

benton
county



"It's that freedom train a comin'; get on board, get on board."
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BEULAH MAE AYERS,
EDITOR



"THEY WANT TO
KNOW WHERE TO
MARCH NEXT.
HOW ABOUT
ASHLAND?"



Citizens Ask Peterson to Speak

Mr. Lloyd Peterson, expected to be the new principal of Old Salem Attendance Center, will be invited to speak to the community at the next meeting of the Benton County Citizens Club on Tuesday, March 30, at Sims Chapel.

While his appointment as principal is not yet official, members of the school committee have been assured that he will be the new principal. However, they were also told that the new principal will have to fire the four teachers rather than the board firing them.

Many members of the Citizens Club have expressed suspicion over this fact. Therefore Mr. Peterson will be asked to state his views about the job of a principal, and specifically, whether or not he will be willing to fire the four teachers listed in the demands of the Citizens Club.

At the last meeting of the Citizens Club, the possibility of a demonstration in Ashland was discussed as a way of showing the county our determination to fulfill the demands listed in the petition. Many feel that if Mr. Peterson does not give full assurance that these teachers will be fired, then there should be a march on the courthouse in Ashland.

The school committee will meet officially with the Board of Education on the first Monday in April. If at that time the fulfillment of their demands is not final, then it is expected that the boycott of Old Salem will begin once again.

Farm Notes

In a recent report by the Civil Rights Commission, it was stated that the agriculture programs of the United States government have to a large part discriminated against Negro farmers in the South. This includes such programs as the ASCS, FHA, and 4-H Clubs.

Negro citizens in Benton County are now being urged to participate in such programs. Then if you feel you are being discriminated against, we will report it to the United States Department of Agriculture. It is expected that prompt action will be taken.

Participation by the Negro youth of Benton in 4-H Clubs will be discussed at Tuesday's Citizens Club meeting at Sims Chapel.

Negroes are urged to apply for FHA loans to buy land. If the loans are turned down, it will be reported immediately.

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Once a sharecropper has put in for a crop with his landlord, the landlord cannot put him off the land, unless he is not doing his job. Anyone who is put off his land for such things as participating in civil rights should report at once to the COFO office.

Recently, a letter was written to the Justice Department complaining about Turner Carpenter's treatment of his sharecroppers.

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Mr. L.B. Paige reports that the deadline for signing up for pre-measurement of cotton acreage is April 5. Sign up at the ASCS office.

Thoughts on Freedom

Where is Your Faith?

By Mrs. Lorsie Jones

You Christian people, where is your faith--in God or the white man? God has all the power, and you are not afraid of Him. The white man has just a little power and you are afraid of him.

Who are you going to serve--God or the white man? Remember: God is with you always, and the white man has to find you.

Change in Image

by Mr. William Smith

Some of our people delight in letting the white man tell them what to do, but in this age and time, that is all over now.

What we need to do is stand up and speak out for what is right, for the time has come now for every tub to stand on its own bottom.

We have so many people that are black without and white within--which means a Negro is in a white man's skin. So, people, if you aren't going to stand on your own feet, don't try to hinder others.

We Need Freedom

by Flora Mae Poplar

We need freedom because the white man has everything and doesn't want the black man to have anything. I want freedom so the Negroes can have good jobs as the white man. We have been down long enough. It's time for us to come up and try to get our freedom. We have always done what the white man says to do, but no more.

America, Wake Up!

by Clara Peterson

You have killed and robbed many people. You made people slaves, made them eat like hogs, work like mules, beaten them like they were wild animals.

America wake up! America wake up! We people want our rights now: rights for voting, equal job opportunities, equality.

America, wake up! America, wake up!
for we want our freedom now.

An Encounter

by Mary Ashten

(The following poem was written by a white lady at Iowa University when she met Mrs. G.N. Reaves.)

In passing I met a friend
I'll meet no more,
Of skin so dark
And soul so fair.

For a moment caught up,
In mutual despair
Of a task set for mortals
Each of us must share.

The acceptance of others
That are different from Self
Since negation of one
To all is a loss.

The aura of loneliness
That encircles each one
For a blessed instant
Dissolved into none.

We stood together, not alone,
Under a common bond.
Communion done and vows renewed,
Each carried back hope to his own.

Negro History Section

WILLIAM C. HANDY (1873-1957)

William C. Handy was the son of Elizabeth Brewer and Charles Bernard Handy. He was born in Florence, Alabama, and attended a school where one of the teachers was a musician. He introduced young Handy to the choruses of Wagner, Bizet, and other great musicians. The music that most appealed to the boy was the harmonizing in the barbershops and on street corners and at picnics, and the great harmonies of the spirituals sung in the African Methodist Church.

His father was a minister of that church and the parents had intended William for a preaching career, but while still a very young boy he showed his great musical talent. In spite of his father's disapproval, he purchased a cornet for \$1.75 from a friend and secretly arranged for lessons. Only his mother never laughed at his first awkward attempts on the cornet or at his ambition to play it as well as Claude Seals, a famous Negro cornetist of the day. The boy, William, had heard him play solos and accompaniments during his appearance with their church choir in Florence, which inspired him to take up the instrument seriously.

Because of his father's belief that professional musicians led a sinful life, and because the family was too poor to give him further education, young William left home on foot with his trusty cornet under his arm. He trudged the long way from Florence to Birmingham, where he taught school for two years. Then for a while he worked in the Bessemer Iron Works because he earned better wages there. Many of the harmonies he heard sung by the mill laborers he used in his "blues" in later years.

During the panic of 1893, when the whole country was in the depth of depression and general unemployment put him and thousands of other iron workers out of work, Handy organized a quartet of musicians to go to the Columbian Exposition--a world's fair--in Chicago. Through the kindness of a switchman and a railroad guard, Handy and his three companions rode as far as St. Louis, Missouri, in a box car. Times were hard there, too, and the quartet was desperately poor. That night in a tavern, Handy heard a young man singing:

"Sometimes my heart grows weary of its sadness,
Sometimes my heart grows weary of its pain. . ."

He grabbed a guitar from a man sitting near him and joined in the song. He poured into it all the weariness and hunger and heartbreak he had known since leaving Birmingham. The crowd applauded and clamored for more. This, according to Handy himself, was the occasion that gave "birth to the blues."

Although his quartet venture at the World's Fair was not an unqualified success, from that time on the young musician prospered. Returning south, he became a music teacher, then, in Alabama, was made a band leader and solo cornetist. Soon he had organized his own large band.

During a dance for white people in Mississippi, Handy observed that

they were most enthusiastic about dancing to a small combination of his musicians--a mandolin, a guitar, and a bass viol. This was a group familiar throughout the south for Negro singing and dancing, and so he began to use it more and more when presenting his own compositions.

Handy moved from Mississippi to Memphis, Tennessee, and there he began collecting tunes and experimenting with them. Soon he was putting this music on paper, and it was on Beale Street in Memphis that most of his compositions were written.

During the mayoralty campaign in 1909, three men ran for the mayor's office, and each candidate had his own band. Handy campaigned with his band for Edward Crump, who not only won as mayor, but went on to later become a United States congressman. As a campaign song, Handy had written Mr. Crump Blues, and at the close of the triumphant campaign, Handy found his band established as the most popular in Memphis. He transformed the campaign song into The Memphis Blues.

When he had failed to find a publisher for it, he issued a thousand copies himself. Unfortunately, he sold another man the rights to orchestrate it for one hundred dollars, and so he could not include this song in the 1926 collection of his compositions, published by his own publishing company.

Among the sixty or more most popular compositions by William C. Handy are those most frequently played and familiar to all lovers of jazz: The Memphis Blues, The St. Louis Blues, Beale Street Blues, Mississippi Blues, and the Joe Turner Blues. In addition to secular songs, Handy harmonized and published excellent versions of the Negro spirituals. His Evolution of the Blues was performed in 1924 by Vincent Lopez at a jazz concert at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City. And, in 1928, William C. Handy presented a concert at Carnegie Hall illustrating the development of Negro music, from the drums of Africa through the spirituals to present-day jazz.

A park in Memphis, part of the old Beale Street he had famous, is named in his honor. He was married in 1898 to Virginia Price, and six children were born to them.

William C. Handy died in 1957, but his songs--especially the most popular one of all, The St. Louis Blues--are still sung and played by orchestras and bands around the world.

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(The above story was taken from the book, They Showed the Way, by Charlemae Hill Rollins).

Editor's notes: We are sorry that in one of our past issues of the Freedom Train we made an error in reporting the integration of the cafes. Mrs. Albirda Hoyle wrote in that, "We did not say that we weren't going to the cafe. We just said we didn't know because we didn't get through filling out our applications in time. When we started, you all were coming back."

By the way, why hasn't anyone gone into the cafes lately?

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The Freedom Train would like to print various opinions of our readers on the question of: Who should make decisions? The people or their leaders? What do you think?