

1834–1959

Black Fellowship and Entrepreneurship in Bermuda

Friendly Society March Points of Interest



GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Ministry of Culture and Social Rehabilitation
Department of Community and Cultural Affairs

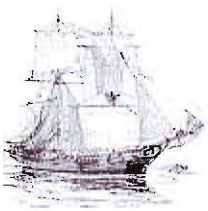
HONOURING BERMUDA'S 2008

EMANCIPATION



THE ENTERPRISE (Barr's Bay Park)

The American brigantine *Enterprise* sailed into Bermuda on 24 September 1835 with 78 slaves on board at a time when slavery was illegal in Britain and its territories, but still practised in America. A Bermudian Friendly Society intervened and the slaves appeared in court. Most slaves chose to gain their freedom by remaining in Bermuda, and were supported by members of the Friendly Society.



BERMUDIANA HOTEL PROTEST (ACE Headquarters)

An early protest in which Mr. Hilton Hill II, Mrs. Georgine Hill, Miss Carol Hill, Mr. Don Gibson and Mrs. Elsbeth Gibson objected to separate private and public nights for dramatic performances. This effort preceded The Progressive Group.

BERMUDIAN WAR HERO MR. FRED DOLAN (Bermuda Historical Society)

Much of the information on Fred Dolan can be found in Andrew Bermingham's book *Bermuda Military Rarities*. Mr. Dolan left Bermuda at the age of 15 and settled in South Africa. When the Boer War started in 1899, Mr. Dolan was recruited into a special civilian unit responsible for driving and maintaining traction engines, which revolutionized road haulage in South Africa. For his service, Mr. Dolan was awarded the Queen's South African Medal 1899-1902 when he was about 40 years old. This is significant because the Queen's South African Medal was only awarded to white troops and support units, and Mr. Dolan was a black Bermudian. He was later awarded two additional medals for his service as an Able Seaman in the Merchant Marines during World War I. He returned to Bermuda and lived in Wellington, St. George's until the time of his death. (courtesy of Mrs. Cecille Snaith-Simmons)



THE PROGRESSIVE GROUP AND THE THEATRE BOYCOTT (Chevron House)

A group of people, some of whom had recently returned home to Bermuda after studying abroad, met secretly for several months to plan a challenge to segregation and racial inequality on the island. Their ideas



culminated with a decision in June of 1959 to anonymously distribute flyers island-wide, encouraging people to boycott movie theatres as a way of protesting separate seating for blacks and whites. The boycott was successful, and the theatres

were forced to close their doors after about two weeks. The newly integrated theatres opened again on 2 July 1959.

DISMONT DRIVE

Dismont Drive is named for the City of Hamilton's first black mayor, Mr. Cecil R. Dismont. The Dismont family was well-established and members of the family were respected city businesspeople along with others in the immediate vicinity.

BLACK ENTREPRENEURS



Washington Lane: Family businesses established on Church Street and in the area known as "The Alley" included the Blue Jay Restaurant owned by Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Jackson (Mrs. Jackson was the twin of W.L. Tucker MCP, who owned Tucker's Commission House on King Street - see Dr. Eva Hodgson's *Second Class Citizens, First Class Men*). Businesses owned and operated

by blacks included shoemakers Mr. Nickie Francis and wife Edith; Mr. Reid Johannsen and tailor Mr. Ebenezer Lespere; Dismont Cycle Livery and Dismont's Shoe Store; Dr. Millard Cann's dental office (Dr. Cann came from a family of doctors and professionals); the Imperial Hotel; and MiLadies dress store (owned by Mrs. Della Place).

LEOPARD'S CLUB (Cedar Avenue)

Service clubs were segregated. Radio broadcasts of the black club's lunchtime speakers were censored and cut off if speakers addressed racism or inequalities. Later, the Leopard's Club provided hotel accommodations for black tourists.

HOTELS AND BURNABY STREET BUSINESSES

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a number of hotels were located on Church Street. The Imperial Hotel and the Sea Horse Grill (now Thistle House) was a grand hotel where the talented Bermudian jazz pianist and composer, Mr. Lance Hayward, performed with his orchestra. On Burnaby Street, the building known today as the



Jackson School of Dance was once owned by Mr. Samuel David Robinson who also owned a store known as "Styleright" which sold furniture, cloth, ladies dresses and hats. An art supply shop and a photographer's studio was on the top floor.

LITTLE PARLIAMENT (Twice-Told Tales)



Mr. John Herbert Taylor's Shoe Shop was known as "Little Parliament". The city's black businessmen would meet there before the first black MCP, Mr. William Henry Joell, would ascend the hill to vote at the



House of Parliament across from the shop. The shop was also a gathering place for black seamen who would bring the news from abroad as well as black literature and newspapers, including W.E.B. Dubois' newspaper *The Crisis*.

BLACK ENTREPRENEURS ON COURT STREET

Court Street was a hub of businesses owned by black Bermudians and other institutions significant in the community. These included Mr. Joe Robinson's Barber Shop, Alexandrina Friendly Society Lodge, Mr. Buster Tucker's Groceries and Vegetable Produce, dentist Dr. Thomas Stowe's office, Mr. Alex Romeo's tailor shop, *The Bermuda Recorder* newspaper, Payne's Ice Cream Parlour, and St. Paul's AME Church. Nearby were the physicians' offices of Dr. Leon Williams and Dr. Charles Smith. The Robinson building housed musician Mr. Lance Hayward's studio.

Special thanks to Mrs. Shirley Pearman, Mrs. Valerie Dill and Miss Carol Hill for their research and assistance.

For further information, please see:

Hodgson, Dr. Eva N. *Second Class Citizens, First Class Men*. England: Hazell Watson & Viney Ltd. (n.d)

Hodgson, Dr. Eva N. (Research by Dale D. Butler) *A Storm in a Teacup: The 1959 Bermuda Theatre Boycott and Its Aftermath*. Bermuda: Writers' Machine, 1989.

Jones, Elizabeth J. *Bermuda Recollections*. Bermuda: Ministry of Community, Culture and Information, 1993.

Musson, Nellie E. *Mind the Onion Seed*. Hamilton, Bermuda: Musson's, 1979.

Musson, Nellie E. *Children of the Enterprise*. Hamilton, Bermuda: Musson's, 1979.

Packwood, Cyril O. *Chained on the Rock: Slavery in Bermuda*. New York: E.Torres, 1975.

Philip, Ira P. *Freedom Fighters: From Monk to Mazumbo*. London: Akira Press, 1987.

Robinson, Dr. Kenneth E. *Heritage: Including an Account of Bermudian Builders, Pilots, and Petitioners of the Early Post-Abolition Period 1834-1859*. Bermuda: The Berkeley Education Ltd., 1979.

Smith, James E. *A New Dawn: An Analysis of the Emancipation Experience in Bermuda*. Bermuda: Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs, 1991.

Smith, James E. *Slavery in Bermuda*. New York: Vantage Press, 1976

Williams, Errol. *When Voices Rise: Dismantling Segregation in Bermuda*. Bermuda: Quibo Films, 2002.

Emancipation Committee:

Mrs. Heather Whalen, Chair

Dr. Michael Bradshaw

Mr. Keith Caesar

Mrs. Valerie Dill

Mrs Louise Tannock

Dr. Kim Dismont Robinson

Mr. Rawle Frederick

Mrs. Shirley Pearman

Ms. Nicole Stovell