

employment in the industrial concerns that were springing up in the state's urban centers.

As early as 1808 African-American workers combined to protect themselves and to improve their economic situation. However, their early organizations functioned more as mutual aid societies and fraternal lodges, providing financial assistance in times of need, than as agents for bargaining with employers. During the 1860s blacks started to be admitted to white labor unions and to establish their own unions. In December 1869, in Washington, D. C., the first black national labor union federation was formed: the Colored National Labor Union. New Jersey was among the eighteen states represented at the founding meeting.

1870-1910

Two major developments shaped the New Jersey Afro-American experience for the next forty years. First, the number of black New Jerseyans almost tripled, mainly because of the arrival of southern blacks. In 1890, 43 per cent of New Jersey's blacks had been born in other states, and in 1910 the figure was 58 percent; corresponding figures for whites were 22 percent and 27 percent. Second, the black population became urbanized. By 1910 almost 75 percent of the state's black residents lived in cities.

That most of these urban areas were in the northern part of the state shows that southern migrants were beginning to shift away from the tendency to settle in South Jersey. Suburban Plainfield, the seashore resorts of Asbury Park and Long Branch, and the industrial cities of Elizabeth, Paterson and Jersey City had all experienced considerable growth in their black populations by 1910. The towns and cities of Essex County demonstrated the trend most clearly. Noticeable increases occurred in Montclair, Orange and East Orange, owing perhaps to their demand for domestic help, and the size of Newark's black population rose phenomenally. In 1910 Newark had almost ten thousand Afro-Americans, five times the nearly two thousand it had in 1870. As the state's most populous city, with an expanding economy, it could offer many positions traditionally occupied by blacks in the North—jobs for unskilled laborers, deliverymen, janitors, teamsters, laundresses, maids.

Only two sizable South Jersey communities—Camden and Atlantic City—drew significant black migratory streams between 1870 and

1910. Camden, which had the state's largest black population in 1880 and 1890, reached a little over six thousand in 1910, ranking third in the state. A far more spectacular change occurred in Atlantic City. Its black population increased from fifteen in 1870 to 9,834 in 1910, the largest in the state. It had a ratio of one black to five whites, the highest among sizable northern urban communities.

Atlantic City's rapid emergence as a major seaside resort explains the dramatic upsurge in its black population. The labor needed for the city's hotels and recreational facilities was largely black labor. The many service positions offered by the hotel-recreation industry—such as cook, waiter, bellman, porter, chambermaid—were within the occupational realm to which the black race had been customarily restricted. At the turn of the century the city's hotel-recreation labor force was 95 percent black.

The movement of southern blacks into South Jersey between 1870 and 1910 added one more all-black community: Whitesboro. Probably the last settlement of its kind established in New Jersey, it was named after George H. White of North Carolina, the last black congressman of the post-Reconstruction period. A group of blacks decided to leave Wilmington, North Carolina, after a race riot in 1898, and White helped them purchase land in Cape May County in 1899. By 1906 about three hundred families had settled in Whitesboro.

The 1870-1910 increase in the black population was accompanied by growth and changes in the social institutions that had traditionally forged cohesion among Afro-Americans. Religious bodies, for example, went through many changes. Older, pre-Civil War churches often rebuilt their edifices; the Bethel AME Church in Woodbury did so in 1874 and again in 1896, and Bordentown's Mt. Zion AME Church rebuilt in 1875. Others, such as Burlington's Wesley AME Church in 1893, built new quarters. Still others, like Burlington's Bethlehem AME Church in 1873, refurbished their existing edifices.

One early congregation became marked for fame through its association with the state's most illustrious black native son, Paul Robeson, the celebrated scholar, athlete, singer, actor, and civil rights activist. This was the Witherspoon Street Presbyterian Church in Princeton, which was established in 1837. Robeson's father, William Drew Robeson, served as its pastor between 1880 and 1902, and Paul was born in Princeton in 1898.

During these decades other churches opened their doors for the first time, often to serve the southern newcomers. Many of these were Baptist. In fact, most of the state's older black Baptist churches were



Paul Robeson (1898–1976), one of the major Afro-American figures of the twentieth century, has been described as a true Renaissance Man because of his many extraordinary talents. A native of Princeton, he also lived in Westfield and Somerville. He was graduated from Rutgers University in 1919 as class valedictorian. This photo was probably taken in the late 1930s. Courtesy of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.



Since the 1840s social lodges have provided a meaningful form of group expression for Afro-Americans in New Jersey. Stressing exemplary conduct among their members, many of these bodies also performed benevolent functions. Members of Queen Esther Court No. 1 of Atlantic City (c. 1900) are shown above. Members of William S. Darr Lodge No. 3 of Camden (c. 1900) are pictured on the right. New Jersey Historical Commission.

established during this period: the Bethany Baptist Church in Newark (1871), perhaps the state's largest black congregation today; the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brunswick (1873); the Salem Baptist Church in Jersey City (1875); the Angelic Baptist Church in Bayonne (1887); the First African Baptist Church in Woodbridge (1905); and the First Baptist Church in Cranford (1910).

While the church continued to occupy its pivotal position in the black community, secular activities also increased and took new forms between 1870 and 1910. Some homes for the elderly and orphans were opened, and attempts began to establish YMCAs and YWCAs for Afro-Americans. Black fraternal orders became commonplace throughout the state. Many of the women's social clubs, which were to be united in 1915 in the New Jersey State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, were formed. In some communities graduates of black colleges and universities organized alumni associations and local chapters of their Greek-letter fraternities and sororities.

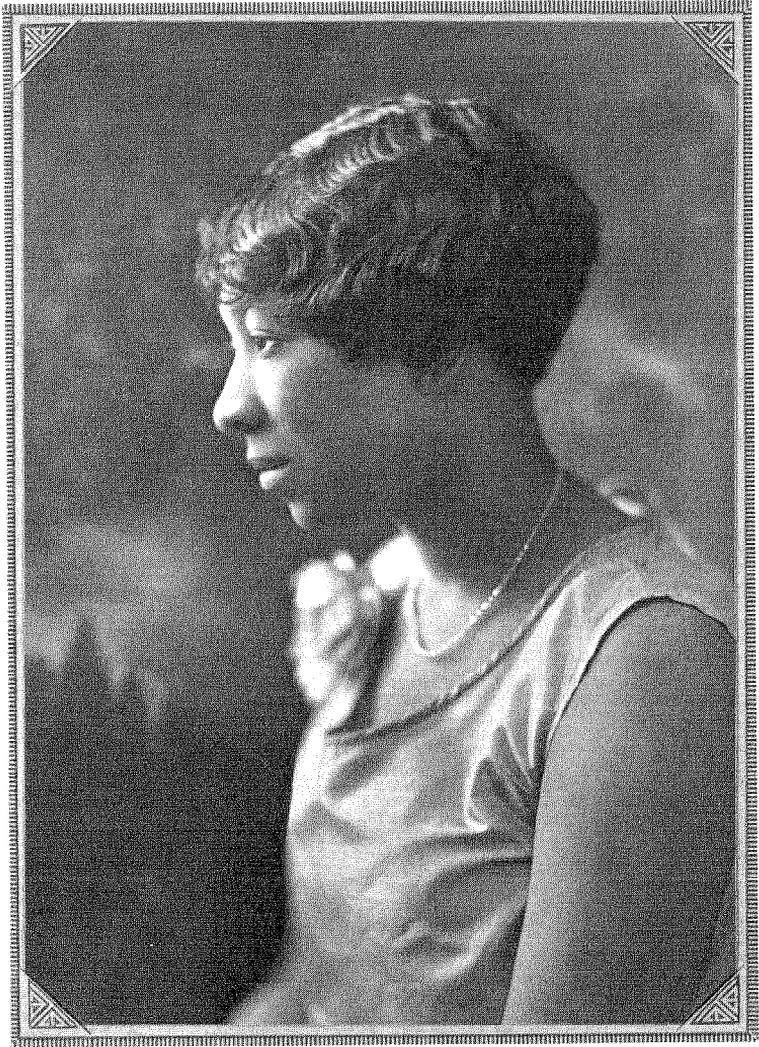


The black press also developed between 1870 and 1910. Twelve papers were established, although only two survived until the turn of the century. Alfred R. Smith of Saddle River was perhaps the best-known black journalist of this period. During the 1880s and 1890s he was the publisher and editor of *The Landscape: A Country Newspaper*. In 1862, as a reporter for the *Paterson Guardian*, he had attracted attention by addressing an open letter protesting President Lincoln's support of a plan to solve the nation's racial problems by sending Afro-American volunteers to establish colonies in the Caribbean or Central America.

Some black-owned businesses that developed during this period experienced a better fate than the black press. Most were small enterprises that provided personal services—for example, barber shops, caterers, restaurants, and shoeshine parlors. There were also a few larger undertakings such as moving and storage businesses.

The masses of the race continued to occupy the lower rungs of the occupational ladder. In 1910 black urban males still tended to be laborers, deliverymen, janitors, porters, teamsters, chauffeurs, waiters and servants. Women were heavily employed as laundresses, dressmakers and domestic servants. The prejudice of white employers and employees combined to exclude blacks from factory work and the skilled crafts. Comments from labor and management in the 1903 Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor and Industries typify the mood of the period. "Their color and low instincts make them undesirable associates for white men," said an official of the carpenters' union in New Jersey. A representative of the glass bottle blowers declared, "[I] do not believe the average negro is capable of acquiring the skill necessary to become a successful glass blower. They are naturally lazy and are not clean in their habits." A New Jersey brick manufacturer stated, "[We] have no negroes employed at our works and have made no attempt to use negro labor. We prefer white foreign help such as Hungarians, Polanders, etc." And a manufacturer of hats observed, "We do not employ negroes in the hat manufacturing business; [we] do not believe they could be trained to do the work." Still, New Jersey blacks were part of the most significant labor organization of the 1880s: the Knights of Labor. Local assemblies of black Knights were established in Bridgeton and Camden.

Education remained a major concern. Between 1870 and 1910 the race was deeply divided in some communities over the question of integrated versus segregated public schools. As the public school system developed after 1871, cities in the northern counties—influenced, according to Marion Thompson Wright, by New York City—began to eliminate their racially separate schools. In 1881, however, a controversy arose in Fair Haven, Monmouth County, when blacks demanded the right to send their children to the white school. A school desegregation law enacted in that year was upheld by the state Supreme Court in 1884. The law protected children against being forced to attend schools according to race or nationality. As a consequence, almost all of the remaining separate schools in the northern counties were discontinued. However, the law did not prevent local school



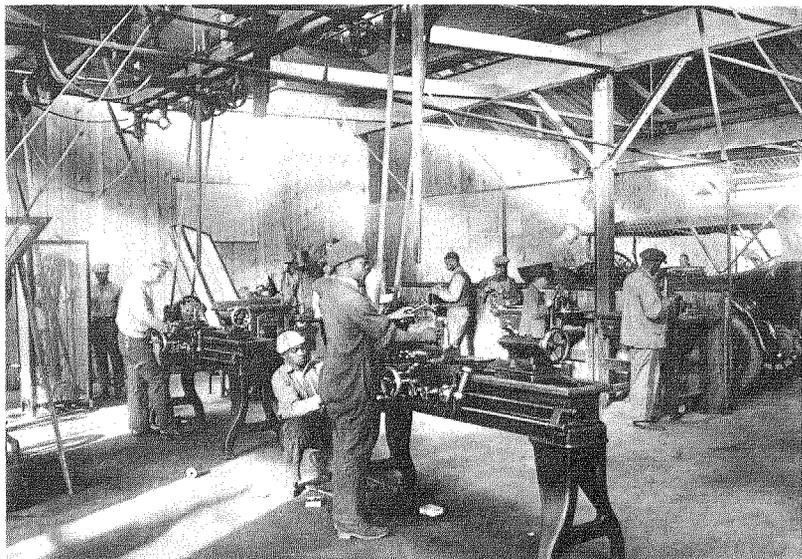
Marion Thompson Wright (1904–1962), born in East Orange, was probably the first black female professional historian. Virtually all of her scholarly publications focused on some aspect of New Jersey Afro-American history. She taught at Howard University from 1940 until her death. Her interest in history led to a close relationship with Dr. Carter G. Woodson, considered the “Father of Afro-American History.” This photograph dates from the late 1920s or early 1930s. Courtesy of James Moss.

officials from offering segregated facilities in the lower grades that might be voluntarily accepted. And certain black communities accepted such facilities. In fact, Fair Haven's blacks themselves finally chose a separate school.

In the southern counties the established black schools continued, and new ones were built. Their black opponents charged that they were inferior to white schools in physical facilities and quality of education. The blacks who supported them, however, considered them compatible with the advancement of the race because they provided a measure of autonomy and self-determination. Segregated schools, they noted, not only offered blacks teaching and administrative opportunities, but also spared black pupils the racial indignities often encountered in integrated classrooms.

As this debate continued, the system of all-black schools was encouraged in 1886 with the establishment of the New Jersey Manual Training and Industrial School for Colored Youth (better known as the "Bordentown School"). Its founder was a minister of the AME Church, the Reverend Walter A. Rice. Because it exemplified the educational philosophy of Booker T. Washington, it was known as the "Tuskegee of the North." It began in New Brunswick and was supported initially by voluntary public contributions. In 1894 it became a state-supported institution, and in 1896 it was moved to Bordentown. It operated until 1955. Its outstanding faculty included Lester B. Granger and Judge William Hastie, and its distinguished visitors (often commencement speakers) included Booker T. Washington, James Weldon Johnson, Paul Robeson, Mary McCleod Bethune, Albert Einstein and Eleanor Roosevelt. Increasingly, it faced criticism from those blacks who questioned the value of manual education as a solution to race problems and who opposed segregated public schools.

The New Jersey Manual Training and Industrial School for Colored Youth, an all-black northern high school whose students were boarders, was a unique educational institution. It placed a strong emphasis on discipline and order, and students were assigned chores that included work on the school's farm. The school was also a site for activities such as tournaments of the American Tennis Association, the black counterpart to the United States Lawn Tennis Association. The photographs on the right, taken in 1922, show students in the machine shop and the domestic science classroom. Courtesy of the Newark Public Library.



If some African-Americans were disheartened by the increase in segregated schools in the state between 1870 and 1910, virtually all welcomed the passage in 1884 of the state's first major civil rights law, which guaranteed all New Jerseyans equal access to public accommodations and jury service. Those violating anyone's civil rights were to be fined and required to pay damages to the victim. This law, however, was openly violated, particularly with respect to public accommodations. In 1917 it was revised and weakened to discourage suits by aggrieved persons. Damages were no longer awarded to the victims but to charitable institutions, and the complainants had no voice in selecting the recipients.

1910-1940

As noted earlier, a significant movement of Afro-Americans out of the South into New Jersey did not originate with World War I. Rather, the war, which began in 1914, is important for the state's Afro-American history because it prompted great numbers of southern blacks to settle in New Jersey in a brief period, and because their settlement had a tremendous impact both on their host communities and on themselves. For the first time, for example, blacks entered the state's manufacturing work force in substantial numbers. Lured mainly by the prospect of better-paying jobs, southern blacks began to migrate to New Jersey in unprecedented numbers around 1915, as part of a general trek northward.

By 1930 there were over two hundred thousand blacks in the state, a huge gain over the roughly eighty-eight thousand in 1910 (see Maps 6 and 7). Of the twenty-one northern cities in 1930 that had black populations over ten thousand, four—Newark, Atlantic City, Camden and Jersey City—were in New Jersey. Only Ohio, with seven, had more. The black New Jersey experience had become even more urban than before. And most of this growth was in the cities of North Jersey. The exceptions were Trenton, whose black population almost quadrupled from 1910 to 1930, and Atlantic City and Camden. Newark in particular received a disproportionate number of newcomers, showing a fourfold increase in black residents between 1910 and 1930.

As more Afro-Americans entered the state's cities and industrial labor force, increasing numbers of black workers participated in organized labor. Blacks in longshore work and the clothing industry (including women workers) were among those organized. In 1917 Pros-