The Negro in the Early History of the West

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COLORADO gained the status of a territory in 1861. Portions of Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico and Utah territories contributed to her birth, and she was admitted to the union as a state in 1876.

Peoples of diverse cultures and races and of divergent social and religious backgrounds contributed to the building of the "Columbine State"—mountain empire of the West. It is significant that the American Negro as slave and freedman has been identified with the state and region since the days of Colorado's early history.

The Negro appeared as early as the year 1528 in the history of the old Colorado Territory, for it was at that time that a Spanish Expedition led by one Pamphilo de Naruaez came to Florida from Cuba, and in the company of Naruaez was one Estevanieo, a Negro servant. The expedition was shipwrecked off the coast of what is now Tampa, Florida, and members of the group became separated from each other, some wandering far into the southwest interior, while other members of the original expedition were held as prisoners by the Indians for a period of six years.

On March 7, 1539, an expedition set out by land "from the town of St. Michael in Culican" to explore the region of fabulous riches which had been pictured to them by the Indians. Led on by the lure of gold which had become an obsession in the hearts of the Spanish conquerors, one Fray Marcos de Nica, A Franciscan monk, Estevanieo, the Negro, and a few Pima Indians who had been trained as guides and interpreters started on the new adventure. The first days of the journey of this expedition were interesting and filled with the hospitable acts of the Indians through whose territory they passed. However, when the expedition entered the area known now as "Sonora," Nica, the leader, determined to send the Negro guide, Estevanieo, ahead "north and west" for a distance of approximately one hundred and fifty miles. The Negro guide was told that if the country revealed its wealth he should go no further,

> "but report by token of a white cross the size of a hand's length or proportionately larger, the extent of the country. On Passion Sunday (April 5th) Estevanieo set forth, and before Easter Sunday had dawned (April 19th), an Indian brought back to Nica a cross as high as a man, and the story that thirty days march from where the Negro remained, the first town of a country called Cibola was to be found. An Indian accompanied the messenger, who said he had been there and that there were seven cities in the province under one sovereign. Their houses were built of stone, masonry and timbers; they were two and three stories high, the house of the king had four well-arranged floors and the gateways of the chief men were ornamented with turquoises laid in the wood. The people of Cibola were clad in gowns of cotton reaching to the feet, with broad sleeves, girt with curiously wrought turquoise belts, and over these were coats of leather ornamented with precious stones. Beyond the first province of Cibola were the three others called Marata, Acus, and Totonleac."[1]

Estevanieo disregarded his instructions and kept on the move to the

[1] Ladd, Horatio O., *The Story of New Mexico*, p. 26. Boston: D. Lothrop Company, 1891).

north until he came to the village of "Cibola." On June 2, 1539, Nica relates that he was informed by an Indian of the tragic death of the Negro guide. The final exploits of Estevanieo are recorded by the historian, Horatio O. Ladd, as follows:

"On the second of June, 1539, Nica related that he was 'met by an Indian, son of one of the chiefs who accompanied me, and who had followed Estevanieo, the Negro. His face was all dejected and his body covered with perspiration; his whole exterior betokened great sadness. He announed the death of the guide and companion of Marcos.'

Estevanieo had passed this desert with three hundred Indians and having entered the country beyond, with a great display of importance, he had received a great many gifts of turquoise, provisions, and clothing, and beautiful women for slaves. . . . His messengers went forward to Cibola and were prohibited by the magistrate from entering the town. . . . but Estevanieo went bravely forward to the gates of the city. Here he was made a prisoner and plundered of all the turquoises he had brought, and he was put without food under strict guard. . . . Estevanieo was a black man, but professed to come from a country of white people. He was arrogant in his manner and demands and did not act like a messenger of peace. Estevanieo was put to death by his captors, and Casteneda, the Spanish historian, records that 'sixty out of the three hundred who had accompanied the Negro shared his fate'."[2]

Far to the north and west of this territory another Negro made an appearance in November, 1787, as a seaman with an expedition which had set out from Boston, Massachusetts, rounded Cape Horn, thence up the Pacific coast to the mouth of the Columbia River. At a point near the present site of Seaside, Oregon, occurred the tragic death of Marcus Lopeus, Negro:

"We anchored half a mile distant from the shore in 3 fm in the anchoring place I observed by Lat'd to be 45 27's and Long'd 122 26' E'. Follows an account of the natives who brought boiled clams and crabs to the ship and kept knives always in their hands:

A young black man Marcus Lopeus, a native of the Cape Verde islands and who had shipped Captain Gray's servant at St. Jago's being employed careing grass doan to the boat, had carelessly stuck his cutlass in the sand one of the natives seeing this took a favorable opportunity to snatch it at first unobserved. We were informed in the circumstances adding that the Black Boy had followed him in spite of everything they could say to the contrary. . . .

When we were observed by the main body of natives to hastily approach them they instantly drenched their knives and spears with savage fuery in the boddy of the unfortunate youth—we turned leaving the dead boddy. . . . 'Murder's Harbor,' for so it was named, is I suppose the enterence of the river of the west it is by no means a safe place for aney but a very small vessel to enter the shoal at its entrance being so accuardly situated the passage so narrow and the tide so rapid that it is scarce possable to avoid dangers."[3]

The Lewis and Clark Expedition 1803-4 crossed the continent and carried in its company one York, a Negro, personal body servant of Captain Clark, interpreter and an object of admiration and fear to the Indians. The journal of

[2] Ladd, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

[3] Hill, D. G., *The Negro in Oregon* (Unpublished Master's Thesis), p. 1. "A Voyage Round the World on Board the Ships Columbia, Rediviva, and Sloop Washington." p. 29, 1788, August Saturday 16th. Oregon Historical Society, Portland.

the Expedition records that the group was

"organized as a military detachment, under orders of the Secretary of War. Although President Jefferson remained the moving spirit, the party, when complete, consisted of twenty nine persons officially recognized on the rolls; with French and half-breed interpreters, Clark's Negro servant York, and the Indian woman Saenjawea as supernumeraries, forty five in all, including the two captains.[4]

The Negro servant acted as a "jack of all trades" in the capacity of interpreter, guide, servant, soldier, and comedian:

"I crossed the river in about an hour after the arrival of the Indian express with 23 men including the interpreter—a mulatto, who spoke bad French and worse English, served as an interpreter to the captains, so that a simple word to be understood by the party required to pass from the natives to the woman (Sacajauea, Indian wife of Charboneau, who could not speak English), from woman to the husband, from the husband to the mulatto, from the mulatto to the captains. York was an object of curiosity to the Indians and a cause of excitement and admiration wherever the expedition went.

Some of the party had also told the Indians that we had a man with us who was black and had short curling hair. This had excited their curiostiy very much and they seemed quite as anxious to see this monster as they wer(e) the merchandise which we had to barter for their horses.

After the successful termination of the Lewis and Clark Expedition the Negro, York, returned to the middle west as a sort of "Free Lance" to live.

There was a Negro residing in Crow village at junction of Big Horn and Stinking Rivers, who apparently was Clark's servant, York. He told Leonard that he first went to that country with Lewis and Clark, with whom he returned to Missouri, and had remained with the Indians ever since (about 10 or 12 years). He had, when Leonard saw him, four Indian wives, and possessed much reputation and influence among the Crows, from whom he secured the return of some horses which they had stolen from Leonard's party."[5]

That numerous black men were identified with the fur trading days in early Colorado Territory is established by James Rose Harvey in his History of "The Negro in Colorado." It was the general opinion that the black men could get along better with the Indians than the white man, and therefore they were frequently employed in the work. Some of the outstanding persons of Negro blood, or of "mixed blood" in the fur trading days dating from 1779 were: Jean Baptiste Point-a-Sable, described by the Indians as "the first white man who settled here was a Negro" i. e. in Chicago; Pierre Bonza, servant with Alexander Henry of the Northwest Company and trader among the Chippewa; Edward Rose, whose father was a white trader, and mother of mixed Cherokee and Negro blood, who served as chief of the Crow Indians and worked with The Missouri Fur Company in 1809 and with the Company of Astor and The Rocky Mountain Fur Company; Francois Duchouquette and his mother, Aunt Mary Menard; James P. Beckwourth, traditional figure of early Colorado history.[6]

James P .Beckwourth, fur trader and scout, was born in Fredericksburg, Virginia, April 26, 1798, the third child of a family of thirteen children and the son

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[4] *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition,* Introduction, XXXI.

[5] D. G. Hill, *op. cit.,* p. 2.

[6] Minnesota Historical Society, *Minnesota History.* Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society, 1872. p. 423-432.

James Rose Harvey, *Negroes in Colorado* (Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Denver, Colorado, 1941), p. 6-11.

of a former major in the Revolutionary War. He has been described as a mulatto.[7] He became a trapper and fur trader, a guide, an Indian fighter and the chief of the Crow Indian Tribe in the Colorado Territory. His name is today a legend in the history of Colorado. Dr. L. R. Hafen, of the University of Denver Department of History, discovered a picture of Beckwourth and placed it in the Colorado Historical Museum. An interesting story of the life of Beckwourth has been edited by T. D. Bonner.

That the issue of slavery was also felt in the Colorado region is attested by a brief account of the appearance of Negro slaves in the Territory in the 1850's as revealed at Fort Bent, the Gregory Mines, Estes Park, near the mouth of Cherry Creek and other points. It does not appear that there were slaves in large numbers, but that men were actually held in bondage in Colorado and other territories of the far west is assuredly a fact.

Robert M. Peck, a private in the First Regiment of the U. S. Calvary under the leadership of Major Sedgwick, stated in a printed letter[8] that he saw a Negro slave near the mouth of Cherry Creek in 1857. He wrote:

> I was with Major Sedgwick's party. We arrived in the vicinity of Cherry Creek in the latter part of June. At that time the country was literally a howling wilderness—no settlement of any kind on the route after leaving Council Grove, except Allison's Ranch at the mouth of Walnut Creek near the Big Bend, and Bent's Fort, a trading post on the upper Arkansas where Fort Lyon now stands. Yes, there were a few Mexicans living in 'dobe shanties at Pueblo.
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> Just before reaching the mouth of Cherry Creek, we met a party of Missourians, six or eight men, all afoot, with a small wagon drawn by a yoke of oxen, driven by a big buck nigger, the slave of one of the party.
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> We stopped and talked to them quite a while and they told us they had been up in the Pike's Peak region, and in the vicinity of the mouth of Cherry Creek prospecting for gold and found lots of it but that the Indians had annoyed them so that they could do nothing without a stronger force.[9] [10]

A letter written by Judge R. P. Boise of the Oregon Supreme Court to T. W. Davenport, concerning the matter of slavery in the northwest is conclusive of the use of slaves:

> Yours of the second instant is just received. Colonel Nathaniel Ford came to Oregon from Missouri in 1844 and brought with him three slaves—two men and one woman. The woman was married to one of these men and had some small children. Ford claimed these children as slaves and continued to claim them until 1853. One of these children, a girl, had prior to that time, been given to Mrs. (Dr.) Boyle, a daughter of Ford. Prior to 1853 the parents of these children (Robbin and Polly) had claimed their freedom and left Ford and in 1862 were living at Neesmith's Mills, but Ford had kept the children. In 1853 Robbin, the father of the children, brought suit by "habeus corpus" to get possession of the children. The case was heard by Judge George H. Williams in the summer of 1853, and he held that these children, being then (by voluntary act of Ford) in Oregon, where slavery could not legally exist, were free from the bonds of slavery, and awarded their custody to their father.[11]

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[7] T. D. Bonner, *The Life and Adevntures of James P. Beckwourth* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1856), p. 1.

[8] *Denver Times,* 1883.

[9] Robert M. Peck, *Negro Slaves in Colorado* (unpublished manuscript, State Historical Society of Colorado), p. 1.

[10] James Rose Harvey, *op. cit.,* p. 16-17.

[11] Oregon Historical Society, *Quarterly Records, XVII,* pp. 108-109.

The above records will serve to show the presence of slaves in Colorado and the far west territorial areas. Black miners were also in the vanguard of early settlers of the Columbine state. W. Sherman Savage, in an address to the Association of Negro Life and History in Boston, Massachusetts, October 28, 1944, pointed out some of the activities of Negro mine operators in California and in Colorado. Following the slump in mining activities on the Pacific Coast, Negro miners were found in the mountains of the Columbine state. They worked claims in Summit County, French Gulch (Nigger Hill) and Indian Gulch on Bald Mountain;[12] and the Morning Star Mine in Hillsdale County, Colorado.[13]

The names of John W. Dobb, John Sanderlin (retired Denver Negro businessman), and "Aunt Clara Brown" are linked with the history of the mining industry in Colorado.[14] Miners and pioneers in the Rocky Mountain West were of divergent racial stock.

Pioneers of Colorado. Substantial and constructive contributions have been made to the building of Colorado and the entire west by the Negro pioneer. These families have played a noteworthy part in helping to subdue the wild country, in extending the borders of the United States government, in building the many towns and cities of the state and in establishing the religious life of the group; for whether the Negro pioneer came as a slave or as a passenger on the "underground railway," as a servant of some white family or as a free man, he usually brought his religious convictions with him and then awaited an opportunity to create a place to worship God "under his own vine and fig tree." A short sketch of several Negro pioneer families in Denver, Colorado, may serve to reveal the deep and abiding religious convictions of these people. Short sketches have been obtained of ten of the most outstanding Negro pioneer families of Colorado. Most significant "religious groundwork" and community leadership was furnished by these people in the early days of the territory and state. Permission was asked to include this information in this study since it may not be found in any other publication. The work of the pioneers furnishes a perspective in historical development for the discussion of the present status of the Negro church in Colorado.

Eliza Smith Gilmore, born in Ashtabula, Ohio, 1858[15]

Such excitement we experienced as we children prepared to leave our home in Cleveland, Ohio, the year of 1866, Mother and we children were leaving to join father in the new west. He had been away since 1863 and had finally earned enough money to send for us by painting the Blackhawk Mill in Blackhawk, Colorado. It was June of 1866, the year our beloved President Lincoln was assassinated. One of my most vivid memories is the day President Lincoln's body lay in state in Cleveland and we were lifted up to get a glimpse of his sad, still, calm face.

We went from Cleveland to a small freighting town in Kansas, where mother bought a team, mules and supplies, hired a driver and there received information that a party of "covered wagons were just one day ahead of us and as they were driven by oxen and our team by mules we could overtake them." It was there that we met Aunt Clara Brown who was bringing her covered wagons with emancipated slaves, at her own expense, from Leavenworth, Kansas, back to Central City, Colorado. Perhaps some twenty to thirty people at a time. A Mr. Felton, who was freighting for a Denver firm

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12 *Rocky Mountain News,* May 2, 1880.

13 *Rocky Mountain News,* September 28, 1880.

14 W. J. Savage, "The Negro on the Mining Frontier," *Journal of Negro History,* XXX No. 1, January, 1945.

15 From an interview with Gilmore family at 3140 Lafayette Street, Denver, June, 1945.

had approximately eight or ten wagons. We also met many Indians (Utes). They were friendly but all precautions were taken when we met them. Among the families that came with Aunt Clara Brown's wagon train was Mrs. Clorinda Crump and daughter, Lavenia Crump.

Father met us about ten miles out of Denver, now it was August, 1866. He had come down from Blackhawk to meet us. Mr. Felton, whose freighting train had accompanied our wagons the entire way, left us here as the danger of the Indians was over. We stayed in Denver until father picked up some more supplies. When we arrived in Blackhawk we were the only colored family there. Father had built a log cabin upon his arrival in 1863, when he accompanied a group of Union Army Officers who came to Colorado looking over the territory. He cooked for them, looked after their personal needs and scouted with them through the surrounding country. Father liked it so well that he did not return to Ohio with them but decided to send for his family.

In this year, 1866, food was indeed expensive. Apples were twenty-five cents apiece. Flour was fifty dollars and even more a barrel. I spent my girlhood in Blackhawk, Central City and Georgetown, visiting Denver frequently. In 1887 I married Isaac George Gilmore who brought the first Pullman car into Denver. He later joined the police force where he remained for twenty-five years until retirement. He died in 1910. I am still living in the home he brought me to at our marriage.

Wellington Randolph, 1849-1909[16]

Wellington Randolph was born in Forkware County, Virginia, March 1, 1849. At the outbreak of the Civil War, Randolph volunteered. Because of his extreme youth, he could serve only as errand and water boy. His three years of dependable and unflinching service in the army attracted the interest of Colonel Powers. Colonel Powers said of young Wellington, "That boy is too fine a character to remain in the south. After the war, I shall see that he gets a chance in life." Before the war ended Colonel Powers sent Randolph to his wife in Berlin Heights, Ohio. Colonel Powers died before the war was over and in 1865 Mrs. Powers left Ohio. Randolph, thrown on his own resources, remained in Berlin Heights and turned to farming.

Many shipments of fancy layer raisins and other fruits went to the New York market from Randolph's hands for he succeeded at fruit farming. He attended the Methodist church and engaged a teacher to help him learn spelling, reading, writing and arithmetic in the evenings. Randolph loved Berlin Heights and farming, but, when he heard of the great, new west, left Ohio in 1872.

April 17, 1872, Randolph arrived in Colorado. On the northern outskirts of Denver, among the Indians, he tried farming. Because he disliked farming in Colorado's dry soil, he moved into Denver City when water was just being piped. Piped water and the need for men to fight fires led Randolph to volunteer as a fireman with the Archie Hose Volunteer Company No. 2, which was organized in 1872. The Archie Boys, as they were called, were the first firemen to fill their wagon with water and use a hose.

When Messrs. Daniel and Fisher established the Daniel and Fisher's store in a two-story building at Sixteenth and Lawrence Streets, in 1875, they sought Randolph for their first night watchman. Randolph was employed not only by Messrs. Daniel and Fisher, but also by the Denver Fire Clay Company at Seventeenth and Larimer Streets. There, he missed death by a few minutes. While he was walking down the

[16] From interview with Miss Tilly Randolph, June, 1945.

street a few blocks on his lunch hour, an explosion destroyed the entire building of the company and killed Mr. H. Bosworth, its founder and president, and Randolph's employer.

Randolph continued to study the three "R's" in his spare time. He was among the first to encourage and support the Denver Star, Denver City's first Negro newspaper edited and published by and for their own people by Messrs. Lewis Price and J. H. Smith, in 1881 at 353 Holladay Street.

The African Methodist Episcopal church, then on Nineteenth Street, became Randolph's permanent choice. He served on the board of trustees in 1880. In the church he met Miss Emma Cherry, a Cherokee Indian, whom he married on October 23, 1883. Three children were born: Matilda Cherry, Robert Cory and Mary Magdalene.

Randolph saved the first one hundred dollars that he had earned till his engagement to Miss Cherry, then invested it along with other savings in a lot at 601 Parkinson Street. In 1884, he had his first home, a four-room cottage, built by one of the few contractors of his race. In 1887, number 601 Parkinson was changed to 2229. Parkinson Street was later renamed Pennsylvania Avenue. About 1907, Pennsylvania Avenue was renamed Cleveland Place. What is now 2229 Cleveland Place, was in 1884 the beginning of an accumulation of property in that neighborhood, which at the time of the writing of this record (June, 1945), is still owned by Mrs. Randolph, who still, after sixty-one years, resides in the same neighborhood. Besides his loyalty to his work, his church, and community, Wellington Randolph was known and loved for his help to those less fortunate. He died March 9, 1909.

Mrs. Mary Randolph, One of Denver's Negro Pioneers[17]

Mrs. Randolph was born in 1826 in New York City of free parents, and was therefore free herself. Her father was well-to-do and gave his children a fair education. Mrs. Randolph came to Colorado in 1858, crossing the plains in a coach. There was a great prejudice against Negroes in those times, near the war, and there was a rule against carrying them inside of stage coaches. So Mrs. Randolph was put off the coach near Fort Riley, Kansas, unprotected in the midst of the great plains. She spent the night there, and was besieged by coyotes and wolves which she succeeded in frightening away by constantly opening and shutting a great umbrella during the night. In the morning came another stage, which rescued her from her peril.

At one time, she had a comfortable sum of money and some mines in Montezuma and Georgetown, but they have gradually failed her and she was sent to the poor farm about a year ago. She escaped with great good fortune from the flood of 1864, and her intimate friend, Mrs. Mary E. Smith, was carried down the river to Smith's bridge, now Thirty-eighth Street. There Mrs. Smith drifted into some treetops and was rescued next day at 10 o'clock.

The lives of these two women are closely intertwined. Both, especially Mrs. Smith, were prominent in founding Shorter African Methodist Episcopal church. Mrs. Smith is known as the "mother" of the church. Mrs. Randolph was a prominent member of Shorter African Methodist Episcopal church, of which she was one of the founders.

Mrs. Mary E. Smith, Founder of First Colored Church in Colorado[18]

Mrs. Mary E .Smith, known as the "mother of the colored Methodist church" in Denver, was one of the pioneer colored women of Colorado. Mrs. Smith was widely known, not alone

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17 From *Allison's Scrap Book* (Denver, Colorado: Compilation of letters, newspaper articles and sketches).

18 *Ibid.*

among members of her own race, but among many of the prominent families of Denver.

Mrs. Smith was a slave up to the opening of the Civil War. She was born in Independence, Missouri, January 1, 1833, and was raised as were other slaves, without acquiring even the rudiments of an education. As she grew older, however, she realized the advantages of learning and by long and painful study acquired the ability to read and write and became in time unusually able in composition and the use of English.

At the outbreak of the war, Mrs. Smith, with three children, left Missouri in company with a party of Union soldiers to seek her liberty. For two years she lived in Leavenworth, Kansas, and in 1863 came to Denver, crossing the plains in an ox train. Mrs. Smith was asked to tell in recalling the journey from Leavenworth to Denver, of a flood which overtook the party one night in June at 11 o'clock and carried the wagons of the train four miles down the Platte river. The children were seperated from their mother and were not rescued until 9 o'clock the following morning.

Denver, at the time of Mrs. Smith's arrival, was a wild place and at least one night was spent by the family in the government building at Sixteenth and Market Street with dozens of terrified women and children who had been warned that the Indians intended to attack the village.

Immediately after coming to Denver, Mrs. Smith began to work for the founding of a colored church. The family at that time lived on Holiday Street, now Market, in the midst of the rough element of the town. The quiet, gentle colored woman came to be looked upon with respect by the rough characters with whom the town was then filled, and Mrs. Smith got many a dollar for her church by entering a gambling house and passing a collection box among the players at faro and poker.

She had, also, many stories to tell of nursing men wounded by the too-ready shooting of the early days, and there was never any objection made to Mrs. Smith entering the roughest barroom to minister to the injuries of a wounded man.

Mrs. Smith is believed to have been the oldest member of the colored Methodist church in Denver and to her belongs the credit for the founding of the first colored church in Colorado. The Shorter African Methodist Episcopal church, Twenty-third and Washington Streets, which is now the largest colored church in Denver, was founded by Mrs. Smith with the assistance of a few other colored people.

Many of the pioneer families of Denver remembers Mrs. Smith from the early days, and there was never a Thanksgiving Day or a Christmas passed that she was not presented with some token, in the form of a big turkey or a couple of chickens, by some of her old-time friends. She was prominent in colored organizations, being a member of the Order of Eastern Star and Queen Elizabeth Court, branches of the colored Masonic fraternity.

Barney L. Ford, Pioneer Colored Member of State Legislature[19]

Born a slave in Virginia, and visited by many reverses, he made a stepping stone of adversity, overcame disaster and to a degree attained both prominence and wealth. In the early seventies he was elected to a seat in the lower house of Colorado. Himself colored he yet spoke with a tongue free from accent of localisms. It happened that his opponent was a white man from the south, who, from playing with colored children, had contracted a broad accent and considerable dialect, which he still spoke, so people voted for the col-

[19] *Ibid.*

ored man because his speech, they said, was pure.

Ford was quite a speculator. Only the day before his death he told what he considered to be a good story at his expense. He said that some friends offered to let him in on the "ground floor" on a good thing for $12,000. He put the money in. When he got through he said he "was in the cellar."

Ford's freedom was obtained peculiarly. Being sent to Quincy, Illinois, on a business trip by his master, he was informed he was a free man by virtue of being on free soil, and he did not return to Dixie. He learned the barber's trade in Chicago, engaged in business in Central America, was a steward in the Vanderbilt household, was in the hotel business in Virginia, came to Denver in 1860, and was interested in various enterprises. Hotels were his specialty. In '67 he built the Ford House in Cheyenne at a cost of $40,000. He built the Inter-Ocean Hotel in Denver, Sixteenth and Blake Streets. He left $16,000 in property for his son and daughter.

Henry O. Wagoner, Friend of Frederick Douglass[20]

Henry O. Wagoner, a pioneer. the personal friend of Frederick Douglass and the man who, although from Maryland, was never a slave.

Prominent in public matters for many years, his last act was to take a personal part in the campaign, when Senator Patterson was elected he wrote him a personal letter, the last, by the way, of many that have appeared over his signature in the press of the city.

He was born in Hagerstown, Maryland, February 27, 1816, his mother a freed slave, his father a liberty-loving German. With limited opportunities for gaining an education, and with only two three-months' terms of school in Franklin county, Pennsylvania, as the foundation for his acquisition of knowledge, by studying at night,, working the fields during the day and teaching school in winter, he succeeded in becoming one of the most advanced men of his race, adding the art of compositor to his accomplishments and later engaged in the operation of a small mill in Chicago. He was closely associated with the work of Frederick Douglass in the decade before the great Civil War, and on the occasion of a visit of John Brown of Chicago, became well-acquainted with that leader of the Kansas free state movement. Their friendship was cut short by the hanging of Brown at Harper's Ferry.

In 1860 Mr. Wagoner came to Colorado to attempt to retrieve his fortunes, swept away in a fire which destroyed his mill in Chicago, and ever since was a resident here. The Pike's Peak excitement was about at an end when he reached the mountains, but his fertile brain conceived the great possibilities for the future of the then new territory and decided to remain and establish a permanent home. He was blessed with enough of the world's goods to make his declining years comfortable. But one great grief ever entered upon his life, and that was the death of his wife, which occurred in 1870, and whom he never ceased to regard as simply having "gone before."

With his gold-rimmed spectacles and white hair he was a familiar figure on the streets. He was a walking encyclopedia of historical and political events of the century. He enjoyed telling of the friends whose names are known at the firesides of every home in the land, and spent many happy hours in reviewing the correspondence which passed between himself and Frederick Douglass, Elihu B. Washburne, and others whose voices and pens were forces in trying times. Several years ago he retired from active labor.

His picture hangs on the wall of the Colorado State Museum.

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[20] *Ibid.*

John T. Gunnell, Member of State Legislature[21]

John T. Gunnell was one of the best known colored men in Denver. He was one of the first Negroes to be elected to Colorado Legislature and was a political leader among his race. Born a slave in Fairfax county, Virginia, in 1834, his freedom was purchased during infancy by his mother, who for $1,400 bought the liberty of herself and son. They moved away at once.

As John Gunnell grew into manhood he learned the barber's trade and later became barber on the steamboats upon the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. In 1880 he became a member of the Colorado legislature and served with distinction. He accumulated considerable property. He was a member of Arapahoe Lodge No. 2936, Odd Fellows, and a leader in church work.

"Aunt" Clara Brown, Resident of Central City in 1859[22]

Aunt Clara Brown, who was accorded honors by the Colorado Pioneers' Association in 1942, was one of the first colored people in Colorado. Old Aunt Clara was elected a member of the Pioneers' Association back in the seventies. She was about 85 years old when she died. She was a slave girl first, owned in Virginia. In 1858, having been given her freedom, she removed to Leavenworth, Kansas, and in 1859, although between 50 and 60 years of age, she started with the gold-seekers and established at Central City, Colorado, the first laundry in the state. She was always first to nurse a sick miner or the wife of one, and her deeds of charity were numerous.

She is famous for her generosity in using her own money to finance covered wagon trains to bring Negro refugees west after the Civil War, 1866.

There is a chair dedicated to her honor in the Opera House at Central City, Colorado.

Jerome C. Smiley, local historian, mentions the early religious interest of Aunt Clara:[23]

> A union Sunday school for children of Auraria and Denver was opened at the house of the Preachers Fisher and Jacob Adriance, near Cherry Creek, November 6, 1859. The school was opened with twelve children in attendance; the only adult person present besides the five who had published the announcement was "Aunt" Clara Brown, an excellent pioneer colored woman.

Lewis Price, Negro Churchman[24]

Lewis Price was born in Fredericksburg, Missouri, journeyed to Colorado in a covered wagon, arriving here in 1865. He amassed a large fortune dealing in real estate. It was through his several real estate deals he purchased the lots where the present site of Shorter African Methodist Episcopal church stands. He published and was the editor of the first Negro weekly in Denver known as the Denver Weekly Star.

Edward J. Sanderline, Businessman of Denver and Property Owner[25]

Probably the best known colored man in Denver in the early days of Colo, rado was Edward J. Sanderline. He was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, September 14, 1837. He arrived in Denver, June 11, 1859. A barber by profession, he immediately opened a barber shop and as the years grew, it was the finest in Denver. His trade consisted of the wealthy people of the city. By the close attention to business he was able to acquire large property interests and a comfortable fortune, but lost the bulk of it later through hard times and the panic. He was a man who was held in high esteem by his fellow citizens.

Allison's Scrap Book contains sketch-

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[21] Walter Vernell, Church Historian.
[22] Allison's Scrap Book.
[23] J. C. Smiley, *History of Denver*, p. 718.
[24] Interview with Walter Vernall.
[25] *Allison's Scrap Book.*

es of the lives of many other Negro pioneers of Colorado. Mention is made of **John Crump** of 1931 Curtis Street, Denver, who was born February 10, 1800 and came to Colorado in 1873; **Mohican Hill,** old time chef who came to the state in 1859; **Augustus Mosby,** employee of the Colorado National Bank; **John P. Johnson; Dudley Clark,** bricklayer, 1875; **Irwin Williams,** employee of David H. Moffatt, 1871; **Ralph Bransford,** "California Forty-niner" who came to the Columbine State in 1872; **Nancy Lewis,** born a slave on the plantation of Allen Cox in Platt County, Missouri, and came in a wagon train to Colorado in 1865; **Thomas J. Riley** came to Colorado in 1859. He was a charter member of the colored Masons and Odd Fellows Lodges and one of the founders of Zion Baptist Church of Denver. Riley's daughter, Annabel, was said to be the first colored girl born in Colorado, April 10, 1864.[26]

Much of the information about pioneers was obtained through the cooperation of Mr. Walter Vernell, retired U. S. Postal Clerk and Historian for Shorter A. M. E. Church, who secured Allison's Scrap Book, and with the writer held several interviews with pioneers and their descendants. Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Montgomery of Shorter A. M. E. Church loaned the Scrap Book to the writer for use during this study.

Thus our dark-skinned Americans have been identified with the exploration of Pamphilo de Naruaez; the expedition to the northwest in 1787; the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and the work of the fur traders in Colorado. With the westward surge of the population, slavery was experienced by Negroes in isolated places in what is now Washington, Oregon, California and Colorado. Black miners worked in the hills and mountainsides, and Americans of African descent helped to lay the foundation of state and church in the western empire.

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[26] *Allison's Scrap Book,* source of much of this information, was given its title by its author and consists of a compilation of old letters, notes, newspaper clippings, pictures and stories about pioneer Colorado Negroes which the owner collected during the years he lived in the state. The author did not number the pages of his Scrap Book, nor did he make any pretense at systematic organization of his material.