MIDDLE CLASS AMERICANS
Portland’s Early Black Community

“In that early generation of the Black community here...you could find the very powerful strains of what you might call pursuit of the American dream. In some ways it was an atypical, a unique Black community. After all, those Blacks who came to Oregon made a conscious choice to travel a significant distance and to participate in a community that had a tradition of racial hostility. They tended to be especially committed to home ownership. They were certainly a very talented population. Many were college graduates although they could not hold the kind of jobs that would be appropriate for a college graduate. They might have to become janitors or work at the hotel, but they were a well educated, a cultivated and cultured community.”

Darrell Millner
Professor of Black Studies, Portland State University

“Their social life was centered on the church activities.”
Kathryn Hall Bogle

“We had an ice cream parlor here...on the Broadway side, on the corner, and after church...this was a mecca.”
Otto Rutherford

Spring Chicken served Saturday and Sunday as long as they last
Baked Ham Every day
With Pork Salad Saturdays and Sundays
RICHARDSON’S CAFE
Broadway and Broadway Street

“After church, certain numbers of us used to drift up to the Golden West Hotel...in order to have our dinner. Often they were swamped with customers all of a sudden every Sunday. So we utilized that time by visiting more with other people who had come out of other churches. There was a great swapping of laughter, exchanges, plans for the coming week—just a general get-together, socializing.”
Kathryn Hall Bogle

“The Portland Blacks who worked for the Portland Hotel or for the railroads represented the highest occupations in the Black community here. Now, that being said, those occupations were not comparable to a middle class status or an upper class status in the white community. They were at the top of the Black employment pyramid but the color line separated them from the class structure on the Caucasian side of the line.”
Darrell Millner

“William Duncan Allen in Recital”
At the Williams Ave. YMCA, 7 N Tillamook, Tuesday evening September 6, 1927, W.D. Allen, Jr. will be presented in a piano recital. Mr. Allen is a student at Oberlin College where he is pursuing his musical studies. Mrs. Jesse Cole-Grayson, contralto, will assist on the program. The admission is 50 cents. Tickets are on sale at the YMCA and the Golden West Hotel.
Portland Advocate, August 27, 1927

Waldo Bogle was born in Watts, Texas, a prominent Black family. This photo was taken in 1940 when Waldie was in his twenties. After his father's death, Waldo moved to Portland to establish his own employment as barber and hairdresser at the center of the African American social and economic community. Waldo Bogle was well known at the preachers of the Golden West Baptist Church from 1912-1940.

Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society