

Out of the Archives

a newsletter from the Washington State Archives

February 2018



Black History Month—several African American families lived in territorial Lewis and Thurston counties

by Dr. Jewell Lorenz Dunn, Olympia Branch Researcher

Black History Month is about recognizing African Americans who have made contributions to our local communities. After trailblazers like George Washington, founder of Centralia, and George Bush, founder of Bush Prairie (Tumwater/New Market), led the way, many other pioneers of color came to Washington Territory.

A cluster of African Americans arrived in Lewis County between 1866 and 1892. William Bryan, his wife, Jane, and their adopted son, Joseph Prescott, lived close to George Washington.

Bryan purchased nearly four acres in 1866 from the U.S. government and later donated the property for a seminary. Bryan was a veteran of the Civil War where he served the Union as a private. His wife, Jane Bryan, was listed on the 1890 veterans' schedule as a surviving widow.

Living next door to the widowed Jane Bryan in 1892 were two more families of color: A.A. [Allen] Miller and his wife Estella. Allen and Estella had one son named William. The three

1890 veterans' schedule.

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Inquiries numbered 7, 16, and 17 are not to be asked in respect to infants. Inquiries numbered 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, and 20 are to be answered (if at all) merely by an affirmative mark, as follows:

SCHEDULE 1.—Inhabitants in Shoohum Creek District, in the County of Sevier State of Washington, enumerated by me on the 5th day of August, 1870.

Post Office: Shoohum Creek V. S. P. D. Howe, Asst. Marshal.

SEX AND AGE.		COLOR AND RACE.		RELIGION.		EDUCATION.		MARRIAGE.		MILITARY SERVICE.		NATURALIZATION.		CIVIL SERVICE.		PROFESSION, OCCUPATION, OR TRADE.		PROPERTY.		MILITARY SERVICE.		NATURALIZATION.		CIVIL SERVICE.		PROFESSION, OCCUPATION, OR TRADE.		PROPERTY.		MILITARY SERVICE.		NATURALIZATION.		CIVIL SERVICE.		PROFESSION, OCCUPATION, OR TRADE.		PROPERTY.	
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1870 U.S. Federal census, Bryan family.

of them later moved up to Pierce County where Allen Miller had a shoeshine business. All three are buried in Tacoma, Washington.

Husband and wife
Charles and M.A.
Alleman settled in
Centralia shortly before

the 1892 census was conducted. According to the census, Charles was a 30-year-old cook born in New York., M.A. was 20 and was born in Canada, and their eight-month-old daughter was born in Washington Territory. It is unclear if the Alleman family stayed in the Lewis County area.

Another 1892 family enumerated as black was Stacy and M.D. Coones of Centralia. Both were born in British Columbia, Canada, making them alien residents at the time of the census.

Lewis Carrothers (AKA Louis Kruthers, Cruthers, or Caruthers) arrived in Lewis County very early on. Born in Missouri around 1830, he lived near George Washington and William F. Bryan in 1870. He was found to be one of the first men of color to obtain a homestead in Washington Territory (We'll tell his story in detail in the next newsletter).

In Thurston County, the well-known Rebecca Howard was proprietor of the Pacific House in Olympia. Rebecca came from Massachusetts just prior to 1860 with her husband, Alex Howard.

These pioneers' stories can be supported and documented by records in our archival collection.

[illegible]

1870 U.S. Federal census, George Washington and Kruthers families.