

The Dawn of Tomorrow

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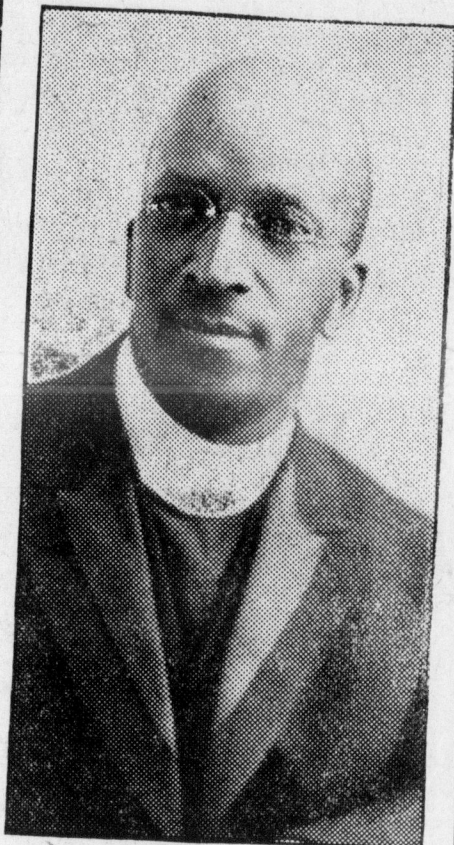
AMHERSTBURG, THE TERMINUS OF THE UNDERGROUND RAILWAY

(From The Journal of Negr History)

By Fred Landon

The little Canadian town of Amherstburg is situated on the east bank of the Detroit River and not far from the mouth of that beautiful stream. From the later years of the eighteenth century it has figured in the history of Canada and today holds proud its place as one of the most historic spots in Ontario. Throughout the earlier part of the War of 1812 it was the headquarters of the British Commander, Brock, and it was here that the first meeting took place between Brock and the great Indian chief, Tecumseh. Later, during the troubles of 1837 and 1838, there were important happenings at this point, particularly the capture of the schooner Ann, in which Negro volunteers from the district had a hand. But apart entirely from its military importance, Amherstburg, or Fort Malden, as it was called in earlier days, has special interest as being the chief place of entry for the large number of fugitives who made their way from the slave States of the South by way of the "underground railroad" to Canada and freedom. Even today there are many colored families resident in Amherstburg, descendants of those who came in the days before the Civil War and who did not leave their adopted home when the abolition of slavery and the downfall of the Confederacy made it possible for them to return in safety to the South. In other towns and cities of Western Ontario there are similar groups of people whose color is a constant reminder of the movement of the fugitives into Canada in the first half of the last century.

The Negro population of Amherstburg on the eve of the Civil War was placed by one observer at 800 out of a population of 2000, a rather large percentage it will be noted. In 1855 another visitor to the place had estimated the Negro population at between 400 and 500, which would indicate that the population had doubled in the late fifties. This might well be accounted for by the large number of Negroes who came into Canada between 1850 and 1860 consequent upon the operation of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. It does



REV. S. R. DRAKE, Member Executive Board of The Canadian League for the Advancement of Colored People.

To Name Negro For Health Dept.

Buffalo, N. Y., January 28th—The Trade and Commerce Club of Buffalo, a colored organization, enlarged its membership last week with the enrollment of Mayor Schwab, who has shown much interest in the body and encouraged its growth. In recognition of the good work of the colored citizens, he made a promise to appoint a representative of the race for the Health Department.

not necessarily follow that either of the figures given above represented the actual population resident in Amherstburg since there must always, from its nature as a place of entry, have been transients in the town. Probably most Negroes preferred a permanent location farther back from the international boundary where there was less risk of kidnapping and forcible return to American jurisdiction. This would account for the colonies in such towns as London, Ingersoll and Chatham, each of which, even to this day, has its Negro population.

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WHAT IS A RACE? Questions And Answers Column

N.A.A.C.P. Press Service.

Opening a series of articles on the "Nordic Myth," to be published in "The Nation," Dr. Franz Boas, Professor of Anthropology at Columbia University, analyses present concepts of race and race prejudice in the issue of January 28th. Dr. Boas denies that hereditary mental distinctions between races have ever been established. He says:

"The occurrence of hereditary mental traits that belong to a particular race has never been proved. The available evidence makes it much more likely that the same mental traits appear in varying distribution among the principle racial groups. The behaviour of an individual is therefore not determined by his racial affiliation, but by the character of his ancestry and his cultural environment. We may judge of the mental characteristics of families and individuals, but not of races."

Dr. Boas points out that children do not have race antagonism until they are taught to have it: "As the child grows up the dividing line between the races is impressed upon it and in this way the race consciousness develops until it becomes a purely automatic reaction which evokes the same intensity of feeling as the so-called instinctive reactions."

Dr. Boas further points out that it is impossible to frame such a description of any race that all of its members will be included: "A whole racial group can never be described by a few descriptive terms, because there will always be many individuals of deviating types. It is our impression that the Swede is blond, blue-eyed, tall, and longheaded; but many Swedes do not conform to this description. . . . We cannot assign one individual to one race, another to another, because we do not know the degree of variability found in the ancestral isolated race, and on account of the long continued mixture the characteristics of the parental races will appear in varying combinations in each individual. All attempts to establish among members of the same social group correlations between mental character and bodily form have failed."

Asserting that "many hereditary characteristics are not racial in character, but must be assigned to. . . family strains," Dr. Boas concludes that: "If this be true, it is clear that any generalized characterization of

(By The Associated Negro Press)

Who was Sophonisha?

Sophonisha was the daughter of Hasdrubal of Hannibal. She was reared to hate Rome. She was affianced to Masinissa, king of the Numidians, but was given by her father to Syphax. Scipio insisted that this marriage be annulled, but the Numidian sent her a bowl of poison, which she drank without hesitation. She has been the subject of many dramas in French, Italian and in English.

Who was Prester John and when did he live?

Prester John is a character about which a great deal of fiction and mystery has been woven. He was said to have been a king of Ethiopia and richer than all the monarchs of the world. One legend claims him to have been the son of the Queen of Sheba by Solomon, another claims the name refers to a line of kings of Ethiopia, while still another claims he was the ruler of the Magi or wise men. During the Middle Age much was said and written about Prester John and of his wealth and many sought him, but he remained a mystery.

I have heard that one of the constellations was named after an Ethiopian queen. Is this true and which one is it?

A great many of the constellations have been named after African heroes and heroines, but I presume you refer to Cassiopea, queen of Ethiopia. She is said to have boasted that the beauty of her daughter Andromeda, surpassed that of the nereids of the sea. This angered Neptune, god of the waters, and he brought a deluge upon Ethiopia. The penalty was to chain Andromeda to a rock to be destroyed by a sea monster, but Perseus, the Grecian hero, freed her and married her and found the royal house of Argos.

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a race must be misleading. It may be possible to characterize family lines, but the assumption of general racial characteristics, anatomical, physiological, or mental, excepting those that belong to the race as a whole is arbitrarily made."