 in the Norwegian language. When the resolution

[47] Edward J. Pierce's "The Northern Reaction to the John Brown Raid" in *The Negro History Bulletin,* Vol. VI (June, 1943), p. 209.

[48] Benj. F. Shambaugh's *The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa,* Vol. II, pp. 240, 241. Editorials, comments, and news items reprinted in the *Iowa City Republican* from other papers for several weeks after the execution of John Brown reveal a decided sympathy for the principles that "Old Brown" fought for and no condemnation of his method.— *Iowa City Republican,* January 4, 1860.

[49] *The Iowa Citizen* (Des Moines), January 25, 1860, quoted in Dan E. Clark's *Samuel Jordan Kirkwood,* pp. 151, 152; *Iowa City Republican,* January 18, 1860; Pierce's "The Northern Reaction to the John Brown Raid" in *The Negro History Bulletin,* Vol. VI, p. 204.

was adopted, twenty Senators and thirty-four Representatives signed a vigorous protest on grounds that a great portion of the message related to John Brown's invasion of Harper's Ferry and was the Governor's private opinion which had no bearing on affairs within the State; that such an attempt to circulate among the people a political speech *"at the expense of the State"* was unworthy of his responsible and dignified office.[50] Governor Kirkwood paid no attention to the protest.

On January 23, 1860, an emissary of the Governor of Virginia handed Kirkwood a requisition "for one Barclay Coppoc, reputed to be a fugitive from the justice of Virginia". Governor Kirkwood studied the requisition, found it deficient in certain legal forms, and returned it. By the time the corrected papers reached Iowa, the Coppoc boy had disappeared.[51]

The following incident may easily be classed with trivia, but more often than not it is in the minutiae of community life that group feelings and attitudes find their most convincing expression. One J. L. Curtis had come up from Tennessee about 1855, settling in Pleasant Valley, Johnson County, later moving into Iowa City. With him were two "likely" Negro girls of five and seven years. Upon his application he was appointed their guardian; but the neighbors suspected that the girls were slaves and that the "Guardianship of Curtis was only a ruse to hoodwink the unsuspecting Hawkeyes." Curtis was arrested on the

[50] *Journal of the House of Representatives,* 1860, pp. 67, 184, 186; *Journal of the Senate,* 1860, pp. 169–171; Shambaugh's *The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa,* Vol. II, pp. 247–251.

[51] Clark's *Samuel Jordan Kirkwood,* p. 152. Barclay Coppoc and his brother Edwin from Springdale, Iowa, had gone with John Brown to participate in the raid. Edwin had been captured and was hanged with Brown. Barclay had escaped and returned to Springdale.— See the *Iowa City Republican,* February 1, 1860, for an account of the Kirkwood-Coppoc affair written by a Des Moines correspondent. The name is also spelled Coppock.

charge of kidnapping and required to post bail of $1,000. The custody of the girls was finally restored to Curtis, but with the requirement of $1,500 bail for their proper disposition. The eyes of thousands of freedom-loving citizens "as well as His who beholds all things", wrote one editor, "will watch over their liberty and guard their rights." [52]

When the war burst upon the country at Fort Sumter in April, 1861, the people of the North drew together, and many of those who had supported the South now gave themselves wholeheartedly to the cause of preserving the Union and wiping away the stigma of slavery. When the General Assembly of Iowa met in special session, one of the first resolutions was presented by a Democrat who pledged "the faith, credit and resources of the State of Iowa" to the Union.[53]

FROM EMANCIPATION TO WORLD WAR I

One winter day early in 1863 a young man of about twenty was doing his usual chores on the farm of Stephen Brooks not far from the capital city of Iowa. His name was Archie Webb. He had lived in Iowa less than two years and, before that, had been a slave on plantations in Mississippi and Arkansas. On this particular day a small group of men made its appearance on the farm, armed with the following document:[54]

To Harcha Webb:

You are hereby notified and required to leave Delaware township, Polk county, Iowa, in three days from the service of this notice or we will commence proceedings against you to compel your removal.

This paper was signed by J. L. West, one of the three township trustees, and was dated January 8, 1863. Some

[52] *Iowa City Republican*, February 1, 8, 1860. The issue for February 15, 1860, carried an item about the adoption of the Negro children by Curtis.

[53] Cole's *Iowa Through the Years*, pp. 277, 278.

[54] *Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), January 21, 1863.

local Tories, probably incensed by the recent Emancipation Proclamation of President Lincoln and undoubtedly horrified by the prospect of swarms of Negroes settling in the State, had remembered the old law of 1851 and chose Archie Webb as a test case.

When Archie Webb refused to leave Iowa, he was arrested by the sheriff, taken before the justice of the peace, fined $12, and sent to jail. Released on a writ of habeas corpus, he appeared before Judge John Henry Gray of the Fifth Judicial District, who studied the case carefully and rendered a decision praised by editors for its "frankness and boldness". A dispatch to the *Chicago Tribune* dated from Des Moines, February 2, 1863, read:

> The Judge held that under the Constitution of the United States a free negro is entitled to the rights of citizenship; that Archie P. Webb is a free negro, and as such entered the State of Iowa; that the act of 1851, under which he had been arrested and imprisoned was in flagrant violation of the old Constitution [1846] then in force, and the new [1857], which is now the fundamental law of the State, and overrides the plainest principles of the common law. He held the act to be null and void, and his decision, therefore, was that Archie had been unwarrantably arrested and imprisoned, and must be immediately set at liberty. . . . Thus has ended a wicked scheme of a gang of semi-traitors to inaugurate a general system of persecution against the free negroes in this State, and to that extent embarrass the execution of the President's Emancipation Proclamation in the Mississippi Valley.[55]

Judge Gray also settled some doubts concerning the status of the publication of the law. He ruled that the defect in the publication of the law did not invalidate the legislative work of 1851, since the Code passed by the same session made provision for the taking effect of all laws not published in newspapers as directed. The law against the blacks and mulattoes, he declared, was inoperative, not on

[55] Nathan E. Coffin's "The Case of Archie P. Webb, A Free Negro" in *The Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. XI, pp. 200, 213, 214.

technical grounds, but because it was in direct violation of both the United States and the State constitutions.[56]

It was fortunate for the Archie Webbs that there were Judge Grays in Iowa. For the machinations of the Tories were supported by some of the prominent leaders [57] of the State whose careers, already endangered by the crumbling of the Democratic Party in Iowa, had been ruined by their consequent behavior during the war. Simultaneously with the Archie Webb affair, a "tremendous mass meeting of 15 small-bored Democrats" was held in Poweshiek County, two counties east of Archie Webb's place of residence. With a view toward checking the influx of Negroes into their county "they resolved to withdraw their fellowship from any neighbor who should be so far forgetful of the dignity of the Anglo-Saxon race as to employ a contraband on his premises." The next day several neighbors took steps to engage Negroes to work for them. At about the same time a group of twenty-five southern sympathizers met in Tama County and passed resolutions "inimical to the Administration and to the prosecution of the war".[58]

An Irish settler who lived nine miles from Tipton and called himself a Jackson Democrat attended a Democratic meeting and wrote disgustedly of the spirit that prevailed. His attitude, incidentally, is not typical of that of the Irish as a group.[59] His letter read in part as follows:

> Mr. Editor:— My friends persuaded me to attend their great Democratic meeting at Tipton. At first I declined; but they told

[56] *Laws of Iowa,* 1850-1851, Ch. 72; *Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), February 4, 11, 1863. In regard to the claim that the law had been repealed by *nonuse,* Judge Gray wrote: "The fact that the law has remained a dead letter and has not been enforced for twelve years is not a sufficient *non user* to repeal it."

[57] Among these leaders were former Senators George Wallace Jones and Augustus Caesar Dodge and D. A. Mahony, editor of the *Dubuque Herald.*

[58] *Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), February 4, 11, 1863.

[59] See above page 8.

me Judge Thayer and Preston would be there, and the meeting would be the largest ever held in Cedar County, and they wanted every Democrat to turn out; so I consented to go. . . . I must confess, if Democracy was in those days what they call it, I want nothing to do with it. They contend that without slavery there is no Democratic party; that we must go in for slavery, right or wrong —for this is Democratic. . . . I then looked around to see who were applauding the speakers. Among them I saw a man who wished "every soldier might have his d—d heart torn out, if he would help to put down the rebellion;" . . .

Now, sir, if a bomb-shell had bursted in the Court House, my opinion, as a Jackson Democrat, is, that it would have killed more traitors than any shot our army has made, at any one time. The strangest thing of all was to see my countrymen, just from the Emerald Isle, who have yet the brogue on their tongues, hurrahing and clapping for two such traitors as were addressing them. How an Irishman can be a traitor I can't see. I think it would be a dark day for the Irish if our Government was destroyed. Yours, with respect,

A 38-year Democrat,
Patrick R. Marvin [60]

A contemporary newspaper report hints that in another incident the fighting Irish were merely the instruments of a secessionist's machinations. Six Irishmen "with bad whiskey in sufficient quantities to make them develish [sic]" had attacked the proprietor of an inn who had a "contraband" in his employ. No knives were drawn as had been the case a few days earlier when the same proprietor had been cut at twice in a scuffle with a secessionist, and the Irishmen took their leave after a few moments of brawling.[61] Whether or not manipulated by southern sympathizers, the Irish, at this time basically a labor group, feared the competition of the emancipated Negroes, who

[60] *Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), January 21, 1863. For material on Edward H. Thayer and Isaac M. Preston, see Edward Stiles's *Recollections and Sketches of Notable Lawyers and Public Men of Early Iowa*, pp. 404, 405.

[61] *Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), February 18, 1863.

were filtering slowly but steadily into the ranks of northern labor.

When the war was over the less bewildered of the newly-freed slaves left the devastated fields of their old plantations and slowly made their way North, by river, wagon, or on foot. Through the Federal census reports one can in some measure follow the migration of the Negro population into Iowa. The place of birth listed in the census does not give a completely accurate picture, since several stages may have intervened between birth and residence in Iowa, but it does indicate to some degree the geographical shifts in the population. In 1870 the majority of Negroes living in Iowa were born in Missouri; by 1880 and thereafter Iowa was the birthplace of the majority of its Negro inhabitants. Throughout this period Missouri continued to rank highest among the States outside Iowa, with Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, Illinois, Mississippi, Ohio, Alabama, and North Carolina following in this order.

PLACE OF BIRTH OF NEGROES LIVING IN IOWA FROM 1870 TO 1930 [62]

	1870	*1880*	*1890*	*1900*	*1910*	*1920*	*1930*
Alabama	122	133	102	223	398	702	568
Arizona				4	2	9	7
Arkansas	109	148	62	68	73	291	433
California	1	3	4	9	14	26	19
Colorado	3	2	5	8	13	39	35
Connecticut	1	10	3	2	6	3	1
Delaware	8	6	9	2	4		1
Dist. of Col.	7	19	19	8	17	23	14
Florida	4	12	7	11	15	49	51
Georgia	79	96	120	145	177	297	220
Idaho						7	3
Illinois	129	305	408	556	746	846	683
Indiana	77	100	87	127	126	109	99
Iowa	1,383	3,664	3,829	4,611	5,253	6,132	6,599

[62] The census reports for 1940 did not include the place of birth of native-born citizens, so statistics for that year cannot be given.

	1870	*1880*	*1890*	*1900*	*1910*	*1920*	*1930*
Kansas	6	66	55	171	219	554	648
Kentucky	647	733	631	686	713	661	392
Louisiana	35	74	40	66	58	328	304
Maine	1	6	1	1	5	2	1
Maryland	72	73	67	45	95	51	34
Massachusetts	14	12	9	10	10	15	9
Michigan	14	28	43	27	38	22	32
Minnesota	6	32	20	25	42	40	67
Mississippi	189	230	160	229	227	965	820
Missouri	1,552	2,315	2,101	2,856	3,272	4,124	3,500
Montana			6	2	3	6	4
Nebraska	6	23	29	88	106	162	189
Nevada					2		2
N. H.	6	2	2	1		2	1
New Jersey	4	8	9	8	10	6	6
New Mexico			2	1	4	4	5
New York	52	92	55	25	36	44	24
N. Carolina	107	128	166	134	208	178	134
N. Dakota					1	3	8
Ohio	118	166	124	151	160	154	98
Oklahoma			2	2	91	293	335
Oregon	1				3	4	
Pennsylvania	74	73	45	62	99	78	61
Rhode Island			4	1	1	3	
S. Carolina	57	83	62	64	82	111	88
S. Dakota		5	5	12	16	21	26
Tennessee	306	368	354	434	473	623	522
Texas	10	40	13	35	116	365	413
Utah					1	4	2
Vermont	9	9	9	5	2	3	1
Virginia	506	750	1,646	1,479	1,588	1,105	638
Washington				4	8	8	9
W. Virginia		24	51	50	117	95	49
Wisconsin	22	78	73	46	47	48	26
Wyoming					5	7	3
Indian Ter.		2	1	9			

The pattern of settlement in Iowa during the period between the Civil War and World War I is clearly discern-

ible: the Negroes concentrated in the agricultural counties on the southern border, the Mississippi River counties in the east, two Missouri River counties in the west, and a parallelogram of counties running in a southeasterly direction from Polk County.

The Federal census reports from 1840 to 1940 show the following figures for the Negro population of Iowa:

1840 . . .	188	1900 . . .	12,693
1850 . . .	333	1910 . . .	14,973
1860 . . .	1,069	1920 . . .	19,005
1870 . . .	5,762	1930 . . .	17,380
1880 . . .	9,516	1940 . . .	16,694
1890 . . .	10,685		

The report of 188 in the 1840 census included 16 slaves. In no case has the Negro population equalled as much as one per cent of the total population. The highest percentage, in 1920, was nine-tenths of one per cent.

NUMBER OF NEGROES IN COUNTIES WITH THE LARGEST NEGRO POPULATION BETWEEN 1870 AND 1940

	1870	*1880*	*1890*	*1900*	*1910*	*1920*	*1930*	*1940*
Appanoose	35	74	145	368	486	426	341	280
Black Hawk	18	37	12	22	29	856	1,234	1,528
Boone	11	251	93	235	105	142	49	39
Cerro Gordo	4	23	9	58	148	361	322	341
Clinton	129	187	209	182	436	338	233	172
Dallas	25	53	37	23	131	207	409	249
Decatur	41	129	56	58	34	6	3	1
Des Moines	227	425	381	428	429	337	386	265
Dubuque	167	156	133	118	96	75	89	65
Fayette	70	122	75	89	107	106	104	71
Hardin	23	111	80	55	46	72	120	56
Henry	465	509	411	367	264	212	135	126
Jasper	69	121	104	190	182	144	99	54
Johnson	98	105	58	62	65	68	112	89
Lee	1,563	1,679	1,666	1,632	1,471	1,417	1,353	1,211
Linn	48	207	234	258	258	704	765	677

	1870	*1880*	*1890*	*1900*	*1910*	*1920*	*1930*	*1940*
Lucas	31	40	319	194	83	46	45	16
Mahaska	150	524	1,592	1,737	677	352	211	166
Marion	36	44	38	44	93	122	146	123
Marshall	37	97	136	167	148	264	351	333
Monroe	49	258	202	553	2,371	1,652	355	202
Montgomery	13	113	38	51	48	54	58	44
Muscatine	163	179	177	146	137	107	66	81
Page	153	247	234	232	262	250	225	199
Polk	303	672	1,194	2,041	3,591	5,837	5,713	6,637
Pottawattamie	163	614	327	271	353	612	684	545
Scott	246	266	274	496	572	745	865	884
Taylor	101	130	96	74	61	34	19	12
Van Buren	211	123	130	102	60	49	44	13
Wapello	193	460	658	793	624	571	447	485
Washington	53	95	75	69	104	108	52	42
Webster	9	8	43	115	84	399	320	204
Woodbury	44	178	366	292	317	1,147	1,078	875

Negroes who came into Iowa before and during the Civil War often settled on the first suitable piece of land or in the first little village they came to after crossing the border. The town of Amity, Page County, was the first Underground Railroad station north of the Missouri line in the southwestern corner of the State and many fugitives found refuge there and in other villages of the county. When the Civil War broke out, others followed. In 1873 Amity, Clarinda, and Nodaway, each with slightly more than a thousand inhabitants, had 32, 41, and 41 Negroes, respectively.[63]

The town of Keosauqua, Van Buren County, with a total population of 772 in 1873 had 102 Negroes. However, the census figures for Van Buren County show that after a high point of 211 was reached in 1870, a steady decline in the Negro population set in. Even so, the colored people in Keosauqua were numerous enough to have their own

[63] *Census of Iowa,* 1873, pp. 50, 51, 62; *Page County History* (WPA, 1942), p. 28.

settlement on "Nigger Hill" where they built their homes, a school, and a Baptist as well as a Methodist church. Some of them were well-known figures, particularly the talented musicians among them, who were called upon to perform at festive occasions. There was also an active Afro-Masonic organization in the town.[64]

In neighboring Henry County, too, the journey of many a northward-moving Negro family had ended. The Quaker community of Salem, which had shown such courage in helping fugitives, undoubtedly attracted several to that vicinity. As early as 1865, the town of Mount Pleasant had a colored Methodist Church and absorbed the usual number of Negroes for its barber shops, livery stables, and domestic service.[65]

One illustration of an immigrant Negro family may be given. When Adam and Martha Johnson left the cotton fields of Tennessee, they farmed for some years in Knox County, Illinois. In the late eighties they moved into Iowa, going across the southern counties to the western part of the State. In Taylor County, near the little town of Gravity, Adam Johnson bought 160 acres of land. When the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad came through, he sold some of his land to the company, but still kept enough to leave a well-developed farm to his sons. From this farm Lulu M. Johnson, granddaughter of Adam and Martha, went to the State University where she received a Ph. D. degree, a little more than three-quarters of a century after her forebears had been freed from slavery.[66]

Less than two decades after the Emancipation Procla-

[64] The statement in *Van Buren County Iowa* (WPA Guide Series, 1940), pp. 24–26, that Keosauqua at one time had a Negro population of more than 400 is a gross inaccuracy.

[65] *The History of Henry County, Iowa* (1879), p. 526.

[66] This information was furnished the writer by Lulu M. Johnson.

mation the northern Negro's tendency toward urban concentration, a trait he shares with several other ethnic minorities, was clearly visible. The decline in the Negro population in the agricultural counties of southern Iowa that set in in the 1880's is but a part of this larger pattern. By 1910 most of the sons and daughters of the Negro immigrants had moved from the farms and villages to the urban centers. The older folks were dying out. For example, in 1938, only three Negro families were left in Keosauqua, which had had a Negro population of more than one hundred in 1873.

Except for Dubuque, the counties bordering the Mississippi River show an increase in Negro population from decade to decade, with individual variations depending upon the economic development of the main population centers, the numbers decreasing from south to north. The figures for the five river counties — Lee, Des Moines, Scott, Clinton, Dubuque — with the largest number of Negroes show that Lee County at the southernmost tip of the State had the largest permanent Negro population. Its proximity to Missouri, the river traffic, and the rising industries of Keokuk and Fort Madison kept the population high.

Boats going up and down the Mississippi had to be lightered at Keokuk because of the rapids, and after the Civil War this work, formerly done largely by the Irish, was taken over by Negroes. "On warm summer evenings these Negroes would come ashore with their banjoes at Montrose and Keokuk while their boats were waiting to be lightered, and play and sing the old plantation melodies until after midnight. They were fresh from the southland, freed from the sorrows of slavery, yet with the old life so vivid in consciousness that they sang on the banks of Montrose

and Keokuk with hearts full of old memories and new inspiration."[67]

Not all who came into these river towns were laborers; some with greater courage and higher aspiration made their way into the professions. In 1868 a young colored man, A. H. Watkins, who during the Civil War had taught in a colored school in Nashville, Tennessee, came to Fort Madison. Like many others of his group, he opened a barber shop. But he studied on the side to become a lawyer. Six years later a Keokuk newspaper carried this item: "A. H. Watkins, a colored citizen of Ft. Madison, was admitted to the Bar by Judge Drayer, of the Circuit Court, on Thursday of last week. . . . The examining committee . . . found the applicant much better posted than the average of law students when admitted to practice."[68]

When river traffic was at its height in the seventies and eighties, the towns of Burlington, Davenport, Clinton, and Dubuque afforded employment for a considerable number of Negroes. Burlington, by 1880, had changed from a river center to a railroad center, and thus continued to provide a livelihood for many of them. Davenport,[69] expanding into a significant marketing and industrial point in the Tri-City (Davenport, Moline, and Rock Island) area, attracted an increasing number of Negro laborers. The Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad employed several of them as porters, waiters, and cooks. The Irish held the jobs of switchman, flagman, fireman, and brakeman, although one Negro served in the latter capacity. James Flournoy, a Negro, was a brick and stone contractor in the city, Linsey Pitts and Wayman Roberts owned a cigar store, William S. Ransom and Charles Berry ran a saloon, and Alexander

[67] *Lee County History* (WPA, 1942), p. 15.

[68] *The Weekly Gate City* (Keokuk), April 22, 1874.

[69] See Stone's *Davenport City Directory,* 1898-1899, for the Davenport data.

Roberts was the proprietor of the Kimball House (one of the leading hotels) Hack and Express Line. There were four colored barbers, one of whom owned his shop. Two churches, one Baptist, the other an African Methodist Episcopal, served the religious needs of the Negro community; and there was also a colored Masonic Lodge in Davenport.

In Dubuque County, where in early days a third of the Negro population of the State had lived — drawn there by the lead mines — the number of Negroes declined steadily after the Civil War, partly because of the closing of the mines and partly because of the slackening river traffic. Then, too, it will be remembered, aggressive measures against the settlement of Negroes in the State had frequently come from this county.[70]

On the west side of the State the Missouri River was another traffic lane for Negroes who left the South after the war. At first they came in small numbers, stopping at Council Bluffs in Pottawattamie County or going on to Sioux City in Woodbury County. During the late sixties and early seventies the construction of railroads connecting with the eastern terminus of the Union Pacific Railroad at Council Bluffs began to attract Negro labor. In addition to railroad construction, the business boom following the silver discoveries in Colorado opened some employment opportunities for Negroes. When the building boom of the seventies and eighties was over, and traffic on the Missouri began to decline, the Negro population in Council Bluffs sagged, not to increase until after the turn of the century when the establishment of several manufacturing concerns revived the economic life of the community.[71]

[70] See above pp. 13 and 14 for Edward Langworthy's resolutions in the Constitutional Convention of 1844. Dubuque also was the home of D. A. Mahony, Democratic and proslavery editor.

[71] Homer H. Field and Joseph R. Reed's *History of Pottawattamie County, Iowa,* Vol. I, pp. 52–130. *The Council Bluffs City Directory,* 1895-1896, shows

Sioux City [72] was also acquiring a steadily growing Negro group. Before the Civil War quite a few of them had served as deckhands on the ferryboats, and after the war, when the railroads were built, many of the laborers who drifted in to lay ties and "pass da time away" until Dinah blew her horn, decided to stay and help lay the board sidewalks and the cedar block pavements. When that was done, quite a few opened barber shops, laundries, dance halls, gambling houses, and restaurants. In fact, the Negroes very often were the first to establish such businesses. The first rug-cleaning establishment, for example, was started by a Negro. More than anything else they enjoyed being barbers, which vocation carried with it the dignified title of "Professor". But they also became waiters and doormen, policemen and mail carriers. Two Negroes near Sioux City during the seventies and eighties became successful farmers. Altogether it may be said that in this period the Negroes of Sioux City benefited from the open spirit of the frontier. When the gaudy nineties gave way to the more sober 1900's many of the establishments owned by Negroes were closed, and the colored population dropped until the stockyards, slaughtering houses, and packing plants began once more to draw Negro labor into Sioux City.

While the Negro population was static or declining in the eastern river towns and in the western towns was uneven, it was making sharp increases in the southern counties of Mahaska, Monroe, Wapello, Lucas, and Appanoose, the richest coal-producing region of Iowa. The influx of Negroes into this area came about under unfortunate cir-

the following occupational distribution of Negroes: 13 laborers, 23 porters, 8 waiters, 6 cooks, 3 barbers, 2 ministers, 2 bartenders, 1 domestic, 1 elevator tender, 1 confectioner, and 26 unclassified.

[72] The *Woodbury County History* (WPA, 1942), pp. 109–113, has a fine account of some of the well-known Negro figures in early Sioux City.

cumstances. When the coal-mining industry began to expand, the inevitable disagreements that arose between the miners and owners resulted in strikes. To break the strikes the owners imported Negroes from Missouri, Virginia, and other southern States to work the mines. Among the first to adopt this practice was Henry Miller, owner of the Albia Coal Company in Monroe County, who in February, 1880, brought in a force of Missouri Negroes to break the strike in his mines. One Saturday night the white miners fired on the colored strikebreakers. The Negroes returned the fire, but before any casualties occurred in the tense situation a company of militia stationed at Albia restored order.[73]

After the strikes were settled, many of the mine operators continued to employ a percentage of Negroes whom they found well adapted to the work. By the late eighties, 350 of the 500 employees of the Consolidation Coal Company in Mahaska County were colored. They formed a society for mutual protection, which among other benefits provided them with medical services and free burial. Disputes between members were handled by the society, a trial being held and the offending party fined, the fine going into a sinking fund. If a party refused to pay the fine he was expelled from the society and denied further employment by the coal company.[74]

Strikes and the importation of Negro strikebreakers continued to disturb the peace of the southeastern mining towns. One night in early June, 1891, emotions were at a

[73] *Register and Leader* (Des Moines), February 20, 1910; Frank Hickenlooper's *An Illustrated History of Monroe County, Iowa* (1896), p. 187; *Monroe County History* (WPA, 1940), pp. 58, 59; Jacob A. Swisher's "Mining in Iowa" in THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XLIII, pp. 337–340.

[74] *Portrait and Biographical Album of Mahaska County, Iowa* (1887), pp. 522, 523.

high pitch in the little community of Mystic, in Appanoose County. *The Iowa State Register* reported: "There was intense excitement at Mystic last night. The striking miners held a meeting nearly all night for the purposes of drawing the negroes away and for a while a riot was imminent. . . . several shots were exchanged without fatal results. Another consignment of forty negroes arrived at Mystic today. . . . At Diamond [mine] where the strikers endeavored to induce the darkies to leave, they came out of the mines, sang a couple of plantation songs and then resumed work." [75]

The newspaper also carried reports of trouble between the strikers and the colored miners at Carbonado near Oskaloosa. Two houses were badly riddled by shots fired to frighten the Negroes away. A few colored miners were intimidated into leaving, but they were soon replaced by new consignments. How many Negroes were imported into Iowa in this way is not known, but it is unfortunate that they had to come as strikebreakers with the ill will of the community directed against them. Many hundreds followed on their own accord so that altogether a few thousand southern Negroes came into the Iowa coal fields during the eighties and nineties.

One of the most exuberant and prosperous of the southeastern mining camps was Buxton. The Consolidation Coal Company, owner of the famous Muchakinock mines in Mahaska County, prospected for new coal fields and in 1900 purchased several thousand acres of wild woodland in northern Monroe County. The camp — it was never incorporated as a city — was a phenomenon in Iowa social history in that it was almost completely Negro. Of the 6,000 inhabitants, 5,500 were colored, many of them imported from Alabama, Virginia, and other southern States. Sans

[75] *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), June 5, 1891.

government, except for two justices of the peace and two constables, the community was somewhat free and boisterous; yet, it is said, the Buxtonites were not always guilty of the crimes that were attributed to them.[76]

The camp had three schools — with both Negro and white teachers and pupils — two churches, a $20,000 Y. M. C. A., the "first and greatest colored miners' Y. M. C. A. in the world", and a three-story department store that was modern in every detail. Literary and musical clubs were organized by the women, and a fine concert band, which toured the State and performed at the State Fair one year, gave proof that cultural activities were not neglected. During the course of its short life this community brought together perhaps the largest group of Negro business and professional men ever seen in one community in Iowa. Several of its leading citizens later became prominent in their fields in other parts of Iowa and other States.

Among them was George H. Woodson, who had come to Mahaska County in 1896 and moved to Buxton in 1900. While living in Mahaska County he was elected vice president of the Mahaska County Bar Association and was nominated by the Republican Party as county attorney. During his residence in Monroe County he was nominated by the Republicans of that community as candidate for State Representative, the only Negro ever nominated for either of these offices in Iowa. He moved to Des Moines in 1918. He was instrumental in founding the Iowa Negro Bar Association and later was its first president. Later he organized the National Negro Bar Association, incorporated in

[76] Jacob A. Swisher's "The Rise and Fall of Buxton" in *The Palimpsest*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 179–192; *Register and Leader* (Des Moines), February 20, 1910; Mrs. Minnie B. London's "As I Remember" in the *Iowa Observer*, for January, February, and March, 1940. These weekly articles were written for the Howard Newspaper Syndicate by Mrs. London, a colored woman, who taught school in Buxton. This Syndicate, located in Des Moines, is a Negro organization.

Des Moines, and served as its first president. He died in 1933.[77] Two others were S. Joe Brown, later a lawyer in Des Moines, and Dr. E. A. Carter, a physician and surgeon in Detroit, Michigan.

In the history of Negro life in Iowa these mining camps in Mahaska and Monroe counties were a colorful and unusual episode. After the first World War, the depression and the competition with Illinois and Kentucky coal fields brought about their decline. Today Buxton is a ghost town with a few crumbling, grass-grown foundations to mark the sites of once-imposing buildings. In 1930 and succeeding years Buxton reunions were held on the first Sunday in September, Negroes and whites returning to revive through speeches and games the memory of happy years lived in the valley. In 1932 several thousand Buxtonites brought their picnic baskets to the spot where markers reminded them of their old homes and shops. The outing opened with an old-fashioned camp meeting in the morning; a baseball game, an autogiro exhibition, music by one-time Buxton band players, and a speech by Governor Dan W. Turner were features of the afternoon.[78]

In the half decade of the sixties following the Civil War and during the seventies the organized activities and individual happenings within the Negro group still found a place in the newspapers, but as the emotions of the Civil War era cooled and Negroes gradually took their place in the everyday life of northern communities, the special interest and the ready sympathy of earlier days waned; as the Negro population increased, the number of newspaper items devoted to their affairs decreased. And in the kind of news that was reported one can detect the opposition that

[77] *The Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. XIX, pp. 159, 160.

[78] *The Des Moines Register,* September 3, 1932, p. 3; *Monroe County History* (WPA, 1940), p. 64, 65.

slowly accumulated in the public mind. By the late eighties and certainly in the nineties the infrequent reports concerning Negroes are nearly always found on the page devoted to crimes — thievery, murder, rape. If colored groups engaged in worthwhile educative or social projects — and certainly they did — newspaper readers were not often apprised of it. Honors bestowed upon a member of the Negro group passed by unnoticed. When President Harrison appointed an Iowa Negro minister to Liberia in 1890, the press in the State ignored it; when he died at his post a few months later, no notices appeared.[79]

Upon rare occasion, however, one does find items reporting the Negroes' participation in public life. During the opening sessions of the State legislature in 1888, the following comment was made in a Des Moines paper under "Legislative Notes": "The colored men were yesterday remembered with a large number of good nominations at the hands of the Republican Senate and House caucuses." At least one of these positions — a janitorship in the Senate cloakroom — was filled by Wm. Coalson, a Negro listed as a barber in the Des Moines City Directory for 1886-1887. In 1894 he became the president of the Bystander Publishing Company, a Negro newspaper concern. A year later the city directory listed his occupation as "custodian in the State Executive Department".[80]

A newspaper item noted that the "Senate barber shop in the cloakroom is in running order and is doing a flourishing business under the direction and care of Miles N. Bell." About a month later this barber acted as secretary of a meeting of the colored Republicans in Des Moines, which

[79] See pp. 50–53 of text on Alexander Clark.

[80] *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), January 10, 1888; *Des Moines City Directory,* 1886-1887, 1895-1896; Porter's *Annals of Polk County, Iowa, and City of Des Moines,* p. 878; Johnson Brigham's *History of Des Moines and Polk County,* Vol. I, p. 560.

was called for the purpose of considering the nomination of one of their people, G. H. Cleggett, for police judge in the approaching convention. Cleggett, who was a constable in Des Moines and later went into the barbering business, was defeated for the Republican candidacy, although he received the second highest number of votes. The city directory of 1895 also indicates that he held high offices in the colored Masonic Lodge, serving as one of the three officers in the Grand Commandery of the Knights Templar in the Iowa and Illinois region, and as recorder for two of the local chapters of the organization.[81]

Because the Negroes were not getting news of their own people, a group of energetic colored men in Des Moines banded together in 1894 and established a weekly newspaper which they called the *Iowa State Bystander*. Wm. Coalson was chosen president of the concern, James E. Todd, vice president, B. J. Holmes, a janitor in one of the public schools, treasurer, J. L. Thompson, editor and secretary, and J. H. Shepard, a bailiff for the Polk County District Court, business manager. It was Republican in politics, independent in religion, and its purpose was to elevate the colored race and to promote better race relations. In a few years it was circulating throughout the State and even beyond the Iowa borders in other States. Still in existence today, it is the oldest Negro weekly in the State.[82]

Among the most fruitful sources of information about Negro life for this period are the city directories. From the *Des Moines City Directory* for 1895-1896 the occupa-

[81] *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), January 18, February 16, 22, 1888. The candidates and votes were: F. W. Craig, 1,367, George H. Cleggett, 459, S. R. Tippie, 407. The *Des Moines City Directory,* 1886-1887, lists him as a constable, but the *Des Moines City Directory,* 1895-1896, lists him as a barber.

[82] Porter's *Annals of Polk County, Iowa, and City of Des Moines,* p. 878; *Des Moines City Directory,* 1895-1896, under Holmes, B. J., and Shepard, J. H. Another Negro newspaper, *The Observer,* published in Des Moines, has also had a long, but more spasmodic, existence.

tional status of the Negroes in the city is seen in the following tabulation of 517 listed as colored.[83]

Laborers	93	Dressmakers	4
Porters	53	Ministers	4
Barbers	41	Bootblacks	3
Waiters	36	Musicians	3
Cooks	31	Teamsters	3
Janitors	16	Printers	3
Domestic service	15	Firemen	3
Bell boys	8	Police	2
Miners	7	Broommakers	2
Plasterers	6	Chiropodists	2
Students	6	Laundresses	2
Coachmen	4	Butchers	2

One person was listed for each of the following: constable, lawyer, physician, engineer (Kirkwood Hotel), restaurant owner, manager (rug-cleaning establishment), foreman, bookkeeper, bailiff (Polk County District Court), rodman (city engineer's office), mail carrier, carpenter, mason, whitewasher, shoemaker, expressman, gardener, housekeeper, and bootstand operator. No occupation was given for 144.

The somewhat surprising number of barbers is explained by the fact that in this period the Negro barbers still had a substantial white clientele. The change to a completely Negro clientele did not come about until after the World War. Probably among the more successful of the Negro entrepeneurs in Des Moines was Robert N. Hyde, manager of the Electric Fan Carpet Dusting Company, whose one-third page advertisement with an engraving of the manager, bearded in the style of the nineties, is prominently displayed in the directory. Only two colored people are listed

[83] This is not necessarily an accurate figure of the number of adult colored residents in Des Moines. The method used in obtaining the information for the directory is not known and one cannot be certain whether the colored people in all cases were indicated as such.

as employed by him, the foreman and a woman bookkeeper, but some of those listed as "laborers" may have worked for him. Two of the three printers were employed by the *Iowa State Register*. Several bits of trivia emerge from such a study. For example, there were three John Browns, perhaps named about 1860 by parents who felt more keenly than most the sacrifice John Brown had made for their race.

There was no distinct Negro residential district in Des Moines until after the turn of the century. Their ability to pay the rent or purchase price of a house was the determining factor, and consequently they often had comfortable homes in desirable environments. About 1910, however, conditions began to change. Negroes were unable to rent homes in the more desirable sections of the city, but if they had sufficient money they could purchase a house. Real estate dealers found that it was impossible to rent to white people after colored tenants had lived in houses and that property depreciated in value when rented to them. Apparently this change to a semi-restricted town did not come about through the prejudices of the old Des Moines citizens, but, it is claimed, through a southern real estate dealer who came to Des Moines and, using outside agencies for propaganda channels, advocated residential segregation.[84]

In following the geographic and economic pattern of Negro life in Iowa during this period between the Civil War and the first World War, one gets glimpses here and there of the social pattern as well. That they were isolated from their fellow citizens, the white people, is quite apparent. They organized their own lodges, churches, and clubs, and through these groups found an outlet for their associative

[84] G. Victor Cools' "The Negro in Typical Communities of Iowa" (unpublished master's thesis, State University of Iowa, 1918).

needs. In 1866 the Negroes in Iowa City organized the Ethiopian Lodge, No. 1, of the Independent Order of Good Templars, which was an occasion for sarcastic comment on the part of John P. Irish, editor of the Democratic *State Press*:

> We must protest in the name of consistency against this separation on the dividing line of color. Gentlemen those negroes are simply black white men, according to the logic of the day, and should have been admitted on a equal footing into the other lodges.[85]

After the establishment of the first Negro church in the State at Mt. Pleasant in 1863, many Baptist and Methodist churches were founded in southern and river towns. When the first church census of Iowa was taken in 1906 there were 33 Negro Baptist churches with a membership of 2,387 and 37 colored Methodist churches with a total membership of 1,675.[86]

Camp meetings were fairly common phenomena among the Negroes in the seventies and eighties. *The Iowa State Press* reported in the summer of 1874 that the colored people of Iowa City had been agitating for an old-fashioned Methodist camp meeting for several months. It was finally held in Berryhill's grove in the south end of town for two days during the middle of August. Unfortunately a circus was in town simultaneously and the first day's gathering was small; but the next day colored people for miles around rumbled into Iowa City in their wagons to hear Rev. Willett, who was so hoarse by the evening of the second day he could hardly make himself heard. "Singing and praying

[85] *The Iowa State Press* (Iowa City), December 5, 1866, quoted in Jacob A. Swisher's "Good Templars in Iowa" in THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XLV, p. 249.

[86] Hazel Smith's "The Negro Church in Iowa" (unpublished master's thesis, State University of Iowa, 1926), pp. 36, 41.

was also extensively indulged in and listened to attentively by the throng of people gathered beneath the trees.'' [87]

So far as education was concerned it took a few court cases to establish the constitutional right of Negro children to attend common schools. Some districts in the State provided separate schools for colored children and expected the Negroes to observe this color line. Such was true in Muscatine, for example. But in 1868, the year when the amendments granting various rights to Negroes were finally adopted, Alexander Clark, a barber in that city, brought a suit against the school board on the ground that his twelve-year-old daughter Susan was refused admission into the grammar school attended by the white children solely because of her race. The court ruled that the board of directors had no right to require children to attend a separate school because of race, religion, or economic status.[88]

In 1874, two colored boys, Geroid Smith and Charles Dove, residents of Keokuk, another town that provided separate educational facilities for colored children, were denied admission into the schools there. The Iowa Supreme Court again decided that Negro children could not be excluded from the public schools, nor could they be compelled to attend a separate school.[89]

Two of the children concerned in these cases came from families who left their names on the pages of Iowa history. Susan Clark's father, Alexander Clark,[90] was the most

[87] *The Iowa State Press* (Iowa City), August 5, 12, 19, 1874. Another camp meeting, attended by an estimated 1,500 persons, was held in 1875.— *Iowa City Republican,* August 4, 18, 1875.

[88] 24 Iowa 266.

[89] 40 Iowa 518; 41 Iowa 689; Dorothy Schaffter's ''The Iowa 'Civil Rights Act' '' in the *Iowa Law Review,* Vol. XIV, pp. 64–66; J. E. Briggs's ''Comment by the Editor'' in *The Palimpsest,* Vol. VIII, pp. 183, 184.

[90] Biographies of Clark are found in *The History of Muscatine County* (1879), pp. 597, 598, and in *The United States Biographical Dictionary and*

prominent Negro in Iowa from Civil War days almost to the close of the century. He was born in Pennsylvania in 1826; his father, a manumitted slave, was half Irish, his mother a full-blooded Negress. When he was thirteen years old he left Pennsylvania — with little formal education, but a fair amount of knowledge — to live in Cincinnati with an uncle, who taught him the trade of barbering. In the spring of 1842 he came to Muscatine, Iowa, where he decided to settle and open a barber shop. For over a quarter of a century he ran a successful business, and enjoyed the respect and affection of Muscatine citizens.[91]

Shrewd in business matters, he invested his money in timberland and contracted to furnish wood for steamboats on the Mississippi. Other business ventures were likewise successful and when he retired from the barbering business in 1868 he was able to live a life of comfort and security. Three of the children born to Alexander Clark and his wife, a woman of Negro and Indian blood, grew to maturity and were well educated, his son, Alexander, Jr., receiving his degree from the Law Department at the State University of Iowa in 1879. The father, undoubtedly stimulated by the legal atmosphere brought home by his son, matriculated in the Law Department in 1883 and received his LL. B. degree in the spring of 1884 at the age of fifty-eight.[92]

Clark was energetic in the fight for Negroes' rights, speaking so eloquently in his tours throughout Iowa and several of the southern States that he became known popu-

Portrait Gallery of Eminent and Self-Made Men. Iowa Volume (American Biographical Publishing Co., 1878), pp. 536–541.

[91] *Muscatine Weekly Journal,* October 15, 1869.

[92] For dates of Alexander Clark's and his son's attendance at and degrees from the State University of Iowa see: *Catalogue of the State University of Iowa,* 1878-1879, p. 89, 1879-1880, p. 79, 1883-1884, p. 81; *The Iowa Historical Record,* Vol. XI, p. 262; *The Alumni Register of the State University of Iowa,* 1856–1904, p. 128, 1847–1911, p. 109.

larly as "the colored orator of the West". When the amendment to enfranchise the Negroes was up for decision in Iowa he was one of the guiding spirits in the colored convention that was called in Des Moines in 1868 to promote their cause.[93]

In January, 1869, an Iowa City paper recorded a meeting in which Clark played a major rôle:

> The people of color held a State Convention at Muscatine, Dec. 31st, to appoint a delegate to the National Convention, to be held in Washington, D. C., today. Delegates were present from Tipton, Iowa City, Washington, Davenport, Burlington, Des Moines, and Muscatine. Alexander Clark, of Muscatine, was appointed to attend the National Convention. . . .
>
> The following resolution was offered by A. Clark, and adopted:
>
> "*Resolved:* That this Convention, in behalf of the colored citizens of Iowa, tender their sincere thanks to the Republican party for their noble and manly effort in behalf of manhood suffrage at the November election, by which our enfranchisement was achieved by 25,000 majority."[94]

At the national convention, which he subsequently attended, Clark was a member of the committee that called upon President Grant and Vice President Colfax to extend to them the congratulations of the colored people of the United States upon their election. As a matter of fact, Clark made the speech on that occasion. A few months after his return from that convention he attended the Republican State Convention where he served as one of the vice presidents.[95]

Clark continued to participate actively in the State conventions of the Republican Party. In 1872 he served as a delegate at large to the national convention and in 1876

[93] *Proceedings of the Colored Convention . . . in . . . Des Moines . . . 1868* (Muscatine, Iowa).

[94] *Iowa City Republican*, January 20, 1869.

[95] *Iowa City Republican*, June 16, 1869.

he was appointed alternate delegate. Also in 1876 he represented an Iowa convention of colored people at the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia, being sent for the purpose of preparing statistics for the colored race. In 1873 President U. S. Grant appointed him consul at Aux-Cayes, Haiti, a position he refused because of the meager stipend. In 1890 when President Harrison appointed him minister resident and consul general to Liberia, he accepted, taking over his office on November 25, 1890. His services there were short; a telegram to the State Department the following June announced his death.[96]

One of the boys, Geroid Smith, previously mentioned in connection with the court cases that helped open the public schools to the colored children in the State, was a grandson of Charlotta Pyles, whose story has been beautifully told by another of her grandchildren, Mrs. Laurence C. Jones, wife of the principal of the famous Piney Woods School in Mississippi.[97]

Before the passage of the Civil Rights Act by the General Assembly in 1884, two cases involving Negroes and the principle of equality before the law had come before the Iowa Supreme Court. In 1873 in Coger *v.* The North West. Union Packet Co., a quadroon employed as a teacher in a school for colored children at Quincy, Illinois, refused to accept separate accommodations on a Mississippi River packet from Keokuk to Quincy. Forcibly removed from the table and dining cabin, she went to court asking damages for assault and battery. The Iowa Supreme Court upheld the decision of the Lee County District Court that a person of color was, under the U. S. Constitution and the

[96] *Congressional Directory,* 51st Congress, 2nd Session, pp. 226, 237; John E. Briggs's "Iowa and the Diplomatic Service" in THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XIX, p. 347.

[97] Mrs. Laurence C. Jones's "The Desire for Freedom" in *The Palimpsest,* Vol. VIII, pp. 153–163.

Federal Civil Rights Act of 1866, entitled to the same rights and privileges while traveling on a common carrier that a white person was, and that the rule making a distinction between the facilities for white and colored people on public carriers was unreasonable and unenforceable.[98]

Twelve years later, in 1885, Bowling *v.* Lyon, was heard by the Iowa Supreme Court. The General Assembly had already passed the Civil Rights Act, but this case arose before the act had become effective. In this instance a colored man was barred from entering a skating rink on grounds of his color. The decision rendered by the court in this case was that the skating rink was a private business and that the owners, therefore, could limit their invitation to certain individuals or classes.[99]

The Civil Rights Act of 1884 stated that "all persons within this state shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the accommodations, advantages, facilities and privileges of inns, public conveyances, barber shops, theaters and other places of amusement." Eight years later the legislators included restaurants, chop houses, eating houses, lunch counters, and all other places where refreshments are served, as well as bathhouses. Furthermore, the legislators made the violation of this act a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of not more than $100 or imprisonment in the county jail for not more than thirty days. This act was patterned after the Federal Civil Rights Act, adopted on March 1, 1875. Most of the States of the North and Middle West, and a few in the Far West, eighteen all together in these sections of the country, have enacted similar legislation.[100]

[98] 37 Iowa 146; Schaffter's "The Iowa 'Civil Rights Act'" in the *Iowa Law Review,* Vol. XIV, pp. 66–70. The decision was based in part on the Federal Civil Rights Act of April 9, 1866.

[99] 47 Iowa 536; Schaffter's "The Iowa 'Civil Rights Act'" in the *Iowa Law Review,* Vol. XIV, pp. 70, 71.

[100] *Laws of Iowa,* 1884, Ch. 105, 1892, Ch. 43; *Code of Iowa,* 1946, Vol. II,

Between the adoption of the Iowa Civil Rights Act in 1884 and World War I only three cases dealing with the problem of civil rights of the Negro reached the Iowa Supreme Court. In State *v.* Hall (1887), a barber refused to shave a Negro. The court held that no criminal discrimination was shown and the defendant could not be convicted of a misdemeanor.[101] In a case decided in 1905 the proprietors of a boarding house were, however, found guilty of a misdemeanor in excluding a Negro from participating in a meal with members of a jury on which he was serving and for which meal service had been arranged.[102]

In the third case, in 1910, a Negro woman, Mrs. Sue M. Brown, paid admission to see a Pure Food Show sponsored by the Des Moines Retail Grocers' Association, but at a booth where coffee was being served free, she was told that they did not serve colored people. This case caused a significant division of the bench. The majority opinion, written by Judge Horace E. Deemer, held that the business in question, a company's booth at a public show, was private and as such did not come under the semi- or quasi-public category of places covered by the intention of the framers of the Civil Rights Act. "These civil rights acts do not confer equality of social intercourse, and it is doubtful, to say the least, if they could be made to apply to purely private business. . . . There can be no doubt that plaintiff was humiliated; but it was one of those social humiliations which the law does not undertake to protect."

Chief Justice W. D. Evans and Judge Silas M. Weaver dissented from the majority opinion. "The case comes fairly within the letter of the statute and clearly within its spirit", wrote Chief Justice Evans. "It [the statute] was

Ch. 735, p. 2050; Charles Mangum's *The Legal Status of the Negro* (University of North Carolina Press, 1940), pp. 34, 35.

[101] 77 Iowa 525.

[102] 128 Iowa 743.

framed in language broad and comprehensive. Its manifest purpose was and is to protect this burdened race against the further burden of public discrimination and humiliation. It does not attempt to deal with social rights, nor is there any question of social rights involved in this case, nor was the humiliation of the plaintiff a mere 'social humiliation' as indicated in the majority opinion." [103]

Thus the legislature and the courts, through this half century between the Civil War and the first World War, denied the Negro certain rights, but on the whole the denials were of less significance than the confirmation of their rights. On the eve of World War I the schools of Iowa, the polls, the legislature, and the militia were open to him.

BETWEEN WORLD WARS

When Iowans read the headline, "1200 Negro Officers To Train Here", in the *Des Moines Capital* on Sunday, May 20, 1917, they had no realization of the many weeks of struggle that had gone on far away from Iowa to bring about the establishment of the only camp in the United States for the training of Negro officers. Opposition came not only from the military, but also from the general Negro population, which accused the well-meaning leaders of trying to bring about the establishment of a "Jim Crow Camp". Nevertheless, a campaign, spearheaded from Howard University and led by the Central Committee of Negro College Men, was carried on to influence the War Department, Congress, and the Negro press in favor of the proposal. Finally, in May, 1917, the War Department agreed and designated Fort Des Moines as the location for the camp that was to be under the command of Colonel C. C. Ballou and a staff of white officers. Champ Clark, Speaker

[103] 146 Iowa 89, at 97, 105, 107. Horace E. Deemer and W. D. Evans were classmates of Alexander Clark, Jr., and received their degrees the same year. — *Register and Leader* (Des Moines), February 13, 1910.

of the House of Representatives, called it "an epoch in American history and a new day for the Negro".[104]

A few people in Des Moines did not see it in this light. The day after the announcement was made a resident of the town of Fort Des Moines, A. J. Kennedy, stated that he would protest to the Congressmen from Iowa, giving as his chief objection the fact that both white and colored persons would have to use the one carline between Des Moines and the post. The majority of the townspeople, however, shared more nearly the feeling expressed by R. B. Patin, executive secretary of the War Camp Community Service of Des Moines: "The Negroes regard the event of this training camp as the greatest in the life of the race since the Emancipation Proclamation, and as such the people of Des Moines were glad to give recognition."[105]

The recognition referred to by Patin was given at a large singing festival held in the Drake University Stadium in July, not many weeks after the training camp had opened. A quartette from the Negro officers' training camp sang a few spirituals after which twelve hundred Negro soldiers marched into the stadium. When the soldiers had completed a demonstration of marching and manual of arms, three hundred stepped forward and sang several familiar spirituals.[106]

On October 15, 1917, impressive ceremonies marked the finish of the training course for Negro officers at Fort Des Moines. Nine Iowans were among the 639 successful can-

[104] Emmett J. Scott's *Official History of the American Negro in the World War* (1919), pp. 82–91.

[105] *The Des Moines Capital,* May 22, 1917; Fred Emory Haynes's "Social Work at Camp Dodge" in THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XVI, p. 537. The Patin letter appeared originally in *The Survey,* October 6, 1917.

[106] *The Camp Dodger* (newspaper published at Camp Dodge, Des Moines), October 5, 1917.

didates who received commissions. The following May another school for training colored officers was opened at Camp Dodge, also located near Des Moines.[107]

A few days after the first Negro officers were assigned to their posts in October, 1917, the first Negro draftees, 127 from Iowa, were ordered to report to Camp Dodge. Most of these called in this first draft came from Buxton, Keokuk, and Des Moines. Soldiers from Minnesota, Illinois, and South Dakota also trained at the camp, but the largest contingents, several thousand each, came from Alabama, Tennessee, and Mississippi. Of the 5,981 Negro registrants in Iowa, 929 were inducted into service during the war.[108]

Efforts were made to give the Negro officers and trainees adequate facilities for social activity similar to those of the white soldiers but, apparently, there was no mixing. Shortly before Christmas the Army Club of the 366th Colored Infantry was opened in an old Des Moines schoolhouse that had been taken over by the War Recreation Board. The club contained a cafeteria, soft drink stand, game room, music room, reading room, barber shop, and an auditorium with a moving picture machine. The rooms on the third floor of the building were reserved for officers. At Camp Dodge the colored Y. M. C. A. organized rabbit and squirrel hunts, boxing matches, and basketball teams for the Negro soldiers. At Christmas time the Red Cross set up Christmas trees and distributed gifts to the colored soldiers. An open air movie house for Negro soldiers was built on the post in the spring of 1918, and during the summer a hostess house to accommodate the colored women who visited the Negro soldiers was built at the south end

[107] Scott's *Official History of the American Negro in the World War*, pp. 90, 91, 471–481; *The Camp Dodger*, May 10, 1918.

[108] *The Des Moines Capital*, October 18, 1917; *The Camp Dodger*, October 19, November 2, 1917; Monroe N. Work's *Negro Year Book*, 1918-1919, p. 216.

of the cantonment where the Negro trainees were stationed, but it was not dedicated until after the Armistice had been signed in November. The Knights of Columbus that same autumn turned over one of its halls in Des Moines for the use of the Negro troops stationed at Camp Dodge. Several prominent white and colored people from Des Moines and the camp participated in the program that marked this event.[109]

Negro women shouldered responsibilities during the war, one organization in Sioux City pledging fifty pairs of pajamas a week to the Red Cross for the duration of the war. Marie Bell, a Negro cateress, studied the cold-pack canning method and, after assisting at demonstrations at Ames, returned to Des Moines to conduct classes for Negro women.[110]

There was some trouble, as is inevitable when an army camp comes to town. Three Negro soldiers were found guilty of assaulting a white girl and a court martial sentenced them to be hanged. Many Des Moines Negroes felt that there was a definite lowering of the moral tone of their group after the arrival of the thousands of colored soldiers. On the other hand, residents of the city rather enjoyed such scenes as a troop of colored soldiers marching down the street singing marching songs, ragtime, or spirituals.[111]

Des Moines residents were not, at first, so aware of the large increase in the Negro civilian population. As the European immigrants of the 19th century drew their rela-

[109] *The Camp Dodger,* December 7, 21, 28, 1917, May 10, 17, September 6, 1918; Earl S. Fullbrook's *The Red Cross in Iowa,* Vol. II, p. 140; Haynes's "Social Work at Camp Dodge" in THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XVI, pp. 518, 544; Ruth A. Gallaher's "Fort Des Moines in Iowa History" in *Iowa and War,* No. 22, 1919, pp. 32, 33.

[110] Fullbrook's *The Red Cross in Iowa,* Vol. II, p. 29; *The Des Moines Capital,* May 30, 1917.

[111] *The Camp Dodger,* July 5, 1918, December 28, 1917; Cools' "The Negro in Typical Communities of Iowa".

tives across the Atlantic by writing glowing letters from America, so the colored soldiers from the South drew their friends and relatives to the North. Assurances of moderate weather and greater pay led to migrations in the fall and winter of 1917-1918. This increase of the labor force in the production centers of the North was believed to be a factor in winning the war. As a result 1920 became the peak year in the number of Negroes in Iowa.[112]

A first-hand report of Negro life in three communities of Iowa — Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, and Iowa City — during 1918 was made by Gabriel Victor Cools, a New York colored student at the University of Iowa.[113]

For the most part the Negroes in Des Moines were scattered in various parts of the city, although the majority of them lived on the west side of the city. One group, because of inter-marriage with whites, formed a colony in a wretched part of town, suffering the disapproval of both whites and blacks. Housing conditions ranged from hovels to well-built, comfortable homes, then valued at $2,000 to $3,000. The finest home was owned by a colored pharmacist and valued at $5,000.

Because of the scarcity of white labor during the first World War the Des Moines Negro moved out of almost exclusively menial and custodial occupations into the ranks of semi-skilled and skilled labor. Cools wrote:

> In many of the industries from which he was long shut out, one finds him occupying positions of trust which require a great deal of skill and perseverance. The railroad shops and round houses within which the Negro formerly dared not look, are now opened to him. The Street Railway Company which, heretofore, had

[112] *The Camp Dodger,* January 11, 1918. Cools states that the migration from the far South did not materially affect Iowa; but the statistics on the State of birth of Iowa Negroes seems to be conclusive evidence that a large number from the far South did come into Iowa during World War I.

[113] Cools' "The Negro in Typical Communities of Iowa".

never given Negro labor even a passive consideration is now employing Negro workmen in its shops in skillful and quasi-skillful positions. Negro workmen may now be seen along the street car tracks doing the repair work and handling the compressed air and welding machine. It must not be supposed that the black man's entry into various industries is looked upon with favor by the labor unions. Indeed, the unions are fighting the Negroes for every inch of the ground and yield only when overwhelming pressure is brought to bear upon them.[114]

Before the war the number of Negroes engaged in business was negligible, but the location of the Negro training camps at Fort Des Moines and Camp Dodge may have "supplied the Des Moines Negroes with the business impulse", which consisted chiefly in opening restaurants and cafes, pool rooms, barber shops, dry cleaning establishments (or panitoriums, as they were called in those days), and shoe repair shops. One man owned two small hotels and the weekly Negro newspaper, *The Iowa Bystander*. Another, a graduate pharmacist from the State University of Iowa, owned and operated a drug store, "the center of attraction for the colored people from every section of the city." One of the most successful Negro enterprises was a soap factory whose owner had invented a rug cleaner. The Negroes brought from the South during the war were accustomed to trading only in shops run by members of their own race, so business in Des Moines Negro shops boomed and new ones mushroomed into existence.

Concerning Negro participation in the political life of the State, Cools wrote:

> The Negro vote in Des Moines, and in the State of Iowa for that matter, has relatively no effect on the politics of the community. . . . The City of Des Moines is overwhelmingly Republican. The Negro vote merely swells the majority. . . . Neither the Demo-

[114] The Miners' Union was the only labor organization that admitted Negroes unreservedly and gave them a fair share in the administration of union affairs.

cratic Party nor the Republican Party makes any serious bid for Negro support.

Consequently, the Negro in Iowa was, in 1918, largely indifferent to State politics. A few positions — one or two clerkships, the rest custodial — in the post office department and in the State and municipal governments were held by Negroes. Cools concluded that these few political jobs were in direct proportion to the Negro population and its service to the party in power.

Approximately two-thirds of the 5,000 Negro inhabitants of Des Moines in 1918 were church members, the majority affiliated with the Baptist and Methodist denominations. Cools' chief criticism of the Negro churches was that they did not provide recreation centers for the young people. "Negro churches are often bitter enemies to all forms of recreation", he wrote. Another criticism leveled at the churches was that each church regarded all others as competitors and tolerated the membership of individuals with questionable moral standing in the community, knowing that if such a person were denied membership in one church he would be gladly received by one of the others.

Closely related to the lack of coordination and group solidarity in the churches was the lack of good leadership in the community life of the Des Moines Negroes in this period. Except for a public dance hall, described as more or less of a "dive", and a Masonic Hall there were no public recreational centers for Negroes. One effort had been made by a prominent Negro woman — a social worker — to provide a combination rooming and settlement house for young Negro working girls. Lectures, sewing and cooking classes, and organized social programs were held in the evenings.

Some twenty or more clubs for Negro women were functioning for educational and social purposes, among them local chapters of the National and State Federation of

Women's Clubs, the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, and a University Women's Club with a membership of fifteen college women. Fourteen Negro secret societies existed, six of them women's branches of the men's organizations. Among these organizations were Masonic lodges, Odd Fellows, Knights Templars, Knights of Pythias, United Brothers of Friendship, and the Elks.

Cools noted the strict separation between blacks and whites on the social level:

> There is no instance on record in which the whites and blacks have come together for social purposes. It is true that . . . when some distinguished . . . person of color is brought by some organization to Des Moines for the purpose of raising money for some project or other, [such functions] are attended by white persons who sympathize with the Negro, yet the number . . . is in reality negligible. . . .
>
> Discrimination against the blacks is practiced everywhere, but it takes more active form in the theatres, restaurants, and hotels. In few restaurants in Des Moines are colored people served. In the theatres they are given inferior seats. . . . There are no first class or second class hotels that will accommodate colored people. . . .
>
> Intermarriage between colored and white persons is tabooed by both races. . . . Miscegenation . . . is regarded as the violation of the taboo, and persons who so offend the group find themselves automatically deprived of their places of usefulness within it.

According to Cools, moral conditions within the Negro community in Des Moines left something to be desired. Yet, a survey of police records revealed that criminality among Negroes was only 1.2 per cent greater than that among whites, with a high percentage (20%) of women offenders. Most of the arrests and convictions were for assault and battery, carrying concealed weapons, larceny, gambling, intoxication, being present in disorderly houses, and vagrancy. Juvenile delinquency, on the other hand, was less among colored children in proportion to the percentage of child population than among white children.

From a questionnaire answered by teachers in the elementary schools where the majority of the colored children attended, Cools reported the following comments: the Negro students were from one to two years below the average of white children; they excelled in music and art; they lacked power of concentration and consequently were not good students in mathematics and other subjects requiring abstract thinking; they lacked initiative and required constant supervision; their deportment was good but they were inclined to be over-sensitive and stubborn; and they exhibited a spirit of resentment for alleged injustice. On the question of general intelligence opinions varied. Very few Negro youths were attending colleges or universities. Four girls were enrolled at the University of Iowa. The two colored students at Drake University were not residents of the city.

Cools' survey of the Cedar Rapids Negro community revealed many similar facts and tendencies. The population there increased from 301 colored persons in 1915 to about 1,000 in 1918. Here also the shortage of white labor was the principal cause of the rapid influx. Added to that was the closing down of the Buxton coal mines in 1917-1918 which released hundreds of Negroes, many of whom found their way to Des Moines and Cedar Rapids.

Economic opportunities were reasonably good, with four of the city's main industries — the starch and Quaker Oats factories, the packing house, and the street paving company — open to them. Most of them were employed as unskilled laborers. Another large group was made up of those in domestic and personal service. Only four places of business were owned and operated by Negroes — two combination barber shops and pool rooms, and two boot-black stands. Attempts had been made to establish a Negro restaurant and a Negro grocery store, but lack of patronage

by the Negro population forced them to close. The only members of the colored group who supported them conscientiously were the newcomers from the South; the old Negro residents preferred to do business with white establishments, somehow clinging to a belief, conscious or unconscious, in the superior quality of white folks' products.[115]

At the time the study was made there were only four professionally trained Negroes in Cedar Rapids, two clergymen, a nurse, and a dentist. The dentist, a graduate of the University of Iowa in 1917, became a member of the Cedar Rapids Dentists' Association and was highly respected by his colleagues.

The social and religious life of the Negroes in Cedar Rapids was very similar to that of the Des Moines group. The line of demarcation between the whites and the blacks in Cedar Rapids was, however, more noticeable on the social level than in Des Moines, the reason given by the Negroes being the large foreign population, but Cools felt that the cleavage was due to the fact that the Cedar Rapids Negroes as a group were intellectually somewhat inferior to those found in Des Moines. On the other hand, little evidence of discrimination against the Negro was observable in Cedar Rapids. Public amusement places were open to them, even though they hesitated to make use of them; the majority of restaurants gave equal service to Negroes and whites; and, until the showing of the theatrical productions "Nigger" and "Birth of a Nation", there had been no attempt to segregate them in theatres.

Only half of the 300 school-age Negro children were attending school, and only six were enrolled in high school. No young person from the Cedar Rapids colored group had ever graduated from college. Their explanation for not

[115] In Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma,* Vol. II, pp. 800–805, this attitude is said to be prevalent among Negroes.

desiring a high school or college education was that Cedar Rapids offered no more opportunities for those with high school education than for those with only elementary school training.[116]

Two determining factors controlled the make-up of the Negro community in Iowa City — the lack of industrial plants and the presence of the State University. In 1918 practically no social intercourse obtained between the group of twenty-six students and the town group, which consisted of twelve families, a total of less than fifty people. The resident group was not small enough to be absorbed by the white community, as was true in many small Iowa towns which had one or two Negro families, and it was not large enough to form a social unit apart from the white group. The result was that the Negroes were almost completely isolated from the white population and from others of their own group. The majority of the Iowa City Negroes were engaged in some form of personal service as porters or as domestic help.

Three cases of intermarriage were known to have taken place in Iowa City at that time, all of them between white women and colored men. One woman, after the death of her colored husband, later married a white man. A small African Methodist Episcopal Church had been maintained off and on, but lack of financial support forced it to close. A few colored people, both students and residents, attended white churches and were welcomed.

The most significant point in this survey of the Negro in three Iowa communities in 1918 was the far-reaching effect of the World War upon the group. For the first time in the history of the Negro group in Iowa, industrial opportunities approximately equal to that of whites were given

[116] For a comment on the lack of incentive for acquiring a higher education see Myrdal's *An American Dilemma,* Vol. I, p. 303.

them. A second point brought out was that at this period the Negroes had not become sufficiently self-conscious to work together as a unit for the betterment of their race, economically, politically, or socially, but signs were already beginning to appear that a mobilization of the Negro forces could be expected. Perhaps the most important of these was the organization of the Des Moines branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in January, 1915, under the guidance of the Negro attorney, S. Joe Brown.[117]

The N.A.A.C.P. is unquestionably the most significant national agency the Negroes have in their fight against inequality in white America. Initiated by white people, the organization took form in 1910. The national president of the Association has always been a white man, but the board of directors, composed of both races, has been predominantly Negro. The branch officers are both white and Negro. While about ten per cent of its approximately 100,000 members are white, the broad base and the working mass of the organization is Negro.[118]

Through the local branches the fight against lynching, segregation, and discrimination, and the fight for political rights and educational opportunities have been carried forward. The large majority of the cases handled by the branches deal with the attempt to eradicate segregation. The Association has prosecuted several cases of violations of the State Civil Rights Act, securing convictions in restaurant cases in Des Moines, Davenport, and other places.

[117] Information sent to the writer by S. Joe Brown. See also an item in *The Iowa Bystander*, October 9, 1947, about a celebration of the founding of the organization in Des Moines.

[118] Robert L. Jack's *History of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* (1943), pp. 20, 110; Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*, Vol. II, pp. 819–836. Information on the Iowa branches of the N.A.A.C.P. was furnished by its president, Mrs. Rose B. Johnson.

The total membership for Iowa is about four thousand, with twelve branches. The oldest and largest branch is in Des Moines with over two thousand members. Branches, with membership ranging from two dozen to two hundred, are located in Marshalltown, Waterloo, Ottumwa, Cedar Rapids, Centerville, Mason City, Clinton, Davenport, Keokuk, Council Bluffs, and Sioux City. All of the branches have some white members,[119] those in Centerville and Sioux City having, in 1947, a majority of whites. The N.A.A.C.P. also has a junior organization consisting of Youth Councils for those from twelve to twenty-one years of age. There are twelve Youth Councils in Iowa with a total membership of about three hundred.

In the fall of 1947 the organization carried a somewhat different case to the Supreme Court. A colored woman, mistaken for white by two Des Moines policemen because of her fair complexion, had been arrested while walking on a downtown street with a Negro man. The charge was disorderly conduct. She sued for damages and for the first time in forty years a discrimination case was taken to the Iowa Supreme Court, which upheld the verdict of the Polk County District Court awarding the plaintiff $650 damages.[120]

A recent case which has received nation-wide attention and is being supported by the Des Moines branch of the N.A.A.C.P. came about through the arrest by the mayor of

[119] In 1947 the wife of the president of Morningside College was president of the Sioux City branch of the N.A.A.C.P. A Des Moines man, Ike Smalls, has been president of the Des Moines branch, State president, and in 1947 was a member of the national board of directors.

[120] A report of the Deadman case is given in *The Iowa Bystander,* October 23, 1947. There is, of course, no statute in Iowa which forbids a white woman to walk on the street in company of a Negro. The prosecution was based on a charge of disorderly conduct: the couple was walking toward one of the city parks about the hour at which the parks, by city ordinance, are closed to the public.

Pacific Junction of a young transient Negro on vagrancy charges. Six young white men in the town protested the arrest and were themselves arrested on charges of "violently and tumultuously assembling". They were found guilty at a hearing and fined. One of the six, Russell Coppock, basketball coach in the local high school, refused to pay the fine and the case is now pending in the District Court of Pottawattamie County.[121]

The quota system for immigration and the scarcity of white labor caused the Negro to make some economic progress in Iowa and the North in general during the first World War and the period of the twenties. White workers in the North at first had little prejudice about working beside Negroes, but when the depression came — which hit the North harder than the South — and the Negro laborer was again a competitor of the white laborer, prejudices grew where none had been [122] and the northern Negro lost some of the gains he had made during the twenties. In a few industries such as coal-mining, slaughtering, and meat-packing he had established himself firmly enough so that not even the depression forced him completely out, but as a group, the Negroes remained confined to their traditional categories: domestic and personal service, unskilled laborers in manufacturing and mechanical industries, in transportation and communication.

The Negro businessman and the professional and white collar worker in the North face problems quite different from those of the Negro wage earner. This middle and upper class Negro group has been even more restricted in eco-

[121] *The Des Moines Register,* October 26, 1947, has a long report of the Pacific Junction case. See also comment in *The Nation,* November 29, 1947, p. 587.

[122] The district president of the C.I.O. affiliated United Farm Equipment and Metal Workers of America wrote in a letter to the writer, dated November 10, 1947, that great opposition to Negro labor still prevails among most wage earners in Iowa.

nomic opportunities than the lower class group of unskilled and semi-skilled laborers. The latter has served a white-dominated economy, whereas the former has been dependent upon the segregated Negro community for its market. From about the 1890's to approximately 1910 the Negroes engaged in a few trades, like barbering and restaurant management, had enjoyed a white clientele. But this changed during the war years and the Negro barber, hairdresser, storekeeper, teacher, lawyer, or physician found that he could not carry on his business or profession outside the Negro community. Among the most limited have been the northern Negro teachers who are forced to go South to carry on their profession because of the non-segregated, white-dominated school systems in northern cities. Des Moines, for example, with a Negro school population of 1,200 to 1,300 between 1930 and 1940 had, it appears, no Negro teachers during that period.[123] The Negro preacher, on the other hand, faces less competition with white preachers because of the segregation of the Negro churches. This factor, plus the importance of the church in the Negro community, makes for a relatively large group of preachers.

Sociologically, the middle and upper class Negroes are caught in what has been called an "ideological dilemma". On the one hand, as active members of the N.A.A.C.P., which up to the time of World War II had the support of the Negro middle and upper classes but not of the masses, they work for equal rights and assimilation with whites in the economic sphere; on the other hand, dependent upon Negro purchasing power — which is not great — for whatever economic security they have, they are forced to advocate racial solidarity and segregation, which, of course, ultimately blocks and limits their economic opportunities.

123 *Sixteenth United States Census, Iowa,* 1940, shows that 1,172 Negro children attended school in Des Moines in 1930, and 1,317 in 1940.

It is not surprising, then, that only seven per cent of the total Negro labor force in the nation in 1930 was in the white collar, professional, and business group.[124]

In Iowa in 1930 out of the total Negro population of 14,426 a little more than half, 7,931, were gainfully employed. The majority of these lived in Des Moines, Sioux City, Waterloo, and Davenport.[125]

The census of 1930 reported 253 Negro males (382 in 1920) and 20 Negro women under the head of "Agriculture". Of these, 116 men and 14 women were listed as owners or tenants. Mining employed 499 Negro men in 1930 as against 1,120 in 1920. Under "Manufacturing and Mechanical Industries", occupations for the 1,896 men included 14 builders and contractors, 357 workers in meatpacking industries (544 in 1920), 157 laborers in building construction, and 177 in various iron and steel industries.

"Transportation and Communication" included data on 976 Negro men (1,113 in 1920) and 6 Negro women (25 in 1920). The largest number of men in this group was the 279 laborers on steam railroads (520 in 1920). Next in point of numbers came the 175 garage laborers, the 133 chauffeurs and truck drivers, and the 123 laborers on roads and streets. The tabulation included 9 mail carriers, 9 brakemen on the railroads, 6 locomotive firemen, 4 owners or managers of truck, transfer, and cab companies, 2 railway mail clerks, 2 telephone and telegraph linemen, and 1 postmaster. Only one Negro woman, a telephone operator, was reported in this category.

A total of 204 Negro men (87 in 1920) was reported un-

[124] Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*, Vol. I, pp. 304, 305.

[125] *Fifteenth United States Census, Iowa*, 1930. The number of Negroes gainfully occupied in the principal cities in the State were: Des Moines, 2,452; Sioux City, 532; Waterloo, 446; Davenport, 411; Cedar Rapids, 339; Council Bluffs, 326; Burlington, 230; Ottumwa, 191; Clinton, 120; and Dubuque, 35.

der "Public Service". Of these, 176 were listed as laborers, 16 as guards or doorkeepers, 6 as policemen, and 2 as marshals or detectives. No Negro woman was listed under this classification. "Professional Service" included a total of 192 Negro men (160 in 1920) and 42 Negro women (69 in 1920). Of these, 13 men and 1 woman were listed as actors and showmen, 32 men and 8 women were musicians or music teachers, and 1 man and 10 women were teachers. The occupations of men included 71 clergymen (65 in 1920), 7 lawyers, 8 physicians, 6 dentists, and 8 keepers of billiard rooms or pool halls. There were four women religious workers, four trained nurses, and two social welfare workers.

A total of 1,565 Negro men, approximately one-fourth of those employed in 1930, were listed under "Domestic and Personal Service". This was less than the 1,636 in this class in 1920, but the proportion was slightly higher. The women listed in this class numbered 1,800, 97 less than in 1920. Approximately one-third of the males in this class — 514 — were janitors and sextons. The list of Negro women by occupation included 1,333 servants (1,095 in 1920), 149 laundresses (386 in 1920), 66 housekeepers, 45 janitors, 33 restaurant, cafe, or lunch room keepers, 27 hairdressers and manicurists (64 in 1920), 29 charwomen, 27 waitresses, 23 keepers of boarding and lodging houses, and 14 practical nurses. "Clerical Occupations" were represented by 54 Negro men, as against 80 in 1920, and 38 Negro women as compared with 23 in 1920. The largest group was made up of the 43 men and 22 women serving as clerks (not in stores).[126]

The major economic fact back of the figures for 1930

126 *Fourteenth* and *Fifteenth United States Census, Iowa,* 1920, 1930. The 1920 figures for Agriculture also include "Forestry and Fishing", but only 11 men were employed in this group in 1930.

was the depression, as yet in its incipient stages. But the Negro labor force was affected by it earlier than any other group. It should also be recalled that in the decade preceding, the Negro population in Iowa had dropped from 19,005 to 17,380, while the total population of the State showed an increase of more than 66,000. It hardly needs to be pointed out that the bulk of the gainfully employed Negroes were unskilled and semi-skilled laborers in the manufacuring industries, in domestic and personal service, and in transportation and communication occupations. Other noticeable features in the occupational statistics are that in manufacturing and mechanical industries the slaughtering and meat-packing plants employed a large number of Negroes and that railroad companies hired Negro laborers to some extent but had only nine brakemen, six firemen, five foremen, five switchmen and flagmen, one inspector, and no conductors or locomotive engineers on their roads in Iowa.

The 1940 data on the labor force are not directly comparable with the census statistics for gainful workers in 1930 and earlier years because of differences in definition of those gainfully employed and in the methods of taking the census. One difference, for example, was that only those fourteen years and over (instead of ten years and over) were counted as constituting the labor force. A summary of the Negro labor force in Iowa in 1940 is given in the table below.[127]

	Male	Female
Employed (except on public emergency work)	3,383	1,354
On public emergency work	634	258
Experienced workers seeking work	730	248
New workers seeking work	49	29

Among the 139 professional and semi-professional em-

[127] *Sixteenth United States Census, Iowa,* 1940, p. 10 in section on Population, the Labor Force.

ployed males, the clergymen ranked highest with 48, musicians and music teachers second with 36; there were 11 lawyers and judges, 8 physicians and surgeons, 4 dentists, and 4 teachers (including county agents), with a sprinkling of one or two in a few other professions. Only 28 female Negroes were reported in the professional and semi-professional class of workers.

The one woman lawyer was, no doubt, Gertrude Rush of Des Moines, who was born in Texas, received her high school education in Parsons, Kansas, and was graduated from Des Moines College in 1914 with a B. A. degree. She studied law with her husband, James B. Rush, passed the bar examination in 1918, and was admitted to the Iowa Bar, the first colored woman admitted to practice in Iowa. Her activities in civic and community affairs have included the founding of the Charity League, a welfare organization for colored people. Through the efforts of this group a colored probation officer was appointed in the Juvenile Court in Des Moines. Mrs. Rush is a charter member of the Des Moines Playground Association and of the Board of Directors of the Des Moines Health Center. From 1911 to 1915 she served as president of the Iowa State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, and she has been chairman of the legislative department of the National Association of Colored Women.[128]

It is difficult to ascertain accurately how extensively Negroes have participated in the labor union movement in Iowa. Generally speaking, Negroes have feared and distrusted unions and have been feared and distrusted by some unions. The period of World War II broke down some of the barriers on both sides, but one may say that the labor union movement has not yet become a major factor in Negro life in Iowa. Individuals among the Negroes have,

[128] *Who's Who in Colored America,* 1928-1929 and succeeding editions.

nevertheless, worked energetically in the labor movement.

Manson L. James, who was educated in the public schools of Illinois and Iowa and studied law at the Omaha Law School, has been one of the most effective organizers of the C.I.O. not only in Iowa, but in the larger Chicago area. Since 1944 he has been a representative of a C.I.O. rubber workers' union, working in Des Moines. James has advocated anti-discrimination in the rubber industry and has brought about a noticeable change in the pattern of employment in the central Iowa area. In 1943 he was elected chairman of the Educational Committee of the Des Moines Industrial Union, and in June, 1944, he was appointed chairman of the Postwar Planning and Reconversion Committee.[129]

According to Charles W. Hobbie of Des Moines, president of the northwest district of the United Farm Equipment and Metal Workers of America, an affiliate of the C.I.O., there are at present approximately 4,000 Negroes employed in C.I.O. plants in Iowa and this group constitutes approximately one-tenth of the C.I.O. membership in the State. In the C.I.O. plants, with two exceptions, about 10 per cent of the employees are Negroes. About 23 per cent of the membership at the Iowa Packing Company in Des Moines are Negroes and the Rath Packing Company in Waterloo has approximately 24 per cent Negro membership. In the Rath plant, where the total employment varies from 2,800 to 4,300, the Negro employment runs from 400 to 800, the greater part of the time being close to 700.[130]

The figures on Negro membership in the A. F. of L. in Iowa are not available. It is a well-known fact, however, that more A. F. of L. unions have been unwilling to admit Negroes to membership than have C.I.O. unions. Out of

[129] *Eyes,* Vol. I, No. 5 (June, 1947), p. 27. *Eyes,* a Negro pictorial magazine, was started by a group of Negro students at Iowa City in April, 1946.

[130] Letter to the writer, dated November 10, 1947.

the approximately 5,000 employees of a railroad car plant in one of the larger southeastern Iowa cities only three or four ex-soldier Negroes are employed, and they in custodial jobs. At the present time only two industries in the State employ Negroes in significant numbers, the meat-packing plants and the gray iron foundries, both largely C.I.O.

With the bulk of gainfully employed Negroes falling in the unskilled and semi-skilled laboring class, it is somewhat surprising to see that in 1930 almost 42 per cent and in 1940 more than 44 per cent of the Negro housedwellers in Iowa owned their own homes. In other words, more than four out of every ten Negro households owned the dwellings in which they lived. It is probable that home-owning by Negroes is larger than it would otherwise be because of their difficulty in renting desirable houses. Of the 1,840 non-farm homes owned by Negroes in 1930, 411 were valued under $1,000, 1,352 between $1,000 and $5,000, 55 between $5,000 and $10,000, and 2 over $10,000, with 20 not reporting.[131]

The statistics on home ownership indicate something of the character of the Iowa Negro group. It is in the main a lower middle and working class group. A few know poverty, a few prosperity. The bulk are quiet, anonymous, hardworking wage earners. About half of them attend church. Approximately 30 per cent of them have gone through grammar school, 30 per cent attended high school, 12 per cent finished high school, 6 per cent have attended college, and about 2 per cent have graduated from college. Over 95 per cent of them own one or more radios and re-

[131] *The Negro Handbook*, 1942, pp. 181, 182, 1944, pp. 81, 82.

	Negro-occupied units	Negro owner-occupied
1930	4,571	1,918
1940	5,021	2,216

ceive one or more newspapers, usually the Negro weekly, *The Iowa Bystander,* in addition to a daily paper.[132]

The Republican Party still claims the allegiance of nearly three-fourths of the Negroes in Iowa.[133] Both the Republican and the Democratic parties in the State have Negro organizations to carry on work among their voters, the former being the more effective because of its complete integration with the State Republican Party machine. Charles P. Howard, J. G. Browne, and A. A. Alexander, all of Des Moines, and Milton F. Field of Waterloo have served as chairmen of the Negro Division of the Republican State Committee. The Republican Party has distributed some patronage to Negroes in the form of a few white collar jobs, such as clerkships in the executive departments. In 1939 William Bailey from Ottumwa was appointed assistant chemist in the State Department of Agriculture and served until 1943 when he entered the armed services.[134]

Democratic Party organization among the Negroes in Iowa came later and was less important than that of the Republican Party. The formation of a Roosevelt Democratic Club in 1934 was the first indication of interest in

[132] James B. Morris's "Voting Behavior in Four Negro Precincts in Iowa Since 1924" (unpublished master's thesis, State University of Iowa, August, 1946), pp. 7–20; *Sixteenth United States Census Population, Second Series, Iowa,* Table 39. Although Morris's material deals only with the voters in four predominantly Negro precincts in Iowa and the census figures are for Des Moines, they may be taken as fairly representative of the Negro population throughout the State. In regard to church membership the volumes issued by the U. S. Department of Commerce *Religious Bodies,* 1936, Vol. I, p. 880, listed 6,134 members of Negro churches in Iowa. This figure, which did not include Negro members of churches other than Negro churches, constituted about 35 per cent of the total Negro population in the State at that time.

[133] Harry Washington Greene's *Holders of Doctorates Among American Negroes* (1946), p. 228; Morris's "Voting Behavior in Four Negro Precincts in Iowa Since 1924", pp. 63–66.

[134] Morris's "Voting Behavior in Four Negro Precincts in Iowa Since 1924", pp. 56–59; *State of Iowa Employees,* 1939-1940, p. 7, 1940-1941, p. 9, 1941-1942, p. 46, 1942-1943, p. 46.

the party. At about the same time the Iowa Negro Democratic League was founded with local units in many Iowa cities. Not until after the statewide victories in 1936 did the Democratic Party extend patronage to the Negro, at which time the record number of twenty-six Negro employees were on the permanent State payroll. In 1940 the State Democratic organization recognized the services of the Negro party workers by electing Manson L. James of Des Moines, who had been an active member of the Young Democratic Club of America, an alternate from Iowa to attend the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. James won the Democratic nomination for one of the seats in the State legislature in Polk County in the primary election of 1944 but was defeated in the general election.[135]

At least one colored person has served in a county position. Since 1936 Lucius Ashby has been one of the thirty or more deputies on the staff of the Polk County sheriff, probably the only Negro to hold a position in a law enforcement department in any community in the State.[136]

Religion and affairs of the church have been vital in the life of the Negro group. In the days of slavery the Negro early developed certain techniques of survival — he learned to sing and dance to turn aside his master's wrath; he developed a keen sense of humor to release emotions that in another form would have offended; he created spirituals and established and built his own church to free himself in some measure from the restrictions and frustrations he endured in the world about him. The perpetuation in American society of limitations in the political, economic, and

[135] Morris's "Voting Behavior in Four Negro Precincts in Iowa Since 1924", pp. 53–55; *The Negro Handbook,* 1942, p. 169; *Iowa Official Register,* 1945-1946, p. 291.

[136] *Financial Report of Polk County,* 1936 through 1946. *The Negro Handbook,* 1942, p. 175, erroneously lists him as "Asby", with the position of Superintendent, Bureau of Investigation, Polk County.

civic field has tended to magnify the importance of the church for the Negro; it remains the primary avenue of self expression and is still his best, if no longer the only, opportunity for leadership.[137]

There have been few, if any, restrictions upon those who wished to become preachers. If a man or woman were "called" to preach and be a religious worker, he was accepted as a clergyman by the masses who yearned for messages from on high that promised deliverance from bondage, whether of sin or of slavery such as the children of Israel endured. Many were "called"; few were schooled for the Negro ministry. In 1926 Hazel Smith found that of twenty-seven ministers of Negro churches who reported, twenty-three had attended colleges or universities and ten had attended seminaries, but only nine held a Bachelor of Arts degree. Three had Bachelor of Divinity and two Doctor of Divinity degrees. This, however, is not the complete picture of the Negro ministry in Iowa, for there were close to seventy clergymen in the State at that time.[138]

Though for the most part inadequately equipped, the Negro ministers have tried to be the intellectual and moral leaders in their communities. It is difficult to say whether they have, as a group, failed or succeeded. Gunnar Myrdal states that the church "is losing out among the young people, mostly because the Negro preacher has lagged behind the rest of the Negro community and, particularly, behind other professionals, in acquiring a better education."[139] The rigidity and conservatism of the Negro church is well known, but concessions have had to be made to hold the

[137] Benjamin Elijah Mays and Joseph William Nicholson's *The Negro's Church*, p. 9.

[138] *Negro Year Book*, 1931-1932, p. 263; Hazel Smith's "The Negro Church in Iowa", pp. 56, 57.

[139] Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*, Vol. I, p. 322.

interest of the growing body of young educated Negroes. Church notices, for example, are no longer limited to announcements of Sunday morning services, weekday prayer meetings, and revivals. The attention of parishioners is called also to literary and musical programs held by the women's guilds, to young people's club meetings at which films on Russia may be shown or the proper attire of young men and women may be discussed, to "Fun Night" parties, and to other social gatherings.[140] Des Moines, in addition to its dozen Negro churches, has a colored Y.M.C.A. and a community center, Willkie House, built by money donated by Gardner Cowles, Sr., and named in honor of Wendell Willkie.

In 1926 the Negro churches in Iowa had a total membership of 8,577. By 1936, paralleling the decrease in Negro population, the membership had fallen to 6,134, with a total of eighty-three churches. The only separate Negro denominations of any size in Iowa are the Negro Baptist and the African Methodist Episcopal, the former having, in 1936, twenty churches with over four thousand members, the latter six churches with a total of over a thousand members. Another wholly Negro denomination is the Church of God in Christ, with eight churches in 1936 whose total membership was approximately three hundred.[141]

The participation of the Negro in the northern school system since the close of the first World War has increased rapidly on the student level, more slowly on the teacher level. From 1876, when Yale granted the first Ph. D. to an American Negro, down to 1943 almost four hundred doctoral or equivalent academic degrees were awarded to Ne-

[140] *The Iowa Bystander,* November 6, 20, 27, 1947.

[141] *The Negro Handbook,* 1942, p. 95; *Religious Bodies,* 1936, Vol. I, pp. 471, 475, 476, 487, 492, 493, 496, 501, 502, 624, 676, 703, 880. The figures used do not include Negro members of white congregations.

groes, the great majority of them since 1930. Thirty-two out of this group received one or more of their academic degrees at an Iowa college or university. Twenty of these thirty-two were Ph. D. degrees, the first of which was granted by Iowa State College, Ames, in 1933, to Nathaniel O. Calloway. Between 1933 and 1943 seven doctorates were awarded by that institution to Negro students. In 1935 the State University of Iowa granted its first doctorate to a Negro student, Cyril F. Atkin. By 1943 twelve Negroes had received Ph. D. degrees from the University. In 1941 Lulu Merle Johnson became the first Negro woman to be granted the doctorate from the State University and is the first in the United States to have received that degree in the field of history. Since 1941 she has served as an associate professor in the history departments of Talladega College, West Virginia State College, and at Cheney College in Pennsylvania, where she is also serving as dean of women.[142] Oscar Fuller, who received his Ph. D. degree from the State University of Iowa in 1942, was the first Negro in the United States to be granted that degree in the field of music.

At the time Harry W. Greene made his study of Negroes holding Ph. D. degrees, fifteen out of the twenty Negroes who received Ph. D. degrees in Iowa were on the faculties of Negro colleges and universities, one was a principal of a public school in North Carolina, and one was a medical student. The employment of three was not listed.

All Iowa colleges, both private and State-supported, are open to Negro students. Although it is impossible because of inadequate records to make an accurate count of the number of Negro graduates, registrars' estimates indicate

[142] Charles S. Johnson's *The Negro College Graduate,* Ch. I; Greene's *Holders of Doctorates Among American Negroes,* pp. 23, 26, 44 ff, 72; information furnished the writer by Lulu M. Johnson; *The Daily Iowan,* July 20, 1941; *University of Iowa News Bulletin,* Vol. XVI, September, 1941.

that at least five hundred have one or more degrees from Iowa institutions of higher learning. Approximately 150 were on the campuses of Iowa colleges and universities during the second semester of the 1946-1947 academic year. Of the eighty-six who were attending the State University only twenty-six were from Iowa.

Negro students have not always been admitted to University-owned dormitories, but in recent years this policy has been changed, and during the second semester of 1946-1947 twenty-three colored students lived in University dormitories. For several years a house for colored women students has been maintained in Iowa City by the Iowa Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, more recently by the Iowa Association for Negro Students. Most of the Negro students at the State University, however, live in private homes.[143]

As far as can be ascertained from the records, Alexander Clark, Jr., was the first Negro to enter the University of Iowa and the first to be awarded a degree, the LL. B. in 1879. Since that day approximately three hundred Negro students have received degrees from the University of Iowa. The first degree in Liberal Arts granted to a Negro went to S. Joe Brown in 1898. During his senior year, Brown was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, the first Negro, it is believed, to have received this honor west of the Mississippi. In 1901 Brown was granted his LL. B. degree, and in 1902 his M. A. from the University, again, as far as can be ascertained, being the first Negro student to receive an advanced degree from the institution. During this early period of 1900's Brown was considered one of the seven or eight most important Negro lawyers in America. He has been active in the affairs of the African Methodist Episco-

143 Information furnished the writer by the University of Iowa Housing Service.

pal Church and for ten years, 1920–1930, he was the only Negro member of the Executive Committee of the Polk County Council of Religious Education. When the Council of Churches of the Des Moines Area was organized in 1930, he was elected one of the five directors at large, the only Negro serving in this capacity.

In 1906 he was a candidate for Judge of the Polk County District Court and in 1910 a candidate for councilman at large for the city of Des Moines. In 1928 he was among eight candidates nominated in the primaries for the office of Judge of the Des Moines Municipal Court. Though defeated in the elections, he received the support of hundreds of voters outside his racial group. In 1919 Brown was instrumental in the organization of the Crocker Street Branch (Negro) of the Des Moines Y.M.C.A., and in 1924 assisted in the organization of the Des Moines Interracial Commission on which he has served in several capacities. In 1925 he was a delegate to the first National Interracial Conference held in Cincinnati.

Throughout his active career in behalf of his race, Brown has been assisted by his wife, Sue M. Brown. In 1906 she founded the Intellectual Improvement Club for Negroes in Des Moines; in 1914 the Mary B. Talbert Club. From 1915 to 1917 she served as the president of the Iowa State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, and since 1921 has been a life trustee of the National Association of Colored Women. She was the founder of the Des Moines League of Colored Women Voters, and the first vice president of the National League of Republican Colored Women. From 1925 to 1927 she was president of the Des Moines branch of the N.A.A.C.P. She has been a trustee of Monrovia College and Industrial Training School in Liberia and chairman of the board of trustees of the Iowa Federation home for colored women students at the State University.

Her *History of the Order of the Eastern Star Among Colored People* was published in 1925.[144]

Among other outstanding Negro graduates from the University of Iowa Law School was Herbert R. Wright who was born in Iowa, practiced in Des Moines after receiving his degree in 1901, and in 1903 was appointed to the United States Consular Service, serving at Utilla, Honduras, from 1903 to about 1908, and at Puerto Cabello, Venezuela, where he served until 1918. William E. Taylor received his LL. B. in 1923 and his LL. D. in 1932. After practicing law in Iowa and Illinois, he became a professor, and later acting dean, in the School of Law at Howard University. In 1939 he was appointed dean of the Law School in Lincoln University, Missouri.[145]

In the field of civil engineering one of the most able and successful graduates of the State University of Iowa is a Negro, Archie A. Alexander of Des Moines. Alexander, the son of a coachman who had come up the Des Moines River from Missouri in 1882, was born in Ottumwa, Iowa, in 1888. After being educated in the public schools of Ottumwa and Des Moines, he entered Highland Park College, Des Moines, in 1907. When the college changed its policy of admitting Negroes the next year, he enrolled at the State University of Iowa, receiving his B. S. degree from the college of engineering there in 1912. During his undergraduate years he played football and won a major letter. In 1925 he received the Bachelor of Engineering degree from

144 "Provisional Register of Negro Graduates of the University of Iowa up to 1942", compiled by S. Joe Brown, deposited in the Alumni Office of the University of Iowa; Johnson's *The Negro College Graduate,* p. 334. Most of the material on S. Joe Brown was furnished the writer by Mr. Brown. See also *Who's Who in Colored America,* 1928-1929, p. 55.

145 Association of American Law Schools, *Directory of Teachers in Member Schools,* 1942-1943, p. 191; *The Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. XVIII, pp. 317, 318; *Official Register of the United States . . . Officers and Employees,* 1905, 1907, 1909, 1911, 1913, 1915, Vol. I.

the State University. In addition to several large bridges and viaducts which he built throughout the State his biggest contract during this period was the construction, in 1928, of a new heating system for the State University's expanding campus. In 1929 he entered into partnership with M. A. Repass, a (white) classmate, and the firm has built bridges, viaducts, and sewage plants in many parts of the country.

When the first Harmon Awards were granted in 1926 to American Negro men and women for distinguished achievement in various fields, he received the second of two awards made in the field of industry and business, a bronze medal and one hundred dollars for his work as a civil engineer and contractor. Alexander was awarded the degree of Doctor of Engineering from Howard University in 1947. At the commencement exercises of the State University of Iowa in June, 1947, he was among some hundred alumni who were honored for distinguished service in their fields. On November 11, 1947, ten Midwest Gold Medal Service Awards were presented to five outstanding white and five Negro Republicans in recognition of their efforts to help the American Negro. The two Iowans who received this distinction were Gardner Cowles, Jr., of the Des Moines family that made possible the building of Willkie House, the colored community center, and A. A. Alexander, its president.[146]

Iowa bears the honor of having educated and encouraged two Negroes who have given abundantly to their race — one primarily as a scientist, the other as an educator — George Washington Carver and Laurence C. Jones. Born in Missouri during the Civil War and orphaned in infancy,

[146] Material on A. A. Alexander furnished the writer by Mr. Alexander. See also *Negro Year Book,* 1931-1932, p. 191; *Eyes,* Vol. I (April, 1946), pp. 14–20 (fifteen illustrations); *The Iowa Bystander,* October 16, 1947; *The Des Moines Register,* November 9, 1947.

George Washington Carver spent a homeless childhood and youth. His wanderings brought him to Winterset, Iowa, late in his twenties. Befriended and encouraged to go to school, he entered Simpson College, Indianola, in the autumn of 1890. The following spring he enrolled at Iowa State College, Ames. There Carver earned his B. S. degree in 1894 and was given a position on the faculty as assistant botanist in the experiment station, a position which he held for two years. During this time he did graduate work and was granted a master's degree in 1896. That fall he left Iowa State College to become the head of the newly organized agricultural department at that by now famed institution in Alabama, Tuskegee Institute. Among the many honors that came to this humble Negro scientist, whose discoveries, particularly concerning the properties and possibilities of the peanut and sweet potato, brought him international recognition, was an invitation to become a Fellow of the Royal Society of Great Britain.[147]

Some twenty years after Carver's birth, Laurence C. Jones was born in Missouri, his father being a porter at the Pacific Hotel in St. Joseph. After a year of high school in his home town, Jones came to Marshalltown, Iowa, where he completed high school in 1903, being the first colored graduate in that high school. Friends persuaded him to continue his education, and by working for his board and room in a fraternity house he graduated from the State University in 1907. Already vitally interested in what Booker T. Washington was doing for his people in the South, Jones went to a little school in Mississippi to teach. On a visit at the home of one of his students in the Piney Woods region of the State, he heard that the people in the district wanted a high school and had been working vainly

147 Rackham Holt's *George Washington Carver,* pp. 2, 56, 62, 72–98, 117, 269. See also *Who's Who in Colored America,* 1928 to 1940.

for many years to raise enough money. To Jones it was a Macedonian call; he cast his lot with them.

Since Jones founded Piney Woods School in 1909, many Iowans have contributed time, interest, and money to the support of the institution. These friends have made possible the erection in the early 1940's of a building called Iowa Hall. Laurence C. Jones was also one of the hundred prominent alumni honored at the centennial commencement of the State University in 1947.[148]

The careers of the majority of the colored graduates of Iowa institutions have been among the members of their own race, but a few Negroes have been able to cut through the confining walls of prejudice and are carrying on their professions in the schools of the North. Until very recently few children in Iowa's public schools had been taught by a Negro teacher, except in the schools of the predominantly Negro town of Buxton. In 1946 the Des Moines school board employed a Negro primary teacher, who met every requirement as to education, professional training, character, and experience. The reaction of the general public was favorable, but a few patrons demonstrated their disapproval. When the election of school board members took place in March, 1947, a small faction in the school district where the Negro teacher had been employed supported two candidates who opposed the hiring of Negro teachers. These candidates were defeated and in the Des Moines public school system there were in 1947 three full-time and four substitute Negro teachers. Later, in a public discussion before a colored audience, these teachers agreed that parents, pupils, and faculty accepted them without discrimination.[149]

[148] Laurence C. Jones's *Piney Woods and Its Story* (1922); *Who's Who in Colored America,* 1928 to 1940; *The Pine Torch,* Vol. V, No. 5 (Sept.-Oct., 1943), p. 4, Vol. VI [sic], No. 5 (Nov.-Dec., 1942), p. 1.

[149] Information furnished the writer by a resident of the school district in

During the school elections in Davenport in March, 1947, Charles W. Toney, a Negro employee of a local iron and machine company and former president of the local branch of the N.A.A.C.P. was an unsuccessful candidate for the school board, the first Negro to seek election to a public office of any kind in Davenport, according to a local newspaper.[150] In Iowa City, where the Negro population consists of about sixty people, a Negro woman was elected president of the Parent-Teacher Association in one of the grade schools in 1943, serving for two years.

Negro students in the public schools are also being given a chance to serve their schools and classmates. Don Clayter, a Cedar Rapids high school student, was elected president of the freshman class at Roosevelt High School in 1943 and during his senior year in 1947 he was one of the 720 boys in the State chosen to attend the annual American Legion-sponsored Hawkeye Boys' State at Camp Dodge, where he was elected "Governor", the first Negro boy to receive that honor in the Hawkeye Boys' State, or in any Boys' State anywhere.[151]

In the area of sports, discrimination against Negroes has been less marked than in many other areas of activity. Through the years the University of Iowa has had several outstanding athletes, among them Edward Gordon who held the national intercollegiate broad jump championship and was on the American Olympic track team at the ninth Olympiad at Amsterdam in 1928. In football some of the great names have been the Negro players such as Wendell Benjamin, "Duke" Slater, Emlen Tunnell, John Estes, and Earl Banks.

Des Moines in which the Negro teacher was employed. See also *The Iowa Bystander,* November 27, December 4, 1947.

150 *Democrat and Leader* (Davenport), March 9, 11, 1947.

151 *The Des Moines Register,* June 22, 1947.

The Negro population in Iowa, larger than that in the neighboring States of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Nebraska, is still but a small part of the total population of the State, less than one per cent. Yet these people have made contributions to Iowa. Some of these have been noted; others are not so easily seen because they are the contributions of "little men", men like the young Negro mail carrier in Burlington. He wanted a good education, but the depression made lean times for Negroes, so after a year at the junior college in his home town, he went to work at whatever he could find. The industrial plants in the town did not hire Negroes. No offices would hire the girls who had completed secretarial and business courses, no shops would hire the boys who had taken courses in mechanics and machine repairing, so his colored classmates went to Chicago to look for work. But this young man wanted to live in Burlington and he decided civil service jobs would offer him the best opportunity for economic security. After taking the examination for a postal position, it took four years before his name rose from the fourth place to the top of the list and brought him a job as a mail carrier.

He married and made arrangements to buy a house in a comfortable neighborhood where both white and colored families live, but when the war broke out, he was called into service, trained in camps in the South where he saw "white supremacy" at its worst, and at the end of World War II was glad to be able to return to Burlington and his job in the post office. He is active in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and interested in the interracial activities of the city's churches. The boys' and girls' basketball teams from his church play the teams of the other churches in town, both colored and white. Exchange services are held among the churches.

These activities have made him feel that only in the

church is the barrier between the white and colored people breaking down. He is liked and respected in town, but he does not feel free to go into a restaurant and order a meal. When the district convention of his church met in Burlington and he served on the housing committee, he could not go to the hotels and reserve rooms for the delegates; so weeks in advance he began calling on his white friends — the homes of most of the colored people were too small and inadequate — to ask them if they could provide rooms for the colored visitors. His church work and his job as a mail carrier keep him occupied and happy. He plans to spend his life in Burlington, but he can understand, and sympathize with, the young colored girls and boys who, each year as soon as they have received their high school diplomas, leave town. Most of them are going to California now; chances are better there than in Chicago. "It doesn't seem very far-sighted", he said, "for the city to invest a thousand dollars in their education and then not provide a means for getting a return on its investment." [152]

LEOLA NELSON BERGMANN

IOWA CITY IOWA

[152] In a conversation with the writer, February, 1947.