

about...time

\$1.00
JULY, 1984

SESQUICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION
ROCHESTER ROOTS/ROUTES

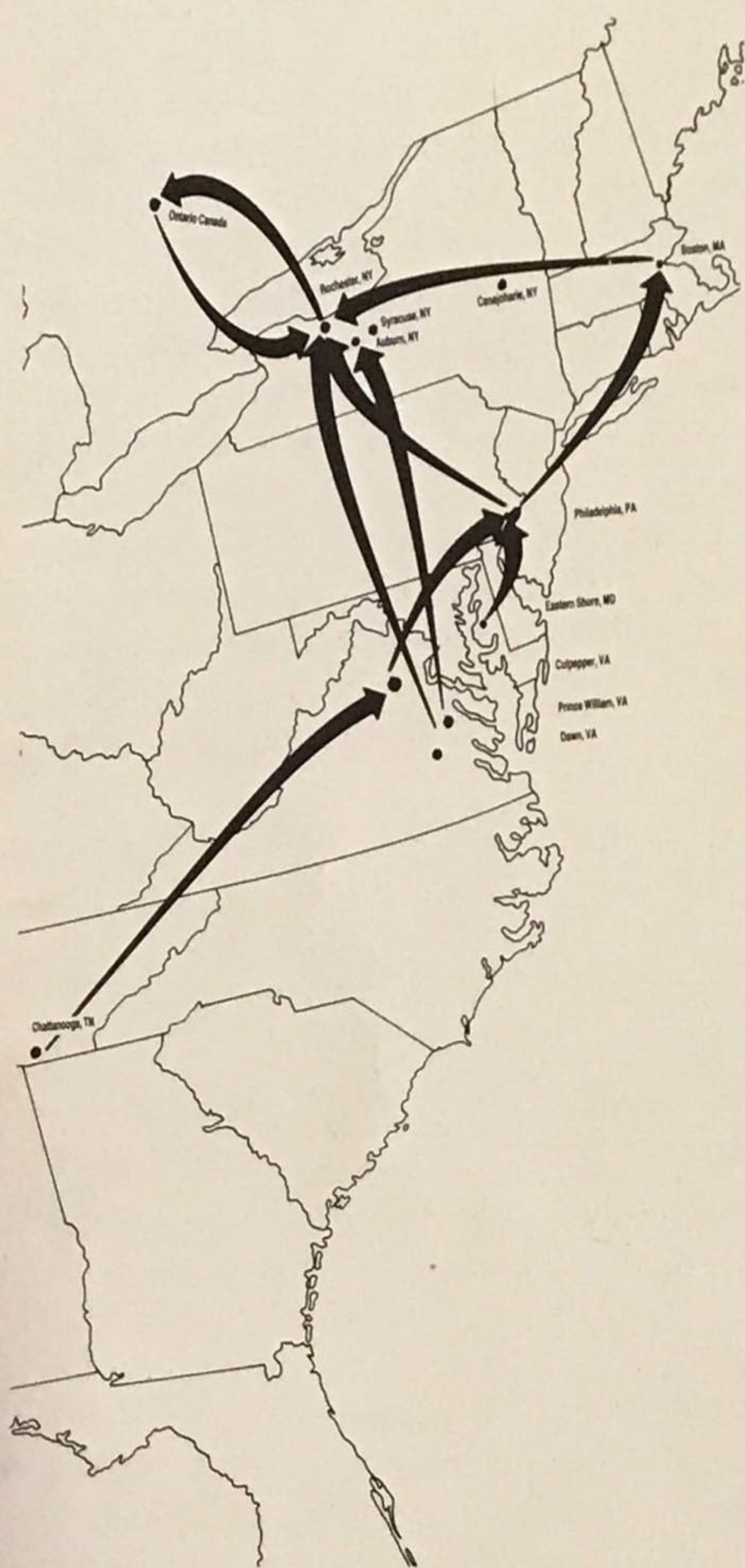
OLYMPIC COMPETITION
THE JESSE OWENS STORY



Rochester Roots/Routes, Part I

No man saw the building of New Jerusalem, the workmen crowded together, the unfinished walls and unpaved streets; no man heard the clink of trowel and pickaxe, it descended out of heaven from God.

—SEELEY-*Ecce Homo*, Ch. XXIV



Throughout our history, maps have been used to document the growth and development of nations. As we trace the growth of roots in the black community of the Rochester, NY area, we find travel routes that range from the networks that formed stations along the Underground Railroad to the great migration patterns in the decade between 1910-1920 to the settling of migrant workers after World War II. Blacks arriving from Culpepper, Virginia and Sanford, Florida form the greatest numbers of non-natives.

Maps are illustrations of history, detailed specifications of our *origins* and *destinations*. During the celebration of this year's sesquicentennial in the Western New York city of Rochester, the dominating—if not publicized—theme will be the development, use and significance of maps.

Early markings on the walls of prehistoric caves may have been the first directional guides to find life-sustaining food and family-protective shelter.

These crude drawings were also chronicles of history, a placement of early *roots* and a strategy for later *routes*.

Within the boundaries of the encompassing sesquicentennial festivities, a seldom documented and rarely publicized segment of local black American history will be charted.

Native Land, Native People (1600-1825)

A nation of Seneca Indians, part of a protective league of native Americans were the earliest known human inhabitants of Western New York.

They did not, however, choose to build their long houses at the 43°10' north latitude and 77°36' west longitude point on the map. Early Rochester, New York was wet with confining marsh land and thick with the native American's sacred trees of peace.

A picturesque series of waterfalls magnified the flow of the river now and then. Here was a source of power that would change the face of the Seneca Nation's maps.

Reports from soldiers in combat with the Senecas and surveys of roughly sketched maps, unearthed a golden opportunity for land development, leasing and sales.

Both New York and Massachusetts staked claims to the Western New York area after the Revolutionary War. A compromise of Massachusetts ownership and New York governing power was put into effect, bypassing the rights of the Seneca Nation and other owning members of the Iroquois League.

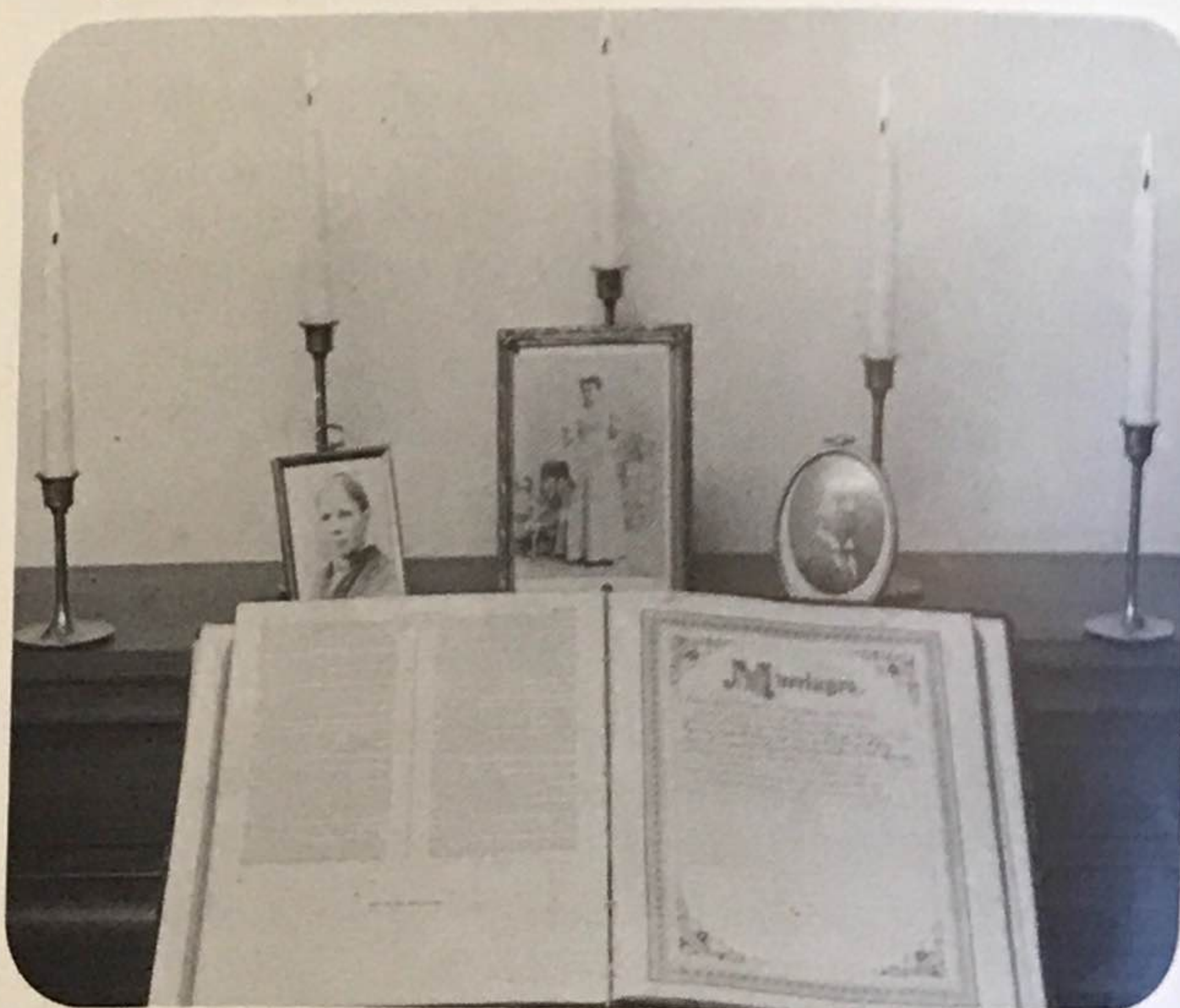


Photo By Collette Fourrier

Family keepsakes—such as photographs, diaries, letters, or the old family bible's recordings of births, deaths and marriages—could be the basis of historical verification, documenting important events in our past. The DuBois family treasures are pictured above.

Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham purchased six and a half million acres from Massachusetts for *six cents an acre*. As a precautionary measure, Phelps and Gorham effected a treaty in 1788 with the Senecas for two and a half million acres for less than thirteen thousand dollars. An additional one hundred acre plot, twelve miles wide and twenty-eight miles long was included for the purpose of building mills to grind corn and cut wood.

ROCHESTER ROOTS/ROUTES

The newly deeded one hundred acres located east of the Genesee River (Chen-ne-see-o—pleasant, clear opening) at the Four Corners—a thriving commercial downtown section of Rochester—was deeded to Ebenezer “Indian” Allan in exchange for building and operating the grist and saw mills.

“Indian” Allan was reportedly—at various times—wed to an Indian squaw whose father, Captain Sunfish, was black; a white woman and possibly a freed black slave. According to Joan Allen, the daughter of the late James Edgar Allen, their family members are descendants of the pioneer settler Ebenezer Allan.



Pictured left to right: Joan Allen's grandmother, Mae (Newport) Allen; Gus Newport's grandmother, Flora Newport; and Charlotte “Lottie” Allen.

“Allen is the proper spelling of the name, some people spell it *Allan*,” said Joan Allen.

“My father was born in a log cabin in North Rose, New York in 1905. My father's mother was Phoebe Mae Newport who was a mixture of Indian, black and white. His father was Vincent Allen, black and Indian.

“The Allens and the Newports were related and both are traced from Ebenezer Allan. We were descendants on both sides. His parents were second or third cousins.” Ms. Allen remembers her father's stories about Ebenezer

Allan.

“He was an Englishman—a Tory. My Indian ancestors gave him Pultneyville as a kind of dowry. One of the Indians that Ebenezer Allan took as a wife was one of my father's ancestors.

“The black heritage came in through Virginia. The Underground Railroad was here and a lot of blacks that came through mingled with the Indians.

“The one thing that I can say about Ebenezer Allan is that he had seven or eight women mates, one white woman was his last wife.”

In reconstructing the oral history from her father, Ms. Allen said her father's grandfather owned property “all over the county” that he inherited from Ebenezer Allan but he “sold it all off.”

“I am related to quite a number of people in Rochester who might not want to say they are related to me, because I am black and they are white,” she said.

Her father's cousin Lillian Hall is the oldest Allen descendant living now. She is the great, great granddaughter of Elvira Allen (see cover). Mrs. Hall operated a restaurant and bar on the corner of Clarissa Street and Bronson Avenue from 1950-1974.

All of her father's brothers and sister are deceased. Joan Allen is a freelance painter and writer. Her sister Joyce is a secretary at Eastman Kodak. A brother, James V. Allen is principal of W.E.B. DuBois Academy and a brother, John is a supervisor at Xerox.

“My father had a thing for ‘J’ in the names,” she said.

A cousin, Gus Newport, is mayor of Berkeley, California. Her mother is Mrs. Clementine Allen.

The first settler on the east side of the Genesee River in 1795 was Asa Dunbar, a black salt miner. A plaque at North Winton Road documents his residency in a place the Senecas called Irondequoit—where bay meets lake. The Dunbar family left for Canada, swallowed up in the mysteries that too often shroud black history.

In 1803 Colonel Nathaniel Rochester and two associates, Majors Carroll and Fitzhugh, arrived from Maryland and purchased the one hundred acre tract. There had been a series of sales and exchanges over the years and the price of the property was now seventeen dollars and fifty cents an acre.

Colonel Rochester returned to the area in 1810 with ten freed black slaves and settled south of the prized land, located on the shores of Lake Ontario and the banks of the Genesee River.

Here and there, a small black community reached out to join hands and silently built their New Jerusalem.

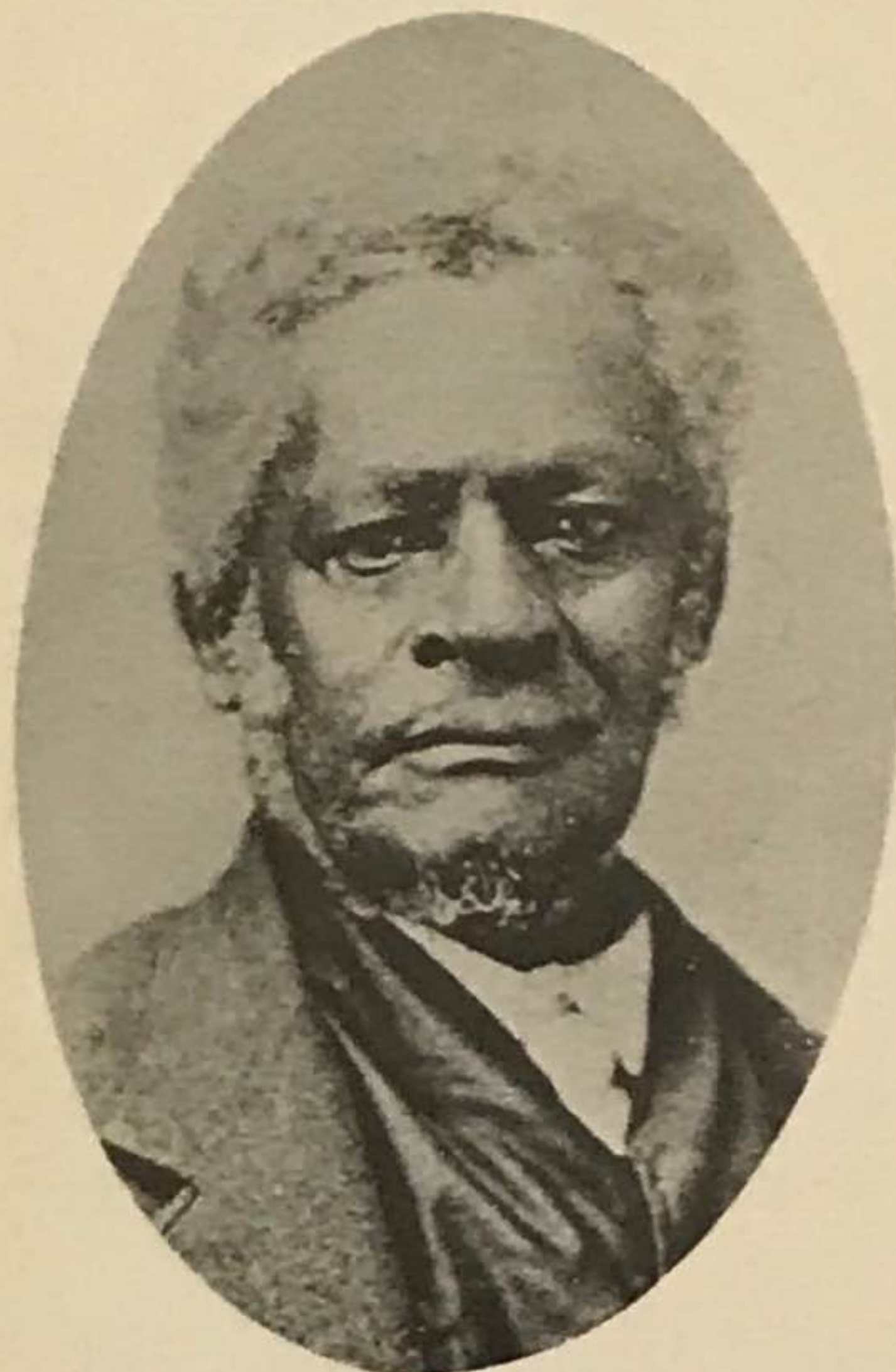
Words of freedom spread fast and in 1817, Austin Steward, a former slave from Virginia followed the freedom trail to Rochester and opened a store on West Main Street. The same year, a charter was approved and the village of Rochesterville was incorporated. The dot on the map was growing larger and larger as the economic potential from the river, lake and canal was becoming a reality.

Continued on next page

ROCHESTER ROOTS/ROUTES Continued

Reverend Thomas James, an escaped slave, arrived in 1823 and later founded the Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church at the corner of Spring and Favor Streets. His escape route followed the markings of the newly proposed Erie Canal, a passageway that would swell the population—both white and black—past record breaking numbers.

He was an influencing figure in encouraging Frederick Douglass to visit and establish roots in Rochester. His great granddaughter, Katherine Golden Anderson, was instrumental in placing a memorial bust in the Hall of Justice in Rochester's Civic Plaza.



Rev. Thomas James: Upon gaining his own freedom and moving to Rochester, NY in 1819, Thomas James helped in the formation of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Society and founded the Memorial Zion A.M.E. in 1830 on a lot at Favor Street. He was also active in the anti-slavery movement, and his church became one of the main stops on the Underground Railroad.

Religion was a unifying force for black Americans, especially former slaves. They sought and found Christianity as a signpost in their journey through the wilderness of slavery. First, prayers in the privacy of their homes, then prayer meetings in rented halls and finally organized churches.

Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church was a beacon of hope for black Rochesterians. Two earlier wooden structures were replaced by an impressive brick building (1907) with a series of memorial windows honoring Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, Harriet Tubman and others. The church was a center of social action—Underground Railroad station, North Star newspaper and women's suffrage.

Early black Methodist and Baptist churches were fragments of white religious groups, shaped into their own culturally individual likenesses. Routes toward self-sufficiency and the opportunity to exercise black leadership in the church also planted the roots for Elks, Masons and other social organizations.

The masons were founded in Boston in 1775 by Prince Hall, a free black from Barbados and fourteen other blacks. Their organization, African Lodge 1, received initiation rites from a Mason group in the British regiment occupying Boston. They had been refused the ceremonies by masons in Massachusetts and New York and did not receive their charter from England until 1787, after the Revolutionary War.

A Route to Freedom (1826-1845)

...Every Negro, mulatto or mustee within the state, born before the fourth day of July, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-nine shall, from and after the fourth day of July, one thousand eight hundred and twenty seven, be free.

LAWS OF NEW YORK, Ch. 137, p. 144
(March 31, 1817)

In the Matter of Color
Aileon Higgenbotham, Jr.

Travel routes to Rochester were filled with prospective employees for the growing flour mills and their related industries when the Erie Canal was completed in 1825.

Two years later, New York State passed an Emancipation Act, easing the fears of runaway slaves and encouraging the migration of blacks from other states. There was a sudden and overwhelming demand for the ownership or use of maps.

Rochester, claiming to manufacture more flour than any other center on any map in the world, was incorporated as a city in 1834. Main Street was bustling with impressive new buildings. The forest in the Senecas' time was gone. Tall, straight trees that lifted their branches to the sky were now flat beams of wood, furnishing the floors and walls of banks, insurance companies, hotels, restaurants, dry goods stores, attorneys' offices and other businesses.

Illustration By Jesse Battle



Austin Steward lived in Rochester off and on from c1817-1830s. He forged new routes for newer roots when he headed a group of runaway slaves beginning a new life of freedom in the Wilberforce Colony in Ontario, Canada.

Austin Steward was an advocate of freedom for blacks. He had suffered the indignities of slavery for over twenty-two years and was dedicated to the abolishment of any kind of servitude.

In 1831, he was vice-president of the *First Annual Convention of the People of Color* in Philadelphia. This was the beginning of a continuing pattern of conventions where people of color united for freedom. Foremost in the discussions was the support of settlements in Canada and the opposition of colonization in Canada.

A much travelled abolitionist, Stewart—forging new

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routes for newer roots—moved his family to the Wilberforce Colony in Canada in 1831 to head a group of runaway and freed slaves beginning a new life in a free community.

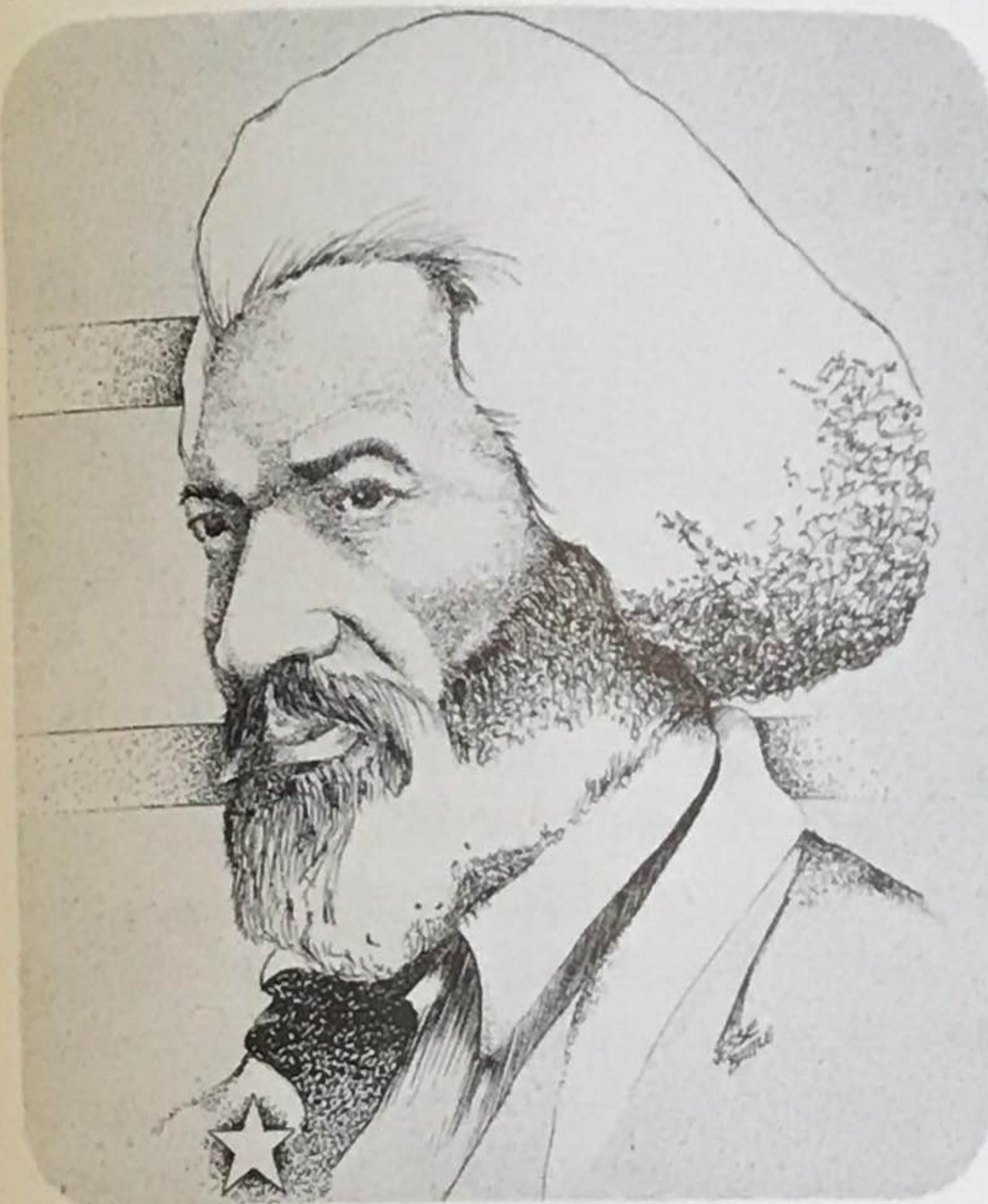
In 1837, he returned to Rochester, disillusioned by fundraising agents whose expenses exceeded receipts. Years later, he moved to Canandaigua, New York where he wrote the classic journal of black history, *Twenty Two Years a Slave*, and *Forty Years a Freeman*.

In the Shadow of a Giant (1847-1860)

Right is of no sex—Truth is of no color—God is the Father of us all, and we are brethren.

MOTTO, *The North Star*
(December 3, 1847)

William C. Nell, Publisher
Frederick Douglass, Co-editor
Martin R. Delaney, Co-editor



Not only did Frederick Douglass dominate political, social and intellectual themes of his day, but the issues he addressed—in the areas of government power, women's rights and the futility of war—are as urgent today as they were a century ago.

THE NORTH STAR.

New enthusiasm for black Americans in Rochester was evident in 1847 with the arrival of Frederick Douglass. A runaway slave, famous orator and a new champion for the anti-slavery cause, Douglass printed the first copy of his *North Star* in Rochester, New York, December 3, 1847.

William Lloyd Garrison, the great abolitionist and editor of the anti-slavery publication, *The Liberator*, did not believe the cause would support another newspaper opposing human bondage.

Douglass had originally planned to publish the *North Star* in Cleveland, Ohio but reports of a highly active women's movement—led by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton—called for a change to Rochester, New York.

A lapse in history fails in too many accounts to credit Martin Delany's role with *The North Star*. Delany—editor, author, scientist, inventor, physician, freemason,

politician, trial justice and the father of black nationalism—was initially listed as subscription agent and contributing editor. According to Victor Ullman's *Martin*

STEPPING OUT OF DOUGLASS' SHADOW

Throughout the publication of *The North Star*, later called *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, a series of intellectual routes branched out from the paper to strategic points all over the world.

Frederick Douglass was a publicized giant, overshadowing the later recognition of many prominent black leaders and contributors to the cause of freedom.

Among the notables who lived in or visited Douglass in Rochester or were visited by or corresponded with him are:

- Thomas Downing 1791-1866, abolitionist, New York City
- Samuel Ringgold Ward 1817-c1866, minister, writer, abolitionist, New York City
- William Cooper Nell, 1816-1874, abolitionist, publisher and acting editor of *The North Star*
- Charles Lenox Remond, 1810-1873, lecturer who often travelled with Douglass
- Charles Lewis Reason, 1818-1893, prominent leader, 1st black professor in American college
- Alexander Crummell, 1819-1898, minister, abolitionist
- William J. Watkins, c1828-?, author, probably the first black lawyer
- James W.C. Pennington, 1809-1871, minister, writer
- James Monroe Whitfield, 1822-1871, barber, poet
- James Cephas Holley, 1825-1855, poet
- James McCune Smith, 1813-1865, physician, abolitionist, writer
- Henry Highland Garnet, 1815-1882, minister, abolitionist

In addition, a number of singular women—black and white—as well as women's organizations fell under the Douglass shadow, a list too long to include in this space.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Most of the material for the period involving Frederick Douglass was selected from the notes and library of Sidney Gallwey, an instructor in the Training Division of the Urban League of Rochester. Additional period material on Frederick Douglass and early Rochester was taken from the notes of Howard Coles, publisher of *The Frederick Voice* newspaper and his book, *Cradle of Liberty, Volume I*, ©1941.*

Delany, *The Beginnings of Black Nationalism*, Delany was credited as co-founder and designated co-editor.

The switch from Cleveland to Rochester for the more active environment of women's anti-slavery activity has an ironic twist. In 1848, during a National Negro Convention in Cleveland and chaired by Frederick Douglass, Delaney recommended more active participation by women. His proposal was rejected.

However, the contributions of Douglass to Rochester and the country is noteworthy and documented by countless citations, awards and other honors.

In the beginning, *The North Star* was published in the basement of the Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church on Favor Street, a flourishing center for other "underground" activities.

Harriet Tubman conducted and supervised her Underground Railroad from that same basement. Susan B. Anthony and her movement were involved in support of the anti-slavery movement.

Continued on next page

All the Brave Generals (1861-1865)

And then we saw the lightning, and that was the guns. And then we heard the thunder and that was the big guns. And then we heard the rain falling and that was the drops of blood falling. And when we came to get in the crops, it was dead men that we reaped.

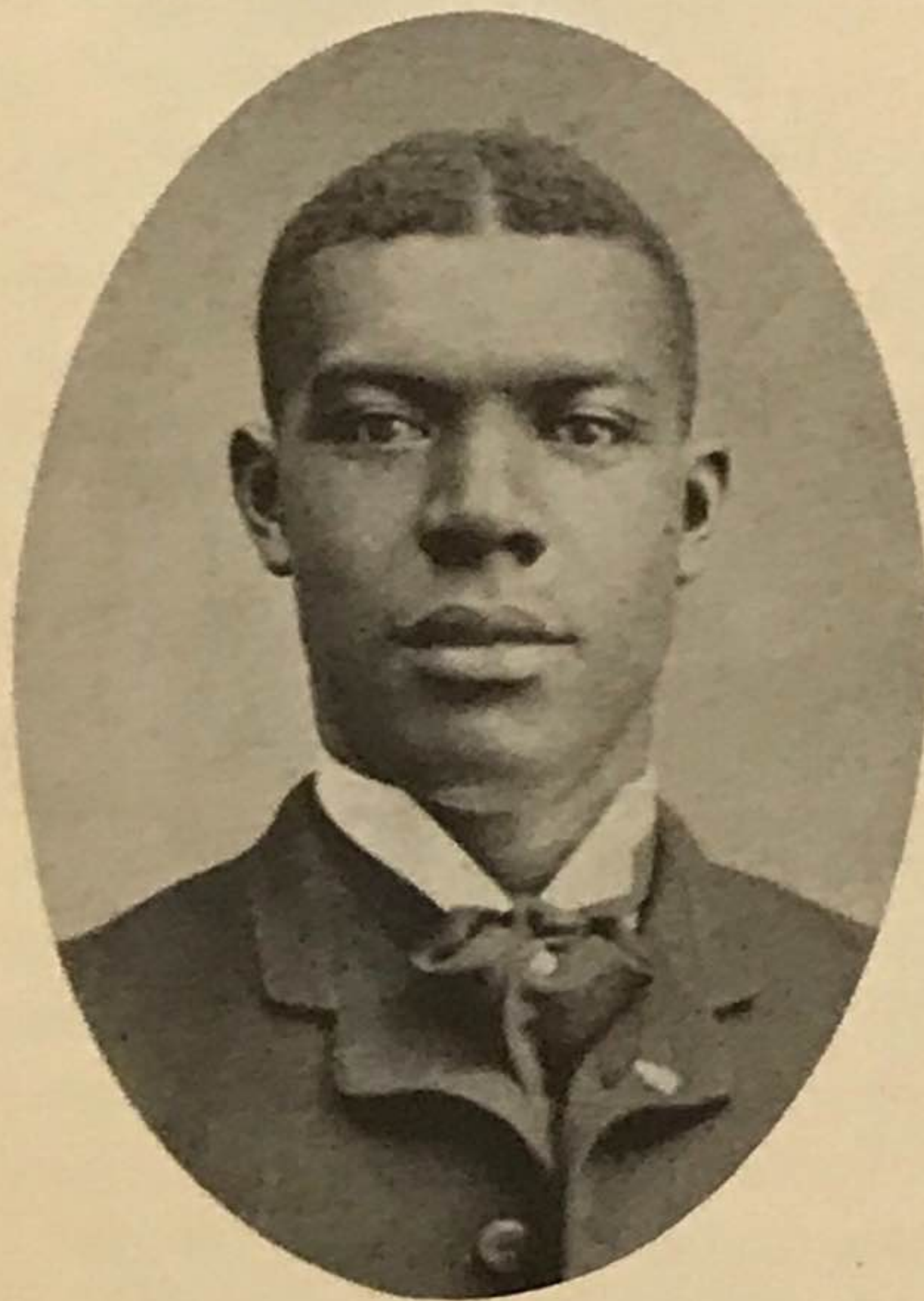
HARRIET TUBMAN, ex slave, abolitionist
Union scout and Freedom Fighter (describing a battle
of the Civil War which she witnessed.)

Preface to And Then We Heard the Thunder
By John Oliver Killens

Map making was a profitable business during the Civil War. Military personnel planned their journeys of destruction and survival on the precious pieces of paper. When there were no printed maps available, hand-drawn directions were quickly sketched on envelopes, pages from books and any scrap of paper available.

Citizens and slaves in "limbo" no doubt peered anxiously over maps to follow the battle-by-battle journeys of the Union and Confederate armies.

It was a war that divided families and friends, in some instances putting free blacks against slaves. In what may have been the last formal action by either side, Sergeant Adann Price of the Fifth Massachusetts Calvary, raised the Union Jack in victory at Appomattox Court House in Virginia when General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant.



Charles Henry Price, Sr. is the son of Adann Price, a Civil War veteran who raised the Union flag in victory at Appomattox Court House in Virginia. Charles came to Rochester from Ithaca, c1918, and worked at the Howland Relin Furniture Company, the N.Y. Central Railroad Station and later in the courthouse. His marriage to Jennie Louise Stevens produced a son, Charles Henry Price, Jr., who became the 1st black officer in the Rochester police department.

During the war, Frederick Douglass was one of the more prominent recruiters for blacks to join the Union Army. He sent black recruits from Rochester while Martin Delany sent recruits from Pittsburgh and other western cities. Both their sons, Lewis Douglass and Toussaint L'Overture Delany enlisted in the 54th Massachusetts Regiment under Colonel Robert Gould Shaw.

Martin Delany was commissioned a Major, the first black field officer in the Civil War. Frederick Douglass, however, did not receive a promised commission but continued his recruiting efforts.

Fresh from her triumphs as shrewd "general" during the

Underground Railroad forays, Harriet Tubman volunteered her services to the Union forces.

The "Moses" of her people found yet another way to lead her army to the New Jerusalem.

Harriet Tubman was a familiar figure in the Rochester area prior to and throughout the Civil War. An unlettered and plain looking woman, she mingled easily with the intellectual and sophisticated giants in Rochester, New York.

There was time to support anti-slavery with Frederick Douglass and womens' rights with Susan B. Anthony. And time to don the battle dress of guerrilla soldier and plot a course of victory through the lightning and thunder of canons as a spy and nurse for Union troops.

During the North-South conflict, blacks were on the battlefield for both sides. For those relatives and loved ones left behind, the cries from the battlefield could almost be heard. As in modern times of war, prudence became a necessity.

The Great War curtailed a multitude of pleasures. However, during the sparse years of the war, blacks banded together to protect their interest in freedom.

Every day is a line, paragraph, page, chapter or book in history. There is no doubt, this period of time in the Rochester area could produce a complete library of useful information on black Americans.

Forgotten or thrown-away letters could be the basis of historical verification as noted by the examination and interpretation of the *Douglass Paper*.

Old diaries, receipts, organizational minutes, artifacts and other personal papers help to reconstruct specific time frames for documentation of important events in our past.

All together, along with pieces of clothing, jewelry, furnishings and photographs, historians and archeologists are able to lay out a map that defines our roots and examines the routes of our journeys through time.

Our examination of Civil War history is incomplete. No history is ever complete. In years to come, we may unearth even more buried achievements by black Americans in what was to them believed to have been the final struggle for victory.

Peace Be Still (1866-1900)

They shall beat their swords into plough shares, and their spears into pruning books; nation shall not lift up sword against nation neither shall they learn war any more.

ISAIAH 11:4

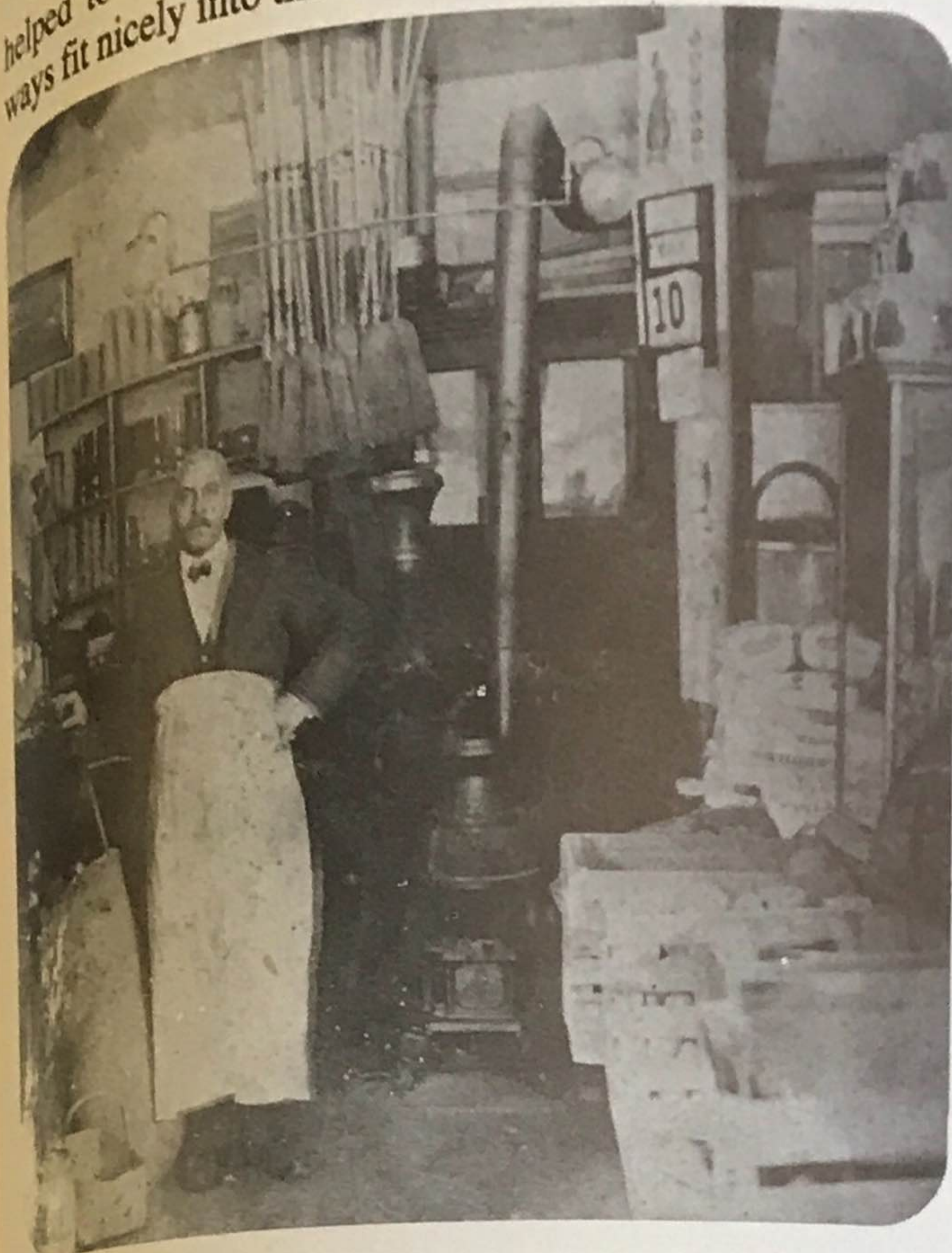
The victory did not come without pain. There was no mass movement to equalize the races. In the faraway corners and sometimes, even in the open spaces, the conditions of black Americans were worse than it was before the Civil War.

Survival was not necessarily for the fittest. It was mainly for those who endured.

In Rochester, New York, there was a run for the money. Slaves who had travelled this route to reach free-

ROCHESTER ROOTS/ROUTES

dom were now searching for economic stability—as free men and women. New roots were being planted. The hardly noticeable change in the status of freedom helped to condition black people to endure. Their old ways fit nicely into the new ideas.



Jesse Stevens is pictured in the grocery and general store he owned on the corner of the old Calidonia Avenue (now Clarissa Street) and Spring Street. His daughter, Elizabeth "Bessie" Stevens Walls, was the first black school teacher in Rochester.

"Uncle Jesse came here first," said Henry Thornton Williams (see page 21) who was born in 1892. "Years ago on East Avenue they use to have oil lamps—all those rich people out there—and he use to sell oil before he started the grocery store. He would go down on a one-horse wagon he had."

Henry Thornton Williams' mother, Tulip (Mines) Williams is the sister of Maria (Mines) Stevens. Tulip and Maria were from Dawn, a town in Hanover County, near Richmond, Virginia.

Maria Stevens was married to Jesse Stevens who came from the same area in Virginia.

Maria and Jesse's daughter, Jennie Louise, married Charles Henry Price, Sr. who was the son of Adann Price, a veteran of the Civil War.

"My grandmother Jennie Louise Price was born in 1892, here in the Rochester area, in a farmhouse, where there was a flour mill off East Avenue," remembered Renee Ann Price. She is the daughter of Captain Charles Price, Jr., first black policeman and first black police captain in Rochester, New York.

Another daughter of the Stevens, Florence Elizabeth "Bessie" (Stevens) Walls was the first black school teacher in Rochester. A son, Harry Stevens, had a blacksmith shop on Cottage Street near Seward.

Blacks who provided services were survivors in the

years after the Civil War. There were few, if any options. However, the patience of waiting on tables provides the means to one day own the tables. It is a fragment of a master plan that when carefully pieced together, plots the routes to richer roots.

The Culpepper connection is not as publically recognized or remembered in Rochester as the Sanford migration. However, the black mass movement from Culpepper County in Virginia was in force long before the migratory movement from Sanford, Florida.

Howard Coles, publisher of *The Frederick Douglass Voice* and editor of *The Cradle of Liberty*, a history of black Americans in Rochester, has more than a transient interest in Culpepper.

"My grandfather's home was Culpepper, Virginia. Chattanooga, Tennessee was where he was born, via Culpepper, Virginia. He had been a slave." Howard Coles, 80, is one of the few threads of our most valuable piece of fabric—black American history. In addition to his oral accounts of nearly forgotten years, he compiled and is presently compiling a chronicle of black American influence on Rochester's history.



Rev. Clayton Coles is pictured with his wife. In 1891 he founded the Belcoda Baptist Church of Mumford, NY and was the caretaker of the Belcoda Cemetary for 25 years.

"My grandfather, Clayton A. Coles, had several masters before he got connected with Stonewall Jackson in Culpepper, Virginia (Confederate General Thomas Jonathan Jackson). Then the Emancipation Proclamation came. He was released through the government and he came up here."

Howard Coles examined the records stored in his mind. The statistics began to unravel a chronological pattern of the Cole ancestry. Clayton Cole was ordained August 26, 1885 in Culpepper at the Ebenezer Baptist Church.

There was a period of time in Philadelphia, he married Ellen Wilson and became an employee of John Wanamaker, operator of a dry goods and clothing store, a forerunner of today's department store.

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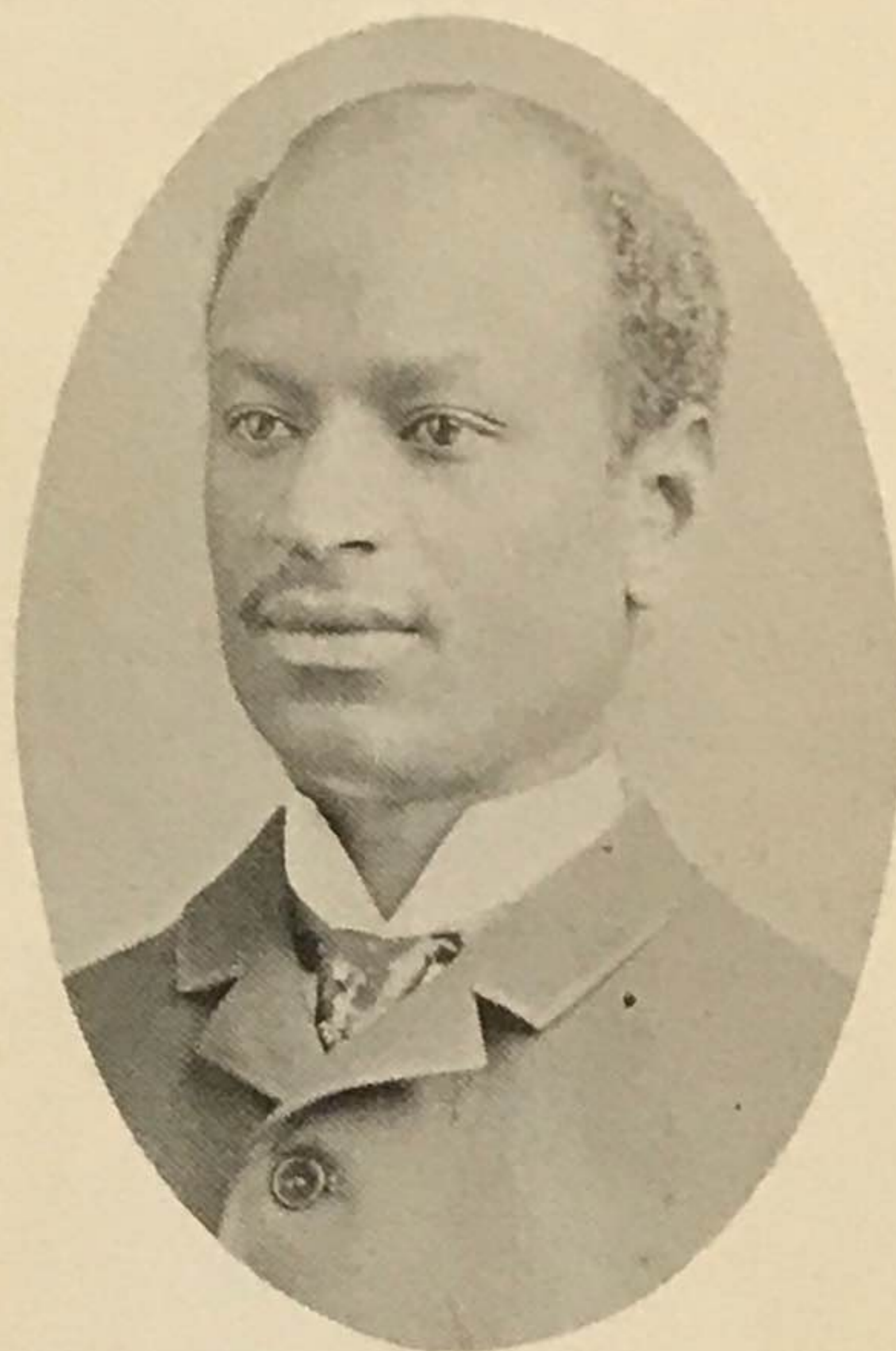
ROCHESTER ROOTS/ROUTES Continued

Migrating to Mumford, New York, Reverend Coles was one of the founders of Belcoda Baptist Church, later Mumford Second Baptist Church.

A former Union officer, Captain John Harmon had recruited a number of Culpepper, Virginia blacks from his brother's farm to work on his land in Churchville, NY.

Eventually the Culpepper connection settled in the neighboring communities of Wheatland, Scottsville, Avon, Caledonia and LeRoy. Most of the early migrants worked the many gypsum mines in a place called Garbut. Howard Coles' father, Charles Coles, worked in those mines for thirty-five years.

Early on, the *roots* of fraternal and sororal organizations had been firmly established in most of the black communities. Rochester, New York was no exception. Many of the *routes* from former slave status converged at Rochester and social groupings of the new arrivals reunited the ties that had been temporarily severed during slav-



J.W. Thompson came to Rochester from Culpepper, Virginia. In addition to his work as Chairman of the Frederick Douglass Monument Committee, Thompson served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees during the building of the "new" Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church on Favor St., completed in 1907. He also was responsible for having the church design and dedicate a stained glass window in memory of Frederick Douglass.

ery and the war.

Eureka Lodge, No. 36 F. & A.M., a group of Prince Hall masons was organized and fully chartered in 1879. The first Worshipful Master was William H. Bruce.

In 1894, John W. Thompson, a native of Culpepper, Virginia and member of Eureka Lodge No. 36 F. & A.M., initiated a proposal to erect a monument in memory of black American soldiers and sailors killed in the Civil War.

J.W. Thompson had been a resident of Rochester since the early 1850's and was actively involved with Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church and the masons.

When Frederick Douglass passed, the committee—under the chairmanship of Thompson—unanimously agreed to direct their efforts toward a monument for Douglass.

Thompson, who settled in Rochester with his wife (Mary Elizabeth Overton of Auburn, New York), was instrumental in involving hundreds of famous personalities with the erection and dedication of the monument. Governor Theodore Roosevelt, Booker T. Washington, Senator

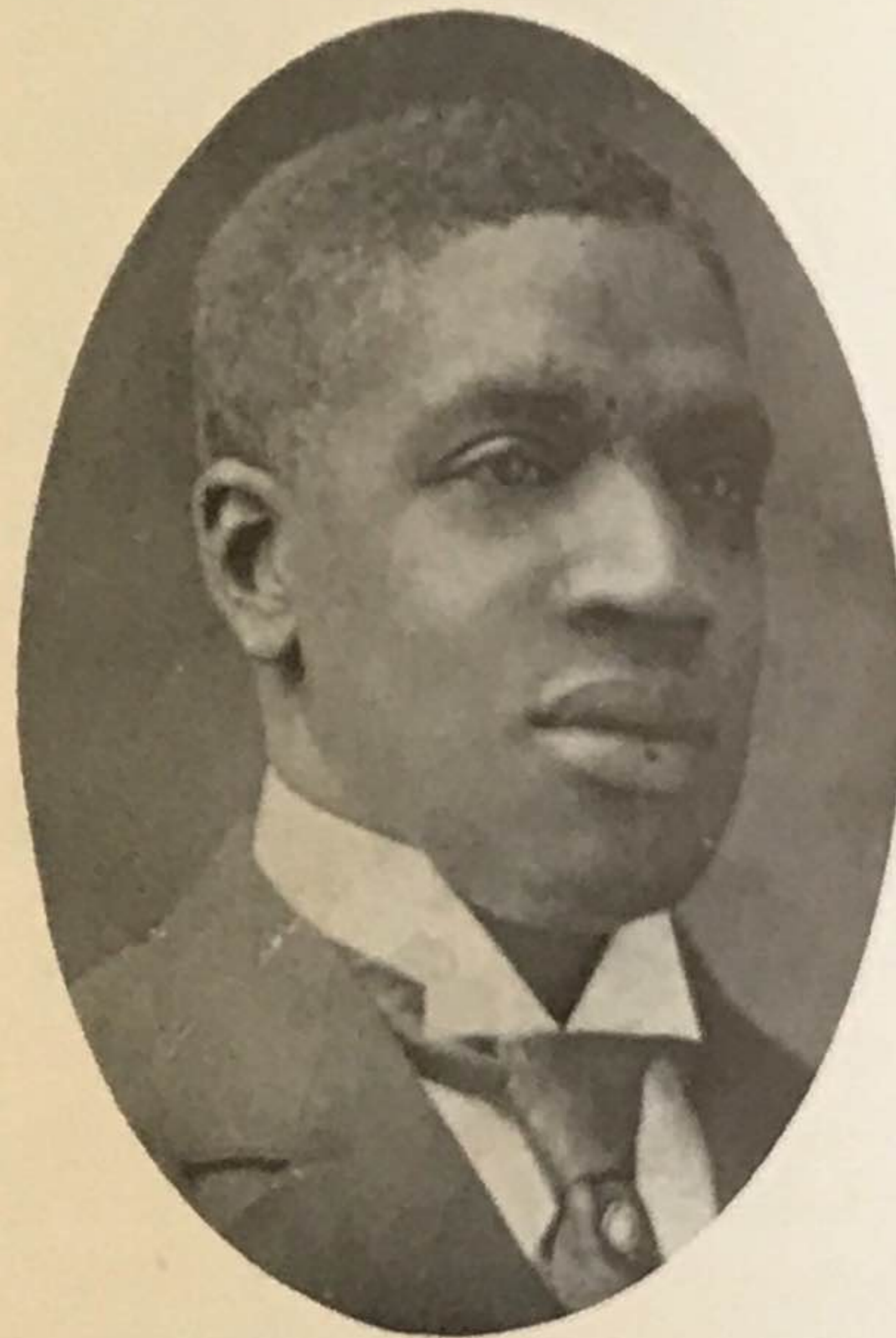
W.W. Armstrong, Susan Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, L. Thomas Fortune, Hester Jeffrey, Charles P. Lee, George Eastman, Roserta D. Sprague and other members of the Douglass family and many, many more.

The Frederick Douglass monument, originally placed at Central Avenue and North Street, was later moved to Highland Park, where it stands today. Frederick Douglass is buried in nearby Mt. Hope Cemetery.

Mrs. Vivian Jeffrey Bentley, the only surviving child of J.W. Thompson, recalls the many Douglass Day celebrations after the statute was dedicated. She was chosen to wear a commemorative wreath around her shoulders.

Thompson passed away in 1926.

One of the members on the J.W. Thompson Committee for the Frederick Douglass Monument was Leon Joseph DuBois, an employee of Central Trust Bank, Chaplain of Eureka Lodge and a guiding force in helping newly arrived blacks find suitable housing.



Leon Joseph DuBois was born in Fulton, NY in Oswego County in 1865. After moving to Rochester, he worked on the committee to develop a monument to Frederick Douglass. He was an employee of Central Trust Bank, Chaplain of Eureka Masonic Lodge and a guiding force in helping newly arrived blacks find suitable housing.

DuBois came to Rochester from Syracuse, New York. He was married to the former Carrie Sprague and was a prominent member of Trinity Presbyterian Church, then located on the corner of Reynolds and Bronson.

Trinity is the second oldest black church, founded in 1902.

After the turn of the century, the DuBois descendants made notable contributions for the improvement of black American representation in the community of Rochester.

A Native Son

Henry Thornton Williams (1892-

I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

On the brightest days when sunlight is a simmering flame to warm the lip-red roses slipping quietly up the bannister, Henry Thornton Williams sits in his metal chair

ROCHESTER ROOTS/ROUTES

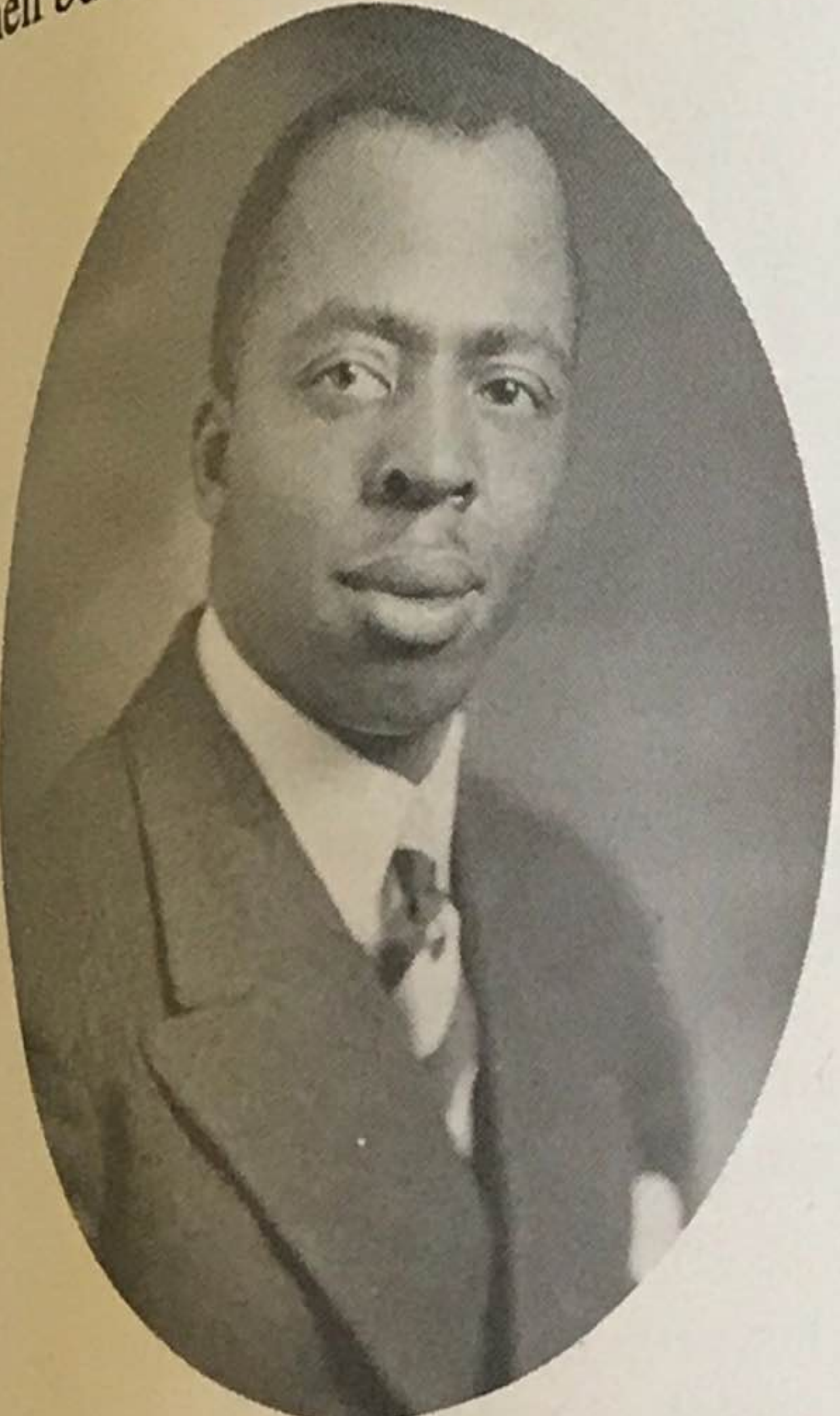
with cushion and marks routes of new history as he fondly remembers his roots.

He was born in Brighton, on the outer edge of Rochester, New York in 1892 when the bustling intersection at Monroe Avenue and Culver Road was wide fields occupied by a regiment of thick trees.

"You ever been out there to Cobbs Hill? You know where that stone marker is? There use to be two brick houses there. I lived in the one and my godmother, a white lady named Mrs. Sherman lived in the other."

Henry Thornton Williams, as perhaps the oldest living black native in the Rochester area, is one of the few remaining oral historians. His memory lays out a priceless map of Rochester at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries.

There have been changes—social as well as physical—since Henry Thornton Williams hauled water to the workmen building the Cobbs Hill reservoir for the city.



Henry Thornton Williams worked for 45 years at Marine Midland Bank, earlier known as Union Trust Company. As a child, he carried water up Cobbs Hill to workers building the reservoir.

"When I was a kid," he said, "all around Monroe Avenue was farm and my father use to work as a farmer and did coachman work."

His mother, Mrs. Tulip Williams, was a sister of Maria Mines Stevens who was the wife of Jesse Stevens, the grocer.

"Uncle Jesse came here first," recalled Mr. Williams. The Williams family migrated to Rochester from Dawn, Virginia, a small place near Richmond in Hanover County.

When memory is blocked by age or any other condition, a Latin word is used to record the "approximate" date. *Circa*—sometimes written, *c.*—means "about" or "around."

Therefore, c1890 is the year computed as the arrival of Henry Thornton Williams and his family to the brick house at the foot of the Cobbs Hill reservoir site.

And c1902 is the year we assumed they left the brick house for a place on South Clinton Avenue and Goodman Street.

"In 1905," there was more of a positive feeling about

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the date, "when they built the Cobbs Hill reservoir up there, I took water to the men.

"And my oldest brother, John worked there too—they had what they called a harrow guage railroad. They had dump carts for concrete. They'd make the concrete down on Monroe Avenue and they'd put it in these carts and John would take it up there on the hill and dump it in the forms they had made."

The elder Thornton worked for a five and ten cents company and then moved over on the city's payroll.

"He went to work for the city picking up trashy things and putting them in a wagon."



Mr. Williams, now 92, sits on his porch during the summer, marking routes of new history as he fondly remembers his roots.

In 1917, Henry Thornton Williams was hired by the Union Trust Company Bank—Marine Midland—as a porter. The bank was on State Street during those years.

Pictures passed through his memory and a snapshot

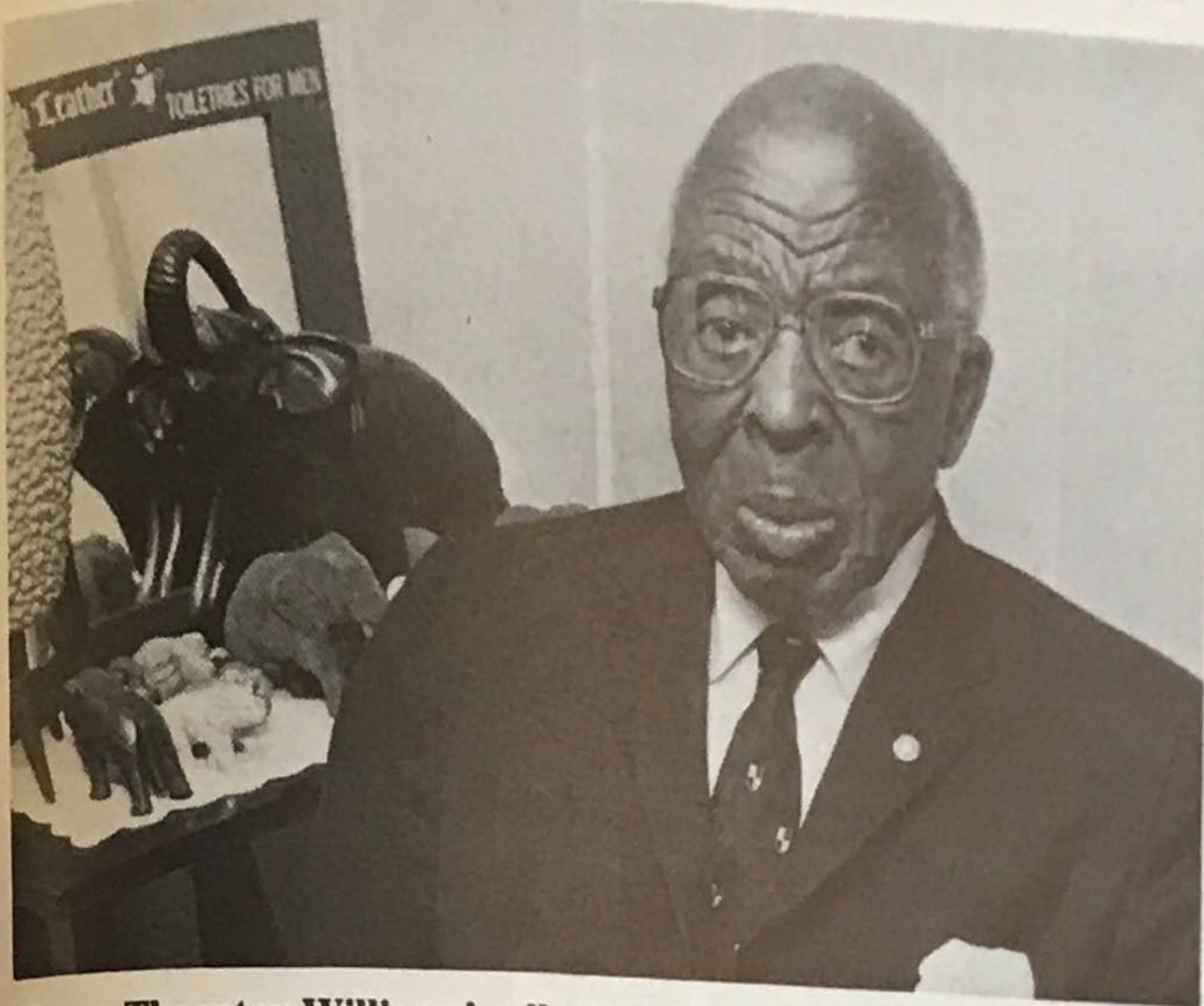
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from out of the past focused on specific things.
 "There use to be a sign in this Yale Hat Store, 'Why pay more? Two dollars!'"

Some dates are imprinted in the mind forever.
 "I was born April 6, 1892."

"My brother Walter and I went to Camp Upton, Long Island, New York, August 2, 1917. We went in the Army together and came home together."
 Overseas in France, the Williams' boys drove ambu-

Photos By Collette Fournier



Henry Thornton Williams' collection of memories also includes other collections such as the ceramic elephants on the table. He is proud of his 40-year service pin from Marine Midland Bank.

lances and helped out around the hospitals.

Henry Thornton Williams smiles fondly whenever "Gay Paree" is mentioned.

They returned to the states July, 1919 and Henry became a charter member in the Veteran of Foreign Wars, Trott Emerich Post.

In 1920, he returned to Union Trust after a short stint as porter for a stockbroker in the old Triangle Building on East Avenue. There was only one other black at the Union Trust Bank when Henry Thornton Williams was a floorman. His name was George Burks, an enterprising young man who had been with the company for many years.

Henry Thornton Williams stayed with the bank—they had moved to their present location at 19 West Main Street—for 45 years.

After their parents passed away, the Williams family made an effort to stay together. Then one by one, the brothers and sister passed and Henry Thornton Williams

Coming Next month!

Rochester Roots/Routes, Part II

20th Century Express

Repetitions of History

Caribbean Connections

Above and Beyond

Knocking for Opportunities

was alone.

He has his roses in the front yard and up against the porch. He has a peaceful garden out back. His house is brightened with period pieces of furniture and soft light and sunlight filtering through the windows.

There is a collection of ceramic elephants—left by somebody else. There is a collection of ceramic dogs. And a collection of memories.

Henry Thornton Williams is history. A testament of sacrifices and patience.

His roots will mark the direction of our routes.

* * *

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Celebration. That's what birthdays are all about. To observe with ceremonies of respect, festivity and rejoicing the birth of something good and noble. At First Federal, we're celebrating Rochester's 150th Birthday by recognizing and praising the thousands of Rochesterians who, through the years, have been responsible for our City's growth and vitality.

First Federal is proud to be among those who have played an important role in Rochester's development. And, as long-time community residents, it's an honor for us to share in this memorable celebration.

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about...time

VOLUME XII, No. 7

JULY, 1984

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Every day is a line, paragraph, page, chapter or book in history. Old diaries, letters, photographs, receipts, organizational minutes, artifacts and other personal papers help document important events in our past. The story on *Rochester Roots/Routes* (p. 14) helps reconstruct specific time frames in the history of Rochester's black community. Cover photos: (l. to r., top) Joan Allen's great grandparents Theodore and Phoebe Newport and her great, great, great grandmother Elvira Allen; (bottom) Howard Coles' father and mother, Charles B. and Grace Coles.



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