1933

(The) Boston negroes' economic experiences, 1700-1930

Goodman, George Wendall
Boston University

http://hdl.handle.net/2144/17662

Boston University
BOSTON UNIVERSITY

Graduate School

THESIS

THE BOSTON NEGROES' ECONOMIC EXPERIENCES . . . . 1700-1930

by

George Wendall Goodman

(A.B. Lincoln University, Pa. 1926)

submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

1933

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PREFACE

The object of this thesis is to throw some light on the experiences of the Negro population in Boston from a very early period in their advent up to the present day. This is done with the hope that the restatement of certain truths may impress themselves upon the minds of those students and interested persons who are anxious to see this minority group eventually reach a position where they may be a self-sustaining element in the population.

All of the material here presented has been gone over many times in various treatises but as far as the writer known, there has been no previous attempt to treat it in the same manner.

New England and particularly Boston has the reputation the world over for having been the "cradleland" for the development of that liberal spirit which eventually flared into the Abolitionist Movement. Hence we find all of the United States looking toward this section of the country for its idealism in the treatment of minority groups and especially the Negro. Then, it is well that more students spend their time tracing the development of the Negro here and measuring if possible the reaction of his white brother toward him. Thus it is my specific objective to first give a general historical background for this element of the population in Boston from the 17th Century to 1900. My main interest all along is Economics, for out of a man's inability to earn enough to furnish his family with the bare necessities of life, come practically all of our social evils. However, to
sustain this main theme I have selected two other factors that have influenced the development of all racial groups in this country—Religion and Education. It is well that I state here that I do not plan to treat these two latter influences in any extensive manner but only in so much as they effect the main theme.

Whatever intense treatment there may be of the subject it will deal with that period between 1900-1930. These are the years in which American industry grew rapidly and included that War period when the doors were temporarily thrown open to Negro workers. However, Boston being a mercantile city rather than a manufacturing center, no marked number of Negroes migrated here, nor was there any marked change in the type of jobs they were offered.

The objective is to determine what degree of actual progress the Negro has made from the days when he came to this city from the shores of Africa totally unused to the language, dress or customs of this country or its people. If he has made definite progress, to ascertain to the best of my ability the contributing factors in this success and also point out those weaknesses which have deterred him. To bring out in bold relief those historical facts and figures which will sustain the thesis, not in a hyper-critical manner, nor with the idea of trying to maintain a satisfactory middle ground but purely with an unbiased scientific approach.

The summary and recommendations are drawn purely from observations and interviews and are offered in the spirit of helpfulness. They are not given as the last words, but rather I hope, they will be but a beginning for the further pursuance of this vital and interesting subject by many, far more capable than I feel in this matter.
Religious Freedom and Slavery

All historical information leads to the one conclusion that the primary urge of the settlers of New England was their zeal for freedom of religious worship. Rather than submit to the dictates of the Church of England these Puritan fathers were willing to break with their homeland and suffer the deprivations of a strange wilderness. To read of the sufferings of this small band of pioneers is sufficient to convince the most doubtful or critics. During the first winter, through exposure, lack of food and savages, their numbers were reduced to a mere handful. There is every indication that had it not been for their intense zeal that they would have lost faith and returned to the Continent.

Hardly had these people begun their struggle for existence when a new problem presented itself that challenged the very foundation of their sincerity in religious matters and marked the beginning of one of the most perplexing problems in the history of this nation. In 1638 a trading vessel by the name of the "Desire" landed on these New England shores with the first Negroes to become a part of this community. These Negroes were purchased by people of Boston. It represented one of those strange twists in the reasoning of people that will permit them to extol the virtues of a cause with one breath and selfishly deny it to another with the other. There were those within the Puritan ranks that condoned enslaving these black
creatures on the basis of the Hebrew experiences of the Bible. However, it cannot be truthfully said that this represented the consensus of opinion, for there were many who could not dovetail their ambition for religious freedom with slavery or the complete denial of salvation to these heathens.

On the other hand, there was no way to interpret this salvation to this black brother save through education and that held the possibilities of dissatisfaction and unrest upon the part of this newcomer, which was not especially desired. This clash of opinion caused considerable discussion and disagreement. During these years the practice varied. In some homes the slaves were taught to read and write that their appreciation of Christianity might be assured. In others, this was not the case and the slave served merely as a means of economic advantage. But so great did the struggle become that the Bishop of London abrogated the law that a Christian could not be held as a slave. This immediately made it possible for the missionaries of this church to inaugurate a religious campaign to bring these blacks into the fold.

There is some indication that the French and Spanish missionaries met this problem first by bringing Catholicism to Negroes and Indians alike. Though they seemed much more inclined toward a liberal spirit in their treatment of the Indians, they still saw the necessity of converting this growing group of blacks. They were particularly broadminded toward those few who happened to be freedmen, according them the highest educational privileges. This attitude of the Catholics, plus a doubtful conscience were perhaps the drives that spurred the Puritan attitude along in the matter. But standing forever in the background of their thoughts was the problem of just what
could be done with this slave group if they were set free. It was not an easy matter to decide, for here were men and women whose appearance, customs and language in no way fitted in the usual life of the community.

It is exceedingly easy to become severely critical of the Puritan fathers in their vacillation on this problem, if we do not keep in mind certain fundamental facts. First that these Negro men and women were totally strange beings to them and inasmuch as the physical difference was so great, it was a simple matter to set them apart as curious and potentially dangerous persons. Then there was the matter of precedent; these blacks were being used in the West Indies specifically for arduous labor and it was not a strange custom to enslave them. And finally the hardships of clearing this area and making it livable were terrific and any kind of manual assistance was welcome.

An extract from the sermons of Rev. Thomas Bacon about 1750 is indicative of the fact that many in high positions were not unmindful of the obligations of those in authority toward the Negro.

"Next to our children and brethren by blood, our servants and especially our slaves, are certainly in the nearest relation to us. They are an immediate and necessary part of our households, by whose labors and assistance we are enabled to enjoy the gifts of Providence in ease and plenty; and surely we owe them a return of what is just and equal for the drudgery and hardships they go thru in our service"

1. Works of Dr. Cotton Mather-Bishop William Meade
Boston's First Census of Negroes

In 1742, in a rather crude count of persons in Boston, there were listed 1374 Negroes, slave and free. In ten years this had increased by over a hundred persons. Between 1742 and 1765 this element in Boston's population fluctuates considerably; at one time coming very close to constituting a third of a total population of around 15,000 persons. But evidently the Negro was not immune from the ravages of this wild country and many of them must have died off, for in 1790 only 766 of them could be found. We must take into account here the fact slave-trading was at a low ebb and thus their ranks were not greatly increased from the outside.

Growing Influence of the Philosophy of Brotherhood and Equality

These were the times when Rousseau through his discourses was attacking the theories of Montesquieu on the historic mode of society. Rousseau's new doctrines colored all of France's social literature. He developed in his most important work in 1776 the spirit that was carrying America to independence when he said, "It is to equality that nature has attached the preservation of our social faculties and happiness: and from this I conclude that legislation will only be taking useless trouble, unless all its attention is first of all directed to the establishment of equality in the fortune and condition of citizens." ¹

While slavery was still more or less accepted by the majority of people in Boston, or at least before any marked movement for its abolition was manifested, citizens of the city petitioned the Colonial Legislature to terminate the practice in favor of white servants.² There is no indication whether this came from a humanitarian point of view or from the feeling

¹. Rousseau by John Morley
². Mass. Historical Collection, Second series-viii-P.184
that the group was growing too rapidly.

It seems that some of the spirit of independence was also infecting the Negro, for in 1770, one Richard Lechmere instituted suit against his master for keeping him in bondage and won the case. In 1773 and 1774, groups of slaves petitioned the Legislature to enact Emancipation.1

While many events and activities pointed to the ultimate abolition of slavery in Massachusetts and Boston, perhaps the event that assured the move was Massachusetts Constitutional Convention of 1780. In the declaration of rights drafted by John Adams, the very first article made slavery impossible. The first sentence of that article began with the following line—"All men are born free and equal, and have certain natural essential and unalienable rights: etc".

The real crisis came at the very beginning of the Revolutionary War, when the majority of Negroes in the Colonies were slaves. The question came up as to the advisability of letting this group fight the cause of independence and still maintain their status of slaves in the country. This matter was brought to the attention of the Provincial Congress in 1774 but for some reason was tabled and not decided upon at the time. The committee of Safety of this body did make a very definite statement in regard to this question in May 1775 which was worded as follows: "The admission of any persons, as soldiers, but only such as are freedmen, will be inconsistent with the principles that are to be supported, and reflect dishonor upon the colony, and that no slaves be admitted into the army on any consideration whatever". This feeling was further expressed by General Washington when he assumed command of the army about Boston July 3, 1775. Still 1. Mass. Legislature Report on Free Negroes and Mulattoes, Jan. 16, 1822. William C. Nell Colored Patriots of the Revolution.
later in October at a council of war it was unanimously agreed that slaves be rejected, with a great many feeling that Negroes generally should be refused. Later on in November, Washington issued instructions specifically stating that no slaves should be enlisted for military service.

There seemed to be no unanimity of opinion about this matter for while resolutions were being passed, Negroes were fighting shoulder to shoulder with the white colonists. From the Boston Massacre to the conclusion of the war they were numbered among those at practically every major engagement.  

The fact that these Negroes entered so enthusiastically into the spirit of the Revolution despite their status as slaves and accepted all the deprivations and suffering along with all other colonists undoubtedly effected the entire spirit of the nation toward slavery. But most certainly it paved the way for Massachusetts to abolish the practice. Thus in 1790 the First National Census does not show a single slave in the state.

The development of the circumstances that made way for Boston and Massachusetts to lead in the abolition of slavery is significant because it established precedent and an underlying current of goodwill, which undoubtedly effected the attitude of a great many persons years later when they fought to have it completely eradicated throughout the country.

The Negroes Economic Status Up To the Revolution.

Negroes had been brought here primarily to perform the arduous work that pioneering entails. The slave had fitted into the West Indian situation in an ideal manner, primarily because the great industry there was sugar raising. They could work in the fields, mills and stills besides doing some of the hand crafts and domestic work.  

2. The Negro in our History- Carter Woodson  P.25
they went through what was called a breaking-in process. It was this type that was first sold in America but a little later it was decided that there was a greater possibility of dissatisfaction brewing among them, for a great many had learned the art of reading and writing. In the North however, there was little use for the slave, save in the household and perhaps the fact they did not work into the economic scheme of this section as a necessary factor went a long way in developing an aversion to the slave system.

The 1790 Census for Boston gives some idea as to the type of work the Negro was doing here. Though slavery had been abolished the name of no Negro was entered separately but attached to some white household, where they evidently worked in the capacity of servants. There is some change to be noted in the type of occupation entered later, as shown by the census of 1829. It speaks of bootblacks, cooks, window cleaners, coachmen, laundresses, cordwainer, housewright, soapmaker, hair-renovator, hair-dresser. Negroes practically controlled the barbering business. What was more important as an indication of their economic progress was the fact that 26 Negroes were listed as having private homes and no occupations. This would seem to indicate that there were some who had acquired enough material prosperity to enable them to live on their savings. However, it is not well to presume too extensively on this latter classes financial independence, for there is a likelihood that unemployment was not exactly unknown to Negroes at even this early date.

Early Education of the Negro in Boston

As has already been suggested, before the abolition of slavery the attitude about teaching the Negro to read and write varied greatly. This
early education evolved chiefly around the question of whether or not the slave would be given an appreciation of Christianity.

In reality the Public Schools date back almost to the settlement of the town, for in 1635 one Philemon Purmont was entreated to take charge of a school and given thirty acres of land. Not until March 1710 does the system seem to take definite form with the selection of five inspectors of schools.\(^1\)

At first the Negroes were permitted to enter the schools with all other children but in 1820 a significant incident occurred. A group of Negroes petitioned the School Committee to establish a separate Primary School. It seems that the parents felt that the real reason for such few Negro children attending the schools was the fact they were taunted and made to feel inferior by the white children. This request was at first turned down but later granted. In 1831 a separate Grammar School was also opened in the North End but due to the fact the Negro population was drifting out of that section, four years later it had to be closed due to lack of attendance. A little later the Smith School was erected off Joy Street. This school was named after Abrel Smith who left a legacy to the city to be used in the education of Negroes.\(^2\)

In 1840 a decided reaction set in that is indicative of the changing spirit of the Negro in Boston. Led by Garrison and Phillips a group of Negroes petitioned the School Committee to open the doors of the Public Schools to Negro children. These petitions were denied and it is interesting to note the content of the report of the school committee in denying this petition.\(^3\)

1. Annals of the Primary Schools - Wightman
2. Report of the Primary School - June 15, 1846
"Our inquiries into the origin and history of separate schools," they said, "have also convinced us that the leading motive for their establishment was precisely the opposite of a design to degrade the colored people, as has so frequently been charged upon them. The colored children in Boston possessed equal rights with others as everyone knows, yet very few, indeed, often not more than two or three in all, attended the public schools. It was next to impossible to bring them in. Benevolent individuals undertook, therefore, to sustain special separate schools for them, and it was with great difficulty for a long time that they could be brought into these schools. The labor of getting them in was far greater than teaching them, when once brought in. It was by the exertion of benevolent white persons, in connection with the most intelligent of the colored people, that this class of children were brought under school instruction in any considerable numbers—an object which it was found impossible to accomplish but by means of separate schools. The question arises by what means the views and feelings of the colored people in reference to these special schools for their benefit have been so mysteriously changed."

This statement of the position of the school committee is important for at least two reasons. First, they take no cognizance of the fact that the Negroes' attitudes are changing with the growth of the community. Secondly, it seems to indicate a conscientious feeling that there is no way of educating the Negro save through the medium of separate schools. There seems to be no will to deny them entrance on the basis of race but rather because of their previous poor showing in mixed schools.

There is no doubt whatsoever that the influence of such men as Garrison and Phillips went a long way in developing this new desire in the minds of the Negroes. With full credit to that Negro leadership which was developing, the dynamic personality and perseverance of one such as William Lloyd Garrison went a long way in interpreting to these Negroes the significance of securing equal treatment as citizens and often bolstered their courage in confronting problems. Thus in April 1865 the Boston Negro gained one of his most significant victories in the passage of legislation that abolished separate schools throughout the entire state.
Anti-Slavery and Our Economic System.

There is every historical indication that practically all of the fathers of the Revolution were in favor of the abolition of slavery. The sentiment in behalf of universal liberty which was the very basis of our independence struggle created an atmosphere that made the days of slavery limited throughout the country. Not only in the North but everywhere it was merely a question of time or the method of freeing them. The Abolition Societies that were started after the War were for the specific purpose of molding public opinion toward gradual emancipation.

However, the South was much better fitted for the use of slaves on its plantations, but even here there were marked efforts among many of the leaders for the abolition of the system on the grounds that it was an economic evil and un-Christian.

In the meantime a far reaching invention was made by Eli Whitney, a Yale graduate, who had gone South to teach school and observing the difficulty of separating cotton fibre from the seed, invented the Gin. Though this invention did not immediately impress its importance upon the planters it later revolutionized the production of cotton and sealed the fate of the blackman as slaves until the Civil War. By 1837, practically all of the southern states had suppressed or abolished their anti-slavery societies and it became chiefly a sectional affair, with the radical element in Boston.

The Boston Negroes Cultural and Economic Status begins to Rise.

The influence of education and freedom gradually began to show its effect upon the Negro population of Boston. Perhaps the greatest source for developing community feeling and pride was the Negro church founded here. In
1830 there were only two but they served as general meeting places where Negroes could talk over various problems and come to some united opinion. There also developed a higher type of leadership represented by Rev. John T. Raymond, pastor of the Joy S. Church who was preceded by Rev. Thomas Paul. The most brilliant minister of these days was the Rev. John Selle Martan who was introduced by the pastor of Tremont Temple and served there as substitute during the regular pastor's vacation.

This church activity gave rise to Negro Societies such as the Masons, Odd Fellows, Brother and Sisters of Love and Charity, plus the first women's beneficial society in Boston, white or colored, United Daughters of Zion.

In economics there was a gradual trend of a certain portion of the population away from menial capacities. They begin to appear in the ranks of the professions, aside from the church. Edward Garrison Walker, William J. Watkins and John S. Rock were practising lawyers and the first Negro physician was admitted to the Massachusetts Medical Association in 1854, a Dr. J.V. DeGrasse. The Boston Negro had accumulated property to the value of $200,000. J.B. Smith evidently was accepted as one of the leading caterers in the city. J.A. Rock was one of the leading dentists and Bailey and Stewart ran the most popular gymnasiums. A Thomas B. Dalton who appeared in the census of 1829 as a bootblack ultimately built up a very fashionable tailoring shop on Brattle Street from which he accumulated considerable wealth. His will indicated his fortune as close to $50,000.

The primary factor in this cultural and economic swing is the fact it produced leaders from the group for the first time. Before this

period the Boston Negro had to rely chiefly upon the interest manifested by those white leaders who saw the injustices of their situation. Further the fact that some of the Negroes were gradually emerging into positions requiring intelligence and a measure of accomplishment gradually reduced the impression that they were inherently inferior.

The Abolition Cause in Boston and the Negro.

The name of William Lloyd Garrison has been mentioned in connection with the fight to have the separate schools of Boston abolished. However, this was just one of the many battles he waged in the interest of Negroes, his chief one being for the final destruction of slavery in the United States. Here was a man of sterling quality and indomitable courage who from the start opposed slavery. His opposition was at first tempered with the idea that it was only possible through a gradual process. Undoubtedly his perspective in this regard was changed by his meeting with the Quaker, Benjamin Lundy, who was practically the only militant Anti-slavery worker of that period and had established a paper called the Genius of Universal Emancipation. Shortly after his association with Lundy and the Genius, Garrison became radical on the matter of slavery. He felt that there could be no compromise in the matter; it must be absolute emancipation and not a gradual process. This frame of mind affected his whole procedure here in Boston and the attitude of the Boston Negroes.

But even before the coming of Garrison the Negroes of Boston organized what may be called a forerunner of the great Abolition Movement here. One David Walker in 1828 was responsible for the organizing of the General Colored Association of Massachusetts, which had as its chief ob-
jective the destruction of slavery. Such men as Joshua Easton, John E. Scarlett, Thomas Cole, Fred Brinley, Coffin Pitts and Walker Lewis were outstanding figures in this association. It is strikingly important that a speech by Walker at this meeting attracted the attention of Garrison. Walker's speech created a furor throughout the South, where they placed a ransom on his head, dead or alive. Walker, who was the proprietor of a clothing shop on Brattle Street had done many things for the cause previous to this time but this single speech brought him to the forefront as the leader. Unfortunately, the following year he died. It was at this point that Garrison stepped into the role as the leader.

What proved to be the mouthpiece of the Abolition Movement was organized in 1831 and called the "Liberator". This paper, plus the practice of flooding the South with anti-slavery literature caused a great deal of ill feeling between the two sections of the country. The South threatened that this attitude would ultimately cause them to dissociate themselves from the Union. This protest was responsible for the development of a pro-slavery movement in Boston. The Mayor of Boston presided over a meeting August 21, 1835 at Fanueil Hall where the pro-slavery group deplored the fact that the activities of Garrison and his group were endangering the Union. Many persons withdrew their support from the Abolitionist cause with the feeling that the movement was much more radical than was justified. The Mayor was appealed to to have the Liberator suppressed by force. To this he made the following reply—That through investigation he found that the paper had only "an insignificant countenance and support in the community and that it had not made or was likely to make converts among the respectable classes."

Evidently the people of Boston were quite wrought up over the

3. Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 244-45
issue, for there were some who were unwise enough to resort to force, in order to stamp out the abolition movement here. They harassed Garrison on every occasion. They built a scaffold in front of his home and finally would have done him bodily injury had it not been for the quick action of the Mayor of the city in having his spirited away.

Strangely enough, this active antagonism instead of breaking the cause, brought many folk to its side out of pure sympathy for a man they thought was being unduly persecuted.

During this period a significant event occurred that seems to be the likely beginning of the inter-racial activities in Boston out of which developed many interesting things, down through the years. There were two anti-slavery movements in this section. One was the association composed entirely of Negroes and the other was the New England Anti-slavery Society, made up of white persons. In 1833, the Negroes sought affiliation with this society as an auxiliary. This overture was most cordially granted and was extended to the placing of a Negro on the board of councillors. The inclusion of Negroes in the New England Anti-slavery Society opened a new avenue of contacts to them. It not only brought them in to many of the better white homes but fortified their determination to carry on in the cause of freedom. This same contact was probably a partial cause for the Boston Negro developing gradually the conception that the only difference between the groups were culture and education. After the Civil War when the Boston whites began to raise the bars between themselves and the Negro on purely racial lines, a good deal of bitterness and disappointment developed in the minds and hearts of the black men. I shall make some effort to indicate this reaction later on in
One constructive idea in the program of the New England Society was the provision for the establishment of a Manual Training School for Negro youth. There was the feeling that there must be some practical preparation for him to become worthy as a citizen. There is no further indication of what happened to this idea later on but it is indicative of the type of person who planned the program of the society. The fact such a constructive proposal was made in the early program of the Abolitionist would persuade one to feel that their objective was not completely sustained by emotional appeals but also sound, practical ideas. Thus it was most excellent contact for those Negroes who became active in this organization.

The single incident that whipped the Abolitionists to fever heat and brought a great deal of favorable sentiment to their side was the George Latimer case. This was the case of a Negro who escaped to Boston from Norfolk, Virginia with his wife and child. His owner traced him here, made complaint and the man was arrested without a warrant and held for the federal court on the grounds that only a federal court had jurisdiction. The Abolitionists immediately called a meeting at Fanueil Hall, where despite the opposition of the pro-slavery group they passed resolutions condemning the fugitive slave laws and appealed for legislation abolishing them within the state. Next the county sheriff was convinced of the illegality of Latimer's arrest and released him. Meetings were held by the Abolitionists throughout the state condemning the whole system that would condone such an arrest and the interest in the matter grew by leaps and bounds. This propaganda was so successful in its effect that in 1843 the Legislature passed a personal liberty

1. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 282-
act which forbade state judges or justices to take part in the capture of fugitive slaves and enjoined sheriffs, jailers and constables from detaining them. 1 This act set a precedent. Massachusetts was the only state in the Union that had such provision in its legislation but it started the trend in this direction and soon it was very difficult for the South to recover many of its escaped slaves. It also increased the discussion in the South about the advisability of secession.

The passage of the personal liberty act undoubtedly made the Boston Negro sense the possibility of ultimate victory in destroying slavery. It gave them much firmer ground to stand upon in waging the fight for their brothers in the South.

The Boston Negro and the Civil War

It was not until New Years Day 1863 that the cause of the Negroes freedom and the preservation of the Union were as one. For the two years prior to this time Lincoln held forth every inducement to the South to return to the Union, without the possible emancipation of the slaves. Only when every vestige of hope had passed into oblivion did Lincoln make it known that on the first day of 1863, unless the South had returned, that he would set all slaves free.

There were certain factors here that cannot well pass unnoticed. First, the Northern forces were in a bad way on January 1, 1863. They had been repulsed at both Fredericksburg and Vicksburg. Secondly, volunteering was at a standstill. Third, the Confederates were in a better position to carry on than at any other previous time during the struggle. Additional soldiers were welcomed and the Government decided upon the general arming

1. Ibid., vol. III, p. 67-footnote
of Negroes under white officers. Though this was the first general attempt to mobilize Negro soldiers during the Civil War, still on the Southern side there were the first Kansas, Louisiana Native Guards and the First South Carolina that were already in the field fighting.

Boston responded to this call for Negro soldiers by organizing the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts under Col. Robert Gould Shaw. Indicative of the spirit of Boston and Massachusetts in this crisis, is a letter written by Gov. John A. Andrew.

"As you have seen by the newspapers, I am about to raise a colored regiment in Massachusetts. This I cannot but regard as perhaps the most important corps to be organized during the whole war, in view of what must be the composition of our new levies; and therefore I am very anxious to organize it judiciously in order that it may be a model for all future colored regiments. I am desirous to have for its officers—particularly for its field officers—young men of military experience, of firm anti-slavery principles, ambitious, superior to a vulgar contempt of color, and having faith in the capacity of colored men for military service. Such officers must necessarily be gentlemen of the highest tone and honor; and I shall look for them in those circles of educated anti-slavery society which, next to the colored race itself, have the greatest interest in this experiment."

The Fifty-fifth Massachusetts and the Fifth Calvary were organized within the state. There were two events in the showing of the Boston Negro soldiers only the wages of military laborers. Despite the fact that it meant the suffering of their wives and children at home, the men of the 54th and 55th steadfastly refused to accept any recompense whatsoever until they could receive that which all other regular soldiers received. The second event was the complete fulfillment by the 54th of all the hopes and ambitions that the many friends of Negro freedom placed in this first Massachusetts regiment. It was at the battle of Fort Wagner that the men of the 54th covered themselves with undying glory and justified all of the confidence and faith that had been

1. A brave Black Regiment, Louis F. Emilia
placed in them. There is little doubt that this memorable occasion developed a respect and confidence in the hearts of many white citizens in Boston that endured for years despite the gradual change in attitude.

The Boston Negro After the Civil War

It would seem that the period between the close of the Civil War and the beginning of the 20th Century was more crucial for the Negroes advancement in prestige in Boston than any other time during his stay here. Public opinion directly after the War was very much in his favor and it appeared that this was the occasion for him to take very definite root. However, there are three factors that entered into the situation and are chiefly responsible for many of the conditions that will be discussed later. First, there was the large migration of Negroes from the South and the stories about their crimes during the Reconstruction. Secondly, there was the passing of both the white and colored leaders of the Abolition. Third, there was the much weaker leadership among the Negroes.

Immediately after the war, all of the "Old Guard" presented a very strong front in Boston. Negroes moved up in the professions; were elected to the legislature and set out with the assistance of their white friends to secure the franchise. On June 13, 1866 the 14th Amendment was passed. But in the meantime reports were gradually floating into Boston about the horrible misuse of power that was being made by Negro leaders in the South under the protection of the Federal government. These stories caused a great deal of uncertainty to develop in the minds of many white friends in Boston who had been very enthusiastic about the future of the Negro. But far more impressive was the appearance in large numbers of these Negro migrants from the South.
They came ignorant, dirty and crude, with but one thought, to get to this promised land of which they heard so much. It is one thing to sit in the cultured comfortable atmosphere of an assembly and listen to the impassioned plea of a missionary but it is quite another to live with the native of whom he speaks. The Boston white man and woman soon found this out. They could sympathize with these poor unfortunates while they were in the south, but they had never had the problem with them to any marked degree and this was quite a different matter. The migration plus the rumors of the reconstruction cooled the generally favorable attitude towards the Negro. This change did not come with a rush and thus it was difficult to combat. Rather, it began at a time when Negroes of a certain station and attainment were accepted freely into the homes and society of many of the finer families of Boston. They were accepted in the business world, as was Mark de Mortie an exclusive tailor and shoe dealer. They were taken into reputable law firms as George L. Ruffin was taken in with Harvey Jewell. The women such as Eliza Gardener, Mrs. Arianna C. Sparrow and Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin were accepted in the best white society. It can well be called the "Golden Era" for the Boston Negro.

Out of this period came a whole generation of Negroes with the exact attitude of the white young men and women. They had gone to school, were socialized and grew up without a full consciousness that extreme racial barriers existed.

In the meantime those strong leaders of the pre-war days weakened by their intense struggle began to pass away one by one and with them passed the driving power of the era. Garrison died in 1879 and Remond six years before. It was also natural that the zeal and thoroughness of the Abolition period should subside and that the sons and daughters of the white leaders should lack the interest or knowledge of the sentiment of the past.
But perhaps the greatest handicap the Boston Negro suffered was in the weaker calibre of leadership within his own group. True there were many brilliant men such as Archibald Grimke, William H. Plummer, Edward E. Brown, Clement G. Morgon and a host of others, but there did not seem to be one within the group that could foresee the change that was gradually coming and prepare to meet it. So great was the enthusiasm for Equal Rights that they missed the real objective. They did not see that the real future of the Negro here rested fundamentally on what disposition was made of their brethren at the very bottom of the economic scale and not on the few who rose to great heights in the courts of law, the legislative chambers or in the business world. They unconsciously recoiled from their crude, uncouth brother from the South and instead of concentrating upon building up in him an appreciation of this new freedom, left him to flounder as best he could. The old settler found himself assuming the same patronizing attitude toward these newcomers that the whites manifested. They built up about them social barriers that could not be penetrated save on the basis of culture or family background. Instead of throwing themselves into the life of their communities as Negroes, a superficial pride developed around the number of white contacts one had or the fact they attended a white church. In other words the Boston Negro made the mistake of seeking those things which were superficial and bound to end in disaster. He made the mistake of thinking that the day was at hand when he would be accepted by the Boston white population on the basis of accomplishment and intelligence rather than race. He did not reckon with the re-establishment of the social and business contacts between the North and the South.

It was perhaps too much to expect of him directly after the trying experiences before and during the war. It is not a criticism of his ability
and foresight but merely the indication of a human error. Undoubtedly his enthusiasm for equal rights throughout the country made him less cognizant of what was occurring all around him. There was no definite program anywhere for the Negro. In fact the whole country was at a loss as to just what disposition could be made of this great mass of ignorant people.

The one hopeful note that was sounded by Booker T. Washington was greeted with disgust and hatred by the leaders of Boston. They interpreted his program as an acknowledgement of the inferiority of Negroes. It did not awaken in them the need for some constructive move upon their part to meet the needs of the hundreds of ignorant persons of their group who were pouring into the city. Washington spoke of preparation for future acceptance of full responsibility for citizenship and despite the fact the majority of farsighted persons were coming to the appreciation of this need, the Boston Negro leaders continued their insistence upon full, immediate rights and privileges.

The Boston Negro closed the 19th Century with magnificent accomplishments all along the line. He can truly be credited with a marked degree of success in interpreting the possibilities of the Negro to America through the founding of the city, the Revolution and the Civil Wars but he must acknowledge his inability to measure the situation after the Union conflict and take his position as leader.
Transition

It is practically impossible to understand the experiences of the Boston Negro for the first thirty years of the present century without some previous knowledge of that period that I have covered briefly in part one of this thesis. The matters discussed are not new and have been given fundamentally to build up an appreciation for the later developments. One could never fully understand the Negro Bostonian who decries the fact that prejudice and discrimination is rife here today in comparison with his childhood, unless they knew something of the close social and business contact that existed for sometime after the war, between the old white settler and the Negro. Neither could one fully appreciate the Negroes present poor economic status, without some knowledge of those things that have been partly responsible for the change in the attitude of the whites, due chiefly to the migration after the Civil War, the change in leadership and the death of the Abolitionist leaders.

With these factors in mind we can begin a more intensive investigation of those economic influences that effect the status of the Negro in the city of Boston and those cross currents of education and religion that have aided or abetted the progress.

* * * * * * * * * *
The Economic Distribution of Negro Labor in Boston 1900

One may get a fair picture of the economic status of the majority of Negroes in Boston at the beginning of the 20th Century by looking through the occupational statistics for 1900. Of approximately 6,678 men and women working in the group, 4,113 were in one of the following occupations—servant, porter, laundress or janitor. In the field of manufacturing and mechanical industries, trade and transportation where the other two major census groups, namely, native whites and foreign born whites build up their substantial middle classes, the Negro simply did not exist.\(^1\) While their absence here may have been due in a large measure to their lack of training for these field, it is also important to keep in mind that it was about this period that the trade unions were making their bid for power. Their fundamental interest was numbers and the Boston Negro could not offer these and they were passed over.

There may be some significance in the opinion that is often expressed that the white man in Boston associated the Negro from the beginning with menial occupations because this is the chief capacity in which he originally entered the life of the city. On the other hand there is that time worn theory that the Negro is totally unfit for certain occupations. This was utterly destroyed in the Industrial crisis of the World War when American Industry was forced to swing wide its doors to Negro workmen and they proved themselves thoroughly efficient.

The chief difficulty with so many Negroes in Boston occupying menial positions at this time, was the fact that all such jobs are usually blind alley occupations with no future and every possibility of being

\(^1\) 1900 Federal Census
dropped first during an economic difficulty. They experienced some of this difficulty with the waves of immigration from abroad, when they found these new comers competing for the jobs they had originally monopolized.

However, the absence of Negroes from certain fields in any considerable numbers must not be interpreted as meaning that there were not a number of both men and women holding unusual positions. Some of these cases were striking in their significance, and a few are worth mentioning here.
There was William C. Lovett with Eldridge & Peabody, who was one of the best salesmen and had worked himself up from a very menial capacity; Philip J. Alston, foreman with the Potter Drug & Chemical Company; Lewis Pasco, clerk at the National Shawmut Bank; Leigh Carter, clerk with N.W. Harris & Company.
There was Theodore Raymond who was the largest real estate dealer in Cambridge and who had personal holding well over $200,000. Through their industry Negroes had accumulated many homes and other additional property. There was also a substantial group of professional men and women throughout the city.

The Influence of Education.

It cannot be said that Boston Negroes were without their educational ambitions despite the fact that opportunities for employment at the completion of their courses were difficult to obtain. Despite the compulsory education requirements up to a certain point, they evidently had never fully forgotten the difficulties of those leaders of the past in breaking the barriers erected through separate schools and the reasons given for establishing the same. They not only attended the elementary schools but many continued on into the High Schools of the city. Many of these young boys and girls not only lead their classes but occupied position of distinction in the schools. During
this same period, Dr. Samuel E. Courtney served on the Boston School Committee. Not content with merely having attended these schools, some of the young women continued into the Normal School, passed examinations and were placed in the system. Seven young women of this period were in the school system as teachers: namely— the Misses Gertrude M. Baker, Jacqueline Carroll, Harriet L. Smith, Eleanora A. Smith, Blanche V. Smith and Iola D. Yates. Perhaps the woman gaining the greatest distinction in the field of education for this period was Miss Maria L. Baldwin, a native of Boston who rose from the position of teacher in the Agassiz Grammar School in Cambridge to the principalship. It was not a case of her heading a school for colored children or staffed with colored teachers, which is oft times thought to be the only possible manner in which such a plan could be worked. There were no other colored teachers in the school and very few colored students. On the basis of sheer competence Miss Baldwin established a most enviable record in her community and throughout the teaching profession of the city. In the Boston School System there was Mr. Clarence Matthews, a former Harvard star athlete, who occupied the position as assistant athletic director.

These cases were at least indicative of a will to forge ahead in the general advance of the life of the city by the Negro and certainly a complete refutation of any conception that he was inferior mentally.

The Negro Church in Boston

It is remarkable to note that the sentiments of some individuals last long after their death. William Lloyd Garrison advised the Boston Negroes during his life to avoid separate churches. 1 Years after his death the effect of such teachings revealed themselves in the attitudes of many Boston Negroes.

toward distinctly Negro churches. This group felt especially in the matter of religious worship there should be no racial differences manifested. Contrary to certain current opinion, the considerable group of Boston Negroes that attended such churches did not do it out of a desire to be associated with folk of the other group. In fact many of them had known no other procedure from childhood, and conscientiously felt that the encouragement of Negro churches was a deliberate threat to their status in the community.

This attitude worked some difficulties as the Negro population grew. First of all there was a growing chilliness toward Negro parishioners in white churches and secondly it denied many of the struggling Negro churches the type of leadership they most needed. The larger white denominations have met this growing problem in a unique manner by making it possible for the Negroes to have a separate branch under the supervision of a minister of their group. This has been done by the Episcopal, Congregational and the M.E. Churches.

It is unfortunate that there had to be this conflict on this matter as the majority of those Negroes who came to Boston from the South attended these Negro churches and were the very ones that needed the influence of their brothers and sisters to acquaint them with the life of the city. Inasmuch as the church has served as the center around which much of the Negroes' progress has been made in America, this difficulty in Boston was a definite handicap.

Negroes have traditionally been prone to intense religious manifestations and thus it has not been difficult for many self-ordained individuals within the group to take advantage of this emotionalism. This has been one of the contributing factors in creating a rather weak clergy. The Negroes of
Boston had been used to a superior type of minister in the white churches and it was not easy for them to re-adjust their attitude, even if they wanted to. On the other hand not all of the Negro ministers who came into Boston during the early part of the 20th Century were men of inferior intelligence or preparation. The Reverends Shaw, Bagnall, McClane, Brown and Ward were men of the first calibre in preparation and they represented among them practically all of the leading denominations.

It will be interesting to stop here long enough to note the results of a casual survey of twenty-seven of the leading white churches, of practically all the denominations in the city of Boston on this matter of mixed congregations within the past twelve months. This information was secured through mailed questionnaires with the specific statement that neither the name of the church nor the pastor would be used in any publication about the matter.

Out of a total membership of close to 20,000 persons there were 539 Negroes. However, a single church showed 500 of these persons on its roster. Strikingly this was a Catholic church, the only large denomination to my knowledge in the city of Boston that has seemingly refused to acknowledge their Negro parishioners a sufficient problem to justify a separate institution. Aside from this single institution which has a membership of 3500 persons, inclusive of the 500 Negroes, it might be said that out of approximately 15,000 members, only 39 Negroes appear.

This group of churches was selected because they represented a fair cross section of denominations, were sufficiently large enough to be considered and were located within reasonable distance of Negro communities.
Fifteen of the pastors of this group expressed their doubts of the advisability of such close Christian brotherhood. However, the majority of these later modified their stand by placing the burden of proof upon their official boards. Eight of the ministers expressed their full approval of opening the doors of their church to all races. Unfortunately only half of these men had ever had any Negro members in their congregation, within their recollection and thus their attitude could be none other than pure speculation. The remaining four came out very definitely against the idea, summarizing their point of view with one of the following statements..."Would not tolerate them"..."Separation is good for both"..."Not Wholesome"..."They should attend their own churches".

The above survey is not quoted with the idea of proving anything. It is merely one of the pointers that indicate the way the wind is blowing in Boston on this matter. It also shows to some degree the uncertain attitude the Negro must tolerate if they would attend mixed churches and with such an atmosphere there could be little hope of their ever being able to work into the life of the church in a natural manner. On the other hand it is well for us to remember that this problem is by no means a new one. It began back in Colonial Days, when a certain section of the white church was set aside for slaves. The Negro church as such did not make its appearance in Boston until 1805 and then was contrary to the views of some white persons who were interested in the group. Then this change in the attitude of the church can be interpreted as only a part of a general swing away from a decided liberal spirit in Boston toward the Negro.

With full acknowledgement of the advantages of Negro churches, we
cannot but face the fact that if thousands of white people can justify such procedure in their religious worship in Boston, it is far less difficult for them to justify separate and distinct economic opportunities in the business world.

The Boston Negro and the Labor Movement

It is interesting to note that from the very beginning of the Union Movement there was some discussion of the attitude that should be manifested toward the Negro worker. At the National Labor Union Convention in Baltimore August 20, 1866 there was much discussion over the fact Negro caulkers had been brought from Norfolk, Virginia to break a strike in Boston and their potential threat as strike breakers. It was the consensus of opinion that this group should be organized and that no distinction be shown on the basis of race. The following year at Chicago for some unknown reason the same topic came up for discussion and there was a wide range of opinion despite the clear statement of their constitution relative to this matter. About 1869 Negro workmen called a National Labor Convention of their own at Washington and the 1st Vice-President was a F.G. Barbadoes from Boston. The above events were all during the very early days of the organized labor movement in the country and are indications that Negroes began early trying to ally themselves with the movement.

I am taking the liberty of citing the convention at Chicago of the National Labor Union again, for it is a fair indication of the ever-varying attitude of organized labor toward the Negro. Despite the fact that the constitution was supposedly indicative of the official attitude of the group, the question was forever before the convention. The real problem in Boston as in

other northern sections of the country, where the labor movement got its start, was that there were never enough Negroes to make themselves felt. Thus since 1900 Negroes have had little or no success in Boston with the Unions, save in isolated cases. Though the majority of the Unions have no clause specifically forbidding Negro members, still there are numerous other ways of avoiding the issue. The common one is the requirement of an apprenticeship. If this apprenticeship cannot be obtained the road to full membership in the Union is closed. Another familiar excuse is that Negroes do not take to organization easily. They object to waiting for results. Consequently it is very difficult to place ones hand upon deliberate discrimination and much more difficult to break the current notion among Negro workers that there is not an active objection to them.

There are, however, some cases where the Union is actively averse to Negroes, such as the Longshoremen's Union in Boston. Periodically this group goes on strike and as often as this occurs the ship owners mobilize Negro workers. Two years ago such a strike occurred and there was a good deal more fighting and bloodshed than previously which is an indication of the bitterness of feeling between these groups. The Union will object strenuously to Negroes working on the docks during strikes and appeal to public opinion for support, but they will not acknowledge the fact it is quite unfair for them to deny this type of work to Negroes in a normal fashion. By admitting a fair number of Negroes to the Union they would eradicate the possibility of their being used as strike-breakers. This condition obtains in this Union here despite the fact that practically every seaport from New York to the Gulf, has either mixed unions or separate locals of Negroes.
The Boston Negro and Foreign Immigration

One of the most interesting reactions of the American people was that toward immigration. We began first by congratulating ourselves upon the fact that we had made a real biological discovery. By throwing wide the doors we could actually witness the crossing of civilizations in this new land and as we assumed that only the hardy could stand the voyage it was quite certain that we would get nothing but the strong. Then there was of course the need for man power to develop the marvelous natural resources. Suddenly in the midst of comparative uncertainty we began to question the real cultural values in mixing. Such questioning just about toppled over our biological find, with the mode of transportation getting a little less difficult. Then suddenly we found that immigration was merely replacing native stock with foreign and as the competition went up, the birthrates of natives went down. This, more than anything else jerked us to attention, especially when we found that the source of our immigration had swung to the southern part of Europe. But before we fully appreciated just what was happening a great horde of unskilled workers had poured into the country. Then we began a perfect avalanche of restriction until we eventually clamped the lid on tight. However, this was not done in time to save the Negroes monopoly of certain types of jobs.

When the immigration was coming from the northern part of Europe it brought chiefly skilled and semi-skilled workers who did not compete for the Negroes jobs, but when the unskilled worker came, his objective was employment of any description. He competed in hotels, restaurants, barbering, bootblack and domestic service generally with the Negro and displaced him to a marked degree. There was some who claim this was because of the unrelia-
bility and laziness of the Negro but it can more truly be laid to the fact that these new comers could live on lower standards and thus compete for jobs at a lower wage. Again the Boston Negro found himself floundering about for stable employment.

Despite the growing opposition to foreign immigration and the difficulties the foreign born mothers and fathers experienced in their early days here, they enjoyed a decided advantage in the next generation over the Negro. With them it was merely a matter of time, education and assimilating the customs of the country and then they could effectively lose themselves to a marked degree in the population. Further their boys and girls, armed with education, could penetrate stratum after stratum in their advance economically. Every succeeding generation finds this foreign born group advancing in the scale of economic security. In many instances from 1900-1930 they have not only crowded Negroes out of traditional jobs but exceeded the native whites.

The Attitude of Boston Business Concerns Toward Negroes

In the past twelve months I have contacted over 100 stores, insurance companies, banks, as well as the public utilities to determine their attitude on the employment of Negroes above menial capacities. While it would not be expedient here to give in minute detail the outcome of this study, to go over many of the reactions will throw a little light on the employment situation as the Boston Negro faces it.

Perhaps Negroes spend more actual cash with the Public Utilities of Boston than any other concerns. It is practically impossible to live in the city of Boston and not use gas, electricity and the street railway line
or the telephone. Yet in the entire group, there are not 50 Negroes in any capacity and not more than one above the menial type in occupation.

The Boston Consolidated Gas Co has a very touching story of an experience 25 years ago with a Negro messenger who fell asleep while on duty and was discharged. This incident more or less has convinced some of the Executives that all Negroes are incompetent. Since that time they have employed no Negroes above the plane of hard laborious work and only a few there. The inference is that had this Negro made good, there is no doubt but what the attitude of the whole company would be different toward Negro workers.

In the telephone company hundreds of girls are employed on the switch-boards and still not one Negro girl has ever had the opportunity of entering this field, since phones have been in use in Boston. The same applies to the men of this group who seek other than porter work.

A few years ago through the intensive efforts of the Boston Urban League, a social work agency among Negroes of the city, the Street Railway Company was persuaded to employ a Negro in the capacity of a motorman. He was used periodically for certain runs and with the beginning of the present business depression laid off with little possibility of being re-employed. The difficulty here was that work opportunities came on the basis of seniority and his short active service practically meant permanent release.

Boston is fundamentally a mercantile city and as such the large department stores, insurance companies and banks play a large part in the employment situation. This makes it extremely important that some consideration be given to these organizations and their practice in keeping open or closing their doors to Negro workers. Time or space will permit the consider-
ation of only two such instances and for such I have selected the two
largest department stores in the city, Jordan Marsh and Filenes Companies.

Jordan Marsh employs between four and five thousand men and women,
fifty percent of which are men and sixty percent women. There are forty-five
Negro workers in this group; thirty-nine of which are women and six men. The
women are employed in the sole capacity of elevator operators and the men as
cleaners. They have been employing Negroes for this type of work regularly
since 1917. The average wage for the women is between $14 and $16 a week and
between $16 and $18 for men. The average woman worker there has had at least
a high school education and some of them beyond this point. The fact that
such types of women can be obtained from the group for this kind of work is
more or less caused by the limited avenues open to them for employment. The
they rate them as efficient in the performance of their jobs over this period
of sixteen years, still it is not the policy of the concern to allow them to
enter any phase of the stores work where they will be subject to promotion or
raise in salary. The company explains this on the basis of the fact such pro-
cedure would cause embarrassment and that would not be good for the business.

The second largest store is Filene's, across on the next corner.
They employ 2300 persons, 33% are men and 67% women. In this group there are
two Negro women who work in the capacity of cleaners in the Beauty Parlor.
They have been employed for more than twelve years and are rated as efficient
in the performance of their jobs. They receive $16 a week. The manager com-
mends them especially on the fact that they keep by themselves and do not eat
in the Cafeteria. Thus few people know that they are employed there. He
states that when Negroes apply for work there he merely avoids the issue by
telling them that there are no vacancies. The Personnel Superintendent thinks that to employ Negroes would merely incur the risk of starting difficulties that the store otherwise avoids.

The insurance companies and banks covered with few exceptions were of the opinion that the public and the white workers in the organization would not stand for Negroes above a certain status; that the menial jobs did not bring them into intimate touch with these groups so this condition was not difficult to handle. The one shining light in this group covered was the Boston Mutual Life Insurance Company. They employ four Negro men; one as an elevator operator, two as filing clerks and one as manager of the supply room. This organization stands out not because of the particular significance of the jobs but because they are a step higher than is usually afforded the group in concerns. However, they definitely state there is no higher position to which they might go and that though they employ women of almost every nationality as secretaries, these same women would object to the presence of Negro women in the same capacity.

Vocational Guidance in the Boston School System and the Negro

The perplexing employment situation that the Boston Negro finds himself confronted with, also gives rise to another problem that tries the patience and intelligence of another large group. This group is the Vocational Guidance Department of our Public School system. While the term itself originally applied specifically to the proper directing of students into those lines for which they were best inclined, the job has fundamentally turned out to be predominately one of placement. With the Boston business sphere either opposed to employing Negroes or shrewdly evasive, the Vocational-
al Guidance Department is constantly thrown into one dilemma after another with Negro boys and girls who are referred to them. It not only places the men and women at 11 Beacon Street in a dilemma but it makes the task of vocational teachers in the system a precarious one.

Not more than a year ago a very critical case arose in one of the High Schools where the Vocational Guidance instructor called together a number of Negro girls and is said to have advised them that they had better go South for any additional education beyond that institution because there were no work opportunities here in Boston for them. As inexpedient as any such advice might have been there is every reason to believe that this step was prompted more or less by a hopeless sort of feeling arising out of the knowledge of how few opportunities are actually afforded in the city of Boston. On the other hand it caused a prompt and bitter protest upon the part of these Negro children's parents and was only settled through the direct action of the School Committee.

Another indication of the difficulties that arise in the school system because of the business world's attitude in this matter, is the denial to Negro students of certain courses. One in point is Salesmanship. Teachers claim that it is practically impossible for them to place Negro boys and girls for this experience and therefore it is useless for them to take the course. Further inasmuch as there is little or no chance for their placement in a job at the completion of their courses, it is a waste of time to prepare them. This same problem arises in the attitude of many of the private business schools and colleges, that refuse Negroes because they cannot live up to the current promise that they place their students in paying jobs at the completion
of their work.

While the head of the Vocational Guidance Department of the Boston School System makes no distinction between the boys and girls on the basis of race, color or creed and believes that the Negro boy or girl suffers no special problem in the matter of placement, the fact still remains that the department cannot find jobs for them commensurate with their ability after school, in proportion to the white children of the city. This casts a rather dismal and discouraging atmosphere about the average boy and girl of this race in the school system that has any ambitions that must be worked out here after they complete school.

It is not amiss to mention here while we are discussing the matter of work opportunities as the result of a formal education, to say a word about Negro medical students in Boston. For a number of years it has been virtually impossible for the young men of this group who have finished the Medical schools here to find a hospital that would admit them for interne work. Not only this but there has been a most unwholesome attitude against their securing hospital experience during their last years of medicine. This movement has become so marked that of the three leading Universities and Colleges there is not a single one that will encourage a Negro to begin his medical work there. This, no doubt is due in a large measure to the attitude of the hospitals. The effect of this has a far reaching influence for it practically excludes any of the practicing physicians of this race in the city from the efficiency that should be theirs because of their hospital contacts. Further, it has prevented any of these same men from developing their knowledge of surgery.
The Boston Negro and Private Business Enterprises

The Negroes of Boston are not without some marked success in past years in private business enterprises. There was a time when they had one of the most popular tailors in the city. A Mr. J.H. Lewis owned such a shop on Washington Street and conceived the idea of the "Bell Bottomed" trouser that sold widely. Before his time the most outstanding Wig-maker in New England was a Negro, with his business located in Boston. In the catering and real estate business they also had men that stood out.

To-day there are about five hundred small private enterprises in a variety of fields but few of them are paying propositions. This is due fundamentally to the fact they are in fields where the competition is much too keen. They have very little capital, cater only to their own group for the most part and have little or no business training. But perhaps the greatest handicap of all for them is the first item-capital. Negro business men find that the banks of the city are pretty generally skeptical about loaning money to their business enterprises. White real-estate men can perhaps give the greatest testimony on this phase, as they well state that a mortgage is much more readily obtained upon property with the poorest grade of white tenant, than with the highest type of Negroes. Thus at the present time this avenue offers little hope for any marked advancement.
A Summary of Conditions

In order to coordinate a summary of the Negro in Boston, I am taking the liberty of treating them under the three separate headings of Religion, Education and Economics. Discussing the effects of these three spheres of influence on the Negro in this city, I feel that their early influence was treated sufficiently in part one of the thesis and therefore I am dealing with their recent results exclusively in this section.

Religion

Since the beginning of the 20th Century, practically all of the larger religious denominations have made social pronouncements in favor of equal rights and complete justice for all men of all races and in all stations of life. Theoretically we have made great strides in the past thirty years toward a better understanding. However, these pronouncements would seem to indicate much more progress upon the part of these denominations South than in the North. For in the South an entirely antagonistic frame of mind had to be dealt with from the start. In the North and especially in Boston the religious atmosphere has been supposedly liberal for years and yet it sometimes appears as though the church is not fully facing up to its responsibility in the matter of Negro and white relations.

It is quite evident that the Boston Negro cannot reach an economically independent position unless the public frame of mind toward him changes radically. There is no organized group in the Boston population that is better able to deal with this public attitude than the church. They reach thousands of people who control the economic life of the city. Though there is
no militant antagonistic attitude toward the Negro, there is a total indifference that is quite as effective in its detrimental influence. We cannot avoid facing the fact that the Negro is here to stay either as a respectable self-sustaining citizen or as an increasingly expensive pauper, as far as taxes are concerned.

The Public's frame of mind will largely depend upon the interpretation of the significance of this problem to them through their leaders. In the church the burden of responsibility for facing this problem rests with the clergy. For the past thirty years the Boston minister has failed to meet this challenge in any increasingly constructive manner. It is something that can only be dealt with through a long time program. One that does not necessarily carry as its feature the Negro, but a real interpretation of fairness and brotherhood in racial contacts generally. While no indictment can be made of the personal frame of mind of the clergy individually, collectively they do not seem to have put this story over to their congregations. To have a Negro speaker once a year, to have a conference seminar where races are discussed annually, to have an occasional fellowship supper will never dent the surface of many of the rock-ribbed prejudices that many white parishioners have, either in their conscious or sub-conscious minds.

A long time program of the quality needed to educate congregations up to the true values of better race relations, would necessitate extensive planning, diligent execution and a keen sense of discretion; and the average clergyman either does not have the courage nor the energy to face up to it. Such a procedure would by no means be a gift solely to the Negro but would be actual advancement in the Christian cause.
The Negro church is an institution destined to be in Boston indefinitely. Therefore the problem is not whether or not the white churches must throw their doors open to mixed membership. On the other hand the insidious influence that makes it possible for a majority of the white congregations in this city to look unfavorably on mixed congregations is but complete justification for excluding Negroes from an opportunity to make a decent livelihood. If it is unnatural to accord them the privilege of worshiping God under the same roof, why is it plausible for them to earn their daily bread in the same business on an equal footing? This psychology has unconsciously developed in the minds of thousands and it is the responsibility of the church to meet it intelligently, effectively, if they would justify their doctrines.

The Negro church in Boston is not without its responsibility in the challenge to change the public's frame of mind. The average Negro church in Boston has unwisely accumulated such terrific debts through investments in huge church edifices that they can give little or no time to the proper direction of their youth in the economic life of the city. Collectively they have no definite program or organization to plead the cause of their group through the press and otherwise, so that those white persons in control might give heed to the situation. The average congregation is extremely religious but not very practicable; the majority of consideration is given to the hereafter instead of the problems that face all Christians alike here.

Education

Though it may be no part of the School System's legitimate program to disseminate propaganda in favor or disfavor of any racial group, sooner
or later the city of Boston will have to face the fact that year after year they are turning out in the community hundreds of Negro boys and girls with a certain level of intelligence that become discouraged, disgruntled and bitter because of the lack of opportunity. This type of thing is not conducive to better citizenship but restlessness and ultimately recklessness. To observe the youngster who finished Boston Trade School in June with an excellent record and high hopes and then see the same individual months later, thoroughly broken, causes no end of thought. It is a frame of mind that is more perplexing because the youngster is conscious of the fact that his lack of success has not been due to his inability to perform a good job, but merely because he happens to belong to the wrong group.

If a good conception of the idea of education is "a drawing out process", then soon the Vocational Guidance program of our system will include some method of drawing out the prejudice and discrimination that is manifested in the attitude of employers with whom they deal, in regards to Negro boys and girls.

Economics

Out of the hundreds of employers I have contacted in my daily occupation and the many I have received written replies from, the fundamental problem seems to be that they are unable to associate Negroes with jobs above the servant type. To justify this frame of mind, which is more often subconscious, they offer a multiplicity of reasons. The excuse that stands highest in ranking is, to hire Negroes in certain capacities is inexpedient and would hurt the business. Such an excuse is well nigh undefeatable because no one could reasonably expect a man to ruin his business for the sake
of an experiment that he doubted from the start. This blanket statement usually covers a multitude of sins and included is the fact the other white employees would resent the presence of a Negro and resign.

Certainly there is no better refutation of these arguments than the fact that close to five hundred Negro men and women in clerical occupations in the city of Boston and over two thirds of these work side by side with white men and women in the city, state and federal offices. Still none of these organizations cease to function, nor is there any record available where a white man or woman refused to accept a job because of them or resigned for the same reason.

It is especially unfair of the Public Utilities in the city of Boston to have on their books thousands of Negro subscribers and still give this group practically no opportunity to raise their standard of living. Not only do they take this group's money but as a part of the citizenship of the city they accept grants and privileges from them that make it possible for them to extend their profits.

With no considerable number of Negroes in the Trade Unions, with the banks, insurance companies and department stores excluding them on the grounds of expediency, this group is forced into the category of menial workers. Even here the day when he enjoyed a comparative monopoly of this type of work has gone. Such a situation in Boston throws the Negro on the border-line of poverty and means that those businesses and individuals who bar his way to economic freedom will eventually find the cost mounting up in public taxes. The future does not look exceedingly promising with the general feeling that without ultimate economic adjustment we shall only be
able to re-employ half of those out of work at the present time. Boston has close to 4,000 Negroes walking the streets today in quest of work. Many of these persons held the same job from five to thirty years but working in the so-called luxury type of occupation, they were dropped first. There is a question as to whether many of these jobs will ever be available again.

The Boston Negroes Reaction to Conditions.

It is interesting to note the frame of mind of the Negroes in Boston toward their present fortunes. I would say they are divided into three camps—those who are patiently hopeful for the best; those who are becoming radical in their concepts and finally that group which is completely discouraged.

As I have talked with hundreds of Negroes about conditions here I found invariably that that group of middle-aged persons who have children that are not fully grown, are the only ones that indicate the least hopefulness about the outcome. For the most part they acknowledge that there are no opportunities here for their children to work but there is the common realization that there are excellent educational facilities. They have their homes and friends to console them and they do not feel like tearing up stakes at this late date to try their fortunes elsewhere.

But the most interesting group is composed of those young people who have been educated here and spent all of their lives here. Most of them have superior backgrounds and very insignificant jobs. They have gone thru that period of disillusionment about equal opportunities and seem dissatisfied with things in general. They have heard their mothers and fathers speak of the good old days in Boston and they have read so much of Boston's liber-
ality and seen so little of it, that the very suggestion makes them fly off in a bitter tirade. They have not particularly affiliated themselves with the Socialist or Communist Parties and yet they have all of the arguments. Many of them still go through the motions of attending the race relations meetings but harbor a growing contempt for the discussion of the things that never work out according to plan on the outside. Surprising too, is the fact that some of the real old settlers who have been conservative in their views are inclining to this attitude too. Generally they express the opinion that the Negro in Boston has been much too loyal and received very little of the benefits. There is every indication that some of the old tradition that was uppermost in the bosom of the Boston Negro yesterday in regards to Boston is dying and something quite different is being born. Out of this same group came the Negroes who had explicit faith in the old Yankee family in years gone by. While there still lingers that feeling that this white group was kind and generous, it was the type of generosity that carried a few to the top and left the multitude stranded and dependent upon charity. These youngsters do not want favors. They want a fair opportunity to be self-sustaining with the rest of the racial groups.

While this group may cause trouble unless something is done to counteract their bitter impressions, the group that will cost Boston dearly in institutional care is that mass of people in Boston's Negro population that are not particularly educated and are getting the feeling that the city and state will provide for them. The majority of them have known little or nothing about social agencies until the present crisis. They have always done the roughest type of work with sufficient consistency to be self-supporting. But suddenly they found their course of employment gone and they
were directed to the city either by a friend or the landlord. They have never known much more than bare subsistence and to have found this with only the need to sign up and work one or three days a week is a revelation. Discouraged in their hunt for work and conscious that there are few chances for them to find work, this group easily settles down into a complacency that a change in the economic situation may not totally eradicate.

**Recommendations**

There is little or no doubt but what the great liberal spirit generated by the Abolitionist Movement in Boston in regard to the Negro has practically passed away. We may attribute this to the passing of the old Yankee stock and the replacement of them by a new generation of white Americans or to the fact that material values have taken the place of pure sentiment. However, it is quite obvious that the Boston Negro labors under extreme difficulties in trying to work out his economic salvation here. It is quite evident that some constructive steps must be taken to adjust the situation. While the condition of Negroes in Boston is not without its parallel situation in other places, because of its early history in the matter of race relations, it stands out as an example to many other sections.

It is an ideal place for experimentation in this field. Tradition is with us; schools are mixed; there is an equal rights bill and there is no active animosity at the present time between the groups.

The first point at which those citizens, white and colored might start an intelligent and consistent onslaught upon public opinion in regards to the Negro is through the press. Unfortunately the newspapers are more
interested in building up attractive stories for the sake of sales than they are of giving a true and unbiased account of Negro activities to the public. If it is true that the American public is the greatest nation of headline readers in the world, it is dangerous to broadcast misconceptions of any group. A case in point was the way one of our leading daily papers handled the Negroes' part in the Longshoremen's strike in Boston in 1931. The Saturday Evening Traveler for October 3rd blazed the following message across the front of their paper to the public--

"STRIKE BREAKERS FIRE ON UNION WORKERS-SLASH WITH KNIVES, RAZORS AND BALE HOOKS-SEVERAL VICTIMS IN HOSPITAL".

"Bloody race rioting turned Commonwealth Pier into a bedlam of fighting, yelling men this morning when armed Negro strike breakers attacked Union workers."

This was a most erroneous interpretation of the whole affair as later investigation by the Boston Urban League showed. In the first place the fight was precipitated by the white Union workers, when they began to hurl missiles upon a group of Negroes who were unloading a boat at the pier. Not a single Negro carried a gun or razor and the only gun fire that occurred was carried out by police officers firing into the air to quell the fighting. The public was not told that these Negroes act in the capacity of strikers on the pier because the white workers will not grant them a fair chance to join the Union and gain employment.

Those white persons who read that issue of the Traveler and who had little or no contact with Negroes had added to their mental impressions another vicious picture of the Negro. And the only retraction of this story appeared in the columns of the Boston Globe a few days later, en couched in the center of another extensive article.
Any group that cannot command some attention from the press is in a hopeless condition. Especially if those organs are chiefly interested in the sensational about the group. There are far more favorable things occurring to the Negro in Boston than there are unfavorable. One indication of this is the unusually low delinquency record of the boys and girls of this group in the courts, despite their poor environmental condition. Some representative group of white and colored citizens could well lay this case before the press and begin an active campaign to change their attitude toward the group.

Boston is more or less famous for its inter-racial groups. They are composed for the most part of well meaning older white settlers or students of the various schools. In my observations and direct contacts with practically all of these groups, there seems to be one weakness. . . they have no specific program for attacking the problem. The majority of these persons are either out of active business because of age or they are just about to begin their life's work. The business men and women of the city who have the influence in making certain economic changes and the majority of indifference toward the Negro, do not frequent these meetings. Further, the same general membership with few changes carries on for years. There is no doubt but that the majority of these people are thoroughly convinced and do not need additional emphasis. It would therefore seem that a better plan of organization is necessary. Let us have what might be termed accumulative race relations committees. An active membership by a white or colored member could not exceed a year's duration with the responsibility of bringing in a person with no knowledge of the problem to take their place for the next season. After the first year of active membership the individual be-
comes an associate member for two years before being eligible for another year of active service. Then let there be a joint conference every two or three years of active and associate members.

It seems to me that such a plan has at least three strong features in its favor. First, it offers an ever widening radius of influence for inter-racial activities. Secondly it assures the group of the refreshing and stimulating effects of new ideas and opinions every year. Third, it would prevent many of us from becoming "chronic race-relationers" and cluttering up these meetings with our crystalized, conservative opinions.

There is no doubt that from the Civil War to 1900 the Boston Negro made some real advancement in the city of Boston. However, from the beginning of this century to 1930 they have been virtually at a standstill. It has not been their lack of adaptability but rather a cold indifference upon the white population of the city toward them. There are numerous respects in which they can improve their efficiency but such a desire can be stimulated only by increased work opportunities. The key to that situation lies in the hands of the white population.

The Boston Negro has little chance of making any real progress along economic lines until some general conceptions regarding him are broken down. First, the presumption that Negroes are not efficient above a certain level was disproved rather generally during the World War but this opinion is not held by the bulk of white people. Secondly, the impression white and Negro workers cannot be mixed is no more tenable than Irish and Swedish persons cannot work together. It is all a matter of individual personalities and not a matter of race. Third, the expression that the public
will not accept Negroes in certain capacities is not a valid reason but an excuse. The public is fundamentally interested in service and once they are used to associating persons with activities they accept them as the usual practice.

I am afraid, however, that these opinions cannot be greatly altered as long as the prime objective of business is huge profits. Business leaders have given these excuses so long many actually believe them and thus hiring Negro workers in certain fields looms as an experiment which might be risking dollars. Nevertheless, whatever progress may be made here will only be possible thru a complete recognition of these three factors and an effort to overcome their influences.

Finally, we cannot but give full credit to the large denominations for their pronouncements on better race relations. It is at least an acknowledgment by them of the seriousness of the problem. On the otherhand it is pretty well known that mere pronouncements are of little or no consequence. There are millions of members in the churches throughout the nation who are not familiar with either the spirit or letter of these pronouncements.

Then, it would seem that the first problem is interpreting the idealism of these resolutions to the people. This rests in the hands of the clergy. There is no better way for the clergymen of a city keeping their hands on the pulse of public opinion in the matter of race-relations than through a joint committee. Not a committee whose principal objectives are an annual meeting and monthly speakers on random subjects. Rather a careful analysis of the problems presented by individual congregations and the city as a whole. On the basis of this analysis, plan inter-racial young peoples forums,
exchange of pulpits, exchange of bible class leaders and general community projects.

There is very little in Boston's history indicative of an active opposition to its Negro population. However, there has developed a lethargy and total indifference that must be changed if this group is to move up above the borderline of perpetual poverty.
In all of the previous dissertation, one factor stands out that is peculiar to the entire development of the political, economic and judicial growth of the American nation. From the very start slave labor created an anomaly in our democratic experiment that has grown increasingly more difficult. The Puritan fathers could not reconcile the enslavement of these blacks with their religious idealism. Despite the inclination of some to use the biblical illustrations of the Hebrews to justify its continuance, by far the majority saw the impossibility of the situation.

Later on, with the growing spirit of independence and the spread of the doctrine of equality of fortune and condition for all citizens, the problem of assimilating the Negro became more complex. The Revolution witnessed utter confusion on the matter of including black men in the cause, though they were among the first to give their lives against the British. The Provincial Congress tabled the matter in 1774. The Committee of Safety in 1775 proposed enlisting free Negroes while a great many opposed using either free or slave blacks.

But inasmuch as the Boston whites presented such a variance in their opinions concerning the treatment of Negroes there could be no definite policy here. In 1710 when the Boston school system seems to have taken definite form, the fact that Negroes were admitted on the same basis as whites is indicative of a tendency away from slavery. It was also quite common to have colonial leaders express the opinion that ultimately the entire institution should be done away with.
There is ample reason to believe that if Eli Whitney's cotton gin idea had proved a failure, the Negro would have assumed a much different role in the history of the nation. However, its success revolutionized the production of cotton and enslaved Negroes until 1863.

Thus, with the institutions of Education and Religion unable to justify slavery in Boston, the Negro gradually began to work himself into the economic system as a human being. More freedom gave him a chance to imbibe of certain cultural influences and we witness the rise of the Negro church and fraternal societies in Boston. They began to aspire to work opportunities outside of the menial occupations and this gave them a certain type of leadership. This development undoubtedly had a tremendous effect upon white public opinion. It began to reduce the impression that Negroes were inherently inferior.

No three years stand out prior to 1900 that were as significant in the history of the Boston Negro as 1833, 1855, 1863. The first marked his inclusion into the ranks of the New England Anti-slavery Society, thus opening an avenue of contacts to him far above those experienced in the past. The second brought the abolition of separate schools and placed him on an equal educational footing. The third witnessed the organization of the glorious 54th Mass. Regiment under Col. Robert Gould Shaw, which justified every hope and ambition the friend of the Negro had for him. This Regiment's bravery and valor at Fort Wagner warmed the hearts of many Boston white persons toward the entire group and was responsible for much of the liberality directly following the war.

In reading of the experiences of Boston Negroes and comparing their status in the community directly after the Civil War up to the
beginning of the 20th Century with today, some cause must be found for the decided difference in his standing. For there is no doubt but what the great liberality manifested toward him in years gone by has vanished and in its place is a cold indifference.

This change can be partially accounted for by three factors. First, the leadership after the Civil War; second, the Reconstruction propaganda and third, the changes in population.

The dynamic personalities who carried on the battle for the abolition of slavery found themselves aging and exhausted after Emancipation and death ultimately claimed them. The younger leadership, while they made a valiant stand for universal suffrage, overlooked the increasing challenge in Boston to keep opportunities open for the group. Out of the South came weird tales of the misuse of citizenship privileges by ignorant blacks. These tales plus an influx of crude, uncouth Negroes into Boston, impressed many whites and made them unconsciously recoil from further contacts. It made them grant favors and privileges on the basis of individuality rather than to the group as a whole. Thus a few Negroes went up to the top but the masses remained far behind. This reaction was not peculiar to white people. It was also assumed by the more favored and intelligent Negro. Finally, the immigration waves encouraged by our rapid industrial development changed the population and attitude of the community. Those whites who came had neither knowledge nor sentiment for the Negro. To them he merely represented a competitor who was at the bottom of the economic scale and to be passed on the road to advancement.

Thus these factors have been primary in creating the unusually difficult position the Boston Negro faces today. Surrounded with some of
the best educational and cultural advantages in the world he finds himself facing a virtual stone wall when it comes to the practical application of these in raising his economic status. His appreciation of the better things of life is constantly sharpened which produces a restlessness and bitterness that is not conducive to good citizenship. The schools are open; the church is timid and the business world keeps its doors closed in his face beyond a certain point of advancement, irrespective of intelligence and ability. There is no question but what the day has passed when such a policy can be sustained on the basis of inferiority of intellect or training. The city and state has furnished these in abundance.

Some new settlement must be made and the challenge squarely confronts those men and women in responsible positions affiliated with both races. It is just as impossible for the present inequalities of economic opportunities to continue without serious results as it was for the Union to exist half free and half slaves. It so happens under our present system of government that if a man cannot furnish his daily needs for existence, the city's taxes must pay the bill. It is far more economical to provide opportunities for a family to be self-sustaining than to throw them on charity.

The Boston Negro is not naturally a beggar. He has more than justified the early confidence placed in his intelligence, thrift and initiative by early white friends. He is knocking at the door of opportunity as any other racial group. Neither the church, school or state can wilfully ignore him forever. From 1900-1932 this minority group in Boston has been standing still, save for a few isolated cases. The inevitable cause of such inactivity must be met by the entire population regardless of race.
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