

Black Voters Disenfranchised

The beginning of the twentieth century marked the end of blacks as a political factor in North Carolina. In the year 1900 the black citizens in North Carolina were disenfranchised or deprived their right to vote by the state constitution.

The many strides blacks had made in the 1890's were practically wiped out by the suffrage amendment and the "grandfather clause". These changes were brought about mainly by white democrats wishing

to keep the black vote. The political rule before 1900 was by the Republicans with the help of the black vote. Many blacks were loyal to the Republican party partly because the Republicans had ended slavery and because they had given them the right to vote.

The suffrage amendment which was passed by a vote of 182,217 to 128,285 stated

that any applicant registering to vote must have paid his poll tax and be able to read and write any section of the constitution. The "grandfather clause" which was aimed primarily at blacks, stated that a person wouldn't be allowed to vote unless they had voted or their ancestors had voted prior to Jan. 1, 1867.

During the 1900 election blacks were generally silent during the campaign that was aimed at taking their vote away, which was guaranteed by the 15th amendment. A small group of prominent blacks did meet and issued an appeal for justice but to no avail.

White Democrats argued in favor of the disenfranchisement saying that it would eliminate the mass of illiterate blacks from the electorate.

The "News and Observer" a Democratic newspaper came out in favor of

the disenfranchisement with strong editorials.

One Observer editorial read, "White supremacy cannot be made permanent until the irresponsible Negro vote is removed."

The Democrats scored major victories across the state, and counties with heavy black populations gave the suffrage amendment a huge majority.

Democratic pollers have since admitted the use of intimidation and trickery to keep blacks from the polls and use of false bottom

cannot boxes to change votes during the 1900 election. However after 1900 some blacks who were entitled to vote under the terms of the amendment did register and did vote. These voters met with no real obstacles because they were few in number and had no decisive influence.

The adoption of the amendment deprived the Republican party of about

50,000 voters and help to strengthen the one party system. The blacks ceased to vote in large numbers, but the race question continued to be a stigma for the Republican party.

The Republican was convinced of the relative unimportance of the black vote after 1900 and the connection the party to blacks. The Republican's made their party a "white man's party" by excluding blacks from Republican affairs, and by ceasing to appeal for their votes. Thus the

Republican party became a "lily white" party. Although blacks didn't make much progress politically, they did see some progress made educationally. Nearly 3,000 school houses were built during the first decade of the 20th Century, and improvements were seen in all schools but black schools were not improved as much as white schools.

Improvements followed the same pattern for blacks as in white schools, though they were less expensive and poorer in every respect. Gradually better buildings and equipment and greater facilities for teacher training were provided by the state.

As a means of training more and better teachers the state took steps to improve the regular schools for blacks. In the cities and towns where grade schools had been established, black children received generally the same benefits as white children.

The length of term in some localities was slightly shorter and the facilities were generally much infer-

ior. In addition, teacher's salaries were lower for black teachers.

The average monthly salary for white males during the first decade was \$67.50, for the black male it was \$45, for the white female it was \$37.50 and for the black female it was \$25.

Several agencies also contributed to the improvement in the education of blacks in North Carolina. The Jeanes Fund, the Slater Fund, the Rosenwald Fund, and the General Education Board contributed, between 1900-1920, almost \$1.8 million to promote education for blacks to the state and counties.

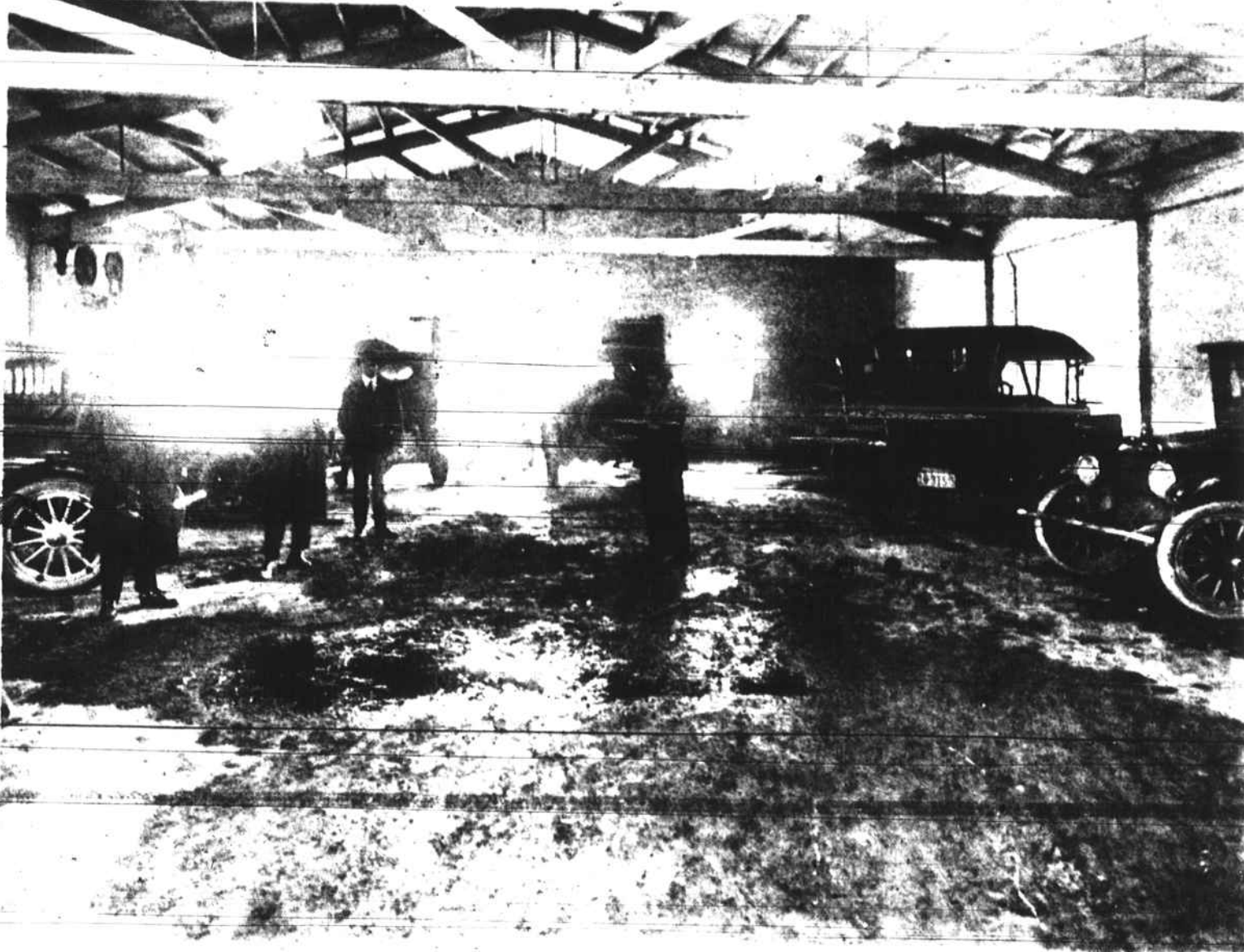
Blacks also made some contributions to this country's war effort during the First World War. In North Carolina 86,457 men joined the armed forces, and 20,350 were blacks.

During the war three black Red Cross branches in the state were organized.

They were in Monroe, Waxhaw and Wise. In Union County, blacks raised \$1000 for the United War Work Fund.

Some blacks sent telegrams to General B.S. Royter of North Carolina, volunteering their services and affirming their loyalty and patriotism. There was some fear of whites at the outbreak of the war that spies and saboteurs might try to stir up race riots and encourage blacks not to serve. There were incidents in other states but not in North Carolina.

Black women also contributed to the war effort by serving in the women's division of the Council of Defense. Yvette McCullough



A 1918 shot of the Morgan and Scales Garage, owned and operated by blacks. The Morgan brothers, Ralph and Harvey later became the first "jitney" owners and helped establish Safe Bus Company.

The first black child reported born in English America was named William Tucker. He was born to two black immigrants Antony and Isabella, in 1624. He was named after an English planter in the Jamestown colony.

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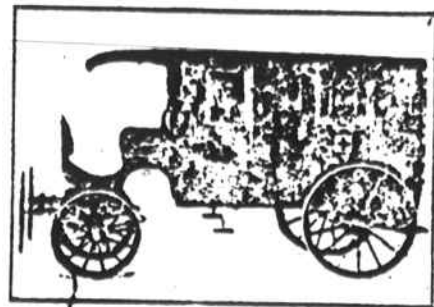
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