

A 100 YEAR RETROSPECTIVE

The Bend ✨ **Colored Men's** **Business Club**

Deschutes
Historical
Museum



Supported by the St. Charles Belonging Grant and
in collaboration with the COCC Afrocentric
Program, The Father's Group, WeBlack Radio, and
Central Oregon Earthseeds

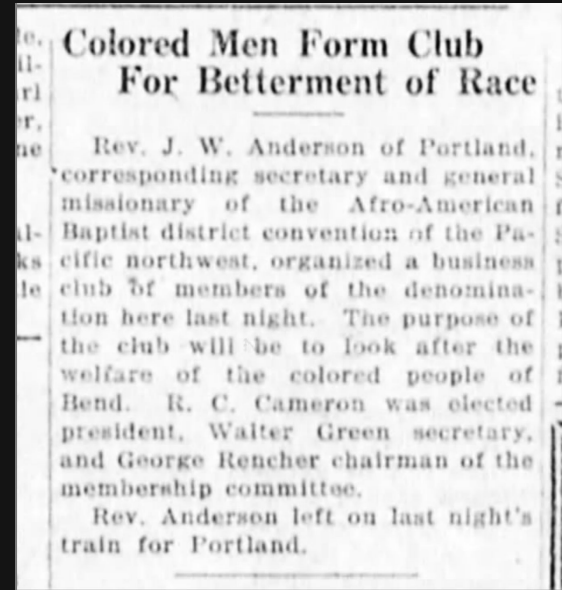


The Importance of Research

UNEARTHING CENTRAL OREGON BLACK HISTORY

This project began with a single newspaper clipping from The Bend Bulletin dated May 16, 1925 entitled “**Colored Men Form Club for Betterment of Race.**”

This exhibit is the cumulation of a month of intentional and dedicated research by the Deschutes Historical Museum and Allyship in Action supported by funding from the St. Charles Belonging Grant, and is in collaboration with The Father’s Group, the COCC Afrocentric Program, WeBlack Radio, and Central Oregon Earthseeds.



The Importance of Documenting Stories

PRESERVING CENTRAL OREGON BLACK HISTORY

Being able to dig deeper into this story is unique because it was made possible by **storytelling and documentation by The Advocate**, a Portland newspaper run by Black community members for the Black community across the state from 1903 through 1938.

So often, Black stories are either completely lost or whitewashed by dominant cultural news sources. We are excited to be able to share about the Club from the perspectives of its organizers and founders.

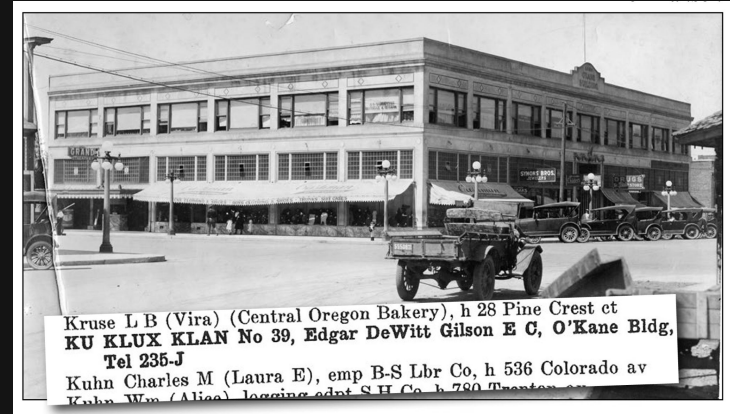
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✧ The **Bend Colored Men's Business Club** was founded during the 1920s, during the height of the Prohibition era, thriving Ku Klux Klan activity, and Black exclusion laws in Central Oregon.

The KKK burned a cross on top of Pilot Butte in April of 1923 and E.D. Gilson — who was the mayor of Bend in 1921-1922 — maintained a KKK office in the O’Kane building.

The 1920 Census identified 4 “negro” households in Bend (which doubled to 8 households in 1930).



Polk's Deschutes County Directory 1924 - 1925 and the Deschutes County Historical Society

Several Black leaders at the helm of early social justice movement organizing in Portland — **Reverend J.W. Anderson** and **Beatrice Morrow Cannady** (who at the time was known as Mrs. E.D. Cannady) — saw the importance of connecting with and supporting the Black communities in Bend, Redmond, Prineville, and Salem.

Rev. J.W. Anderson came to Bend for the first time around 1920 and regularly supported the Club. NAACP organizer and Advocate editor Beatrice Morrow Cannady first came to Bend in 1925.



Reverend J.W. Anderson

African-American Baptist Movement

Reverend J. W. Anderson spurred the early African-American Baptist social justice movement in the Pacific Northwest. He presided at the The Olivet Baptist Church in Portland, the largest Black Baptist church in the PNW and had touchpoints with Marcus Garvey and A. Phillip Randolph, the Portland chapter of the Brotherhood of Pullman Porters, Shirley Graham-McCants (wife of Dr. W.E.B. DuBois). Membership of his church were very affluent and leaders of the Black community.



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



Second location of the Mt. Olivet
Baptist Church of Portland built
under the direction of Rev.
Anderson. Courtesy Vancouver
Avenue First Baptist Church of
Portland

Beatrice Morrow Cannady

The Advocate and NAACP Organizer

Beatrice Morrow Cannady was the leading civil rights leader of her era in the PNW. 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 graduated in 1922 from Northwestern College of Law becoming the first Black woman in Oregon to practice law. She also was the first Black woman to run for state representative and successfully advocated for the passage of civil rights bills by the Oregon state legislature.

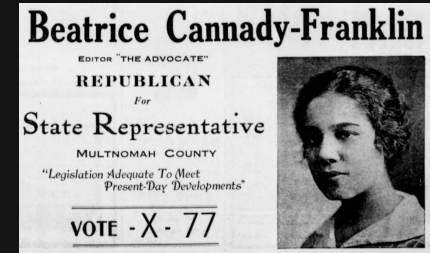
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The Advocate (1913), courtesy University of Oregon Libraries, Historic Oregon Newspapers



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



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

On May 15, 1925, the Bend Colored Men's Business Club was founded. Walter Green, the Secretary-Treasurer of the Club sent a letter to The Advocate thanking Rev, J.W. Anderson for supporting the formation of the Club.

A similar Colored Men's Business Club was founded in Salem in 1920, demonstrating that this was part of a larger movement.

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 CLUB

- **R.C. Cameron** - president: valet at Pilot Butte Inn, meetings were held at his house
- **Walter Green** - secretary-treasurer: owned B-B shine stand, died in 1937 and buried in Pilot Butte Cemetery
- **George Rencher** - chairman of membership committee: owned De Luxe cleaners and a home
- **R.J. Johnson** - member, worked at Altamont Hotel
- **Louis Epps** - member
- **Ed Simmons** - member, lived in Bend 36 years, died in 1957 and buried in Greenwood Cemetery
- **Chester Terry** - member
- **Owen H. Thompson** - member: owner of shining parlor and cigar stand
- **Henry Burton** - member: janitor at Central Oregon bank and Mannheimer's store, died in 1926
- **Mrs. R.C. Cameron**: advocate in her own right, sending letters to The Advocate and speaking on behalf of Black folks in white women's groups locally.
- **Mrs. Combs**: Mrs. R.C. Cameron's mother and a mother figure for the members of the Club, who were predominantly single with "no home life" and gathered with her on Sundays.
- **The Phelps**: While not explicitly identified as Club members, they had a relationship with the Camerons and helped host the Olivet Jubilee Singers from Rev. J.W. Anderson's church.

The Club was responsible for bringing a successful complaint to the Bend City Council in August of 1925 to remove Jim Crow signs from downtown restaurants.

The Central Oregon Press published an in depth article which The Advocate ran, but with the title “Bend City Council Adopts Resolution Condemning Jim Crow Signs.”

The Bend Bulletin published one paragraph from the Central Oregon Press coverage, which was buried in an article on oil surfacing on streets. It did not have its own headline.



Photo: Central Oregon Press (August 8, 1925)

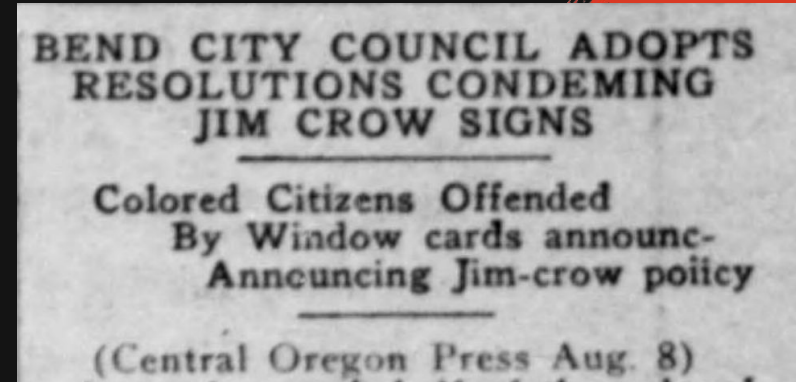


Photo: The Advocate (August 15, 1925)

Beatrice Morrow Cannady visited Bend as an NAACP organizer shortly after the Bend City Council Complaint and shared her experience in The Advocate on September 25, 1925.

ASSOCIATE EDITOR IMPRESSED WITH HER TRIP TO BEND
By Mrs. E. D. C.

Replying to a telegram from the president of the Colored Men's Business Club at Bend, Oregon, I caught the 8 o'clock train Saturday evening and after a twelve-hour ride, arrived safely the next morning at Bend, which is in Eastern Oregon. A delightful, quiet, sunny Sunday morning, together with the president of the Business Club greeted me. After breakfast, prepared by Mrs. Combs, we called on the pastors of the Methodist and Baptist churches, respectively, and ascertained what they wished me to do, since there I was. These consultations resulted in my singing at the Methodist church in the morning, and as per previous arrangement by Mr. Cameron, I spoke in the evening at the Baptist church. The Baptist congregation was augmented by the Methodist and Congregational ministers with a goodly number of their followers, so that the beautiful, spacious, church was quite well filled by the time to begin service.

It was exceedingly pleasing to me to note in the audience, I believe, every one of those colored men who makes Bend his home, the colored population of Bend, being eleven men and two women. One of the women was away at the time of my visit.

At the close of the church service in the evening, the Colored Men's Club arranged a special meeting among themselves which I addressed. We had a wonderful heart to heart talk together, in which we stressed intra-racial as well as inter-racial good-will. We closed our meeting feeling that our visit had been worth while to all of us. Several of the men expressed the belief that our visit there had already begun to bear good fruit as evidenced by the warm hand-clasps and kindly expressions of the white people to many of them before they left the church, and by the invitations extended by the ministers to me to return to speak to them again.

The colored men whom I personally met were: R. C. Cameron, pres. Business Men's Club; Walter Green, it's Secretary and the Messrs. R. J. Johnson, Louis Epps, Ed Simmons, Chester Terry, George Rinch, O. H. Thompson and A. Burton, all members of the Club. Mr. Cameron is employed at the Butte Inn, a magnificent hotel commanding a wonderful view of the nearby mountains; others are also employed here. Some of the men work as janitors and porters in several business houses. Mr. Thompson is the proprietor and owner of a very nicely equipped shining parlor and cigar stand, and Mr. Burton is employed at the bank.

I was the guest of honor at a delicious dinner Sunday afternoon. An auto trip over the mountains was to follow dinner, but owing to the fact I had already planned to return home by this same route, I thought it best to rest for the tedious drive that lay before me. We spent the remainder of the afternoon pleasantly with music and helpful conversation.

Mr. Cameron's house is centrally located and nicely and comfortably furnished. As the men have no home life, his home is a sort of mecca for them on Sundays. Mrs. Combs, his sweet, refined and altogether lovely mother, is their "mother". They all love her dearly and vie with one another in doing kind things for her. The spirit manifested was beautiful to say the least, and I wouldn't take anything for my trip.

I was royally entertained. A beautiful silk scarf and money to cover my traveling expenses was presented to me, by the Club which I highly appreciated inasmuch as it came by surprise to me.

The people of Bend have certainly endeared themselves to me and I am happy to know they want me to come again.

Although only few in number, they are making themselves felt in a way that counts. It was through the efforts of the Colored Men's Business Club and the personal efforts of Mr. Cameron, et al that obnoxious color-line signs were removed from the windows of restaurants there.

After bidding my hosts, Mr. Cameron and his mother, Mrs. Combs, goodbye, I left Monday morning by stage via the Mackenzie Pass, over the mountains and through lava-beds. The "Three Sisters" and the Bachelor, snow-capped mountains of the Cascade Range, afforded sufficient incentive from a view near Butte Inn, to cause me to be willing to endure the hard drive in order to view at closer range Nature's Extravaganza. So, for thirteen long hours, I journeyed before reaching home.

Beatrice Morrow Cannady's presentation at the Baptist church, while only briefly mentioned in her own article in *The Advocate*, was covered in depth by *The Bulletin* on August 31, 1925 as part of a feature on the departure of Pastor F.H. Beard from the Bend Baptist Church.

An unusual feature of the service at the Baptist church Sunday evening was the address of Mrs. E. D. Cannady, editor of the *Advocate*, devoted to the interests of the colored people of the Pacific northwest.

Nearly all present day evil may be traced to religious prejudice, racial prejudice or political prejudice, the colored woman declared, in an address delivered with unusual perfection of style and expression.

In spite of the fact that the negro in America is an unwelcome guest, brought here by force to reclaim the south from a wilderness, he is still intimidated and humiliated even in Oregon, said Mrs. Cannady.

The Oregon constitution still prohibits the bringing of free negroes into the state, denies them the right to own property and the right of suffrage. This provision was nullified by the 14th amendment to the federal constitution, but it is still a part of Oregon's laws, and is printed in recent volumes. A measure which would remove this section from the state constitution will be voted on at the next election, and Mrs. Cannady asked support for it.

After reciting some of the humiliations which the colored people in America face, Mrs. Cannady gave a contrasting picture of their accomplishments in many fields, and declared that the white man has done much for the negro since he brought him in chains from interior Africa; but that the negro, too, has done for

the white man more than money can repay.

At about the same time that an entire negro regiment was receiving the *croix de guerre* for bravery in the Argonne, negroes in America were being lynched, said Mrs. Cannady.

Better understanding between the races, coupled with universal extension of the Christian spirit, was the only solution for the problem that the speaker offered.

There was continued collaboration and connection between Rev. J.W. Anderson, The Advocate newspaper, and the Club through late 1928. During this time:

- Mrs. R.C. Cameron provided a talk on the home missionary work among the “colored race” to the Methodist Episcopal Ladies’ Aid society.
- The Camerons and Phelps families hosted the Olivet Jubilee Singers from Rev. J.W. Anderson’s church.
- Beatrice Morrow Cannady traveled to Prineville to a white women’s club in Prineville to support “study of the Negro.”

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.

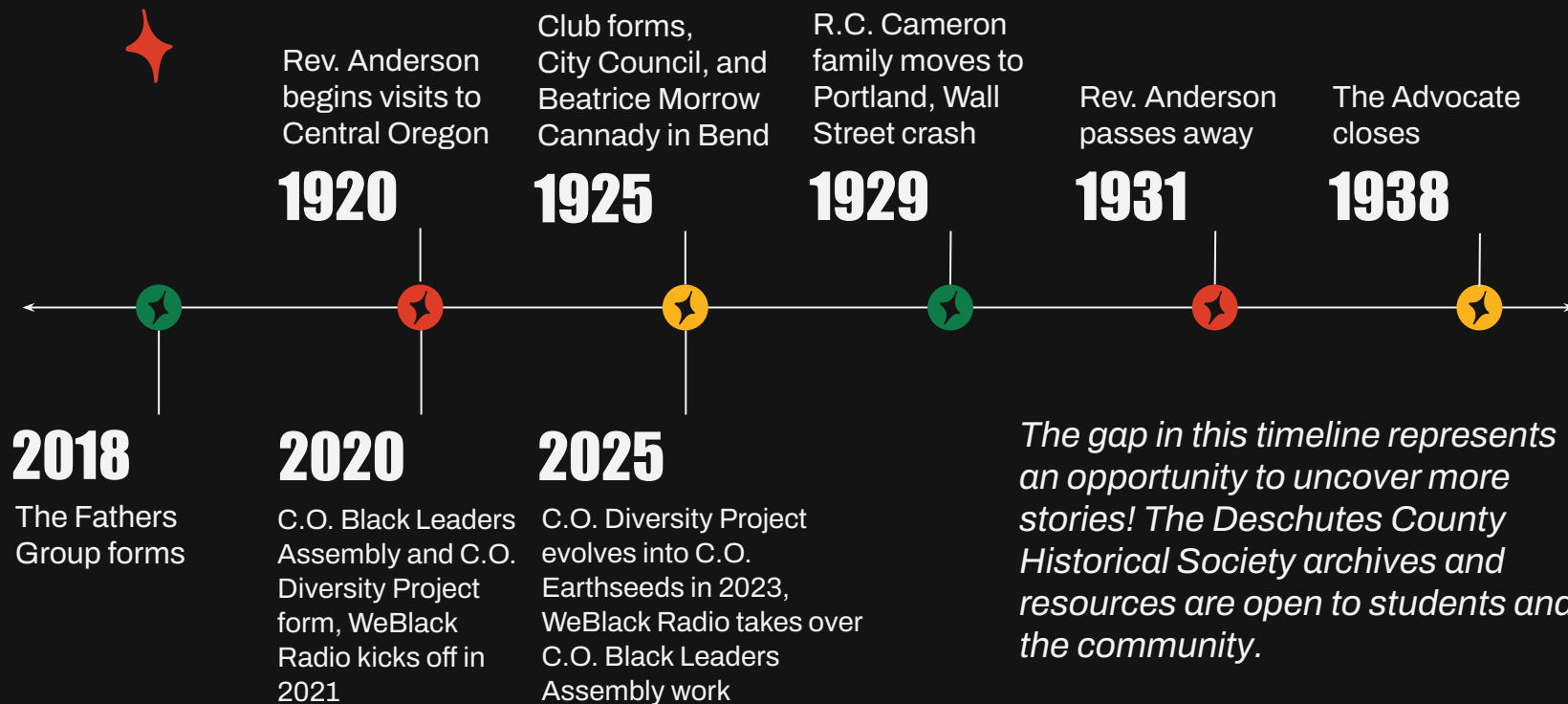
MRS. R. C. CAMERON.

By April 1929, R.C. Cameron — whose home served as a gathering place for the Black community and was the primary meeting location for the Club — moved to Portland with his family.

In late October 1929, the Wall Street market crash triggered the Great Depression. In July 1931, Rev. J.W. Anderson died in a sanitarium. The Great Depression took a major toll on The Advocate newspaper, and Beatrice Morrow Cannady was forced to move the business to the attic of her home, and in 1938, ceased publication. That same year, she moved to California.



BLACK HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF



LESSONS FROM OUR ANCESTORS

KENNY ADAMS - The Father's Group

The uncovering of this history has hit home in many ways for both me and The Father's Group. Observing the parallels between today's work in this city and the club's formation 100 years ago is a blatant reminder that while times change, the barriers to progress, equity, and equality remain significant hurdles. The determined efforts of Central Oregon Black community members—R.C. Cameron and many others—in forming the Colored Men's Business Club with the support of Rev. J.W. Anderson and Beatrice Morrow Cannady, and their work against all odds, strikingly mirror what The Father's Group does today. Being part of this untold legacy not only assures that our compass points true north but also galvanizes us to continue the march toward progress!



LESSONS FROM OUR ANCESTORS

RICCARDO WAITES - WeBlack Radio

This historical rediscovery is a teeter totter of emotions for me and others of compatible mindset. On one side I am raised up high by the formation of The Bend Colored Men's Business Club. Knowing a lot of Oregon's history, I know courage and unparalleled determination were in abundance and I am both impressed and very thankful for Reverend J.W. Anderson , Beatrice Morrow Cannady, Walter Green and everyone involved in evoking change so long ago. I feel pure joy in their accomplishments. Then suddenly I fall to earth with a thud and dwell in the sorrowful fact that this history was lost to us, it also seems history is currently **attempting** to repeating itself. I hope **ALL** Central Oregonians can learn about these incredible humans and once again rally together to make positive changes for all in our community.



LESSONS FROM OUR ANCESTORS

JOSIE STANFIELD - Central Oregon Earthseeds

Uncovering this chapter of Oregon's history holds significant importance for me as a Black woman who has engaged in activism in Prineville, Redmond, and Bend for many years. Throughout my work, I often sensed a missing context regarding past events, and learning about Beatrice Morrow Cannady has helped to fill that gap. There are notable parallels between our experiences, including confronting hate groups, organizing protests, founding and collaborating with civil rights organizations, facing accusations of occupying too much space, being unjustly vilified as a witch or wizard, and working alongside local white communities to foster understanding of the needs and experiences of Black Americans. Her contributions to our history empower and validate my own efforts in this ongoing struggle.



Take This Story Home

Scan the QR code or go to
<https://bit.ly/Bend-Business-Club> to take this story
home and to share with others!



Learn More About the Club



APRIL: FIRST AND FOREMOST PODCAST

Bend Colored Men's Business Club: Business Owners, Bootblacks, and Bootleggers

Be on the lookout in early April, when Kenny and Day Day from The Father's Group, and LeeAnn from Allyship in Action explore the individual stories of Roscoe Conklin Cameron, Walter Green, George Rencher, and the other Club members!

MAY 15th 4 - 6:30 pm: 100 YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE CLUB

Roots of Strength: A Journey Through Black History in Central Oregon

The Father's Group, COCC Afrocentric Program, WeBlack Radio, and Central Oregon Earthseeds invite the community to a free family friendly, interactive, and educational celebration of the 100 year anniversary of the Bend Colored Men's Business Club. Participants will immerse themselves in the stories of the founding members as well as the Black leaders at the helm of early social justice movement organizing --Reverend J.W. Anderson and Beatrice Morrow Cannady-- who came from Portland to connect with and support local Central Oregon leadership and educate white folks in the community. We will trace the roots of our local Black community a century ago to the branches of activism and the progress of racial equity that we see in Central Oregon today. Location: Redmond Library.

JULY 29th: MCMENAMINS HISTORY PUB

Beatrice Morrow Cannady

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.