



A Force for Change

Beatrice Morrow Cannady and the Struggle
for Civil Rights in Oregon, 1912-1936

KIMBERLEY MANGUN

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& THE STRUGGLE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS IN OREGON,
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*To James and Shawn, for everything,
and more.*

*To Beatrice Morrow Cannady,
who refused to live her life behind the veil.*

*And in memory of my parents, Ruth and Jim,
who opened the door to history.*



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Introduction

Beatrice Morrow Cannady was one of Oregon's most dynamic civil rights activists. Between 1912 and 1936, she gave hundreds of lectures to high school and college students about the importance of better race relations. She used the new medium of radio to share her message of interracial goodwill with listeners in the Pacific Northwest. She was assistant editor, and later publisher, of the *Advocate*, a weekly newspaper for Negroes founded by her first husband, Edward Cannady, in 1903. Cannady was the first black woman to graduate from law school in Oregon, and the first to run for state representative. She held interracial teas in her Irvington-neighborhood home in northeastern Portland. She met with Portland Mayor George L. Baker to protest repeated showings of the racist film *The Birth of a Nation*. And when the Ku Klux Klan swept into Oregon from California, she urged Governor Ben W. Olcott to act quickly to protect black Oregonians' right to live and work without fear. Despite these accomplishments—and many more during her twenty-five-year career—Beatrice Cannady fell into obscurity when she left Oregon in about 1938. She spent the next four decades in the Los Angeles area, still pursuing the issues she was passionate about, but in a far less public way. She wrote



for the *Precinct Reporter*, one of several newspapers that served the black community in Southern California, and she resumed her interracial gatherings—renamed “fireside meetings”—at the Perris ranch she shared with her third husband, Reuben Taylor, whom she considered the love of her life.¹

I “discovered” Cannady purely by chance during the summer of 2002 while doing research on the Oregon Historical Society Web site. A striking photograph, taken ninety years earlier when Cannady was twenty-three, captured her doing something

she loved: reading a book. We will never know what volume she was holding with such care—perhaps a book of poetry by Paul Laurence Dunbar, one of her favorite writers. Nevertheless, the photo offers an important glimpse into her career: among other things, Cannady became known for her extensive library of “volumes of literature by and about the Negro,” black newspapers, and collections of journals, which she made available to anyone who wanted to learn more about Negro history, culture, and art.² That photograph captivated me; I wanted to know more about Cannady and the *Advocate*, which came out nearly every Saturday for thirty-three years. I found brief information about her or the newspaper in a few publications, but no one had explored her noteworthy career in a documented biography.³

Marilyn Richardson, who edited a collection of essays and speeches by the nineteenth-century political writer Maria W. Stewart, observed that “readers searching for information on black women of outstanding prominence in their eras will quickly discover the gaping spaces of lost or thinly documented years in their recorded lives.”⁴ Many women, Cannady among them, left few personal documents like journals or diaries that might offer insight into their struggles and achievements. Brooke Kroeger calls this “poor planning for posterity.”⁵ While researching the white journalist Nellie Bly, she realized that “guaranteeing [oneself] a place in history ... takes more than living a phenomenal life. In most cases, it takes careful attention to creating a documented record of that life that isn’t too hard to retrieve.”⁶ Women, whatever their race, often are marginalized in other ways, too. One source calls Cannady “fiery,” a description seldom applied to men.⁷ A striking photo published in the *New York Amsterdam News* was misidentified as “Atty. E. D. Cannady”—her husband’s initials.⁸ And throughout most of her career, she was known simply as Mrs. E. D. Cannady, in keeping with the conventions of the era.

The scarcity of primary documents does not mean women’s lives cannot be studied; rather, scholars need to be more creative with their research, following hunches, cross-referencing leads, and reviewing endless reels of microfilmed text. So I slipped a reel of film onto the spindle of the massive machine, brought the *Advocate* into focus, and encountered the first of many dead ends: copies from September 1903 until May 1923, and from 1934 to 1936, were missing, a result of a library cataloging error and a lost opportunity to preserve holdings belonging to Cannady’s son, Ivan.⁹ Despite an exhaustive search and e-mails to discussion lists, reference librarians across the country, longtime Portlanders, and Cannady’s great-niece, these issues of the *Advocate* appear to be lost to historians.

Still, more than five hundred issues of the weekly newspaper remain, a remarkable number considering that periodicals like the *Advocate* were, by

their very nature, ephemeral. They were read, shared, clipped, sometimes even used in lieu of insulation; in 2007, a few copies of the *Advocate* were found stuffed inside a wood elevator hidden behind a wall in Cannady's Portland home.¹⁰ Taken as a whole, the *Advocate* brings to life a tumultuous period in the state and nation and "shows us a world beyond the narrow limitations of traditional history" — a history that has emphasized Oregon's white male pioneers.¹¹ Seemingly unimportant details buried in the paper's seven dense columns reveal a striking amount about migration, employment patterns, social and religious life, entertainment, Jim Crow restrictions, and black-owned businesses. These topics have been the focus of articles and books about the black experience in the West from the 1500s through the 1800s; far less is known, however, about these issues in Portland during the first decades of the twentieth century. Scholars also have overlooked how terrifying events such as the arrival of the Ku Klux Klan in the spring of 1921, or repeated showings of *The Birth of a Nation*, the film that glorified the Klan's formation, might have affected Negroes who were trying to live, work, and rear children in Oregon. This book offers new information about the black experience that helps to dispel the myth that black women and men played a minuscule role in the state's history during the early twentieth century.

First and foremost, though, the *Advocate* is the story of Beatrice Morrow Cannady herself and her ongoing campaign for better race relations in Oregon during this period. Editorials delineate her stand on segregation and discrimination, while news items supply details about her extensive outreach to high school and college students, lectures to civic and religious groups, efforts to share black culture with white audiences, and the radio broadcasts she gave during Negro History Week, the forerunner of Black History Month. (This book retains the word "Negro" because it was the preferred racial description during this period.) Articles in the newspaper also make clear that her advocacy was not done in a vacuum: Cannady interacted with the period's leading black artists, editors, politicians, and intellectuals, including W. E. B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, A. Philip Randolph, Oscar De Priest, Roland Hayes, and James Weldon Johnson.

To help reconstruct events that occurred between 1912, when Cannady apparently arrived in Portland, and 1923, the first year for which copies of the *Advocate* are available, a number of other primary sources were located and consulted. Among the most helpful were Cannady's scrapbook; records from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); Harmon Foundation records at the Library of Congress; articles in other newspapers for black Americans; oral histories from longtime Oregonians; Governor Ben W. Olcott's scrapbook and papers; Ku Klux Klan records; City of Portland files; documents at the National Bahá'í Archives

and Austin History Center; and articles, editorials, and advertisements in Portland's white press. Combined, these resources illustrate the scope of Cannady's civil rights work on behalf of black Oregonians.

Her story is far more complete than I dreamed it would be at the outset, but I have been unable to answer some perplexing questions. When and where did she meet Edward Cannady, her first husband? Was their courtship truly conducted through a purely platonic exchange of letters, as Beatrice indicated in one interview? What caused their marriage to end in 1930? Was there a defining moment in the mid-1930s that prompted her to apparently abandon the *Advocate* and move to Southern California?¹² How did black Oregonians and subscribers react to the loss of the *Advocate*, their mouthpiece and defender? These and other mysteries may never be solved.

I keep a photo of Beatrice, Edward, and their young son George in my office, and the stunning black-and-white image of Beatrice draped in her handmade Spanish shawl is framed on my desk at home. These images remind me that the fight for equal rights and liberties has not yet been won, and that individual efforts *can* make a difference.

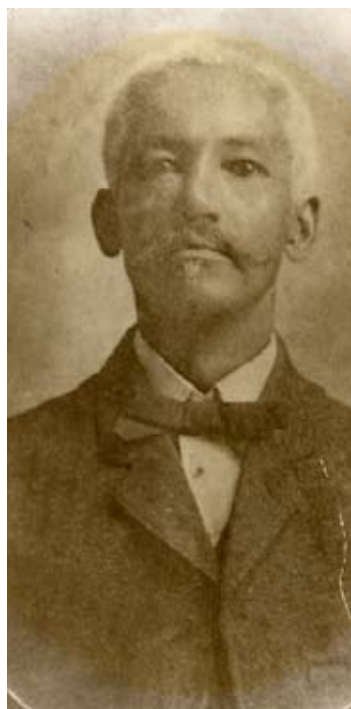
CHAPTER ONE
From Texas to Oregon

Get wisdom, get understanding, get health, get wealth and don't forget the teachings of the lowly Christ: practice the Golden Rule and all will be well.

— the *Advocate*, May 2, 1925, 4

In 1883, a former slave named Jackson Morrow donated a parcel of land he had been given by his owner, Christopher Hamilton McGinnis, for a new town.¹ But it was not named in his honor; instead, the site eighteen miles northeast of Austin, Texas, was called Littig, for a former employee of the Houston and Central Texas Railway who surveyed the area.² The Morrow clan—including Jackson, who had been born in Tennessee in about 1828, and his wife, Lucy—owned homes there, tilled the soil, reared children, and buried loved ones.³ “It could just as well have been called Morrowtown for it was made up principally of our family and relatives,” recalled Beatrice, whose father, George, was one of Jackson and Lucy’s sons.⁴ A map of Littig from 1896 reflects their influence in the area: Morrow Street was the main east-west thoroughfare; Jackson, Wesley, Edward, and Albert streets divided the blocks of homes into neat grids.⁵

George married a local girl named Mary Francis Carter in 1875; he was twenty, she was sixteen.⁶ Beatrice described her father as a “pillar in St. Paul Methodist church” and a “successful” farmer who was “highly respected and beloved by both colored and white.”⁷ The couple had fourteen children, twelve of whom survived.⁸ Census records for 1910 reflect an overflowing house: son Leroy (thirteen), and daughters Cora (twenty-five), Georgie (twenty), Beatrice (eighteen), Ella (seventeen), Carrie (fifteen), Bula (eleven), Mabel (nine), and Winnifred (seven).⁹ All but Beatrice and the two youngest girls were described as laborers who helped on the home farm.¹⁰ But their parents also stressed the need for schooling. “My father was a very well-educated man,” Beatrice told a friend, who “made every effort possible to give his children a good education.”¹¹ Most, if not all, of the siblings eventually earned a college degree and enjoyed successful careers. Beatrice’s brother John, who was born in 1876, became a physician and worked in Jennings, Louisiana, midway between Houston and New Orleans.¹² Lucy graduated from Tillotson College, a historically black institution in Austin, and taught there for many years.¹³ Bula earned a bachelor of arts degree from Sam Houston State Teachers College and was



Beatrice Morrow Cannady's mother, Mary Francis Carter, and father, George Morrow.

working on her master's thesis when she visited Cannady in 1932.¹⁴ And Almus graduated from Northwestern College of Law in Portland, Oregon, before settling in Berkeley, California, where he worked in real estate and reared a family with his wife, Lillian.¹⁵ But it was Beatrice who went on to earn national recognition for her career as an editor, educator, and a civil rights activist.



Beatrice Hulon Morrow was born at home on Wednesday, January 9, 1889—a year that proved to be remarkable.¹⁶ In the United States, Jane Addams finalized plans to open Hull House in Chicago, and consumers discovered conveniences such as George Eastman's Kodak cameras.¹⁷ A. Philip Randolph, who would become a leading civil rights activist, was born.¹⁸ The bare-knuckle pugilist John L. Sullivan, who steadfastly refused to fight Negro challenger Jack Johnson, survived a seventy-five-round bout versus Jake Kilrain to retain the title of Heavyweight Champion of the World.¹⁹ Stunt journalist Nellie Bly began her record-breaking trip

around the world, and Confederate President Jefferson Davis died.²⁰ “Aunt Jemima” was introduced to market a new pancake mix.²¹ And thousands of homesteaders—white as well as black—raced to Oklahoma to stake their claim.²² Little is known about Morrow’s childhood in Littig, other than her expressed love of music. “I was always singing,” she told a friend in 1929.²³ She recalled being “stood up on the platform” and singing *Hello Central, Give Me Heaven*, a piece for piano and voice composed in 1901 by Charles Kassell Harris. The lyrics, which acknowledged the growing spread of the telephone, told the story of a “tearful little child” trying to call her “mama” in heaven.²⁴ “I would promptly begin to cry, as I could not bear the thought of my precious mother being so far away,” Morrow said. “I was a tiny thing and it seemed to afford a lot of amusement for the audience, but to me, I lived through what I sang.”²⁵ Even though she was not as young as she recalled—she was eleven when the song was published—music remained an important interest for the rest of her life.

The Morrow family may have subscribed to one or more of the weekly black newspapers published in the 1890s, including the *Texas Freeman*, the *Langston (Oklahoma) Herald*, or the venerable *New York Age*, edited by T. Thomas Fortune, one of the most powerful black journalists of the late nineteenth century.²⁶ Articles about politics, religion, education, and more may have been discussed when the family gathered for meals. Morrow’s formative years undoubtedly were influenced by the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the landmark case that in 1896 formalized Jim Crow segregation, and by journalists such as the anti-lynching crusader Ida Wells-Barnett, who wrote for the *New York Age* after her own Memphis newspaper office was destroyed by a white mob in 1892. By the end of their careers, the two women had much in common—including unsuccessful bids for elected office and difficulties with the NAACP—and both were compared to Joan of Arc.²⁷ Equally important to Morrow’s early life was the passing of a leader: Frederick Douglass died in 1895, just a month after Morrow turned six. Years later, as the idea of Negro History Week took hold, she would write fondly about the orator, publisher, and former slave.²⁸ Her public talks and editorials also reflected ideas drawn from Carter G. Woodson, the Harvard-educated scholar who has been called the “Father of Black History”; Booker T. Washington, president of Tuskegee Institute from 1881 until 1915; and W. E. B. Du Bois, the influential sociologist who co-founded the NAACP and edited its journal, the *Crisis*, for twenty-four years.²⁹ From Washington, Morrow borrowed the concepts of self-help, hard work, thrift, and racial solidarity, while Du Bois shaped her civil rights agenda and political activism. She also identified with Du Bois’ concept of a black intelligentsia or “Talented

Tenth” — “exceptional” educated men (and women) who were expected to “guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races.”³⁰ And Woodson, who initiated Negro History Week in 1926, influenced her dual commitment to teaching black people about their past in order to “instill race pride,” and educating white people about history and culture in order “to break down the opinion ... that the Negro never has and never will count for much in the building and developing of civilizations.”³¹



Morrow attended schools in Littig, Houston, and New Orleans before reportedly graduating in 1908 from Wiley University, “the first Black college west of the Mississippi River.”³² However, there is no record of her attending, or graduating from, the institution.³³ The school, founded in Marshall, Texas, in 1873 by the Freedman’s Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, was later made famous by its award-winning debate team.³⁴ Morrow noted that she “took a teacher’s course” there, which probably meant that she completed the Teachers Normal Course.³⁵ She undoubtedly spent a great deal of time in the new Carnegie Library, a two-story brick and stone building funded by philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.³⁶ And one of her last class projects may have entailed reading the influential new book, *Following the Color Line: An Account of Negro Citizenship in the American Democracy*, by the muckraking journalist Ray Stannard Baker.³⁷ Two years after she graduated from Wiley, “Following the Color Line” became the standing headline for a column that was “eagerly read” in the NAACP’s new monthly magazine, the *Crisis*.³⁸

Her alma mater seemed to affect her deeply.³⁹ She later told an interviewer: “You know, perhaps, that Wiley College is one of the best in the United States for colored students.”⁴⁰ President Matthew W. Dogan sent a typewritten note in 1917 to thank her for “the splendid write-up” she had given the school “in a recent edition” of the *Advocate*.⁴¹ “I referred to the article in one of my chapel talks,” he wrote, “at which time I told the students all about you. You have greatly helped our institution by your splendid sayings.”⁴² A few months later, he again acknowledged her promotional efforts. “I forgot to tell you how much I enjoyed reading your article on Wiley in one of the *Advocates* during the winter. After reading it, we put the copy where teachers and students could get hold of it.”⁴³ Other letters thanked Morrow for her generosity to the college. Toward the end of 1919, she sent Dogan \$44 — worth about \$550 today — to help offset “current bills ... at the institution.”⁴⁴

Morrow also contributed regularly to a fund to build a gym for the female students. “You cannot know, Miss Beatrice, how much I appreciate your efforts in trying to get a gymnasium here for our girls,” wrote Dogan on Christmas Eve 1912.⁴⁵ “We have too long neglected this very important feature of every first-class college, so we must make amends in the future.”⁴⁶ He calculated that it would cost \$4,000—about \$90,000 today—to erect “a nice frame building” and “fit it up,” and noted that he was counting on her help to see the project to completion.⁴⁷

She solicited donations from some of Portland’s leading white businessmen. In December 1912, she called on William M. Ladd, president of Ladd & Tilton Bank. His father, William S. Ladd, who had co-founded the bank in 1859, the same year Oregon was granted statehood, was “involved in civic and business affairs throughout his lifetime.”⁴⁸ Knowledge of Ladd’s philanthropy may have prompted Morrow to ask his son for a donation to the fund. He was interested, but decided to check with the State Bank of Marshall to determine whether the “school for colored youth” was being “properly conducted and doing good to the freedmen.”⁴⁹ The bank’s cashier assured Ladd that everyone in the region felt “very proud” of the institution. “It is doing a great work for the general uplift of the colored race,” he added, and stressed that the college was “well deserving of the moral and financial support” of people across the country.⁵⁰ Apparently that was all Ladd needed to hear, because he sent a donation to Dogan.⁵¹ Once again, Dogan thanked Morrow for her efforts, and sent her some “printed matter” to use while canvassing people for contributions.⁵²

Morrow told a friend that she began her brief teaching career soon after commencement in 1908.⁵³ First, she worked in the “literary and domestic departments” of Gilbert Academy and Agricultural College, a school for black children founded in Baldwin, Louisiana, in 1884.⁵⁴ Then she taught for a time at Logan County High School in Guthrie, Oklahoma, a land-rush city established the year she was born.⁵⁵ But Morrow’s true passion was music. She later recalled, “I had great ambitions in those days and dreamed of an operatic career.”⁵⁶ She was proud of the fact that she had spent two summers in Chicago studying “voice culture” with David Alva Clippinger, a conductor and teacher who boasted he had trained “a large number of conscientious young men and women” who had “gone out ... into the world to engage in the responsible work of voice teaching.”⁵⁷ Although Morrow never realized her dream, she incorporated music into her interracial teas and used the *Advocate* to promote the careers of many individuals, including Roland Hayes, the first black “classical singer to have an international career on the concert and operatic stage.”⁵⁸



In between her studies with Clippinger, Morrow took “Special Courses in Domestic Science and Art and special physical training” at the University of Chicago.⁵⁹ She also found time “to exchange letters purely platonic” with Edward Daniel Cannady, with whom she had been “intrigued” by friends to “exchange letters.” Cannady was the “hat-check man” at the luxurious Portland Hotel in Oregon and a co-founder of the *Advocate*, a newspaper for Negroes established on September 5, 1903.⁶⁰ Little more is known about Cannady, and published details are contradictory. According to a brief biographical sketch in *Who’s Who of the Colored Race*, he was born in Jefferson City, Missouri, on November 27, 1877, to George Cannady and Caroline Wilkins, and attended public schools in Jefferson City and high school in St. Louis.⁶¹ But the family does not appear in Missouri census records.⁶² An article in the *Advocate* notes that Cannady worked at the Ryan Hotel in St. Paul, Minnesota, and also for the *Appeal: A National Afro-American Newspaper* in that city.⁶³ According to the masthead, the weekly was edited and published by J. Q. Adams and his brother, Cyrus; Cannady was not listed, but he reportedly assisted Cyrus with the newspaper.⁶⁴ If so, he may have had some interaction with McCants Stewart, who worked as business manager of two black newspapers in St. Paul before moving first to the Dakotas and then to Portland, where he would help launch the *Advocate* the year after his arrival.⁶⁵

It is unclear exactly when Cannady moved to the Pacific Northwest, but by 1902 he was working at the Portland Hotel and establishing his reputation as a man with “a great memory for heads.”⁶⁶ Three decades



Edward Cannady, left, and an unidentified man at the Cannadys' home.

later, an article in the *Morning Oregonian* noted that he was “known all over the world” for taking and giving “back tens of thousands of hats, overcoats and rubbers, but chiefly hats.” The newspaper added that “many of America’s greatest men [had] had their hats returned to them by this expert,” including Presidents Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson.⁶⁷

Cannady and Morrow continued their long-distance relationship until sometime early in 1912. Finally, she told a reporter for the *New York Amsterdam News*, she decided to purchase “a round trip ticket to visit points in the West” – and meet Edward.⁶⁸ As the train began its final leg into Portland’s Union Depot, Morrow may have got her first glimpse of the Willamette, the river that ends its northerly course when it meets the Columbia. She also may have caught a reflection of herself in the glass, an image unlike that of the other passengers milling about the station. But any lingering doubts she may have had about settling in the city apparently vanished that June when the couple wed; she was twenty-three, he was almost thirty-five.⁶⁹ The account of their relationship prompted the *Amsterdam’s* reporter to observe, “There is romantic glamour that adorns this union.”⁷⁰ Beatrice Morrow Cannady cashed in her return train ticket and began her new life in Portland, a city with just one thousand Negroes.⁷¹

Although she may have missed being part of a larger and more vibrant black community, Portland offered its own unique mix of progress and paradox for Cannady as well as for the other black women and men living in Oregon’s largest city. After a forty-two-year struggle for (white) women’s rights, Governor Oswald West had signed the Oregon Woman Suffrage Proclamation in November 1912, shortly after her arrival.⁷² The opulent New Oregon Hotel—soon renamed the Benson—opened the following year, joining the Portland (1890) and Multnomah hotels (1912) as imposing landmarks and destinations for well-to-do travelers and a long list of presidents.⁷³ Black guests, however, were not welcome to stay at these establishments. Reed College held its first classes in 1911 and the following year Lincoln High School—the city’s oldest—moved into its new building on Southwest Park Avenue.⁷⁴ Cannady was a frequent guest of both venues, where she discussed topics such as interracial relations, Negro history, and “The Negro’s Contribution to Civilization.”⁷⁵ She valued these opportunities to share information with white people in order to dispel race prejudice, which she believed was “the inevitable outcome of thorough instruction to the effect that the Negro has never contributed anything to the progress of mankind.”⁷⁶ This outreach was important for the small black student body, too, because the facts Cannady shared helped validate the students’ existence in an overwhelmingly white environment.⁷⁷

Soon after her marriage, Cannady joined the *Advocate* as associate editor and manager and apparently assumed most of the responsibility for running the weekly newspaper.⁷⁸ The timing could not have been better: Edward, who worked long hours at the hotel, had grown weary of the time-consuming demands of publishing. Co-founders McCants Stewart, hotel waiter John C. Logan, barber Edward Rutherford, William H. Bolds, A. Ballard, and Reverend Carey F. B. Moore had “deserted before the paper was two months old,” leaving Edward Cannady, Edward Ward, Howard Sproull, and Bob Perry to get the paper out each Friday.⁷⁹ The three remaining men gave “loyal and faithful service” to “the paper for a number of years,” but may have moved on by 1912.⁸⁰ A decade later, Edward wrote in the *Advocate*:

Right here we wish to state [that] when we were almost tempted to give up the struggle and let the paper die as a number of others have done, we led to the altar a woman whose equal is hard to find in any race; who, although inexperienced in newspaper work at the time, was possessed of a splendid education and unbreakable courage; she was a strong believer in “what others have done, I can do” principle, who came into the office and the community and with her wonderful assistance The Advocate lives on.⁸¹

Her efforts were recognized again in a front-page story celebrating the *Advocate's* twenty-sixth anniversary: “Much credit for the continued success of the paper for the past 15 years is due to the untiring efforts and faithful service rendered by Mrs. Cannady, manager and Associate Editor.”⁸² After the couple divorced in 1930, she took over as publisher of the weekly newspaper, an enterprise to which she gave “the very best of time and ability.”⁸³

One scholar has observed that “individuals working in the African-American press have been some of the most important leaders of African-American history.”⁸⁴ Frederick Douglass, T. Thomas Fortune, Ida Wells-Barnett, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Charlotta Spears Bass—to name only a few—had long careers as writers and publishers. Some, like Wells-Barnett, were recognized early in their careers; she was among the ten black women whose literary and journalistic accomplishments were lauded in the “Woman’s Number” of the *Journalist*, a special issue of the trade publication that came out on January 26, 1889, two weeks after Cannady was born.⁸⁵ Others, including Cannady, were recognized by their peers but have been overlooked by scholars.

While there is no documentary evidence that Cannady ever met Wells-Barnett in Chicago, the Portland editor did have “a delightful chat” with

Defender publisher Robert S. Abbott at his “great plant” during a cross-country trip she made in 1927.⁸⁶ Her description provides insight into the operations of both newspapers: “The noise of the dozen or more linotype machines and the hum of the giant printing press, installed at a cost of \$25,000, made us ‘homesick’ for the moment for our own little plant.”⁸⁷ Cannady also stopped by the offices of the *Chicago Bee*, where the “pretty managing editor insisted that [Cannady] ‘pose’ for a special photograph for the *Bee’s* pictorial page.”⁸⁸ During a trip to California in 1926 to speak at a national Bahá’í convention, Cannady visited with the “pioneering black reporter and historian” Delilah L. Beasley.⁸⁹ The gist of their conversation has been lost, but the women undoubtedly talked about their journalism and efforts to promote civil rights.⁹⁰ Cannady also would have been interested in discussing Beasley’s book, *The Negro Trail Blazers of California*, the first history of the state’s black population.⁹¹ Following their meeting, Beasley sent a typed letter to Cannady that described more of her activities in the Bay Area. “I have been working [for the white *Oakland Tribune*] three years in an effort to break down some of the wall of prejudice in this part of California,” she wrote.⁹² This advocacy was true of Cannady, too. As she noted in 1931, shortly after the *Advocate* observed its twenty-eighth anniversary:

We have been vigilant in our efforts to protect the rights of the Negro masses, we have fought segregation and social discrimination with all our strength and on the other hand have worked for equal rights and better interracial conditions; we have supported every worthwhile movement for the general welfare; we have urged our group to take part in civil, political, religious community activity, and among many other things, we have urged our young people to go to school and acquire education.⁹³

This agenda guided Cannady’s work in Portland for twenty-five years.

A number of influential journalists also passed through Portland.⁹⁴ In June 1923, for example, Joseph Bass, editor of the *California Eagle*, “one of the finest and best newspapers printed on the Pacific coast, was a pleasant visitor in Portland.”⁹⁵ While in town, he spoke at Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, which boasted “the largest membership and congregation of any colored church in Portland,” and visited the *Advocate* office.⁹⁶ And Cannady met Clara Belle Franklin in 1931, shortly after her retirement at the age of seventy from the *Kansas City Call*, a newspaper founded by her son, Chester, a decade earlier.⁹⁷ Cannady wrote that visiting with a colleague who had devoted her life to “the newspaper game” was “one of the most delightful experiences” she could recall.⁹⁸

Cannady had some interaction, too, with John H. Ryan, who published the *Forum* with his wife, Ella.⁹⁹ The Ryans moved to Spokane in 1889, the year Washington was admitted to the Union—and the year of Cannady’s birth.¹⁰⁰ After brief stays there and in Seattle, the couple settled in Tacoma, launched their newspaper in 1903, and helped found their local branch of the NAACP. But John Ryan was best known for his politics. In 1921, as the sole black member of the Washington State Legislature, he helped defeat a bill prohibiting interracial marriage.¹⁰¹ Ryan, an *Advocate* subscriber, was on his way home from a vacation in Oregon in August 1923 when he stopped by the *Advocate* office to say hello to his colleague.¹⁰² The “brilliant editor” told Cannady that “everything [was] ‘tip-top’ in his business” and he remained “optimistic over the political situation” in his state.¹⁰³

Cannady also entertained Cecil E. Newman, the “youthful” publisher of the *Twin City Herald*, when he visited Portland for a few days in May 1928.¹⁰⁴ She wrote that she “experienced real joy in meeting this forward looking, upstanding, purposeful young man” and predicted he would enjoy a “useful and successful future.”¹⁰⁵ He went on to found several publications, including the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*, which continues to be an important source of news and information for readers.¹⁰⁶ Newman toured the Northwest again three years later, shortly after launching *Timely Digest*, a general-interest magazine for Negroes modeled after *Time*. Cannady was pleased to receive the first issue, which she described as “pregnant with timely information.”¹⁰⁷ She also was happy to see Paul Robeson featured on the cover; the singer and actor had just become an *Advocate* subscriber.¹⁰⁸ Cannady hosted a small party for Newman at her home, and took him to visit Dr. DeNorval Unthank’s medical offices and to meet the editor of the *Oregon Daily Journal*.¹⁰⁹ Upon his return to Minneapolis, Newman wrote in the *Digest* that he had “spent five hours in the most complete public library this side of Chicago,” a nod to Cannady’s extensive collection of books by and about Negroes.¹¹⁰



Newman was not the only visitor to browse Cannady’s library; other houseguests enjoyed it, too.¹¹¹ Cannady also invited white students to come to her home at 2516 Northeast 26th Avenue to read periodicals, peruse newspapers such as the *California Eagle*, or borrow from her collection of several hundred books.¹¹² Among the titles she owned were *The Negro* by W. E. B. Du Bois, *My Bondage and My Freedom* by Frederick Douglass, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, and *William Lloyd Garrison on Non-Resistance* by Oswald Garrison Villard, grandson of the *Liberator*’s famous publisher and an influential editor in his own right.¹¹³ Villard also

was a co-founder of the NAACP and the son of Henry Villard, the initial developer of the Portland Hotel and a benefactor of the University of Oregon.¹¹⁴

New acquisitions were discussed often in the *Advocate*. In 1927, she received the fourth edition of *The Negro In Our History* by Carter G. Woodson, founder of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History.¹¹⁵ The book has “remolded the attitude of the popular mind, especially among Negroes, as to the place and importance of the Negro in American history,” wrote Alain Locke, a professor at Howard University who reviewed the newest edition for the *Journal of Negro History*. Although Locke felt that “a more interpretative text” was needed for college students, he noted correctly that the “first phase” of revisionist history always entails filling in the gaps. In this case, Woodson’s goal “was to supply the omissions of the current school histories and to stimulate race pride directly in terms of a knowledge of the salient facts about the Negro’s historical past.”¹¹⁶ Cannady wrote that the “book as well as the *Journal* should be in every colored home.”¹¹⁷ Annual subscriptions to the *Journal* cost just \$3.50, she reminded readers, for which they would receive “four large journals brimful of authentic information.”¹¹⁸ If people still were not convinced to part with the twenty-first century equivalent of \$44, Cannady pointed out that the quarterly contained “important information bearing on every phase of the life and history of [the] race.”¹¹⁹

Early in 1929, she announced that she had “added 44 volumes” to her library, bringing the total to “nearly 300 volumes of Negro literature.”¹²⁰ In spring of the same year, she told readers she had added three more books to her collection, including *From Negro to Caucasian* by Louis Fremont Baldwin, reportedly a former Portland resident.¹²¹ Cannady also browsed used-book stores during trips. On the way to New York City in 1927, she found two books “of interest” at a shop in Vancouver, British Columbia.¹²² People she visited presented her with gifts, too. Longtime subscriber Warner Webb, who worked for the Dennison Paper Company in Chicago, gave Cannady “three rare Negro books” for her library.¹²³ She called him “one of the biggest boosters of the *Advocate*,” and thanked him for keeping her “well supplied with leading white dailies of Chicago.”¹²⁴

For a time, Clifford C. Mitchell, whose columns “Timely Digest” and “Digesting the News” were carried in the *Advocate* and dozens of other black papers, reviewed books for Cannady’s newspaper. In 1931, he discussed *From Captivity to Fame*, a new biography of botanist George Washington Carver, and *School Acres*, a nonfiction account of a school established in the midst of the Civil War on St. Helena Island off the coast of South Carolina.¹²⁵ Following one of Mitchell’s articles, Cannady made a point of

noting, "The editor of the *Advocate* wishes to announce that every book reviewed in these columns is to be found in her collection of books."¹²⁶ It went without saying that people were welcome to borrow any of the titles they found interesting.

Cannady occasionally donated books to the local library—probably Central Library in downtown Portland. Her gift of *Scott's Official History of the American Negro in the World War* was acknowledged by a representative of the Library Association of Portland who noted, "I can assure you it will be much appreciated."¹²⁷ The "profusely illustrated" tome by Wiley alumnus Emmett J. Scott offered "a complete and authentic narration ... of the participation of American soldiers of the Negro race in the world war for democracy."¹²⁸ Cannady also never hesitated to suggest titles she felt Portland's libraries should purchase for its patrons, black as well as white. In October 1925, she told readers she had sent the librarian "a long list of books about the Race" that included *Up From Slavery* by Booker T. Washington, Frederick Douglass' autobiography, *The Complete Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar*, and *The Emperor Jones*, Eugene O'Neill's Pulitzer Prize-winning play that featured black actor Charles Gilpin in the lead role when it was first staged in November 1920.¹²⁹ In all, twenty-five works were added to the public library at Cannady's suggestion.¹³⁰ Titles and call numbers were published in the *Advocate* and the editor encouraged readers "to cut out [the] list and place it conveniently for quick reference."¹³¹ Cannady's efforts to promote racial uplift did not go unnoticed. The Reverend Lewis B. Stewart, who served in Portland for a time before assuming leadership of the AME Church in Anaconda, Montana, named his church's reading room after her. In a handwritten letter to her in 1927, he noted that the designation was in recognition of her "untiring efforts to bring before the public the true history of the Negro race and her work to bring about a better relation between the two races."¹³²

Cannady also encouraged families to start their own libraries, or add to existing collections. "Parents of Negro children who have no books about their own leaders and about their own history in general ... ought to realize what an injustice it is to their children to be deprived of this information and entertainment," she wrote shortly before Negro History Week in 1932.¹³³ Cannady suggested a new thirty-four-page booklet about Frederick Douglass that she promised "would enhance anyone's library on Negro life and history."¹³⁴

Other meaningful gifts were acknowledged in the newspaper as well. The suffragette Alice Park sent Cannady several reproductions of an oil painting of Frederick Douglass by an artist in Pasadena.¹³⁵ The composer W. C. Handy mailed the *Advocate* "a complimentary copy of his latest

composition, ‘Way Down South Where The Blues Began,’” which Cannady predicted would “become as popular as his world-famous ‘St. Louis Blues.’”¹³⁶ Maud Cuney Hare, a well-known music historian and pianist who wrote for the *Crisis* and other publications, promised to send Cannady a copy of one of her books “as a little mark of appreciation for [her] kindness and ... work in Portland.”¹³⁷ Cannady received Nellie M. Fall’s new book of poems after the author visited Portland in 1922.¹³⁸ Publishers in Buffalo, New York, sent Cannady a copy of the sheet music for *Sorrow Is Mine*, a “beautiful and appealing” song dedicated to her friend the clubwoman Mary B. Talbert, who died in 1923.¹³⁹ George E. Haynes, a co-founder of the National Urban League, mailed her an autographed copy of his book, *The Trend of the Races*, in 1927.¹⁴⁰ And Cannady was particularly delighted to receive in 1932 an autographed copy of *Scottsboro Limited; Four Poems and a Play in Verse*.¹⁴¹ The powerful collection by Langston Hughes was a response to the ongoing legal battle being waged on behalf of nine young black men who had been wrongly convicted of raping two white women in Alabama. Cannady printed dozens of articles and editorials about the Scottsboro Boys in the *Advocate* between 1931 and 1933.¹⁴²



But she also used the newspaper to build as well as defend the local black community. She promoted success stories – teens graduating from high school, men starting businesses, families buying homes – and she editorialized against discrimination in restaurants, jobs, and theaters in an effort to erase color lines, correct wrongs, and illustrate inequities. The *Advocate* was simultaneously a mouthpiece and historian, decrying and documenting instances of racism, and extant copies demonstrate that black Portlanders worked hard to put down roots despite racial antipathy.

Segregation in Oregon worsened during the 1920s, especially after the Ku Klux Klan swept into the state, but the color line had been drawn years earlier. In 1857, white male voters in the Oregon Territory approved their new, hand-written constitution and settled the question of whether Oregon should be a slave-holding state. Voters overwhelmingly rejected the idea, but even more opposed the admission of “free Negroes in Oregon.”¹⁴³ The editor of the *Oregon Weekly Times* echoed what most settlers were thinking: “Oregon is a land for the white man, and refusing the toleration of negroes in our midst as slaves, we rightly and for yet a stronger reason, prohibit them from coming among us as free negro vagabonds.”¹⁴⁴ Two sections were subsequently added to the state’s Bill of Rights. The first outlawed slavery and involuntary servitude, except “as a punishment for crime” – and only after an individual had “been duly convicted.”¹⁴⁵ The second

passage was “aimed at putting black and mulatto residents in a state of complete subordination and even rightlessness”.¹⁴⁶

No free negro, or mulatto, nor residing in this State at the time of the adoption of this Constitution, shall come, reside, or be within this State, or hold any real estate, or make any contracts, or maintain any suit therein; and the Legislative Assembly shall provide by penal laws, for the removal, by public officers, of all such negroes, and mulattoes, and for their effectual exclusion from the State, and for the punishment of persons who shall bring them into the State, or employ, or harbor them.¹⁴⁷

Cannady and other black Oregonians considered this wording a “disgraceful blot” on the state and its constitution and worked for years to remove the language from the document.¹⁴⁸ Measures to repeal the “Negro and Mulatto Section” were voted on in 1916, 1926, and 1927, and failed each time.¹⁴⁹ Finally, in November 2002—ninety years after Cannady’s arrival in Portland—Measure 14 amended the Constitution and removed the last of the “historical racial references” from its long-obsolete sections. Even so, the vote was 867,901 in favor—and 352,027 against the measure.¹⁵⁰

One scholar maintains that the West, while not the proverbial “Promised Land,” nevertheless offered Negroes “an opportunity to make a better life for themselves.”¹⁵¹ Another historian has described efforts by a handful of black settlers to make a living as farmers, cooks, or barbers in the fertile Willamette Valley, in Portland, or in Oregon City, the terminus of the Oregon Trail.¹⁵² Still, the exclusionary provisions, commonly called the Black Laws, represented a physical and psychological barrier for Negroes who looked to the West for a new beginning. Black women and men were arriving in California, Washington, and British Columbia in increasing numbers, but less than two hundred individuals called Oregon home in 1860.¹⁵³ The small number, coupled with the fact that they were dispersed in fourteen of Oregon’s nineteen counties, made it “difficult to characterize” the inhabitants “as a ‘community’ having a collective identity, shared goals or institutions.” Yet it “would be equally misleading to ignore their residence in the region.”¹⁵⁴ Between 1860 and 1900, Portland’s black population increased from sixteen to 775, still small, but large enough to support two churches, a few businesses, and the *New Age*, a newspaper established in 1896.¹⁵⁵

Edward Cannady arrived a few years later, as did McCants Stewart.¹⁵⁶ But Stewart quickly became disillusioned with Portland. His law practice was disappointing because white people “rarely hired black attorneys, and the prevalence of unskilled laborers and service workers among Oregon’s

small black population guaranteed" few clients.¹⁵⁷ He did have one high-profile case in 1905, though, involving a discrimination suit brought against the manager of the Star Theatre. An usher informed Oliver Taylor, a Pullman Car conductor, and some friends that house rules barred them from occupying box seats. The men refused to sit elsewhere in the theater and the group left. Taylor subsequently sued for \$5,000 in damages—about \$120,000 today—citing humiliation over the way he and his party were treated. But the court ruled that "a theater ticket was nothing more than a license" and thus revocable; patrons were entitled only to a refund of the cost of admission and transportation. The *Morning Oregonian* reported that the decision applied equally to white and black patrons, "and the mere fact that Taylor happened to be colored did not in any way affect the question." But the Oregon Supreme Court later awarded Taylor "a favorable judgment."¹⁵⁸

Despite the *Oregonian's* opinion, skin tone remained a criterion for admission and seating. Cannady and sons George, fifteen, and Ivan, thirteen, were discriminated against in 1928 when an usher at the Oriental Theatre tried to direct them to the balcony rather than the main floor, which was reserved for white patrons. She described the painful experience as a play in three acts with the following cast: "One usher and three guests. Usher of white race, guests of colored race; usher's profession, ushering; guest's profession, editor and lawyer." In the first act, the usher tries to seat the guests in the balcony. When the guests ask whether seats are available on the floor, the usher tells them, "Yes, but I'm sorry I can't seat your people downstairs." The second act involves confrontation and compromise. She tells the usher that "plenty of seats [are available] downstairs, and ... as I am a law-abiding citizen, presentable and have paid admission ..., I prefer to sit downstairs and shall do so." When the guests proceed to look for seats, the usher leads them to a side aisle. The denouement occurs in the third and final act: "Three lovely seats are vacated on center aisle. Guests move over and occupy them and nobody moves because of their presence. Guests see show but can't enjoy it because of the humiliation in obtaining seats." In the end, Cannady observed wryly that such treatment was a "regular occurrence" in Portland, "'the land of the free and the home of the brave."¹⁵⁹

During the 1920s, discrimination was commonplace in public venues. Otto Rutherford, president of the NAACP Branch in the 1950s, recalled that whites-only signs were displayed prominently in most downtown eateries.¹⁶⁰ Some individuals went as far as affixing signs to their windows that featured the word "NO" in large letters along with pictures of a dog, "a black guy lookin' like Little Black Sambo," and a stereotypical Native

American. Even if individuals couldn't read, Rutherford said, they could see the images and know they were not welcome.¹⁶¹ Offensive signs had been a topic of conversation in Portland since at least 1902, when City Councilman Fred T. Merrill reportedly ordered several signs to be removed from places of business on Burnside Street and other thoroughfares.¹⁶² Edward Cannady and three other members of the Colored Taxpayers League pointed this out in a letter to Mayor Harry Lane in 1909.¹⁶³ They also asked him to deal with a sign displayed "in full view of pedestrians" at a downtown restaurant. It was "publicly insulting," they argued, as well as "undemocratic" because it created "a line of distinction based upon race and color" that was apt to intensify "race antagonism and conflict" in the city.¹⁶⁴ Police instructed George Henry, proprietor of the Owl, to take down the sign "No colored patrons wanted."¹⁶⁵ He was "quite angry," observed Police Chief Charles Gritzmacher.¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Gritzmacher reported in a handwritten note to the mayor that the sign had been removed — "at least it cannot be seen from the outside or sidewalk."¹⁶⁷ This sort of qualified victory was common, as Beatrice Cannady noted in the *Advocate*. In the summer of 1933 she convinced the new chief of police Burton K. Lawson to order the removal of "an obnoxious sign, 'We cater only to white trade,'" from a restaurant on the corner of Broadway and Glisan.¹⁶⁸ But the very next week, the *Advocate* carried a news brief about waiter Juneious Pugh, who had been arrested after tearing down another sign from the window of Heller's Café.¹⁶⁹



Continual setbacks in the struggle for civil rights may have prompted the Cannadys to join with Dr. James A. Merriman, chef James Williams, tailor J. W. Miller, clerk Eugene Minor, waiter and aspiring photographer James S. Bell, and more than one hundred other women and men to found the Portland Branch of the NAACP in January 1914.¹⁷⁰ According to one report, Beatrice was elected to serve as the group's first secretary; branch letterhead, however, lists her as vice-president and Edward as chair of the executive committee.¹⁷¹ The group wasted no time trying to effect reform. At the end of December, Edward sent a letter to Mayor H. Russell Albee, on behalf of the Branch's executive committee, regarding an incident at a downtown restaurant. Police officers passing by the establishment one Friday evening observed a white woman dining in the black-owned business. "In the midst of her meal," Edward wrote, "the officers on the beat ... entered — ordered her up from the table and out of [the] place, with disparaging remarks about all concerned." He asked the mayor whether officers had standing orders to "eject any white persons found patronizing

a colored place of business” — a practice that clearly was “against all rules of fairness and justice.” The letter concluded with an appeal to reason, just like so many other letters and petitions over the years: “We appeal to you in the name of all law abiding citizens of color and ask that you encourage, not discourage, our humble efforts whenever they are decently conducted; and lend us your support in eradicating an incident which may easily become a precedent by short sighted officers whose capacity for expediency is subservient to their conscience.”¹⁷² Branch records are incomplete, so it is impossible to say whether Mayor Albee replied to Cannady and the executive committee. Albee had his hands full in 1914: in February, just seven months after he took office as Portland’s thirty-eighth mayor, disgruntled voters launched a drive to recall him over alleged violations of the city charter.¹⁷³

During Beatrice Cannady’s fourteen-year association with the NAACP, she promoted the national organization and the Portland Branch, as well as their activities, in the *Advocate*. In 1923, for instance, she posed a rhetorical question: “What has the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People done?” Then she outlined some of its recent accomplishments, including providing Congressman Leonidas C. Dyer with “data on lynching” to support “his arguments before the House [of Representatives] on his anti-lynching bill.” Cannady wrote that she could “cite case after case where splendid results” had been “accomplished by” the organization, but she simply did not have the space for such a lengthy list. Instead, she urged her readers to peruse “the annual reports and read the colored newspapers.”¹⁷⁴ Portlanders who did not support the organization — or papers for Negroes — were criticized in the *Advocate*. “It costs only a dollar to become a member for a whole year; why not do it? ... There is no need for us to spend more money to get this preachment printed telling you why you ought to [join], for you already know it is your duty to get in and help lift up yourself, and every one around you.”¹⁷⁵

Cannady also helped to establish NAACP branches in Vernonia, Oregon; Longview, Washington; and Elgin and Littig, Texas. She was particularly hopeful that the new Longview Branch, organized in September 1925, would be able to address some of the “urgent needs of the colored district” there, including schooling for the children. Cannady walked the two-block neighborhood and “called at every house.” She found the residents to be “delightful people,” despite the deplorable conditions: “There is no sanitary sewerage system in this section; no paved sidewalks, no paved streets, no street lights, no telephones!”¹⁷⁶ She “authorized” President William Gildon and the fifteen others who had joined to “begin work at once,” even though there were not enough members yet to obtain their charter.¹⁷⁷ Robert

Bagnall, the NAACP's director of branches, was convinced the branch would be one of the organization's "very live units," thanks to Cannady's "guidance and inspiration."¹⁷⁸

The work she did in Longview and other cities was critical to the underfunded organization, which relied on "volunteer workers wherever possible to visit branches, address mass meetings, organize new branches, and to instruct in methods of work."¹⁷⁹ By July 1925, national officials were so pleased with her efforts that Bagnall told Cannady he was adding her to the organization's speakers bureau.¹⁸⁰ She considered it "an honor ... to be included" and assured him she would do her "best" to promote the NAACP.¹⁸¹ Soon after their correspondence, Bagnall wrote Portland Branch President Jesse A. Ewing: "You have no doubt noticed that your branch has been complimented in the appointment [of Cannady] as Branch Organizer for the Northern Pacific Coast."¹⁸² Some local members, however, viewed her selection for this volunteer position as an affront, especially when the title "Northwest Supervisor of Branches" appeared on her letterhead.¹⁸³ Her role in local as well as national operations quickly became the subject of a heated debate that lasted more than two years—from June 1926 through July 1928—and flared up again in 1932 when she ran for state representative.

Lee C. Anderson, secretary—and later president—of the Portland Branch, appeared to spearhead the efforts to strip Cannady of her title. He read a two-page, typed, single-spaced report at the annual fall meeting in November 1926 that criticized her for being "selfish," monopolizing Robert Bagnall's time during a recent visit to Portland, and failing to cooperate with "local officers" to ensure that William Pickens, the NAACP's field secretary, had a "pleasant" time during a trip through the city that May. Anderson also used the report, which was sent to NAACP headquarters in New York City, to publicly question Bagnall's judgment: "How does he expect our people to support the branch, when he stands behind the selfish motives of his appointee?"¹⁸⁴

Two women in the crowd of at least seventy black and white members felt Anderson had "turned the meeting into a demonical destroying mob" bent on insulting Cannady "with their leering glances, murderous looks, and poisonous words." They also implicated "Portland's most intelligent club women," local members of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, whose attacks were motivated by "personal feeling, and jealousy."¹⁸⁵ Although the NACWC's objectives mirrored Cannady's, documentary evidence suggests that she was minimally involved by 1926. She had attended the eleventh biennial meeting in Denver in 1918, when "some resolutions" she had prepared pledging the women's "whole-

hearted co-operation and support to the United States” and to its wartime allies were reportedly sent to President Wilson.¹⁸⁶ She also corresponded with Mary Talbert, president of the NACWC from 1916 to 1920, and was in “charge” of her “Portland engagement” in March 1920.¹⁸⁷ And Cannady interacted frequently with Nettie J. Asberry, president of the Washington State Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs and a founder of the Tacoma NAACP Branch.¹⁸⁸ But Cannady may have dropped her membership in the NACWC when she grew busier with her own civil rights work. Or she may have preferred to promote racial uplift using her own strategies. Either way, she may have been criticized for not taking part in the organization on the regional or national level.

Also worth noting in the context of the criticism of Cannady at the 1926 NAACP fall meeting is her troubled history with James Merriman, a charter member of the Portland Branch who held several positions in the organization, including a stint as its first president.¹⁸⁹ Merriman, a physician and surgeon born in Alabama, published a competing newspaper for black Portlanders from 1918 until 1923.¹⁹⁰ Cannady apparently made comments about him to Wiley President Dogan in the fall of 1919. He replied: “Am sorry your physician has not measured up to expectations. As soon as I can locate the right man I will be glad to write you.”¹⁹¹ Three months later, both the *Morning Oregonian* and *Portland Telegram* reported the out-of-court settlement of a libel suit brought against Merriman by Cannady. She had charged that an editorial in Merriman’s *Portland Times*, headlined “Two Vampires,” questioned her “reputation and character.” Merriman agreed to retract his statements and publish a two-paragraph apology, which also appeared in both white papers. He noted, in part, “We find, after careful investigation, that the statements ... concerning Mrs. Beatrice Cannady are unfounded and we herewith [retract them] with apologies to Mrs. Cannady.”¹⁹² Still, Merriman may have harbored a grudge toward his rival that ultimately played out in Branch politics several years later.

By the end of the Portland Branch’s 1926 fall meeting, the factions appear to have solidified into two camps: those who supported Cannady and her work, and those who continued to call for her resignation. That latter effort intensified when Lee Anderson retained the position of secretary, edging out his competitor – Cannady – by just three votes.¹⁹³ Anderson continued to send correspondence to the NAACP, ultimately involving Executive Secretary James Weldon Johnson in the acrimonious discussion. A letter signed by all twelve members of the newly elected executive committee urged Johnson to use his “influence” to abolish “the office of Northern Pacific Organizer and Supervisor.”¹⁹⁴ He refused to do so, but he did clarify “an apparent misimpression” regarding the position and its “relation to the

branch.” Johnson told the committee the officeholder had no “authority over any organized branch,” but groups had “the right to invite her aid in stimulating and strengthening [their] work,” something she was “ready” and willing to do.¹⁹⁵

Although Johnson urged the Portland Branch to “smooth out its differences” so “its officers and members” could “work in harmony” in 1927, local officials continued their efforts to remove Cannady from office.¹⁹⁶ Johnson, who had worked as a lawyer and diplomat before joining the NAACP, was accused of being “blind to subterfuge” and uninterested in the branch’s “welfare.”¹⁹⁷ Johnson observed in his brief reply in mid-January that the accusations were “both unfair and unworthy of the Portland Branch.”¹⁹⁸ The historical record does not resume until the summer of 1928, when an entire board meeting was devoted “to a discussion of their situation in relation to Mrs. Cannady.” She was accused, in absentia, of a laundry list of sins that included giving “the National Office the impression that she alone [was able to] make contacts with the whites.”¹⁹⁹ The Portland Branch, one of the oldest on the West Coast, was in shambles and the national office—in the form of Mary White Ovington—decided to intervene.²⁰⁰

Ovington’s views about class and race were influenced by her abolitionist grandmother, stories she read as a child about fugitive slaves, and the opportunity to hear Frederick Douglass speak in a Brooklyn, New York, church in 1890.²⁰¹ But it was a meeting with Booker T. Washington in 1903 that changed the direction of her life.²⁰² By the time Ovington toured the Pacific Northwest in July 1928, she had written five books and served the NAACP in numerous capacities, including chairman of the board, and was respected by white and black people alike.²⁰³ Given that Portland Branch members were upset with Bagnall, Pickens, and Johnson, her fact-finding visit may have been viewed as a conciliatory gesture on the part of the organization.

Ovington filed a detailed report following her busy weeklong stay in Portland, which included interviews with reporters from the *Morning Oregonian* and *Oregon Daily Journal*, speaking engagements to white groups, a reception hosted by the National Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs, and diversions such as a picnic luncheon at a fish hatchery by the Columbia River. Throughout the week, Ovington visited with white people who knew Cannady and were acquainted with her work. The feedback was mixed. George Orr Latimer, a Portland Branch member and a well-known teacher of the Bahá’í Faith in the U.S. and Canada, told her Cannady “could at one time have had the leadership of the branch had she been equal to it, but she did not cooperate as she should have.”²⁰⁴ Alice Handsaker, whom

Cannady considered “an outstanding contender for the rights of Colored people,” was “very sympathetic with” Cannady.²⁰⁵ But another woman, who admitted she was not a friend, told Ovington that Cannady thought “first of herself and only quite secondarily of her cause.”²⁰⁶ Missing from the report are the opinions of black Portlanders, as well as comments from Ewing, Anderson, or the aggrieved board members who had called for the editor’s dismissal. Also absent is Cannady’s voice. The two women took a long Saturday-afternoon drive, but “talked about everything but the branch.”²⁰⁷

However, after reading minutes from Branch meetings spanning seven years, Ovington acknowledged problems with the local organization and its inability to do much — particularly under Ewing’s direction.²⁰⁸ Two years earlier, during the contentious annual meeting, Cannady had supported dentist Elbert Booker for Branch leadership. She lamented Ewing’s lack of “executive ability” and felt that he was “not in a position to represent the cultural forward-looking group of [the] race” because he worked as a janitor in a meat market.²⁰⁹ It is difficult to disentangle the class bias in Cannady’s comment, yet her reasoning was consistent with that of other members of the black intelligentsia who “took for granted that black elites, as ‘representative Negroes,’” should speak for “the black majority.”²¹⁰ Ovington, too, felt that Booker “was unquestionably the better man,” but he was defeated by a vote of thirty-two to twenty-four.²¹¹ In the ensuing two years, she observed that the board had “done little” in Portland.²¹² Still, she felt that the Branch could “work out things” if NAACP officials refrained from making “any visits for a while,” and also stopped giving “the impression that Mrs. C. is superior to the branch.”²¹³ Finally, Ovington recommended abolishing the “office of organizer.”²¹⁴ That became a moot point. The controversy had deeply wounded Cannady, and she apparently left the branch she had helped found. Robert Bagnall checked in with her in 1930: “I have not heard from you for a long time and I have wondered whether you have found time or opportunity to do any work for the Association.” In fact, he hoped she would be able “to revive the branches in Vernonia and Longview” she had organized five years earlier.²¹⁵ There is no evidence that she responded to his query.

Three months after Ovington’s visit, Branch President Lee C. Anderson felt compelled to clarify his relationship to Cannady. “It seems that you have been informed that I am hostile and ... fighting Mrs. E. D. Cannady ...,” he wrote to Ovington. “I wish to say that ... I always have and always will hold the highest esteem for [her], and feel that she is the greatest woman in our community.”²¹⁶ However, Anderson made it very clear that he was more qualified than she: “I know my people in Portland as well

or better than any one here as I have worked among them and for them ever since 1910. I have studied their needs and know how to get the best results from them."²¹⁷ This oblique reference to the charge that Cannady was self-centered illustrates the gendered nature of civil rights work in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

The historian Kevin K. Gaines points out that black women intellectuals often were "relegated to the sidelines" due to the "middle-class ideology of racial uplift that measured race progress in terms of civilization, manhood, and patriarchal authority."²¹⁸ Even when they claimed center stage, such as when Cannady spoke at the NAACP's nineteenth annual conference, many black women found themselves caught between the domestic sphere and the need or desire to advocate for reform in the public sphere. Cannady told attendees that women needed to finish the work started by their foremothers who had done so "much for the race and country." Yet she also reminded listeners that "Negro women [could] do their finest piece of work for the race and nation" by caring for their husbands and ensuring their children grew up with race pride.²¹⁹



Cannady may have been conflicted about the best way to navigate the intersecting public and private spheres, but much of her career involved making a stand—against *The Birth of a Nation*, against the Klan, against Jim Crow. In September 1916, the *Morning Oregonian* reported that she had "filed an action in the Circuit Court ... to restrain the School Board from denying her" the pleasure of swimming during the hours "open to [white] citizens and taxpayers." She "demand[ed] to be placed on an equal basis with other women ... and to be allowed" to use the pool at Couch School in downtown Portland on Tuesday and Friday nights, and not solely on Saturday nights.²²⁰ Cannady's attorney was a white man named Arthur Moulton, a Portland Branch member whom she described as someone who "stood for justice to all alike."²²¹ But the judge did not share this conviction. Two months later, Henry McGinn ruled that the "School Board was clearly within its constitutional rights in segregating white and colored races in the use of the public bathing pools" at Couch as well as Shattuck Elementary School, where Negro men had faced similar segregation. Noting that the "proportion of the colored to the white population is such that one night a week is far in excess of their share of the time, if time was allotted on a tax or population basis," McGinn dismissed the case.²²²

Cannady might have abandoned her burgeoning civil rights career then and there. She was busy with the *Advocate*—writing, editing, collecting accounts and sending out renewal notices, typesetting, and doing all

the other time-consuming tasks associated with publishing a weekly newspaper. And the twenty-seven-year-old had two young sons to care for: George was born May 1, 1913, and Ivan had turned one in the middle of his mother's court battle. But she may have been inspired to continue working for equal rights and liberties with an eye toward improving life for her boys. Still, the definitive crack of the judge's gavel must have left her wondering how to advocate for reform in a city where "separate but equal" was accepted without question.

Copies of the *Advocate* are missing during these years, and Cannady did not leave a diary, so one can only imagine how she began to position herself as an activist. But by 1920, many people were taking note of her efforts to promote racial uplift and secure equal rights for black Oregonians. Maud Cuney Hare, for example, told Cannady: "You quite deserve your reputation ... as the person who *does things* in Portland."²²³ People talked about her at gatherings, during chance encounters with friends, and at religious meetings. One Brooklyn friend told Cannady that Bahá'í leader Louis Gregory had spoken "feelingly" about her and her work and noted how "busy" she was in her "calling."²²⁴ And Lewis B. Stewart, the pastor in Anaconda, "discussed" Cannady with a woman from Washington when both happened to be in Boise, Idaho. "We agreed that you are incomparable," he wrote.²²⁵ Cannady became Portland's most visible and outspoken Negro, and was often referred to as the city's unofficial "ambassador of good will."²²⁶ Her standing in the white community was particularly apparent when officials sought her opinion on matters "affecting the harmony of relations between the races," such as when theater owners requested permits to show D. W. Griffith's controversial film, *The Birth of a Nation*.²²⁷

Cannady consistently wrote about her lectures, teas, radio broadcasts, and other modes of outreach in the *Advocate*, which fueled charges by some Branch members that the editor was vainglorious and using "the columns of her newspaper to boost herself."²²⁸ She unabashedly used the *Advocate* to promote her speaking engagements and included countless articles that described her outreach to high school and college students as well as their reactions to her talks. But this was not uncommon in the black press.²²⁹ Cannady also reprinted letters from people who were grateful to receive books she had loaned them about Negro history, or from students who thanked her for helping with a research project. Many times, these items appeared on the dense front page of the *Advocate*, sandwiched between national news stories, advertisements, and society news about black Portlanders. The placement and frequency of the articles makes it easy to dismiss her work, as Branch board members did when they observed in 1928 that Cannady used the *Advocate* "for her own exploitation."²³⁰

But this meticulous documentation of her advocacy must be viewed as an integral, if complex, component of Cannady's efforts to promote racial uplift, an ideology that emphasized "self-help, racial solidarity, temperance, thrift, chastity, social purity, ... and the accumulation of wealth."²³¹ Like the journalist and civil rights advocate Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, who launched the black women's club movement in 1895, Cannady believed that Negro women had an obligation to "present a positive image of the race to the world."²³² Her status as an ambassador of goodwill fit squarely with this mandate, as did the subsequent publicity of her outreach in the *Advocate*. Cannady took her role seriously, noting that the "interpretation of [her] race to others" was at the forefront of her work "on the public platform and in pulpits."²³³ Saidie Orr Dunbar, a prominent white woman in Portland and friend of Cannady's, observed: "I can only say that more than any other one person in the great Northwest, Mrs. Cannady has interpreted the problems of her race, has consistently worked for justice and has maintained and upheld before her own people and others all the standards of relationships between the races."²³⁴ Robert Bagnall also acknowledged that Cannady had "acted as arbiter in differences between the races."²³⁵ Further, printed descriptions of the warm response white audiences accorded her and her message signaled that Cannady was in step with other "elite blacks [who] believed they were replacing the racist notion of fixed biological racial differences with an evolutionary view of cultural assimilation."²³⁶

Gaines notes that many of these leaders "sought status, moral authority, and recognition of their humanity by distinguishing themselves, as bourgeois agents of civilization, from the presumably undeveloped black majority."²³⁷ Articles about Wiley University can be seen as an example of this class distinction; Cannady was one of the few individuals, female or male, to earn a college degree in the early 1900s. One source notes that "at the time of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s, at best 10,000 American blacks—one in 1,000—were college educated."²³⁸ References to her alma mater reinforced the idea of elitism and added to the status and moral authority she needed to represent her community to white audiences. She willingly took on the role of spokeswoman, and the publicity she garnered in the white press enhanced her credibility and led to additional speaking engagements. But, as her reputation grew, so did the backlash from members of her own community who were jealous and resentful of the attention she was receiving from white Portlanders, black editors, and NAACP officials.



The chasm between Cannady and the black majority grew wider when she decided to challenge racial and gender norms and become a lawyer. Wiley President Matthew Dogan was not surprised by her announcement, however. "So you are going to practice law? Well, that is just like you," he wrote. "You are indeed a hustling young woman. I have been pleased to note from time to time just how you have done things out there in the West."²³⁹ Maud Cuney Hare also sent encouragement: "I hope you will be successful in your present ambition and be able before many years to put out a new sign of Attorney-at-Law!"²⁴⁰ Cannady made history in 1922 when she became the first black woman to graduate from Northwestern College of Law, which subsequently merged with Lewis & Clark College.²⁴¹ But her achievement was bittersweet. On Wednesday evening, May 24th, the college held its graduation ceremony just blocks away in the stately Multnomah Hotel. Candidates and their families, dressed in their finest, gathered in the hotel's "ballroom of palatial grandeur" for the awarding of degrees.²⁴² Among the proud class of twenty-two were Cannady and her brother, Almus.²⁴³ She had another reason to be happy that night: She was on the program to sing two solos, including *By the Waters of Minnetonka*, a composition "inspired by a Sioux Love Song" and published in about 1913.²⁴⁴ But when she was finished, the dean, John Hunt Hendrickson, "publicly insulted and humiliated" Cannady and her brother "by asking them and their invited guests" to leave."²⁴⁵ She later recalled in an interview, "Of course, I do not forget such experiences, and no one can fully appreciate the distress, unless he has suffered in the same way."²⁴⁶ This sort of discrimination may have inspired her to attend night school to earn her law degree; perhaps she thought she could effect reform and promote racial uplift by filing additional civil rights suits such as the one against the Portland Board of Education in 1916. She also may have felt she could fill the void created when attorney McCants Stewart left Portland for San Francisco in 1917. Or, maybe she was inspired by George W. Carry, a lawyer she met in Guthrie, Oklahoma, who helped clear a black man who had been denied his constitutional rights.²⁴⁷ Carry wrote her: "You have done exceedingly well in completing the course in law and I am sure you will enjoy the work. There is nothing, in my mind, so fascinating as the study of law, and when you get into the practice the real fascination begins."²⁴⁸

Cannady occasionally discussed her work with the NAACP's Robert Bagnall. "Had three cases ... this week," she wrote in 1926. "Tried two yesterday, winning both. One a very interesting case which I would like to detail to you when I have more time to write, other one I had postponed until next week."²⁴⁹ Articles also appeared in the *Advocate* from time to

time. Cannady apologized to her readers at the end of 1927 for omitting some “church notes and other important news,” but she had been unable to get everything typeset before heading south to Corvallis, where she had spent two days in court as associate defense counsel for Herman Trimble.²⁵⁰ Her “impassioned plea for the defendant” reportedly “had the whole jury” and much of the “packed” courtroom “in tears.” The jury of eleven men and one woman deliberated all night, according to Cannady, but failed to reach a verdict; the judge dismissed them the next morning and scheduled a new trial the following week.²⁵¹ Cannady again served as co-defense for Trimble, who stood charged with assault and battery. But this time, she announced that he had been found innocent. The article noted that she “was warmly congratulated by lawyers and laymen alike for the fine way in which she analyzed the evidence and presented her argument.”²⁵²

For a time, Cannady enjoyed her reputation as the first black female lawyer in Oregon. The *Oregon Daily Journal* printed a photograph of her in cap and gown along with a brief story headlined, “First Colored Woman Lawyer in Northwest.”²⁵³ And Lawrence Dinneen, editor of the *Mt. Scott Herald*—which soon would be acquired by the *Advocate*—sent a telegram congratulating her on the “unique distinction of becoming the first lawyer of [her] race in the northwest.”²⁵⁴ But Oregon State Bar records indicate that she failed the bar examination on five occasions between 1922 and 1930.²⁵⁵ She continued to practice, however, eventually prompting the OSB’s Board of Governors to discuss the fact that she had been “representing herself as an attorney at law” in criminal and probate proceedings. President Robert Maguire told the board he had written her late in 1935 “inquiring as to her rights to practice,” but had not received an answer. So the board voted to have Maguire send another letter informing her that until she was “regularly and properly admitted to the Bar of the State of Oregon, she must desist in further attempts to practice law” or face “criminal proceedings.”²⁵⁶ Cannady continues to be recognized as the first black woman to practice law in the state, in part because the label fits so well with her civil rights work. The honor, however, rightfully belongs to Mercedes Deiz, a New Yorker who was admitted to the bar in 1960.²⁵⁷



Cannady’s legal career did not go as she had hoped or planned, nor did her marriage to Edward. In 1930, two weeks shy of their eighteenth wedding anniversary, the couple divorced. The painful personal event was made public when Bonnie Bogle, editor-manager of the *Seattle Enterprise’s* “Portland News Section,” revealed details of the couple’s “family troubles.”²⁵⁸ Cannady wrote, “In view of the fact that Mrs. Bonnie Bogle ...

seems to be taking unusual interest in MR. CANNADY'S private affairs, which he has indicated to me over a period of years, and which had much to do with the course I pursued by resorting to the courts, I [am] publishing the decree ... so that she may know just what disposition has been made of our business." The lengthy document mandated monthly child support payments for George, seventeen, and Ivan, fourteen, and an additional sum toward the mortgage on the house in northeastern Portland. Decree No. N-9539 also ordered Edward to transfer ownership of several parcels of land to Beatrice, including a lot in Bayocean, a project in Tillamook County that once was touted as "queen of the Oregon resorts." And the document spelled out the disposition of the "office furniture, together with the printing outfit and utensils" associated with publishing the *Advocate*: All items became Beatrice's, as long as she continued to publish the newspaper. In the event that she discontinued it, Edward was granted "the right and option ... to take over said office fixtures and furniture and said printing establishment at one-half of the inventory price of the same" as agreed upon by the estranged couple. Finally, she was listed as the "sole owner" of two automobiles, a 1927 Buick sedan and a Star roadster.²⁵⁹ Cannady may have regretted later the rash decision to print the particulars; certainly it was uncharacteristic of the editor, who family say was very guarded about her private life.²⁶⁰ Yet the document provides insight into the lives of an upper-middle-class couple and illustrates that they were doing well financially, even if the *Advocate* was struggling to make ends meet.

One year later, Bogle contacted the Associated Negro Press with the news that Cannady had quietly married the *Advocate*'s linotype operator, Yancy Jerome Franklin, on July 18, 1931.²⁶¹ Cannady issued a reserved statement: "The couple are indebted to Mrs. Bonnie Bogle who so kindly sent the marriage announcement to the [ANP], although it was a little earlier than Mr. and Mrs. Franklin intended Formal announcements have just been issued."²⁶² Cannady noted that she and her new husband had received "numerous letters and telegrams of congratulations and best wishes from friends and acquaintances in various parts of the country" as a result of ANP's release.²⁶³ Still, she may have been concerned about impropriety: she had not been divorced very long, and Franklin was an employee.²⁶⁴ Beatrice also was nearly twenty years older than Yancy, who was barely five years older than his new stepson, George.

Franklin, who went by Yancy as well as Jerome, was born February 6, 1908, to Cora Yancy and Alfred Franklin, Jr., a soldier in the Spanish-American War.²⁶⁵ By 1920, the large family had moved from Washington to Portland; they purchased a home on East Davis Street and Alfred ran a cigar

A Force for Change



George Cannady, upper left, earned degrees from Willamette University and Howard University and practiced law in Los Angeles. He also played football in high school and college, and was known for his achievements on the field as well as in the classroom. Ivan Cannady, top right, earned a law degree from Lincoln University and had a successful real estate career in Los Angeles.

shop.²⁶⁶ Yancy began working for the *Advocate* as a linotype operator and office assistant in February 1928. The following year, the Reverend Daniel Hill wrote an article about printing, which he felt was a fine vocation for people seeking employment. He praised Franklin for “the meticulous care and healthy enthusiasm with which” he did his work.²⁶⁷ “His jobs show neatness, originality, artistic appreciation and pride of the native artisan,” he wrote.²⁶⁸ After their marriage, Franklin was listed as assistant manager and compositor.²⁶⁹ He also apparently flirted with the idea of a legal career: the *Advocate* reported he had enrolled in the school of law at La Salle Extension University in Chicago.²⁷⁰ Other notices in the *Advocate* describe the various social activities the couple engaged in, including dinner parties with friends and family, but their relationship was difficult due to societal norms regarding their age difference. The couple apparently divorced by 1936.²⁷¹

Edward Cannady died in Portland five years later, at the age of sixty-three.²⁷²



Beatrice’s son George remained a constant in her life, as well as a source of great pride, and the *Advocate* is filled with news of his accomplishments and activities. In June 1923, the ten-year-old won his fifth blue ribbon in as many years for the “most beautifully decorated bicycle” in the Grand Floral Parade, a much-anticipated aspect of the seventeenth annual Rose Festival. He competed against “eight other lads, all older and all of the opposite race,” but judges were impressed with the “flowing and fragile appearance of the slender cornucopia of mass roses [that was] attached to the back of the bicycle,” as well as the wheels, which “were rolling circles of red and pink roses, arranged in blending tone colors.” George told the *Morning Oregonian* that his mother deserved all the credit for the “masterpiece of floral decoration.”²⁷³ She reprinted the *Oregonian* article on the *Advocate*’s front page, along with a photograph that appeared in the *Oregon Daily Journal* and his invitation to attend an awards luncheon given by the Chamber of Commerce.²⁷⁴ His prize was a check for \$50—about \$625 today.²⁷⁵

George and Ivan spent many summers at Spirit Lake YMCA Camp, one of four popular lakefront sites demolished when Mount St. Helens erupted in 1980.²⁷⁶ They were the “only colored boys in the camp” for several years, yet Cannady often noted that “the spirit of goodwill and brotherly fellowship existing between [her sons] and the other eighty boys at camp [was] beautiful to behold.”²⁷⁷ Articles in the *Advocate* describe the fun and games Ivan and George enjoyed, from track meets to swimming contests

to participating in the camp choir. But Cannady clearly took pride in the older boy's accomplishments and listed them in the newspaper: George received the "camp award for general all-around excellency"; he set records in the one-hundred-yard dash and won a three-mile race; he was elected governor of the camp and prosecuting attorney for the "kangaroo court" — an incident that foreshadowed his future legal career.²⁷⁸ Cannady also printed a number of the letters he wrote her during his absence; they reveal the pitfalls of camp life — "the mosquitoes were BAD!" — as well as the pleasures: "Great trees of all kinds stood with their heads high in the air — thick moss covered the ground — small creeks crossed and recrossed the trail now and then — the birds were singing all the time — it was certainly awe-inspiring!"²⁷⁹ The correspondence also provides insight into their relationship. "Thanks for the box," he wrote, "it sure was timed right. ... With loads of love, George."²⁸⁰

In 1930, George's essay on the "Renunciation of Wars as an Instrument of National Policy" tied for fourth place in a contest sponsored by the American Friends Inter-Racial Peace Committee, an organization established by the Quakers whose executive secretary was Alice Dunbar-Nelson.²⁸¹ George, a senior at Grant High School, shared his prize with Ethel Payne, a freshman at Crane Junior College in Chicago.²⁸² He was in good company: Payne went on to have a very successful career in journalism as a political correspondent for the *Chicago Defender* and commentator on CBS radio in the 1970s, and was widely regarded "as the nation's pre-eminent black female journalist."²⁸³ First prize went to William Edward Harrison, a sophomore at Harvard University who became one of the editors of the *Boston Chronicle*, a black paper that vied with William Monroe Trotter's *Boston Guardian*.²⁸⁴

George amassed other honors before graduating in June 1931.²⁸⁵ He was elected treasurer of his senior class and was an award-winning football player and hurdler.²⁸⁶ In 1930, the *Portland News* reported that the "Negro halfback" had been awarded a "cup" by his coach for "maintaining the highest scholastic average."²⁸⁷ George also was one of only fifteen players to receive a varsity letter at the end of the season.²⁸⁸ He was an accomplished speaker, too, who gave many talks during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Cannady wrote that she used her sons as "'missionaries' to aid in bettering race relations" because they knew "more of the past and present history of the Negro than many leading Negro adults."²⁸⁹ In February 1929, the fifteen-year-old discussed "Some Famous Negro Characters" and "Abraham Lincoln and the Negro" at two white churches, probably in conjunction with the local celebration of Negro History Week.²⁹⁰ He talked about "Youth and Interracial Amity" at a dinner for two hundred people sponsored by

the Portland Bahá'í Assembly in November 1930. George told attendees that youth left to think for themselves “without contamination from outside influences” were “without race prejudice.”²⁹¹ The following fall, he talked about “the American Negro’s achievement in music, literature, art and science” with some white clubwomen near Salem.²⁹² And in 1933, he went to Corvallis to tell three hundred people about “achievements of the Negro race.”²⁹³

George enjoyed a stellar collegiate career at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon. Among other things, he was inducted into Pi Gamma Mu—an international honor society in social sciences whose members included Jane Addams and William T. Coleman, Jr., “author of the winning legal brief” in *Brown v. Board of Education*—and Blue Key National Honor Fraternity, which values “all-around leadership in student life, high scholastic achievement, service to others, citizenship, and an adherence to principles of faith.”²⁹⁴ He was president of the International Club for two years, treasurer of his class, and he lettered in football.²⁹⁵ One article in the *Willamette Collegian*, the school newspaper, noted that George was “the fastest man on the squad—in fact so fast that he has difficulty keeping behind his interference.”²⁹⁶ Cannady threw a “pretty seasonal party” for George and his teammates in 1932 after a game at Multnomah Civic Stadium between Willamette and Pacific University. Some of his Portland friends were invited; Ivan was there; George’s roommate, Wallace Turner, spent the weekend with the Cannadys; and a few people drove down from Seattle for the game. George may have been a bit embarrassed by the attention: the buffet table was decorated with trophies won by “the guest of honor” in high school and college and “brown paper football helmets were presented to each guest.”²⁹⁷

Two months after his graduation in June 1935 with a degree in political science, the *Oregonian* announced that George had been awarded a scholarship to pursue a law degree at Howard University, a historically black college founded in Washington, D.C., in 1867.²⁹⁸ He eventually ended up in Southern California, where he worked as an attorney.²⁹⁹ Not long after he celebrated his fifty-fifth birthday in 1968, he was murdered in his home; the crime remains unsolved.³⁰⁰ A Bahá'í and Christian memorial service was held for George Edward Cannady on Saturday, July 27th, at the Chapel of Remembrance in Los Angeles; he was interred at Valhalla Cemetery in North Hollywood.³⁰¹



Far less is known about his brother, Ivan Caldwell Cannady, who was born October 7, 1915. He was named after his godfather, Ivan Harold Browning,

a tenor who sang with the Harmony Kings, recorded with Eubie Blake, and performed on Broadway in *Shuffle Along*.³⁰²

Ivan graduated from Fernwood Grammar School in June 1928—the same school that made news when his brother was denied admission to a graduation party at a skating rink.³⁰³ Four years later, Ivan was one of 329 students to graduate from Grant High School.³⁰⁴ He and some friends were “entertained at an informal party” at home, where “dancing and games were the diversions.”³⁰⁵

Most articles in the *Advocate* were about Ivan accompanying his mother and brother on excursions: to Tacoma, Washington, so Cannady could address the Washington State Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs; to Salem, where his mother met with Governor Walter M. Pierce about “a very important matter.”³⁰⁶ But on one occasion, mother and son enjoyed a special evening together at the Municipal Auditorium, where Jascha Heifetz “charmed a capacity house” with a “delightful program” played on his new Guernerius violin.³⁰⁷

Like his brother, Ivan did some public speaking. When he was twelve, he accompanied Dr. Elbert Booker to First Christian Church. Booker discussed “the race question” and Ivan “exhibited large photographs of twelve internationally known Negroes and gave a brief biography of each.”³⁰⁸

Ivan went to the YMCA Camp on his own once George had “outgrown” it.³⁰⁹ *Advocate* notices rarely elaborated on his summer experiences, but in 1931 it was reported that Ivan had been elected the camp’s lieutenant governor.³¹⁰

He planned to attend Willamette University, but returned to Portland when he could not register for the journalism and commercial art courses he was interested in.³¹¹ Instead, he wrote a few articles for the *Advocate*, including a profile of Lee Roy Kinard, the new pastor of First AME Zion Church.³¹²

Ivan apparently returned to Willamette for his bachelor’s degree, and earned a law degree from Lincoln University in Oakland, California. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1943 to 1946, and then settled in Los Angeles, where he established a successful real estate career. He belonged to the Urban League and NAACP, and served on the Board of Directors of the California Association of Real Estate Brokers.³¹³

In 1982, Ivan returned to Portland to attend a dinner honoring twenty-one women—including his mother—who had been selected for inclusion in the booklet, *Notable Women in the History of Oregon*.³¹⁴ Cannady continued to generate publicity, even after her death in 1974: the event was covered in the *Los Angeles Sentinel* as well as the *Oregonian*.³¹⁵

Five years later, on December 14, 1987, Ivan Cannady died after an extended battle with cancer.³¹⁶ He was seventy-two.



In 1929, the Portland Council of Churches nominated Beatrice Cannady for the William E. Harmon Award for Distinguished Achievement Among Negroes in the field of race relations.³¹⁷ Among other things, the Harmon Foundation provided awards for “constructive achievements among Negroes” during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s.³¹⁸ Work in nine fields was recognized, including education, literature, music, and race relations. Cannady’s “splendid grasp of affairs in a wide range of fields, cultural and social, civic and racial, legal and religious, has been impressive,” wrote Executive Secretary E. C. Farnham in the nominating letter. “In addition, her activity as editor, public speaker and leader in civic and social affairs has been very definite and a direct contribution to racial understanding.”³¹⁹ But she faced stiff competition for the gold medal and \$1,000 honorarium: Dr. Robert R. Moton, president of Tuskegee Institute, NAACP co-founder Mary White Ovington, and journalist Delilah Beasley were among the twenty nominees.³²⁰

Cannady’s supporters included an eclectic group of individuals, white and black: professors, local ministers, Portland’s mayor, friends, and the president of the Oregon Prison Association. Some of the letters, handwritten and pages long, described the work she had done in the Northwest; others were typed and just a few paragraphs in length. All of them conveyed respect for Cannady’s tireless commitment to improving race relations locally and nationally. For example, Levi T. Pennington, president of Pacific College, wrote: “Mrs. Cannady is an outstanding citizen and leader of Portland, of Oregon, and in a still wider circle. In movements for civic, religious, social, industrial, or international betterment, she is a figure of consequence. To have a cultured, refined, highly educated, and thoroughly efficient woman of her race serving her city, state, and nation, and helping to build up better world relationships is in itself a thing that adds in the promotion of right feeling between the whites and the Negroes.”³²¹

Franklin T. Griffith, president of the Portland Electric Railway, Light & Power Co., noted: “Mrs. Cannady is an able and sincere woman and a leader among the people of her race. If anyone in Portland is entitled to the Harmon Award, I think Mrs. Cannady is that person.”³²² The pastor of Ellis Avenue Community Methodist Church observed, “In leading pulpits, on platform, in state and national conventions, this modest, unassuming, gifted lady is doing a constructive, outstanding service in race relations.”³²³ Mayor George L. Baker wrote, “I am glad of the opportunity to endorse the nomination of Mrs. Cannady. I am acquainted with her work over a period of years and keenly appreciate the fine spirit of fellowship and good-will existing between the negro and white races here, which I feel certain, to a

large degree, is due to her personal efforts.”³²⁴ And the pastor of the First AME Zion Church noted: “As I think of the people who have labored for better race relations in America, I can think of none who have wrought more nobly than Mrs. Cannady. While she has lived in Portland, and therefore her labors have been chiefly in the Pacific Northwest, yet she has made contacts and has influenced RACE RELATIONS in many sections of the United States.”³²⁵

Despite these letters of support, and a scrapbook of some two hundred pages filled with supporting evidence of Cannady’s work as an ambassador of race relations, Dr. Moton was awarded the medal and cash prize, worth about \$12,500 today.³²⁶ Cannady was undoubtedly disappointed; the honorarium would have helped considerably during the Depression. She also would have appreciated the national recognition of her eighteen-year career advocating equal rights and liberties. But she could not dwell on her disappointment for long. Five days after the *New York Times* reported Moton’s selection, the January 11, 1930, issue of the *Advocate* hit the streets with the news that several janitors at the American Bank Building on Southwest Morrison Street were being replaced by white workers.³²⁷ The little security that black Portlanders had quickly disappeared during the Great Depression, but Beatrice Morrow Cannady and the *Advocate* documented this fight—and many more—between 1912 and 1936.