

Bogle Family Brings Barbershops to City

By Abe Proctor
Of *The Skanner*

Some of this area's African American families first arrived here as slaves. Others came to work in the booming shipyards of World War II. Still more were lured by the Northwest's natural beauty. It's a pretty safe bet, though, that relatively few headed west to strike it rich in California's gold fields.

Such is the tale, though, of Richard Bogle, the great-grandfather of *The Skanner's* jazz columnist, former Portland City Commissioner Dick Bogle.

Young Richard fled the island of Jamaica in 1847, at the age of 12. Although slavery had been outlawed in the British Empire in 1833, the prospects for a young man of color in Kingston, Jamaica were none too good. Richard traveled to New York City and then, after a stop in Tennessee, headed to California's Gold Country in the early 1850s.

Like many prospectors of the era, Richard didn't find unending wealth in the hills of the Sierra Nevada. Deciding to move on yet again, he pulled up stakes and headed north to Roseburg, Ore., where he became an apprentice barber. Needless to say, there weren't



Bogle family patriarch Richard Bogle, front row, right, is joined by his wife, America Waldo Bogle, front left, and children Arthur Bogle, back left, Belle Bogle, Warren Bogle, Kate Bogle and Waldo Bogle.

many African American barbers in 1850s Roseburg. After a time, Richard moved north yet again, this time landing in Salem, where his life was to take a momentous turn.

While in Salem, Richard met a young woman by the unusual name of America Waldo. She was the free daughter of Daniel Waldo, a member of Oregon's first Legislature, and one of his

female slaves. Waldo brought America and her mother with him when his family crossed the continent by wagon to settle in Oregon.

Richard and America were married in Salem in 1863, at the First Congregational Church. Their union was poorly received by many of their fellow townspeople. Oregon, then newly admitted to the United States, was not

known for its tolerance. In fact, at the time of its admission in 1859, Oregon was the only state in the Union with an "exclusion law" in its constitution — a clause banning people of African descent from living in the state.

Salem's daily newspaper, the *Statesman-Journal*, editorialized against the marriage ceremony, called it a "nigger wedding." To his credit, Daniel Waldo, a prominent man in the community, gave his public blessing to the marriage and gave the new couple several gifts of great value with which to start their home.

Nevertheless, the Bogles left Salem for the relatively friendlier confines of Walla Walla, Wash., where Richard opened a barbershop. Richard often would allow travelers to spend the night in the back room of his shop — a practice that backfired severely on one occasion. A group of vigilantes broke into the shop, then captured and lynched a young Black man who had allegedly aided the escape of two criminals from the local jail.

In addition to his barbershop, Richard owned a 200-acre farm and was a co-founder of the Walla Walla Savings and Loan Association.

Richard and America went on to have many children, of whom five

survived. Among them was Dick Bogle's grandfather, Waldo Bogle. Most of the Bogles remained in eastern Washington, but Waldo led a branch of the Bogle family back to Oregon, where he ran a number of barbershops, mostly in North and Northeast Portland. One was located in the Golden West Hotel — itself owned by a Black man — in Northwest Portland, where many of Portland's early African American residents lived. The hotel is still in business under the same name. Another barbershop was housed in the Medley Hotel on North Mississippi Avenue, and two more were located on North Williams Avenue.

The haircutting business was good to Waldo. Dick Bogle remembers his grandparents' spacious home in Southeast Portland, where his grandmother, Bonnie loved to entertain and serve her guests on fine china. Dick, though, has taken a new turn through the Bogle family's Oregon/Washington revolving door — he recently moved back across the Columbia to Washington, where he and his wife, Nora, have settled in Vancouver.

In addition to reviewing jazz albums for The Skanner, Dick Bogle hosts a radio program for KMHD FM.