THE RAILROAD
Black Businesses in the North End

NW Sixth Avenue, c. 1912. Following the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition of 1905-06, Portland’s population skyrocketed. Along Broadway and Sixth Avenues, stretching from Union Station to Barnsdale, a new business and entertainment district springing up serving the fast-growing Black community, traveling salesmen, and railroad workers. Residential hotels, as well as storefront restaurants, shoe shine parlors, barber shops, and poor rooms lined the busy streets.

Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society.

A Sampler of Black Businesses, 1900-1930

1. Golden West Hotel, W.D. Allen
2. Waldo Boggs’s Hotel Barbershop
3. Richardson’s Café
4. G. H. Green’s Ice Cream and Confectionery
5. Lucy B. Lejeune Boarding House. 1884-1907
6. Arcadia Salon, Burr Williams & S. C. Clay, 1899
7. Mt. Olive Baptist Church
8. Bethel AME Church
9. Charles Jackson Law, 1903
10. Julius Savage, 1902
12. Colored Cooks
13. Walters, Porters, and Janitors Club, 1904
15. Mrs. Emma Moore, “The Castle,” Rooming and Boarding House, 1902
16. Mrs. Emma Moore, Restaurant, 1902
17. Shepard Freeman, Restaurant, 1902
18. The Alpha, Furnished Rooms, 1906
19. J. C. Matthews Club for railroad men, 1919
20. Asuyền & Rutherford’s Barbershop, 1905
22. Club Café Barber Shop, Walter Eagan, and S. L. Ware, 1917
23. Rutherford Bros. Barber Shop, 1919
24. Mack Oliver, 1919
25. Frankie Baker Shoeshine, 1921
26. Rutherford Bros. Barber Shop, 1931
27. Walter Eagan Barber Shop, 1931

“The original location of the Black community in Portland was in close proximity to Union Station where much of the Black economic life and employment center was centered.”

Darrell Milliner

“Dad used to have his barbershop on the Broadway side and confectionary and haberdashery on the Flanders Street side. Down on Gllson there was a grocery store right across from the Post Office, a very busy little store. And then across the street from the Post Office on the Broadway side there was a shoemaker and he had that business for a long time. These were all Black businesses. Then of course you had your billiard parlor here and there, one across from the Post Office and one over on Sixth Street. Then they had -- before Prohibition they had one or two saloons, too.”

Otto Rutherford

Rutherford Brothers Haberdashery NW Sixth and Flanders. 1910. William and Edward Rutherford were partners in several successful businesses, including a barbershop and a haberdashery, which served the resident African American community, railroad workers, and travelers. They first owned property at the corner of Broadway and Flanders, later selling it for a quarter block on Sixth Avenue between Gllson and Flanders, close to Union Station.

Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society.