

# Reverend J.W. Anderson

## African-American Baptist Movement Organizer

Reverend J.W. Anderson spurred the early African-American Baptist social justice movement in the Pacific Northwest and built deep relationships with the Black community in Bend, visiting frequently between 1920 - 1928. He supported the Black community in forming the Club. He also connected with folks in Redmond and Prineville.

Reverend Anderson presided at the Mt. Olivet Baptist Church in Portland, one of the oldest and largest Black Baptist church in the Pacific Northwest. Mt. Olivet began in 1897 when 14 Black folks gathered at the home of a white Christian woman for a service, and eventually started their own church. By 1922, the Black community built a new building for their church under his direction.

He explored the possibility in 1923 of founding a Black church in Bend, but concluded that "Bend could not now support a church for colored people, so his work at this time consists merely in encouraging negroes here to attend other churches."

Beyond his work with the Club, he engaged the larger Bend community, providing programs of spirituals and speaking about his work at the Bend Baptist Church during this time. Reverend Anderson died at the age of 65 on July 18, 1931.



The Advocate (1924), courtesy University of Oregon Libraries, Historic Oregon Newspapers



Second location of the Mt. Olivet Baptist Church of Portland, Courtesy Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church of Portland

# Roscoe Conklin "R.C." Cameron

## President of the Club

Roscoe Conklin "R.C." Cameron was born in the late 1880s in Mississippi and had 4 siblings. He made his way to Portland by 1918 and was a waiter at the Multnomah Hotel. In 1920, he married Katherine Combs at the age of 27.

While living in Portland, he maintained a relationship with The Advocate newspaper and that relationship continued while he lived in Bend.

He stayed at the Cozy Hotel in 1922, which was considered the only respectable hotel in town at the time and it catered to the most wealthy travelers. By 1924, Roscoe was employed as a valet at the Pilot Butte Inn and he may have lived on site at the Inn.

The Club meetings were typically at his home with the warm loving space that his wife Katherine and her mother Sallie Combs made. The Club members gathered at their home most Sundays and their family was the connective tissue for the Club.

He and his family moved back to Portland in April 1929 to the Albina district where he worked as a Pullman porter. Fun facts about Pullman porters:

1. They were almost exclusively Black men hired by the Pullman Company to work on its luxury sleeping cars.
2. Many were able to send their children to college, helping to create a Black middle class.
3. The first all-Black union was formed by Pullman porters in 1925.

He was the only Club member to live long enough to see the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. He died in Memphis, Tennessee on February 12, 1970.

**BEND OREGON NEWS**  
(By R. C. Cameron)

Master Oscar Johnson of Portland is visiting Mrs. S. Combs. He reports a wonderful time fishing and bathing.

Henry Burton motored to East Lake Sunday in his new Buick car which looks mighty swell.

The colored people of Bend feel very much pleased with the action of the City Council by havin some humiliating signs removed from restaurant windows.

R. C. Cameron left for Kansas City, Mo., last week on business. While there he will visit with old friends and relatives.

The Advocate, August 15, 1925, courtesy  
University of Oregon Libraries, Historic  
Oregon Newspapers

**Human Alarm Required  
To Wake Up This Man**

**Newsboy Has Special Duty  
of Rousing Janitor**

**Pay Would Buy Fifty Clocks In  
Year, But Walter Johnson  
Prefers It That Way**

Alarm clocks are perfectly reliable when a person can stay awake to make certain that they go off, but Walter Johnson, employed as janitor by the management of the Capitol theater, has no faith in these sleep disturbing contraptions.

Whether an alarm clock "did him dirt" on one occasion, causing him to lose his job by oversleeping, is not known, but it is certain that Johnson prefers to be awakened by a human agency. As a result of this preference, Clayton Constable, newsboy, gets paid for serving as a human alarm clock.

Each morning at 7:30 Clayton quietly walks to the head of the stairs in the R. C. Cameron home on Wall street, where Johnson lives, and gives the high sign, "Hey, time to get up." Then Johnson rolls out. And after rolling out, he doesn't have to turn off his human alarm clock, for Clayton is on his way.

For his services, Clayton receives \$1 each week. And when it is considered that Johnson's human alarm clock costs him about \$52 a year, the extent of his disdain for mechanical alarm clocks is realized.

The Bend Bulletin, August 25, 1925

# Walter Green

## Secretary-Treasurer of the Club

Walter Green was born around 1888 in Oklahoma. He made it to Bend by 1924 and lived at 731 Florida Avenue, which was owned by fellow Club member Henry Burton, and worked at De Luxe Shoe Shine Parlor, which was owned by another Club member, George Rencher.

He struck out on his own by March 1926 and opened his own business, the B-B Shine Stand, at the entrance of the O'Kane building, and advertised regularly in The Bulletin for over a year. He also worked as janitor at the O'Kane building, which is where the local Bend KKK office was located.

Walter's story takes a turn in December 1929 when he was arrested for having cases of wine, beer, and homebrew, which was found "when officers entered his home in search of the colored man who attempted last night to assault a local woman." Less than a year later, he was charged with being under the influence of liquor and shooting a car tire. While he did not recall discharging the weapon, he was "greatly chagrined when he learned that he had ruined one perfectly good automobile tire... and asked that the owner of the tire be sent around to the city jail to receive an order for a new tire and inner tube."

His life was cut short when he died unexpectedly of heart failure at the age of 49 in January 1937. The Bend Bulletin reported that he had been living in Bend for 12 years and at that time and lived at 810 Arizona. He is buried in Pilot Butte Cemetery (F-3-2) and the funeral services were provided by the Baptist church, with Club member Ed Simmons as a pallbearer.

### Colored Men Organize at Bend

Bend, Ore., May 15, 1925.

To the Editor:

Please allow me space in your paper to say something about that big man of our race, in the person of Dr. J. W. Anderson of Portland, Oregon, Superintendent of the N. W. Coast Baptist Association. Dr. Anderson has been coming to our city for more than five years in the interest of our race. He was in our city today and after a talk with the men of our race and leading business men of the city, he called the men together at 5 p. m. in the home of Mr. R. C. Cameron. There he organized "The Bend Colored Men's Business Club" with the following as officers: R. C. Cameron, president; Walter Green, secretary-treasurer; George Rancher, chairman membership committee. This is the first colored business men's club in Deschutes County. We are proud of Dr. Anderson as a leader of our race in the state.

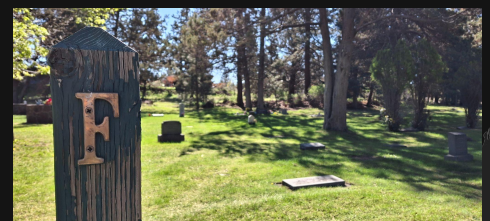
WALTER GREEN,  
Secretary-Treasurer.

The Advocate, May 23, 1925, courtesy  
University of Oregon Libraries, Historic  
Oregon Newspapers

### B-B Shine Stand

**\$1.50 Ticket for \$1.00**  
Entrance O'Kane Bldg.  
WALTER GREEN, Prep.

The Bend Bulletin, May, 23, 1927



Site of Walter Green's unmarked grave at  
Pilot Butte Cemetery



# George Rencher

## Chairman of the Recruitment Committee of the Club

George was born in 1877 in Hillsboro, North Carolina and had two brothers. He lived in Portland in 1913 and then moved to Astoria where he had a reputation of being an “expert in the shining art” and a 15¢ rate for his services.

He moved to Bend by 1921 and lived at 571 Drake until he was able to purchase a foreclosure property in Aubrey Heights from another Black family, the Wilces. This was remarkable given that Black exclusion laws were still on the books at this time. He also owned a sweet Briscoe car.

George owned De Luxe cleaning and pressing, located at 1008 Wall Street, which also had a shoe shining parlor and cigar counter. He had at least one employee — a Mrs. Grace Simpson, who did garment repair work and ladies’ alterations — and regularly advertised his many services.

Football was also big and there was a big rivalry between Bend and Prineville. George, being the community oriented person he was, went to Prineville to cheer on Bend High.

George moved back to Portland in 1931. For a few years, he owned Novelty Pressing Shop on Williams Street and advertised his business in The Advocate. But by 1934, he had moved to Salem where he worked both as a chauffeur and a cook and then moved back to Portland by 1941 and worked as a waiter at the 1017 Club.

George lived out most of his life in Portland, but died in his mid-80s in July 1961 at the Oregon State Hospital in Salem.



The Bend Bulletin, October 22, 1926



The Advocate, April 30, 1932, courtesy University of Oregon Libraries, Historic Oregon Newspapers



George Rencher, one of city's best known waiters, now at the 1017 club, says folks don't spend as of old.

The Sunday Oregonian, February 8, 1942

# Ed Simmons

## Club Member

Ed was born around 1873 in Georgia. By the age of 49, he had been widowed and lived in Portland working as a Pullman porter. He moved to Bend in 1921 and by 1924 lived at 804 Arizona. He ended up owning that property and a structure at 804 ½ Arizona, where he would live until he died.

Ed seemed to make his living primarily from bootlegging alcohol and got in trouble a number of times over the years from the illegal sale of alcohol.

In the years after the Club disbanded, Ed had a number of brushes with the law, some of which reflected the inequities of the time. In February 1930, Ed was held under investigation for stabbing Floyd Shockley 6 times in the back over a dice game at his home. Floyd Shockley recovered and two weeks later, Ed was freed from jail after Floyd refused to file a complaint against him and Simmons refused to plead guilty.

Just a year later in 1931, the police “went scoring down the highway nearly to La Pine” after Ed for allegedly harboring Mrs. Lyda Trueblood Southard, a “black widow” who had escaped from the Idaho penitentiary after poisoning her fourth husband. They got an anonymous tip which turned out to be false.

He had an end-of-life caretaker for the last few months of his life and he died on January 5, 1957 with no family. He had lived in Bend for 36 years. He is buried at the Greenwood Cemetery.

### Bend Man's Car Kills Deer on Columbia River Highway; Carcass Given to Hospital

\*(By United Press to The Bend Bulletin.)

PORTLAND, May 15.—Ed Simmons, colored, of Bend, brought a dead deer to the police here today, saying his automobile killed the animal on the Columbia River highway near Horsetail falls.

He said he rounded a curve at 3 o'clock in the morning, and saw four deer cavorting on the pavement. One, apparently blinded by the lights, dashed in front of the machine.

Police said Simmons is blameless for killing the deer out of season and gave the animal to the Shrine children's hospital.

The Bend Bulletin, May 15, 1924

### ED SIMMONS FREED

Ed Simmons, 59-year-old negro, was released from custody by county officers yesterday following refusal of Floyd Shockley to sign a complain against him, District Attorney Ross Farnham stated today.

Simmons had been held in the city jail for county officers since February 23 when he was arrested following injuries suffered by Shockley as the result of an attack with a knife or dirk. Shockley was released from the hospital last week.

“I was protecting myself, as I am entitled to do as an American citizen,” Simmons told Farhanm in refusing to agree to plead guilty to a charge of assault with a dangerous weapon.

The Bend Bulletin, March 6, 1930



Ed Simmons grave site at Greenwood Cemetery



# Owen "O.H." Thompson

## Club Member

Owen Thompson was born in Virginia on August 22, 1863 in Virginia, likely born enslaved since slavery in the United States formally ended with the ratification of the 13th Amendment on December 6, 1865.

In 1910, he lived in LaGrande by himself and worked as a barber shop porter. He moved to Bend in June 1917 for a position at the Metropolitan. By 1920, Owen lived on Hawthorne Street and was a bootblack who owned his own business. The Deschutes Historical Museum has an artifact from his business -- a shoehorn.

In November 1922, before the Club was formed, he was arrested for shooting a white man Walter Danmeier allegedly over a stolen box of candy. He pled guilty to possession of a gun and was fined \$200 and jailed for 50 days for the crime. The judge lectured that "More violent deaths come as the result of carrying concealed weapons than from any other cause. The time for such extraordinary measures of protection is past. Action of the kind is a constant temptation to a man to take the law into his own hands. I consider the offense a very serious one indeed."

Just a few days later, Danmeier was arrested for assaulting Owen during the same incident, and the case went to trial... where the jury found Danmeier not guilty.

He moved to Medford by 1934 after the Club disbanded and married Lucy Briggs Ford in January 1934. She died just two years later. Towards the end of his life, moved to Portland and died in March 1946. He is buried at the Eastwood IOOF Cemetery in Medford with his wife Lucy.

Owen H. Thompson has arrived in the city from La Grande and has accepted a position at the Metropolitan.

The Bend Bulletin, June 2, 1917

## JURY'S VERDICT FREES DANMEIER

Charge of Assault Disproved—Agreement Reached Late at Night

A verdict of not guilty was brought in shortly before midnight last night by the jury in the case of Walter Danmeier, who was charged with assault and battery on Owen Thompson, as the sequel to an encounter at the O'Neil & Johnson cigar store on the morning of November 12. Danmeier was represented by R. M. Turner, and the state by District Attorney A. J. Moore.

Thompson, Lee Anderson and H. Stearns were witnesses for the state, and Mearle Barber, Joe Pival and Danmeier for the defense. Danmeier's corroborated testimony was to the effect that he had launched a blow at Thompson, and then seized a chair, only after Thompson had started to reach for a weapon.

Thompson's declaration was that he drew his gun after Danmeier had struck him and rushed him with the uplifted chair.

The Bend Bulletin, November 22, 1922

# J. Henry Burton

## Club Member

Henry was born in Tennessee sometime between 1868 - 1874. He lived in The Dalles as a single barber porter in 1900 and by 1910, he was married and widowed. He then married Martha Probasco and lived Portland by 1912. He arrived in Bend sometime between 1914 - 1916 and he became a janitor at the Central Oregon bank. Martha and Henry later got divorced.

There was a rather sensational Bend Bulletin article about Henry from May 1921 where he made heroic efforts to save his new car from destruction in a forest fire near Tumalo creek.

He purchased both 731 Florida Avenue for \$900 and then also 735 Florida Avenue for \$100 from Daisy Carter, a single white woman, for \$100 around 1922. At the time, the 735 Florida Avenue property did not have a structure on it.

In 1923, Henryetta Campbell came from Tennessee to marry Henry. This was his third marriage and there was a large age gap as was common at the time. He built a house on the 735 Florida Avenue property in 1925 and also bought a new Buick that year as well.

Henry's life was cut short on May 18, 1926 when he passed away. He had lived in Bend for 15 years and according to his probate file, Henryetta was 38 years old when he passed away. They had no children and their real estate was valued at \$3000, his personal property valued at \$600, and the annual income from real estate income was valued at \$600 (for example, Walter Green lived at 731 Florida as renter).

### CROSSES CONTINENT TO WED BEND MAN

Tennessee Acquaintances of 25 Years  
Ago Will Be Joined in Marriage  
Here This Evening

From Nashville, Tennessee, Miss Henryetta Campbell arrived in Bend Wednesday. Tonight Miss Campbell, graduate of the Fisk university, Nashville, will become Mrs. Henry Burton.

The romance began many years ago, according to local acquaintances of the couple, perhaps even before Burton, who has been in Bend for the past seven years and who is janitor for several of Bend's largest buildings, came to the west, about 25 years ago. The acquaintance was renewed two years ago when Burton, who has accumulated a nice bit of money, and acquired a six cylinder car since coming west, made a trip to Tennessee.

Burton and his prospective bride, who was formerly associated with a Baptist publishing house in Nashville, applied for a marriage license Thursday. Burton was obviously acquainted with the formality of obtaining a license, but he was not certain about dates and place of birth. He said that he believed he had been born in Ohio about 47 years ago. Miss Campbell's age was given as 32.

Miss Campbell is an expert hair-dresser and has patented several hair preparations. This is her first trip west, but she likes Oregon.

The Bend Bulletin, June 29, 1923

# Beatrice Morrow Cannady

## The Advocate Associate Editor and NAACP Organizer

Beatrice Morrow Cannady was the leading civil rights leader of her era in the Pacific Northwest. She became the assistant editor of *The Advocate* — the state's largest and most influential Black newspaper — in 1912 and eventually took over the whole newspaper in 1930. She was a founding member of the Portland NAACP and was the first Black woman in Oregon to practice law.

But for the reporting of *The Advocate*, researching the majority of the Club's story would not have been possible, highlighting the importance for the Black community to tell their own stories.

Beatrice came to Bend for the first time in August 1925 with the hopes of organizing a branch of the NAACP in Bend. It is because of her detailed reporting that the Club members names are now known. During this visit, she addressed the Bend Baptist Church, advocating to remove the Black exclusion clause from the Oregon constitution.

Her work was also seen in Prineville in 1927, where she presented at a white women's club on the "study of Negro life and history." Mrs. Davidson, one of the prominent members of the women's club, reached out to Beatrice several years later for support for a review of *Green Pastures*, a play written in 1929 by white author Marc Connelly that had the first all-black Broadway cast.

She fought to keep *The Advocate* running as long as possible, but the Great Depression took its toll and in 1938, she ceased publication. That same year, she moved to California where she lived until she died on August 19, 1974 at the age of 84.



The Advocate (1913), courtesy University of Oregon Libraries, Historic Oregon Newspapers



In 1932, Beatrice Morrow Cannady, by then married to her second husband, ran for the Oregon Legislature, courtesy Oregon Live



Age 80, Ore. Hist. Soc. Research Lib., bb002116

### JULY 29th: MCMENAMINS HISTORY PUB

Join the Deschutes County Historical Society and Zachary Stocks from Oregon Black Pioneers on Tuesday July 29th (doors at 6 pm, presentation at 7 pm) to learn more about Beatrice Morrow Cannady. \$5 with ticket sales opening 30 days in advance.



# Katherine Combs and Sallie Combs

## Club Matriarchs

Katherine Combs (aka Mrs. R.C. Cameron) married Roscoe Conklin Cameron in 1920 at the age of 24 while living in Portland. She moved to Bend with her mother Sallie Combs and Roscoe around 1922.

Beatrice Morrow Cannady described their relationship with the Club as follows: "As the men have no home life, [their] home is a sort of mecca for [the Club members] on Sundays. Mrs. Combs... is their 'mother.' They all love her dearly and vie with one another in doing kind things for her." They created a warm connective space for the Club to meet.

Katherine engaged in social justice work in her own right. She wrote on behalf of the Club to The Advocate after one of Reverend J.W. Anderson's visits noting that "we have seen a decided change in conditions here," and highlighting the importance of "being in unity with each other, for 'United we stand, divided we fall.'" She also gave a talk "on the home missionary work among the colored race" to the Methodist Episcopal Ladies Aid Society, which included Mrs. E.D. Gilson, the wife of the KKK representative in Bend and former mayor E.D. Gilson.

Their family had a close relationship with the Phelps family and co-hosted dinner for the Mt. Olivet Jubilee Singers from Reverend J.W. Anderson's church in 1927 when they came to Bend to perform at the First Methodist Episcopal church.

Katherine and Sallie moved to Portland with Roscoe in April 1929.

### ADDRESS OF WELCOME

I am speaking in behalf of the business men of Bend to express their sentiments as well as my own in welcoming you, Reverend J. W. Anderson, Regional Secretary National Baptist Convention, and organizer of our Business Men's Club. We want to thank you, Reverend Anderson, for your visit here today, and the effort you are making in our behalf. I am sure that your speech made here today in our behalf will help us in our daily toil for better things.

And I am sure the Club thinks as I do that since you, Reverend Anderson, have organized this little club and, by visiting the pastors and business men of this city, we have seen a decided change in conditions here; and the men as a group must help you, Reverend Anderson, in your efforts to help our race here by being in unity with each other, for "United we stand, divided we fall."

Again, we thank you, Reverend Anderson, for your visit and hope in the near future you will be with us again, for you are always welcome to our city.

MRS. R. C. CAMERON.

The Advocate, May 15, 1926, , courtesy University of Oregon Libraries, Historic Oregon Newspapers

The ladies of the Methodist Episcopal Ladies' Aid society were entertained on Thursday by Mrs. Ralph Bartlett, Mrs. J. M. Walker and Mrs. Walter Jacobs, at Mrs. Bartlett's home. An impromptu program included readings by Mrs. H. G. Farris, musical numbers by Mrs. Frank James, and a talk on the home missionary work among the colored race by Mrs. R. C. Cameron.

Ladies present were Mrs. C. R. Simkins, Mrs. O. C. Wood, Mrs. John Reid, Mrs. O. M. Cook, Mrs. A. E. McKnight, Mrs. Mary Beebe, Mrs. J. D. Bowman, Mrs. A. T. Cavaness, Mrs. Roy Cooper, Mrs. Harry McGuire, Mrs. Ralph Spencer, Mrs. B. Wilcox, Mrs. O. K. Allen, Mrs. August Nelson, Mrs. J. J. Kulstad, Mrs. Anton Kulstad, Mrs. J. O. Gibson, Mrs. Harold Friedley, Mrs. R. C. Cameron, Mrs. Frank James, Mrs. E. D. Gilson, Mrs. H. G. Clements, Mrs. H. G. Farris and Mrs. Bert Bolen.

The Bend Bulletin, February 27, 1926