BLACK CRAFTSMEN THROUGH HISTORY

by Robin Myers

published by

THE INSTITUTE OF THE JOINT APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

WORKERS DEFENSE LEAGUE / A. PHILIP RANDOLPH EDUCATIONAL FUND

1520 Bushwick Avenue Brooklyn, N.Y. 11207

John Henry told his old captain,
"A man ain't nothing but a man;
Before I'll let your steel gang down
I will die with the hammer in my hand, Oh Lord!
Die with the hammer in my hand."

It is somewhat ironic that the folk-hero of the struggle of man's skill against the power of the machine in the United States is a black worker. For those who do not know any of the many versions of the ballad of John Henry: when a steam drill was brought in, John Henry challenged it with his 12-pound hammer, and won, though the attempt killed him. In traditional craft fashion, his dying words were, "Son, be a steel drivin' man."

This publication was made possible by a grant from
The Ford Foundation

BLACK CRAFTSMEN THROUGH HISTORY

by Robin Myers

published by

THE INSTITUTE OF THE JOINT APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM
WORKERS DEFENSE LEAGUE / A. PHILIP RANDOLPH EDUCATIONAL FUND
1520 Bushwick Avenue Brooklyn, N.Y. 11207

Chapter One

ZAMANI

Societies and their Craftsman in Africa

Science distinguishes man from the mammals, his nearest kin in the depths of time across which we reach to seek the first man, as the "tool maker." It means not one who simply changes a natural object so that he can use it (elephants as well as chimpanzees do that) but one who shapes tools to a pattern. Man, by definition, is a craftsman.

It is probable, but not certain, that this first man lived and worked in East Africa. (It may be only that scholars have looked harder there.) Yet it is fair to say that just as when we find man, we find a craftsman, so when man appears, an African appears. African, craftsman — they come up through the years together, making history for all men.

It has been only within the last hundred years that the strange lie has gained credence that blacks were incapable of fine craftsmanship — that the splendid masks of West Africa and the noble ruins of Zimbabwe must be the work of alien hands; that Africans could not fashion the metal work required by modern engineering or cope with blueprints for a drainage system. It would be laughable if it had not meant tragic deprivation of livelihood for the descendants of African craftsmen. The lie has now been nailed by apprentices who fought for and won the right to enter the skilled trades in the United States.

Leave the primitive tool maker shrouded in the mystery of prehistory. African or not, he was the forerunner of all workers, all skill, all knowledge. Among his successors are African workers whose handiwork survives, though sometimes in ruins, and whose lineal descendants on both sides of the Atlantic are workers today.

Crafts Then and Now

What are the trades of these craftsmen in centuries before the Americas were known to the Eastern Hemisphere? The basic crafts have changed less than one might think over thousands of years. Printing is new, as a trade, and one need

not stop to look for the scribes who invented and developed writing, and many other things. Branches of the needle trades are highly skilled crafts, but they do not fall within the apprenticeship system now, so they will come to notice only occasionally. Pottery, once all important, is now either manufacturing or art. Transportation is a creation of the industrial revolution, but there were certainly road builders and boat builders and chariot makers in the long past.

There remain all the builders, essential then as now. As soon as man settles down from a gathering and hunting life, building starts, and man's society is often judged by the ruins it leaves. Bricklayers, carpenters, metal workers — metal transforms society and to watch civilizations grow is to follow the Iron Age marching across Africa. Plumbers and pipe fitters, even operating engineers? Who else built irrigation works that conquered the food problem, thus allowing time and energy for other crafts to develop, and so, great kingdoms to emerge? Who devised, occasionally, plumbing that was not bettered until the twentieth century? Who were the finishers and the carvers and the painters in whose hands construction approached art? Past and present, too, merge in their handiwork.

Of the two earliest major civilizations that we know, one was in Africa, the other nearby in Asia Minor (which is geologically and geographically more African than Asian, despite the arbitrary division of the continents). Peoples and cultures intermingle continuously, so Asia Minor will recur even in this brief history. But African Egypt is its true beginning.

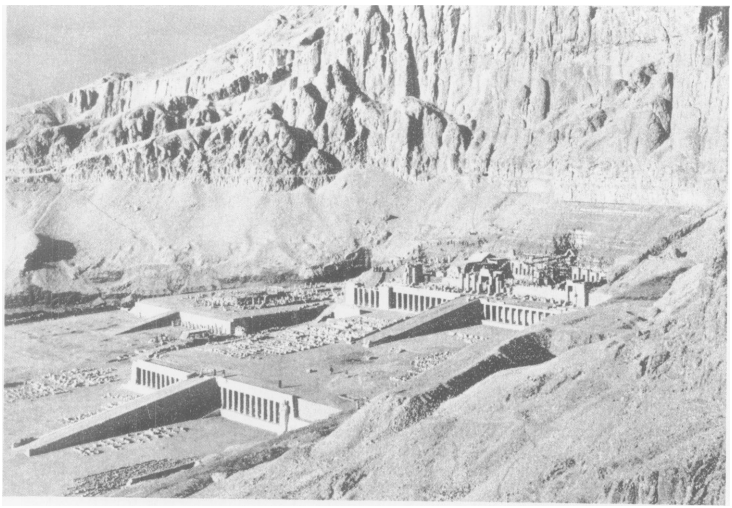
The Black Land [1]

Egypt! Three thousand years of glory! Who could consider Africa without her — or, indeed, her without Africa. She was African in origin, in nourishment, and in heart, despite influence from Mesopotamia. Aside from great imperial moments when some Pharaohs conquered far abroad, Egyptian thinking always turned inward, up the Nile into Africa rather than down into the sea.

Egypt spelled grandeur even through centuries when her history was lost, because her monuments remained. Pyramids (Giza is some forty stories high), sphinxes, temples, statues — massive marbles and granites that have come down unmatched through changing civilizations. Engineering triumphs that took hundreds of thousands of workers and lifetimes of effort. Irrigation that tamed the mighty Nile and made possible the food surplus that supported all the other artistic, political, and social developments.

It was all African, no matter what kind of classification one gives to different peoples: Nilotic, Sudanese, Bantu. And they mingled. (The only generalization

[1] So called by its people in tribute to the richness of the soil after flood.



The Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el Bahari.

one can make about "race" in Africa is, the further south, the darker, and even that has exceptions.) The first man whose remains seem to fit the modern characterization "Negro" appeared near Khartoum around 10,000 years ago, and about the same time in the Western Sudan. About a thousand years ago the group called Bantu from their language moved out from the Sudan, multiplied and peopled all of Africa to the south, assimilating, replacing, or decimating the original people who were few in number.

People will describe Egypt as not a black civilization, and it wasn't; it was African. Let them, and move up the Nile. But pause on the way to admire the magnificent temple of the Queen-Pharaoh Hatshepsut at Deir el Bahari, built around 1500 B.C. Her architect was reported to be a man of Cush.

Nubia, between the first and third cataracts [2] on the Nile, was an extraordinarily productive area for gold, and there the first African miners may have worked (mines were worked in some other areas of the continent at an early date, and gold was panned in water, but most likely much later than this).[3] Some

[2] The cataracts interrupted free navigation of the river, and so protected the people who lived above them.
[3] The Carthaginians (Carthage was where Tunis is now) traded down the west coast of Africa; no one knows how far, for they kept trading secrets carefully. But the Greek historian Herodotus reported their silent barter technique for gold just as Arab historians reported it later of the western Sudan empires.

of them probably went on to become metal workers, fashioning the weapons and jewelry and decorative-highlights that were found in tombs and can be admired in museums today.

A Thousand Years of Cush

Below Nubia, between the third and fourth cataracts, lay the land of Cush where an indigenous civilization (much influenced by its northern neighbor, of course) developed in a number of towns, with its capital first at Napata and later, further south at Meroe. (By the time it had moved to Meroe, it had become a distinctly black society.) Cush is generally known for a brief conquest of a declining Egypt in the eighth century B.C. but that is not its real importance. Cush is first heard of in 1970 B.C. and was a power from the beginning of the first millennium,[4] about 1000 B.C., to about the fourth century A.D., well over a thousand years. Few world powers have endured so long. Its strength, skills, and culture, which had been moving steadily south all the time, were taken over by Axum, forerunner of the Ethiopian kingdom which exists today.

Cush possessed two vital resources which Egypt lacked — iron ore and fuel (wood). Probably the Cushites learned ironworking from the Assyrians who conquered lower Egypt. The land south of the Nile cataracts was never conquered from abroad, while from the ninth century through the rest of her history Egypt fell from one alien hand to another. It has been said that the real Egypt moved south.

Too little is known about the thousand years of Cush. There are great ruins there, especially at Meroe (where the slag heaps caused one scholar to call it the Pittsburgh of Africa). Many souvenir hunters have gone through, robbing, but few archeologists.[5] In the beginning the ancient Egyptian language was used, but Meroe developed its own script. Although recent efforts at decipherment have had some success, the records are not yet available. So what is known of Cush comes from Egyptian records, or is read from the ruins, or is the parallel of any expanding empire. With the iron plow and the iron spear Cush improved its agriculture and its standard of living; kept outsiders at bay and extended its

[4] A millennium is a thousand years, as a century is a hundred.
[5] Sudan, now she is an independent nation, would like to preserve and explore this heritage, but she lacks the funds to do so; and world interest and resources have always concentrated on Egypt.

The Pyramids of Meroe.

rule to an increasingly wide area; built great cities and temples whose ruins can be seen; traded very widely (its heyday was that of Alexander's empire, and its trade with the Red Sea, Arabia, the East, and India, was considerable). Axum, nearer the coast, took over the Cushite trading routes and cut deeply into its wealth before attacking and defeating the kingdom around 400 A.D.

In all of this, black craftsmen were the builders. In at least one sense, craft guilds began to develop. The ironworking technique, however acquired from the eastern invaders of Egypt, was a secret, perhaps a state secret. (It could easily have seemed that survival of the kingdom depended on the smiths when the contrasts were at hand: imperial Egypt conquered by iron weapons when she had none; and Cush herself conquering neighbors who used only wood and stone.) Ironworking was closely associated with the priesthood and with the kingship, which was divine on the Egyptian pattern; thus the religious and the secular sources of power were united in the same hands. The association of rank with the blacksmith, and the limitation on the number who could practice the art, is found later in West Africa, and may have been continent wide.[6]

The Iron Age in Africa

The iron age has no specific date, but varies from place to place, roughly progressing, in Africa, from north to south and from east to west. The phrase "iron age" indicates how revolutionary a change in society came with iron working. Great civilizations had grown up using other metals, gold and silver, copper and bronze (and also, stone and wood) while iron was not available. But iron is so much stronger that, once it had appeared, a society possessing it was secure from or superior to its less fortunate neighbors. (One of the advantages middle- and upper-Nile soldiers had (in the A.D. era) was armour; perhaps it first came from Asia, but native metal workers surely learned the craft.) Iron could farm better and build better. The development of cities was encouraged by the growth of food and wealth; they were easier to build and better built with iron. Iron did start a new age wherever it appeared.

There is a theory, not yet proven, that the defeat of Cush by Axum meant the beginning of the whole series of African kingdoms that extended across the broad savannah belt. (This runs below the desert and above the tropical rain forest across the continent.) It is said that the ruling Cush family escaped west to Kordofan and Darfur in the hills. There brickwork and pottery of Cushite

[6] It is certain that iron workers, the blacksmith clan, were always a separate people, but this cut both ways. In the beginning, all smiths were important, even exalted. As centuries of the iron age went by in East Africa, they sometimes became a depressed instead of a superior caste. Such smith clans are found attached to the Masai, the Somali, and the Ethiopian Watta. The superior tribesmen would not inter-marry with the smiths, or enter smithys, and there were varying degrees of contamination by touch. The smiths had slightly different dialects, including alien words for work-related nouns: iron, knife, spear, ax.

design can be found, and camels are still branded with marks derived from royal property markers in ancient Cush. Yet this influence could have come as easily by trade as by the arrival of royalty, and probably did since the same story comes up from the south.

These hills are some 600 semidesert miles from the Nile, about midway across Africa to the Niger. Egyptians may have reached them as early as 2400 B.C. Ruins are left from several centuries at least, and many cultures. One of the largest of the lost cities of Africa is in these hills, Jebel Uri. The dry stone work technique (bricks without mortar) which was first used on the Nile is repeated here, and down throughout east Africa. Highways, stairways, palaces, temples, and homes, testify that, whoever lived here, they were African builders.

Half Across Africa

The caravan trails from the west to both Egypt and the Indian Ocean branched off in Darfur. Their next stop on the road west was at Lake Chad, and with the Lake one reaches the border of modern Nigeria. Somewhere around 1000 A.D. a little known people, the Sao, arrived there; that is only 600 years after Axum conquered Cush and 200 years after Arabs recorded an already centralized state in Ghana, to the west. Civilizations seem to cross there, but it is never their core. When the Sao disappear there is a long gap before the state of Kanem arises (or it may be only a gap in our knowledge).

The Sao were metal-working people. Whether or not they had an organized state, they built towns. They worked in copper and in bronze, and they had blacksmiths who worked iron. (And they left behind a wide variety of pottery and clay sculpture that calls to mind the Nok people whose work has been found in that area.)

Their bronzes, like all later African bronzes, were cast by the lost wax method. The sculptor first models in wax what he wants to reproduce in metal, molding the wax over a hard core, most likely mud. When the wax is set, it is coated first by fine pottery clay, then with coarser clay, leaving spaces for the wax to run out. Great skill is required in pouring the molten metal into the cast so that the wax can escape while the metal goes in, and yet air bubbles are avoided. Later such craftsmen were organized into guilds (and perhaps here also, but knowledge is lacking) or the art was reserved to nobility, royalty, or priesthood.

The question may arise, here or elsewhere, as to what distinguishes craftmanship from art. Some West African bronzes are among the finest art of any time or place. Certainly in both wood work and metal work craft and art merge. Sometimes the work of the individual artist is clear, and is clearly art. Sometimes

a hundred craftsmen may have labored on a temple which, as a whole, is just as clearly an artistic masterpiece. Is the artist then the architect, the craftsman, the group? As a rule of thumb, if the same kind of work is done by groups of people, it is for our purposes a craft or trade.

South from Axum

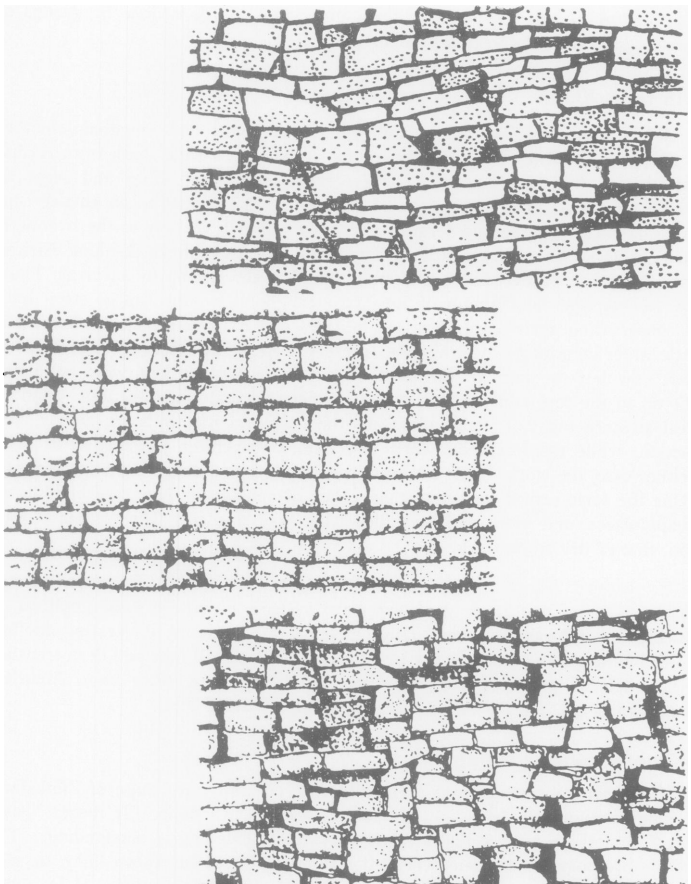
Before following the bronze trail west to the Niger area kingdoms, another line of advance — for iron, for Africans, for craftsmen — leads south from Axum. First, Axum itself: passing over, as repetitious, populated cities and seaports, splendid temples, and all the works of craftsmenship essential to an empire continuous (though isolated and forgotten) from the fourth century to the twentieth, Axum displays two very practical achievements that carry down the East African coast. From the borderline of art, craft shifts to the means of survival. These achievements are the building of fortified strongholds on the top of steep hills, and conservation agriculture: terraced hillsides and irrigation channels that made a little water go a long way, while they preserved sparse soil from erosion. Nothing is left now but the lines of the sustaining walls, yet mountains were cultivated right up to the top, and the restoration of ancient works and practices would be a real advance today. In craft divisions, the forts and the walls are clearly construction, while the irrigation works are plumber-pipefitter jurisdiction as well. In either case, the works made civilizations possible by guaranteeing a food supply, just as the forts served to defend them. Part of defense strategy was building in difficult places, and more than unskilled labor was required. The technique was, again, that of dry stone work.

In western Kenya, and in both northern and southern Tanzania, enough remains to show that there were extensive systems of graded roads, cultivation terraces, and irrigation ditches.[7] Huge systems of earthwork, illustrating another type of building known-how, exist in Uganda. Fortified hill tops and deep trenches indicate defense purposes, although there may have been other uses. Trenches were at times cut into the solid rock to a depth of 7 to 15 feet.

Zimbabwe and its Neighbors

The most impressive ruins in East Africa, certainly, are those of Zimbabwe, the name nationalists have now given to southern Rhodesia. (It meant "royal village" and there were actually many Zimbabwes, but one is outstanding.) The earliest dwellings on the site where the ruins of Great Zimbabwe may be seen today may have been as long ago as the fifth or sixth centuries A.D. when Axum was replacing Cush; the last as late as the first half of the eighteenth

[7] Occasionally, in East Africa today people are found who still practice hill terracing.



Brickwork at Zimbabwe.

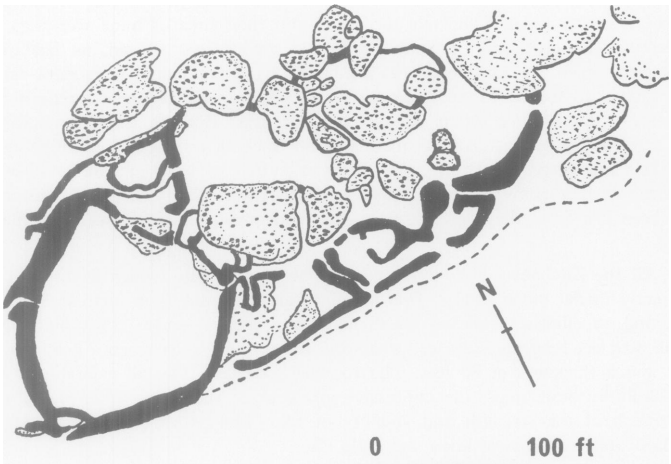
century; the great period was the several hundred years just before. In this area there are many miles of hillside terracing, and thousands of mine workings, all indicating the depth and breadth of an old civilization. Indeed, as has often happened, when the ruins of Great Zimbabwe were first noted in modern times, they were attributed to anything but Africans because of their strength and majesty — the land of Ophir was a favorite guess. But the technique was the dry stone work of East Africa; there was no trace of a recognizable influence or parallels elsewhere. Zimbabwe was finally admitted to be a genuine indigenous civilization. The ruins were prey to any curious traveler for many years, so much has been lost from the site. The first, and inadequate, official protection came in 1902.

All the Zimbabwe buildings are made of local granite, which flacks off conveniently in flat stone bricks. Two buildings are outstanding, a fortress on a hill top, and an elliptical building which may have been a temple. That building is some 300 feet long and 220 feet wide, and its girdling walls reach a height of 30 feet and a thickness of 20 feet. The rounded gateways, the tall encircling walls, the skillfully built steps, the impressive grandeur of sheer size, reflecting power, tell much of the strength and stability of the society that built them and the skills of its workers; we know too little else.

Nearby the two major structures, walls enclose other buildings sizeable enough to have housed important people or offices. Artistic technique beyond craftmanship appears in tall soapstone birds and decorative trimmings. Ruins of smaller clay and stone settlements are not far away. Many evidences of the Indian Ocean coastal trade remain (it was with Asia, and as far as China); artisans and traders as well as farmers provided the economic base for the great kingdoms. There is plenty of evidence of mine working and its products, gold and copper mines as well as iron, but the exact relationships between the mines and the Great Zimbabwe as capital city are not known.

In an area covering 2,000 or 3,000 square miles of eastern Rhodesia and western Mozambique, lesser but still imposing ruins remain. There are, again, the terraced hillsides with traces of irrigation works as well. There are the hill-top forts, the remains of dwellings, and storage pits, and mining. The craftmanship of dry stone building as well as the terraces might be in the Sudan or in Ethiopia. Streams were tapped and water deflected by dams (also built of stone without mortar) was carried in carefully built trenches. Today one would call the builders engineers; then, they were at least craftsmen. Probably these ruins date from the several centuries before 1700 that were the high point at Zimbabwe.

While all this was going on inland (indeed, from many centuries B.C.) flourishing settlements and cities rose and endured along the eastern coast. They are skipped over in this brief study because, although the societies were basically



Plan of Zimbabwe Ruins.

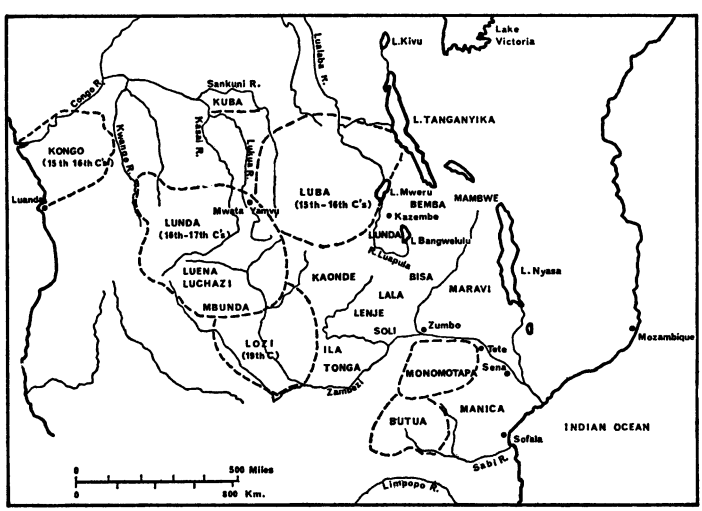
African, the populations were continually mixed. Techniques came from nearer and further Asia; goods moved in trade as far away as China; and of course crafts were present and their practitioners highly skilled: builders, metal workers, plumbers, engineers, and all the maritime crafts as well. But who they were, what they borrowed and what they devised themselves, what was permanent and what came and went with successive maritime empires, is too complex for this account. The African interior speaks more clearly and to the point.

The copper mines of Katanga in the Congo and of Zambia were developed by the end of the first millennium (1000 A.D.) and copper objects found in earlier sites may well have come from them also. It is difficult, too, to tell the source of gold that was certainly in use, and how much came from the same area. More important to the people then were salt deposits in Katanga whose control was contested as the mines were not. There was plenty of metal, of one kind or other, available. There was also a great deal of population movement early in the second millennium; it did not begin to stabilize until the sixteenth century. Then standardization appeared in metal work, particularly in iron. Bowstands, staffs, ceremonial iron stools, ceremonial gongs, battle axes, tongs, and spearheads were made by skilled smiths whose techniques probably originated in the Congo but were found in the area that is now Zambia as well.

Early South Africa

The history of South Africa can also, in a sense, be written in metal. The iron age came south with the Bantu migration, but the earlier peoples were already working in the softer metals. Of importance rivaling Zimbabwe is one South African site, Mapungubwe. Just south of the Limpopo river which divides Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) from South Africa, the ruins of Mapungubwe were found in the 1920's, late enough for their value to be recognized and the contents secured without the plundering that ruined Zimbabwe. Large quantities of worked gold were found in connection with 23 skeletons — royal burials, perhaps. Gold plate, some 12,000 gold beads, ornaments, little gold rhinoceroses; the goldsmiths had been busy. Less than 200 miles from Zimbabwe and of somewhat earlier date, there is still enough overlapping to indicate the existence of parallel and well-organized societies, regardless of what the political relationship between them may have been. Since the first publication of these remarkable finds, little has been reported from Mapungubwe. Much less information is available publicly than should be the case.

Later Iron Age Empires in South Central Africa.



Gold, copper, and tin were mined in the Transvaal from early in the second millennium, although it was perhaps 1600 A.D. before population (from the northern emigration) stabilized into permanent settlement. In the Orange Free State, where wood was lacking, the usual iron age huts were built with undressed stone instead of thatched roofs. In northern Natal, people were termed "prolific iron workers." The Lemba people, who live mainly with the Venda (emigrants by way of Rhodesia [Zimbabwe] in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries) in the middle Limpopo valley and in the Transvaal mountains, are an example of specialization. They were pottery makers and metal workers, traders and businessmen not only for the Venda but for other tribes. Probably, they handled the Transvaal copper and gold trade to the coast (the Indian Ocean) from an early date.

Sudanese Civilizations

Having traced the Iron Age down the east coast of Africa and found kingdoms with developed agricultural techniques, magnificent dry stone building, and unusual development in metals, it is time to return north to even greater middle and western kingdoms. Not all the way north, for the western Mediterranean coast, although the seat of advanced civilizations for thousands of years (second only to Egypt in antiquity), was much more subject than Egypt to the stimulus of culture and peoples from outside; like the east coast trading centers, its influence cannot be ignored, yet the core of black Africa lies south of the desert.

The great commercial kingdoms of central and west Africa are beginning to be well enough known so that one can make some assumptions about them, and concentrate on the craft guilds that were often part of their organized structure. Between the desert and the tropical forest a savannah (grass) belt runs right across Africa. There agriculture made possible the sustenance of highly organized, powerful, and culturally advanced societies. Whether the technique came from Cush or from the Mediterranean to the north, iron smelting had reached the savannah (also called the Sudan) in the last centuries B.C. By the time that Axum succeeded Cush, organized societies were developing in the west.

Ghana (some 500 miles northwest of its present namesake) was already a flourishing power when it is first mentioned by an Arab traveller in the eighth century. Islamic influence was, in later centuries, great, but metal-based kingdoms were there when the first Arabs visited. Ghana, then, may well owe something to Meroe by way of Sao; and more to the Nok culture.[8]

[8] The Nok culture dating to 200 B.C. and extending east of Lake Chad and west beyond the Niger bend was undoubtedly a forerunner. But it is known mainly because of superb terra cotta sculpture, and though crafts must have existed they can only be assumed, not detailed. From Nok in direct line came the wonderful terra cotta, wood, stone, and bronze carvings of the Yoruba with Ife as the center; and it was to Ife that Benin sent for a brass smith.

Just when possession of iron weapons and iron-stimulated agriculture enabled what was to become Ghana to assume leadership over peoples around her is not yet known. Indeed, even Ghana's great twin capital city is unknown although ruins that may be it have been excavated. By the middle of the first millennium, something was under way; by 800 it was organized; by 1000 it was a great empire situated north and northwest of the upper Niger river. Ghana, like later Sudanese empires, lay between the gold of the forest region and the salt of the desert and profited as middleman. Salt was so much needed that it was said to command its own weight in gold. Gold, of course, had been in demand since advanced peoples settled the Mediterranean coast; and so it was as a source of gold that Ghana and her successors stimulated the world's imagination and lust. It was the constant endeavor of the successive empires to control and incorporate the sources of both salt and gold.

Ghana's power would not have been possible without iron, even though it was gold that characterized the empire to the outside world. The Arab El Bekri's account in 1067 went far to create Ghana's reputation abroad for centuries: the king sits in a pavilion around which stand horses caparisoned in cloth of gold; ten pages hold shields and gold-mounted swords; princes have gold plaited into their hair; dogs that guard the gate have collars of silver and gold.

Not only the goldsmiths were busy. Ruins that may be one of the twin cities described as Ghana's capital (Kumbi Saleh) revealed numerous iron objects that were not so splendid, but perhaps more useful and more surely of home manufacture: lances, knives, arrowheads, nails, farming tools, scissors. The gold was bought in nuggets and dust and sent north in the same unfinished state. Later, when the king had control, and not merely access, it was said that he took the nuggets and wisely left the dust to the people. But smiths worked the metals, along with copper from the southern Sahara, for local use.

The walled cities described in Arab accounts were impressive, and the Kumbi Saleh excavation indicates a city of perhaps 30,000 people in the period of which El Behri wrote, 1000-1100 A.D. Comfortable buildings that may have been homes were found — one about 66 feet long and 42 feet wide, with seven rooms on two stories connected by a staircase; and there were mosques and larger buildings. Certainly the construction workers were active in the old kingdom, particularly the bricklayers.

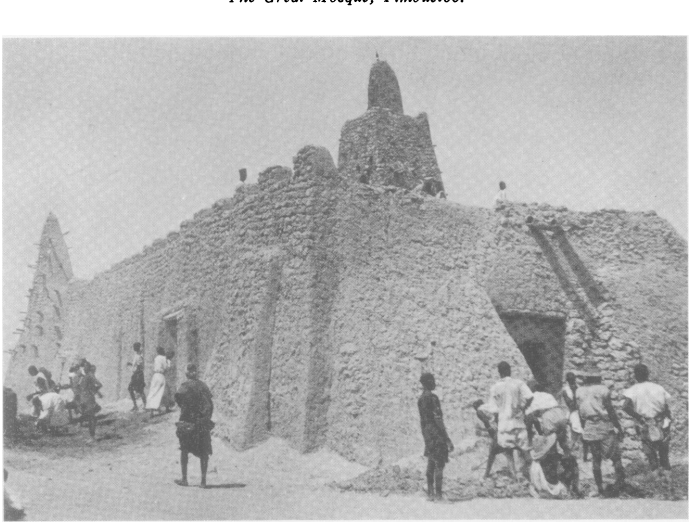
In Timbuctoo, there has been no physical protection for craft sanctions since the period of French colonial administration. Yet supernatural sanctions still guard the hereditary crafts. If anyone but an apprenticed Arma tries to sew leather slippers, it is believed that the needle will turn against him and prick his hand. If a person not from a family of masons tries to build a house, he will fall

to his death. Crafts are highly subdivided, with different smiths specializing in work with different metals, for instance.

A brief account of the old kingdoms like this sounds rather as if Mali mechanically succeeded Ghana, Songhai replaced Mali, the Hausa states united into Kebbi, and a little further east, Kanem gave way to Bornu. Of course the actual history was much more complex. But the kingdoms were much alike in their practical use of iron; their agricultural base; their trade north across the desert with the Islamic Mediterranean powers and south with the forest people; their ostentatious gold and their great cities, caravans, and armies. At least as far west as Kebbi, the dry stone technique of the east and south reappears. Traders before all, they were subject to influences and even migrations from the Mediterranean and Asian worlds but there was never any doubt of their African character. Occasionally cities were conquered by raids from the desert and once, armies from the north, but whatever conquerors came in were absorbed into the population.

Conversion to Islam started with the merchants, won over the kings, spurred intellectual development, and vastly strengthened the empires. Islam gave them a literate civil service and a bond of unity wider than kinship groups. The

The Great Mosque, Timbuctoo.



journey of Kankan Musa, Mali's ruler, to Cairo in 1324 on his way to Mecca brought so much gold there that it is said to have damaged the Egyptian economy. Musa brought back teachers and architects, and his capital Timbuctoo grew to be among the greatest of medieval cities, with high walls and imposing buildings of burnt brick. For where civilization flourished, craftsmen were the essential underpinning.

Further down the west side of Africa more information is available about crafts in precolonial Africa in locations where practices persisted until they were reported by Europeans, and indeed some persist today. Here and beyond lay the forest kingdoms in the heart of the tropics. Although these situations were isolated, there are enough other indications to justify taking them as typical, rather than unique.

The Craft Guilds of Benin

Benin is near the Atlantic coast in modern Nigeria. It was just out of range of conquest by the Sudan kingdoms and developed independently as a kind of city-state whose tributaries were the peoples of the Niger delta. When the Portuguese first visited here in the fifteenth century, they found Benin guarded by a moat, rather than by the typical high walls, and its buildings were made of mud (perhaps the cement workers and plasterers may be interested). The main trade commodity was pepper, and the term "Grain Coast" referred to grains of pepper. Bini traditions say that they came from Egypt, and date their first kingdom to around 900 A.D.

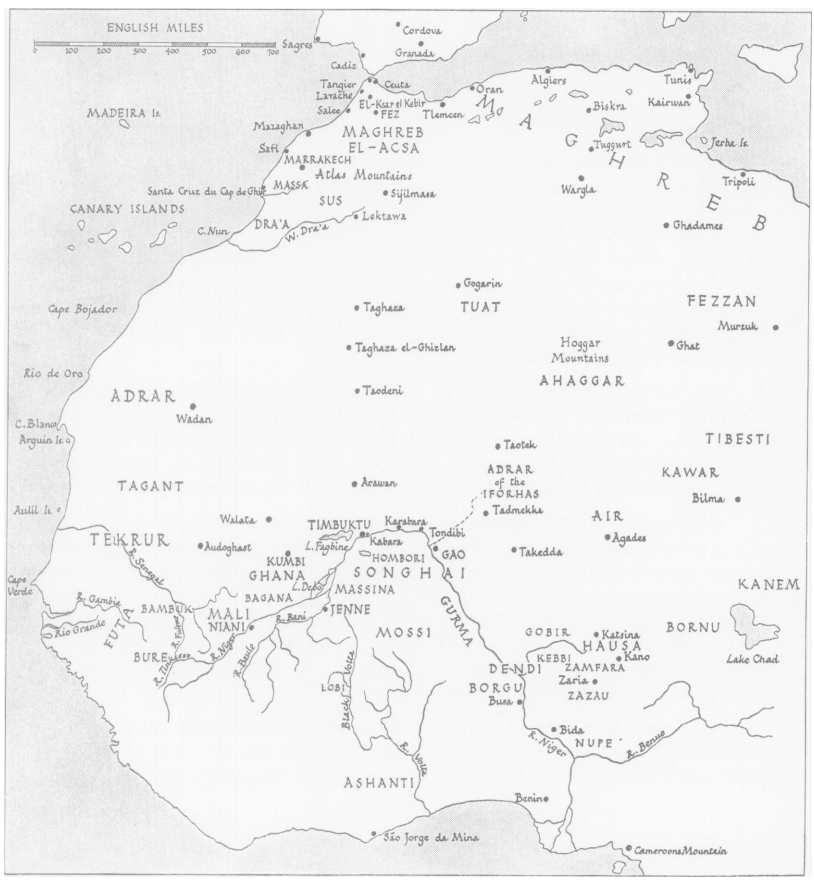
The craft tradition is nearly as old as the kingdom, for the introduction of crafts is attributed to Ere, the son of Igedo the first Ogiro (later rulers were called Oba) at a date "between 900 and 1200." Carpenters, carvers in wood and ivory, traditional royal objects such as throne, stool, and furniture, and also the more common plates, tools, and domestic articles, all were attributed to him.

A firmer date, 1280, is given as that when the current Oba sent to the Oni of Ife to ask for a brass smith. Iguegha, who was sent, left so many designs and was so generous in teaching (ie, he probably started a guild) that he is said to be worshipped by brass smiths to this day. In modern times, Eweka II, 1914-1933, was an expert carver in ivory and wood and a clever brass smith. Particularly smiths, but also other crafts, were from the beginning closely associated with the religion and government of the city. Leading members of these guilds were part of the government structure.

Benin was divided into halves by a broad street. On one side was the court, on the other, the town. The town was divided by crafts into 40 wards. Each ward guild was affiliated to a parallel palace association on the other side of town, but

some of the more important guilds had direct access to the Oba as well. Tradesmen whose work was connected with ceremony, such as brass smiths and ivory carvers, did all their work for the palace and others who needed their products had to go through the palace to buy; certain village chiefs who needed ceremonial ivory were privileged to deal direct.

North and West Africa



A few guilds were housed outside the city; potters, for instance, lived in two villages. Carpenters who produced mortars, door frames, roofing beams, and drum parts for the Oba's court were located in a number of scattered villages outside the city, but remained under the direction of a city functionary. He summoned them when work was required. They were sent to any village where suitable timber was available, and the village was responsible for feeding and housing them until the project was accomplished. In other cases, where earnings of guild members were inadequate, they were assigned farms in the villages worked by dependants. Iron smiths were once centralized into one ward, but they were so much needed that later it became customary for most villages to have one smith of their own, though he came originally from the ward.

A list of recognized guilds in the governmental structure included:

the royal physician and diviners
worshippers and recorders of departed Obas
sanctifiers of the royal homes
brass smiths
carvers and carpenters
bards
commissioners and land constables
eben (Oba undertaker)
executioners
drummers
fife players
fan and leather box makers
royal carriers
bearers of sacrificial victims

Society was thus organized by economic function, and the mingling of the sacred with the secular is noticeable. This relationship was closest with the brass or bronze smiths. A royally sponsored art was based on altarpiece heads of cast bronze. Each head had a place in the cap of the skull into which a carved elephant tusk could be inserted. The tusk swept back and up from the head. An altar might have more than a dozen such pieces, magnificently wrought and carefully preserved.

As part of a ritual for a deceased Oba and also of the ceremonial installation of his successor, bronze heads and other figures were cast on a piece of ground used for no other purpose. The new Oba himself poured the first crucible of molten bronze, and other senior chiefs followed. The smiths were rewarded on this occasion with generous gifts.

The Blacksmith King of the Congo

Tradition regarded royalty in the Congo (with a vague legend of foreign origin) as the founder of the society, and a very important part of his attributes was as the inventor (perhaps the bringer from abroad) of the art of the smith. He was the blacksmith king of his people who provided them with both the tools of agriculture and the weapons of defense.

There is no doubt that at one point the king was the practicing blacksmith of the community, perhaps the only one, and that later the privileged profession was confined to the royal family and a related aristocracy. Even into the eighteenth century, it was the profession of only a small caste. Iron was produced only in the capital under the direction and control of the king, and religious rituals were observed at the forge. A similar tradition, and perhaps a related one, was found in Angola.

Throughout the area of the Lunda and related peoples (Zambia, Angola, and the Congo area near them), there was a tradition of good blacksmith work always connected with particular people: ie the Chokwe are famous for smiths; the iron they worked came mostly from surface deposits of red laterite for there were no iron mines. Each village had its own smithy which might be used by all the men, but with permission of the headman who officially owned it. Blacksmith guilds were common but detail scant. A little exists concerning those of the Angolan blacksmiths. Smithing was an important, even sacred profession, which often but not always descended by inheritance. A boy might be apprenticed to a member of the profession at the age of 18, and he would serve two years in this capacity. An important part of the agreement, and the ritual, was that the master workman would make tools, particularly a hammer, for the apprentice. During the initiation ceremony the apprentice would stand on a small anvil. Four chickens, two male and two female, and other animals were sacrificed and their blood was sprinkled on the new tools (the flesh was eaten by the villagers at a feast which followed). The apprentice was then asked to choose a professional name; he did so, and stepped down, qualified. As a smith, he wrought ax heads, hoe blades, tools for mat making, arrow heads, and knives.[9]

The story varies somewhat in other parts of a wide countryside, but its essentials repeat: a secret, often hereditary craft; religious rituals; community status; and often one group of smiths serving various peoples. Right up to the time of colonial rule, African metal workers were important in their community, essential to its wellbeing, and proud of their skill on which so much depended.

[9] For insight into similar apprenticeship, though in Guinea, see Camara Laye: **The African Child**, London, 1959, a paperback memoir written by an African blacksmith's son.

Chapter Two

CRAFTSMEN IN A SLAVE SYSTEM

The Africans who were transported to the Western Hemisphere as slaves from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, then, were people from widely varying cultures which included a tradition of craftsmanship dating back to the ancient world. Most of the slaves were shipped from the 3,000-mile stretch of Atlantic Ocean coastline that runs today from Senegal in the north to Angola in the south; and those who came finally to the United States were more from the northern than the southern area. Yet slaves came not so much from the coast as from the interior, not from a group selling its own but from war, including kidnapping, or trade. So most of Africa was touched by and represented in the slave trade. In any case, centuries of migration and trade had diffused and diversified African cultures. The heritage of Afro-Americans draws on every part of the continent.

Because this is a story of craftsmen, it is perhaps necessary, for balance, to recall that most Africans who were brought to the Western Hemisphere,[10] including the United States, came from a predominantly agricultural society to work in another predominantly agricultural society. This is not at all the same as saying that the transported Africans were — and remained — all unskilled workers, least of all that they had no capacity to function as skilled workers, a myth that still persists. Skilled craftsmen have always been a minority of the working population; they were a minority among the immigrants and a minority in the slave society.

The plantation economy of the South in which most slaves found themselves was by and large a self-sufficient one. Moreover, it was increasingly characterized, as a slave society would be, by a belief that labor itself was demeaning to free men, so that with the exception of a few seaport cities, skilled white labor tended to shun the area or not to develop in it.

[10] Although the western hemisphere outside the United States cannot be considered in any detail here, the example of Brazil is instructive. A Swedish engineer wrote in 1818, "The Captaincy of Minas Gerais seems to have been the last in which the usability of iron ore and the extraction of iron was learnt from African negro (sic) slaves." Slaves were found "working as carpenters, masons, pavers, printers, sign and ornamental painters, carriage and cabinet workers, fabricators of military ornaments, lamp-makers, silversmiths, jewellers and lithographers."

This self-sufficiency was all the more necessary since the slave society in the United States (roughly 1619 to 1865) preceded the full development of the industrial revolution; in addition, in the colonial period which covered the greater part of the era, any type of processing or early manufacturing was discouraged by the colonial powers. Thus the need for craftsmen was urgent. And in an economy based on slave labor as that in the southern states was, it was inevitable that all types of work from the crudest to the most highly skilled would be performed by slaves, and that a slave's value would vary in accordance with his skill.

Slavery's Help Wanted Ads

The best witness to the skill of slaves as craftsmen comes from the advertisements of slave sales and of slaves wanted for purchase. Such ads were prominent in colonial newspapers from the time they were first published. It was quite typical that the Fredericksburg *Virginia Herald* of February 5, 1799, should advertise for sale "a valuable negro[11] fellow" about 28 who knew something of carpentry and was an excellent sawyer; two valuable young men, one an excellent shoemaker and the other a nailor; and two excellent ship-carpenters who were either for sale or hire.[12] (Carpentry, which included everything from rough fencing to cabinet work, was often subclassified as plantation carpenter, joiner and carpenter, and so on.) In August and September, an obviously skilled craftsman who had served a long apprenticeship was described: "FOR SALE, a negro man, about 38 years of age, very healthy and strong; he has been principally since a boy engaged in hewing, sawing, planing and polishing furniture . . ." In December, ads appeared offering two millers and four coopers, all of whom were also good bakers; and two good blacksmiths with their tools, and a good hostler. Slave traders often advertised for mechanics of all kinds.

As for the proportion of slaves employed in such occupations, it might be fair to judge from an advertisement in the Washington, D. C. *National Intelligencer* of August 19, 1833: "NEGROES WANTED — A gentlemen from the South wishes to purchase 40 or 50 effective Slaves, of good character, for his own service, and among them it is desireable to have a blacksmith, carpenter, coachman, and a man cook . . ." An 1828 household with broader needs (possibly en route to Alabama to carve a new plantation out of wilderness) wanted a carpenter, a cooper, a bricklayer, a calker, a seamstress, a washer, and ironer, and a pleater. Coopers might be advertised for hire as specifically as "a tight cask cooper." There were plasterers and masons as well as bricklayers, and

[11] Chapters two and three follow whatever nomenclature the appropriate sources use; Negro, colored, black, etc. Quoted material, of course, follows the capitalization of the original. For instance, freed slaves were almost invariably called free men (women) of color; fms, fwc.

[12] "Hiring out," a procedure by which slaves were contracted out to work for others (and, more rarely, were allowed to find work for themselves) for maintenance and a daily, weekly, or even annual wage paid to their owners, frequently involved craftsmen and made them an especially valuable investment to owner-contractors.

trimmers and grainers as well as painters; butchers, meat cooks, and confectioners and not merely cooks; boot as well as shoemakers.

Unusual occupations most often turned up at sales of estates and the like. In the *Charleston Courier* of December 5, 1859, Nick, "a first-rate silversmith and good jeweler" was sold at auction by the Wilburs as part of a sheriff's sale of the property of a King Street jeweler. A first-rate engineer and mill-

New Orleans* Picayune, *January 4, 1860.

NEGROES.

Sale of Negroes.

On the 1st of October next my house will be opened and a large supply of all classes of Negroes offered for sale, imported from Virginia, Maryland and Georgia. Afterwards, during the whole season, the supply shall be kept good by the receipt of large lots of the choicest Negroes to be had from the above States. Apply at 54 Baronne street, between Common and Gravier, and two squares west of the St. Charles Hotel. [o6 59—9m¶] WALTER L. CAMPBELL.

Just Received.

Forty very likely young NEGROES, consisting of Field Hands, Mechanics, Seamstresses, House Servants, &c., and for sale, for cash or good city paper. Apply to C. F. HATCHER, o19—tf 156 Gravier street, New Orleans.

Negroes for Sale.

Having removed from Esplanade to the corner of Baronne and Gravier streets, two squares west of the St. Charles Hotel, where I will keep constantly on hand a choice lot of Maryland and Virginia Negroes, consisting of Field Hands, House Servants, Mechanics, Cooks, Washers and Ironers, Seamstresses, &c.; all of which will be sold low for cash, or on time for good city acceptances.

[illegible] J. M. WILSON.

Carolina and Virginia Negroes for Sale.

I have received Fifty Carolina and Virginia Negroes, consisting of Field Hands, Cooks, Washers and Ironers; also, two No. 1 Blacksmiths one No. 1 Bricklayer, five good Carpenters, and one good Cooper. Will be receiving fresh gangs every month during the season, which I will sell low for cash, or good 12 months' city acceptances. Persons wishing to purchase would do well to give me a call before purchasing elsewhere. Apply to

R. F. PETERSON, 15 Perdido street,
o24—6m¶ between St. Charles and Carondelet.

C. F. Hatcher,

No. 156 Gravier street, New Orleans, La.—Liberal Advances made on Property placed in my hands for Sale—Slaves—Texas, Mississippi and Louisiana Lands Bought and Sold.

C. M. JOHNSON, Superintendent Slave Depot.

NOTICE TO MERCHANTS, PLANTERS, TRADERS and Owners of Slaves—Having made extensive alterations and accommodations on my old stand, I am now prepared to receive and accommodate from two to three hundred slaves, for sale on commission. I can also accommodate the owners with good board and comfortable rooms, on reasonable terms. Those having business in my line would do well to call and see for themselves before looking elsewhere, as the inducements I offer are unequaled. A good stock of Negroes for sale will be constantly kept on hand, consisting of Field Hands, Mechanics, House Servants, Seamstresses, Nurses, Hair Dressers, &c. C. F. HATCHER.

New Orleans, September 26, 1859. s28 59—1y

[illegible] right wrist, which produced a little stiffness in the little finger of the same hand; color black; full beard.

The owner is hereby notified to come forward, prove property, pay charges and take him away, or he will be dealt with as the law directs.

W. R. HARDAWAY, Sheriff.
Eutaw, July 1, 1859. [illegible]

For Sale.

Just arrived, with a choice lot of VIRGINIA and CAROLINA NEGROES, consisting of Plantation hands, Blacksmiths, Carpenters, Cooks, Washers, Ironers and Seamstresses, and will be receiving fresh supplies during the season, which I offer for sale, for cash or approved paper.

JOHN B. SMITH,
At the old store, cor. Esplanade and Chartres sts.,
[illegible] New Orleans La.

Negroes for Sale.

Just arrived, with 140 Negroes, from Virginia, consisting of Field Hands, House Servants, and Mechanics, and will be receiving fresh lots every month. All of which are offered on accommodating terms at my old stand, corner of Esplanade and Chartres streets, near the Mint. Omnibuses running on Royal and Chartres streets all pass my house.

[illegible] JOSEPH BRUIN.

Slaves for Sale.

I have received near one hundred Negroes on consignment of all classes—several likely families which I wish to sell cheap for cash, or its equivalent. In addition to the above I have since received fifty more Negroes—two of which are first rate Blacksmiths. C. M. RUTHERFORD,
o4—3m No. 68 Baronne street.

Slaves for Sale.

Having permanently established myself in this city, I shall keep constantly on hand a full supply of Negroes, selected for this market, comprising Mechanics and House Servants of every description, and choice Field Hands. My stock already purchased is large, and will be added to as required during the season. Will be sold low for cash or approved city acceptances. A. WIESEMANN,
[illegible] 177 Gravier street.

WEBSTER & HOLMES,

Wholesale and Retail Druggists,

wright, with his wife, were for sale; two saddlers and harnessmakers, three firemen; a mulatto who was a "good gas-fitter by trade;" another who had "superintended a grist and saw mill." The incredible value system of slavery was revealed in the Augusta (Georgia) *Constitutionalist* January 7, 1860, account of a sale to be held in Macon County, January 8, of about 100 "young and likely" Negroes . . . "amongst the number, four good carpenters, two plantation blacksmiths, a superior pressman — having had several years' experience in printing offices in Macon — and a first-rate ostler . . . Also, a fine lot of mules and horses, together with 'Morgan Comet,' a superior young stallion from Vermont."

Slavery in the Cities

Black craftsmen were not only found on the self-sufficient plantations, as rare individuals, but in the cities and in specialized city trades (draymen), on the rivers and ocean (even as pilots) and in what industry there was. Industrial Richmond (Virginia) led in corporate ownership of slaves. Many of them were, of course, unskilled factory hands, but there were a proportion of skilled. More than 54 Richmond corporations owned 100 or more slaves, and the Virginia Central Railroad possessed 274. The Tredegar Iron Works were much cited to prove the adaptibility and usefulness of slaves to even heavy industry. They performed skilled work such as puddling, heating, and rolling, as well as unskilled tasks. Less often it was pointed out, in defense of slavery, that the experiment of using slaves at the iron works had begun when the free white workers had gone on strike; slavery was viewed as a superior method of labor control.[13]

In that same Richmond, an advertisement for slaves in the *Enquirer,* January 3, 1833, asked for "four or five boys as apprentices to learn the blacksmith business."

"From the nature of our society," according to the Charleston City Council, "menial occupations are necessarily confined to coloured persons." Thus slave painters, plasterers, carpenters,[14] and coopers were common; typesetters and bookkeepers were not unknown. In 1818, a Charleston law provided tickets for identification purposes for slaves "hiring out" in three categories: 1) every handicraft tradesman; 2) every carter, drayman, porter, or day labourer; and 3) every fisherman or fisherwoman." Fees for the tickets (some cities required badges), which the masters had to buy, varied according to the skill of the worker — ie the return which could be expected from his labor. In Charleston

[13] Around the middle of the century and just prior to the Civil War, the factory system was new and the influx of foreigners rather frightening; the extension of slavery (including to white workers) was considered by some a serious possibility. Lincoln was among those disturbed by the threat.

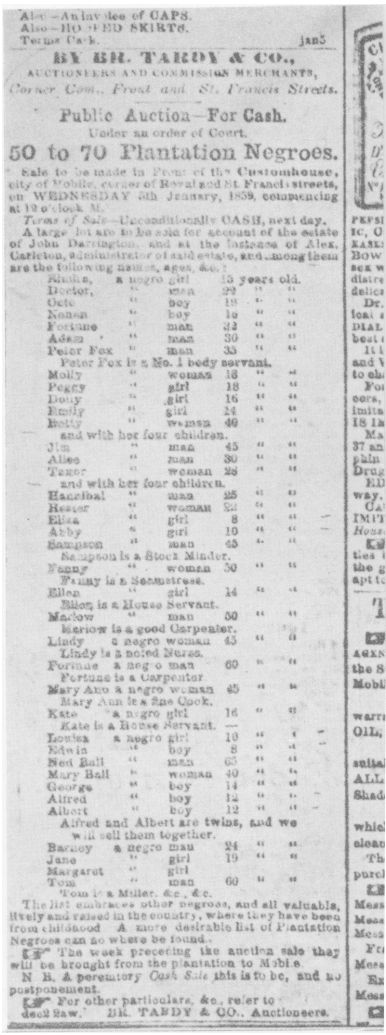
[14] It is not without interest that Denmark Vesey was a highly regarded carpenter, the only free man in the 1822 conspiracy, and that his slave associates included a ship carpenter and other skilled workers.

the range was from $7 for the craftsmen down to $2. In Savannah masters had to pay $10 for any slave to "exercise the trade of cabinet maker, house or ship carpenter, caulker, bricklayer, blacksmith, tailor, barber, baker, or butcher;" less for other trades. There were never many of them. In Savannah in 1848, out of a total slave population of 5,686, the large majority were women and employed as domestics; several hundred men were in manufacturing, commerce, and transportation; 83 were skilled workers.

Slave Wages and White Opposition

Whenever statistics are available, they reveal a wide spread in wages between hired slave and free white. For example, in New Orleans around 1840, the city paid white carpenters from $1.20 to $3 a day, but the top for blacks was $1. This naturally imperiled the jobs and wages of the white workers, and white mechanics often tried to get city and state legislation to stop the competition. Despite the evidence above of trades practiced, and even licensed, Charleston's ordinances as early as 1806 prohibited teaching slaves "in any mechanic or handicraft trade," although the vagueness made circumvention easier. Savannah was more specific. No Negro could be apprenticed "to the trade of Carpenter, Mason, Bricklayer, Barber or any other Mechanical Art or Mystery." Later, cabinetmaker, painter, blacksmith, tailor, cooper, and butcher were added to the list. Georgia's regulations excluded them from "being mechanics or masons, from making contracts for the erection . . . or repair of buildings."

Mobile, Alabama, Register, *January 5, 1859.*



Also—An invoice of CAPS.
Also—HOOPED SKIRTS.
Terms Cash. jan5

BY BR. TARDY & CO.,
AUCTIONEERS AND COMMISSION MERCHANTS,
Corner Com., Front and St. Francis Streets.

Public Auction—For Cash.
Under an order of Court.

50 to 70 Plantation Negroes.

Sale to be made in Front of the Customhouse, city of Mobile, corner of Royal and St. Francis streets, on WEDNESDAY 5th January, 1859, commencing at 12 o'clock M.

Terms of Sale—Unconditionally CASH, next day.

A large lot are to be sold for account of the estate of John Darrington, and at the instance of Alex. Carleton, administrator of said estate, and among them are the following names, ages, &c.:

Minda,	a negro girl	15	years	old.
Doctor,	" man	29	"	"
Ocie	" boy	18	"	"
Rohan	" boy	16	"	"
Fortune	" man	32	"	"
Adam	" man	30	"	"
Peter Fox	" man	35	"	"
Peter Fox is a No. 1 body servant.				
Molly	" woman	16	"	"
Peggy	" girl	18	"	"
Rosy	" girl	16	"	"
Emily	" girl	24	"	"
Betty	" woman	40	"	"
and with her four children.				
Jim	" man	45	"	"
Alice	" man	30	"	"
Tenor	" woman	28	"	"
and with her four children.				
Hannibal	" man	25	"	"
Hester	" woman	22	"	"
Elsie	" girl	8	"	"
Abby	" girl	10	"	"
Sampson	" man	45	"	"
Sampson is a Stock Minder.				
Fanny	" woman	50	"	"
Fanny is a Seamstress.				
Ellen	" girl	14	"	"
Ellen is a House Servant.				
Meadow	" man	50	"	"
Marion is a good Carpenter.				
Lindy	a negro woman	45	"	"
Lindy is a noted Nurse.				
Fortune	a negro man	60	"	"
Fortune is a Carpenter				
Mary Ann	a negro woman	45	"	"
Mary Ann is a fine Cook.				
Kate	a negro girl	16	"	"
Kate is a House Servant.				
Louisa	a negro girl	10	"	"
Elvin	" boy	8	"	"
Ned Ball	" man	65	"	"
Mary Ball	" woman	40	"	"
George	" boy	14	"	"
Alfred	" boy	14	"	"
Albert	" boy	12	"	"
Alfred and Albert are twins, and we will sell them together.				
Barney	a negro man	24	"	"
Jane	" girl	19	"	"
Margaret	" girl			
Tom	" man	60	"	"

Tom is a Miller, &c., &c.

The list embraces other negroes, and all valuable, lively and raised in the country, where they have been from childhood. A more desirable lot of Plantation Negroes can no where be found.

☞ The week preceding the auction sale they will be brought from the plantation to Mobile.

N. B. A peremptory *Cash Sale* this is to be, and no postponement.

☞ For other particulars, &c., refer to
dec21 law. BR. TARDY & CO., Auctioneers.

In an open letter to the local contractors, a citizen of Athens, Georgia, wrote in 1838, "I am aware that most of you have too strong antipathy to encourage the masonry and carpentry trades of your poor white brothers, that your predilections for giving employment in your line of business to ebony workers have either so cheapened the white man's labor, or expatriated hence with but a few solitary exceptions, all the white masons and carpenters of this town . . . As masters of the polls in a majority, carrying all before them, I am surprised the poor do not elect faithful members to the Legislature, who will make it penal to prefer Negro mechanic labor to white men's." The answer, of course, aside from lack of organization, was that the poor could not have done so. Property qualifications for voting and additional qualifications for office holding, and legislative apportionment for the benefit of slaveholders, kept political as well as economic power in the hands of the few. Skilled slave labor was highly profitable to them, and they retained it.

Free Blacks in the Slave States

Studies of free Negroes in the slave states during the slave era show a proportionately higher percentage of them in the skilled trades, as might be expected.[15] One reason was the practice of apprenticing black children to the trades, particularly in the early period before free blacks were considered a threat to the whole slave system.

In Baltimore, between 1794 and 1820, one third of all colored children bound out by the county orphans' court were assigned to the skilled trades. The city directory in ensuing years (1819-1860) listed Negroes engaged in trades that included: barbers, blacksmiths, a brass founder, bricklayers, butchers, broom-makers, brush-makers, cabinet-makers, carpenters, caulkers, cordwainers, cigar-makers, comb-makers, coopers, painters, plasterers, a plumber, rope-makers, ship-carpenters, ship-joiners, shoemakers, a stone-mason, a stone-cutter, a wheelwright, a whip-maker, a sawyer, and a whitesmith. The largest proportion were barbers, blacksmiths, and caulkers.

Particularly in the country, where demand for one trade might not have been great enough to guarantee a living, (or perhaps as a legacy from slavery) it was common for a worker to be proficient at several crafts. In Talbot County (Maryland) a shoemaker by trade also found work as boat-builder, wagon-maker, wheel-wright, and general wood workman; and the same thing was true in other counties.

A very wide range of wages existed, for the free black had no bargaining power; he was outside both systems, the slave and the free white. Sometimes

[15] Favored slaves, more apt to be emancipated, were also more apt to be educated or trained vocationally; skilled slaves were more apt to have the opportunity to buy their own freedom, and so on.

he worked for maintenance in virtual slave conditions. Sometimes his remuneration approached the white rate for the job.

A similar system of apprenticeship existed in North Carolina (and in other states; this study is illustrative, not exhaustive). As early as 1733, the children of free Negro parents there were being bound out; it was at that time required that they be taught literacy as well as a trade, although this requirement was eventually dropped. The reason for binding out could be either the inability of parents to support the children or the desire of parents to have them trained (white children were sometimes bound out as apprentices in this period). That there were abuses is indicated by revised legislation of 1773 stating that the binding out was illegal if against the consent of the parents. Obligations of the master were spelled out in one contract:

> And the said Samuel doth covenant, promise and agree to and with the said Chairman and Justices that he will teach and instruct, or cause to be taught or instructed, the said Solomon Wiggins in the art and mystery of a Cooper and also to read, write, and cypher agreeable to law; and that he will constantly find and provide for said apprentice during the term aforesaid, sufficient diet, washing, lodging, and apparel fitting for an apprentice; and also all other things necessary, both in sickness and in health. In witness whereof, etc.

County records for Craven County, North Carolina, list occupations of free Negro apprentices between 1800 and 1860, including: baker, barber, blacksmith, boatbuilder, bricklayer, brick maker, carpenter, carriage maker, caulker, cooper, harness maker, house carpenter, shoemaker, tanner, trunk maker.

There were occasional protests by white mechanics against permitting black competitors to practice the trades. However, an intensive study of the free Negro in North Carolina revealed that "Free Negroes experienced little difficulty in securing employment in North Carolina in the building trades. Masons, brick makers, and stone dressers were in demand in North Carolina's growing towns, and the protestations of white workers were not strong enough to cause a ban to be placed on the use of free Negro workers in these trades . . . Almost 500 free Negroes made their living in the building trades in 1860."

Comparatively, Maryland and North Carolina were among the more liberal rather than the more rigid of the slave states. Yet in this field they are not atypical.

North of Slavery

Moving north of slavery, the picture is recognizable. Of course, the north, too, had its slavery period, and while there were slaves they were employed wherever needed. "In the cities, they worked in various skilled trades — as

bakers, carpenters, cabinet-makers, sawyers, blacksmiths, tailors, and coopers — and perhaps most prominently in the maritime industry." As late as 1855, some 87 per cent of the gainfully employed Negroes of New York City worked in menial or unskilled jobs, and this was typical of northern cities.

The really great difference in the north was the presence of white labor which was not only free in economic status but also free to complain bitterly of slave competition. At least as early as 1737, the lieutenant governor of the colony of New York asked the Assembly to consider the justifiable complaints of "honest and industrious tradesmen" that skilled slave labor had reduced them to unemployment and poverty. It was in a large sense self protection when white mechanics refused to work in the same shop as unpaid Negro slaves. The attitude persisted as slavery was gradually ended in the north, and with more telling results. The free Negro did not have the status to maintain himself on the job against opposition in the same way that the master had had power to determine the slave's occupation. Adding to the white mechanic's concern was the fear of hordes of cheap labor from the south, a potential threat but a real fear.

The end of slavery in the northern states just about coincided with the opening of the first great period of foreign immigration; nearly five million immigrants, mostly Irish, German, and Scandinavian, entered the United States between 1830 and 1850. By and large, the Irish were the least skilled, and most apt to remain in the cities, where they became the core of a mass of unskilled, unorganized labor exposed to unbridled exploitation. Not only were the crowded city slums miserable beyond compare, but there was no obligation to the working man on the part of either his employer or society: no maximum hours or minimum pay, no help for unemployment, no relief from the economic "panics" which swept the country severely about once in ten years.

When men had to compete with each other for jobs at a bare survival level, it was no wonder that those nearest the bottom — Irish and Negroes — clashed.[16] Unemployed white workers formed mobs in Philadelphia in 1842 to protest the hiring of Negroes. The fear of violence caused New York City to refuse licenses to Negro carmen and porters; thus they were driven out of traditional occupations. They struck back — that is, they found jobs — in one of the few ways they could — by strikebreaking, as in the New York longshoremen's strike of 1855, and violence followed.

In Cincinnati, the mechanical association publicly tried its president for teaching a trade to a Negro youth. This shows, of course, not only the opposition

[16] It is hard to realize, across the years, the great contempt felt for immigrant groups during the years of their first arrival. An advertisement in the New York **Herald** illustrates this: "WANTED: A Cook, Washer, and Ironer; who perfectly understand her business; any color or country except Irish."

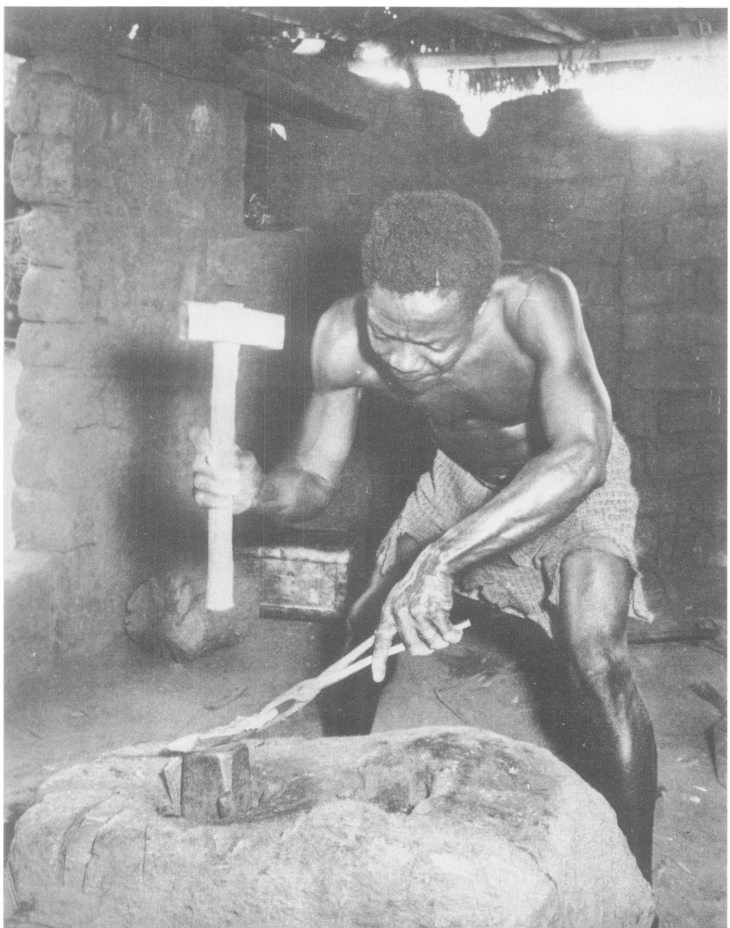
of organized whites but also that despite the generally unfavorable situation, Negroes still learned trades, and whites still taught them. Cincinnati is just over the border from a slave state, and was the center of much controversy in pre-Civil War years. There was unusually keen awareness of the dangerous potential of cheap labor migration. Between the 1830's and the 1850's, most state legislatures in the north discussed legislation which those in the south were actually enacting — entry restrictions to bar free Negroes.

The Cheap Labor Peril

To balance the account, it should be remembered that this period saw the rise of a national political party, the "Know-Nothings" (American Party), based on hostility to the immigration of white labor. It was unlimited cheap labor, regardless of its sources, that threatened the still low standards of unorganized workers. This was also an era of the early organization of trade unions and workingmen's political parties for self protection, and very often one of the things to be defended against specifically was the wage undercutting of free Negro labor.

The anti-slavery movement, on its part, while it called on merchants and master mechanics to hire Negro apprentices, also called on Negroes to secure jobs by working more cheaply, working harder, and giving employers greater satisfaction . . . that is, to undercut the wages and working conditions of the whites.

It was typical that when Frederick Douglass, a skilled caulker, escaped to the North and sought work in the New Bedford shipyards, he was told that his employment would drive every white man away. For three years, until he became an abolitionist lecturer and publisher, Douglass made a living as a common laborer, a coachman, and a waiter. The curse of slavery still lingers over the opportunity for employment. But even the length of the tradition of discrimination cannot conceal the fact that Negroes worked successfully at every trade practiced in the country before white workers were able to bar them.



Dahomey, West Africa, Village Blacksmith.

Chapter Three

BLACK CRAFTSMEN IN A WHITE WORLD

Freedom brought more problems than solutions to the black craftsmen of the south. The region itself was backward economically, so that the impact of technological change hit there later and less. Nevertheless, objective changes in the situation as well as the continuation of discrimination created difficulties for craftsmen. The industrial revolution meant that craftsmanship was often replaced by the factory (or factory goods imported into non-industrialized areas); and the kind of craftsmanship that was still required was more highly skilled than the old handwork had been. It was harder to learn, and training was harder for free Negroes to get in a free society than it had been for slaves or emancipated slaves whose masters knew that training meant profits. Vocational schools were set up (Tuskegee was the best known) and were useful; but the training they gave was for the old society, not the emerging modern one. By 1900 there were 98 such schools offering training in carpentry, as blacksmiths, painting, plastering, woodworking, brick making and the like.

Thus while the complaint is heard that the revival of craft unions following the Civil War period meant a limitation on the number of apprentices allowed to learn the skilled trades, and a restriction of opportunities which excluded aspiring Negro applicants, this was but one of many factors. Unions were not strong enough to be effective in many areas, especially in the southern states where there were few white craftsmen, and their policies varied considerably.

An indication of slow growth in the number of Negro artisans before emancipation is seen in the city directories of Washington, D.C. (This is also an indication of the growth of the city itself; but more cities were new than not in the first half of the nineteenth century.) In 1827 there were two carpenters, two blacksmiths, and one brick mason; in 1830 the brick mason was not listed; in 1850 there were two of each and in 1855 there was only one carpenter. But in 1860 (perhaps influenced by migration out of the south) there were 25 carpenters, 11 blacksmiths and 20 brick masons; and, for the first time, other craftsmen: one machinist, four painters, one bookbinder, two tanners.

Craftsmen in 1890

The 1890 national census listed Negro artisans as: carpenters, 22,318 (20,800 in the south); blacksmiths, 10,762 (10,022 in the south); masons, 9,647 (including stone cutters for whom the over-all total was 1,279, 9,198 in the south); saw mill operatives, 17,230; miners, 15,809; brickmakers, 10,521; engineers and firemen, 7,662; iron and steel workers, 5,790; shoemakers, 5,015; painters, 4,396; plasterers, 4,006; quarrymen, 3,198; coopers, 2,648; butchers, 2,510; woodworkers, 1,375; tailors, 1,280. Some figures probably included both skilled and unskilled workers; others, like shoemakers who today would be only factory operatives were then (at least those listed as artisans) still skilled hand craftsmen. It is not an impressive total, probably less than 100,000 skilled,[17] except when measured by the idea that was beginning to win acceptance — that craftsmanship was an attribute of whites only. That was a mythology that grew out of the fear of low-wage competition, equating low wages with low quality; and which was strengthened by the lack of training to meet new job standards which made black workers poorer workers.

In many instances in the north Negroes were admitted to union locals. But the pre-war fears of northern workers appeared to be justified even in the sixties — in 1863 Negroes were brought in to break strikes of the longshoremen in New York and other eastern cities; in 1867 ship caulkers were brought up from Portsmouth, Virginia, to Boston to defeat the struggle for an eight-hour day. Such bitter memories lingered in the minds of union men; but they also caused the demand to be raised by far-seeing delegates, as soon as there were national labor meetings in which to raise it, for Negro organizers to be sent into the southern states.

Why does a history of black craftsmen turn suddenly to become a sketchy history of trade unions? Because once the craftsmen emerged from the shackles of slavery they had to move within the organizational structure of the free society. For thousands of years before, we had followed the development of African craftsmanship — the passage of the mysteries of the trade from father to son; the connection of skill with political power; the organization of guilds, when crafts spread beyond families, to establish and protect the standards and the earnings of their members. The development of craftsmanship in Europe was similar, and the free European craftsmen who emigrated to the United States brought with them not only their skills but their tradition of secrecy, their pride in journeyman standards, and sometimes the structure of the guilds. It was no wonder that the first and most lasting unions organized under the new American conditions were those of skilled craftsmen, and not strange that they guarded membership jealously. Most

[17] Definitions varied. Charles Welsey estimated that in 1865 there were 100,000 Negro mechanics in the south, compared to 20,000 white ones.

black craftsmen practiced in localities where unions were few and weak. But increasingly they met. Thus the survival of black craftsmanship became dependent upon the membership policies of the craft unions. This was particularly true where there was no alternative method of learning new trade techniques outside union apprenticeship.

Local autonomy is still a characteristic feature of trade unions and in the early period, when national organization hardly existed, it was even more prominent. Locals determined their own membership policy and public trouble arose only, as in the case of bricklayers, when traveling cards issued by one local were not recognized by another. It was 1881 before that national union was strong enough (attempts had been made for many years) to insist that traveler's cards held by Negro bricklayers be recognized. Particularly in the south, where there were so many Negro craftsmen working that they could not be ignored, the practice grew up of organizing separate locals.[18] These were sometimes used as a "way out" of the traveling card impasse; the worker was allowed to practice his trade in the new location, retaining membership in the old local!

Early Separatism

Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that there were attempts by Negroes to organize themselves separately. Both the National Negro Labor Union and the National Labor Convention of Colored Men were formed in Washington in 1869, following several years in which state and local conventions of Negro workingmen, about which little is known, were held. Among the delegates were Negro unionists opposed to separatism and desirous of putting pressure on unions to secure admission of Negroes, especially to apprenticeship. But their leadership was more middle class and political (Frederick Douglass and John Mercer Langston) than workingman and class conscious; and the white union leadership that attended could guarantee nothing. The effort survived for only about five years, for separate labor organizations lacked power to defend the interests of their members. But independent unions were to rise again and again in response to the needs of workers that white unionism failed to meet.[19]

In 1851, a short-lived national organization of reformers and working men had admitted Negro delegates to its Industrial Congress. A similar attempt — including union men but not really a union — was the National Labor Union of the 1860's and 70's, whose leaders attended the Negro conventions. The union was concerned with gaining the eight-hour day, but it was more political than

[18] It should also be remembered that early unions often started as fraternal, insurance, and social organizations, which created additional difficulties in crossing the color line.

[19] The independent black union movements (there were others in the 1920's) should at least have destroyed another myth — that Negroes are anti-union, not interested in unions, hard to organize; they need and want unions as much as any workers — they just don't trust organizations that have kept them from getting work for a century.

economic, stressing currency reform and other social issues. At first it sought the cooperation of Negroes, inviting them to form locals. But at its second annual meeting in Chicago, 1867, delegates decided that the question of Negro membership aroused too much controversy for them to take action. The 1869 convention had nine Negroes out of 142 delegates and the 1870 convention denounced discrimination on the basis of race or color; but there was no follow-up in action. In any case the union was headed in an increasingly political direction. In 1872 it organized the National Labor Reform Party and later it merged into the Greenback Party.

The Knights of Labor

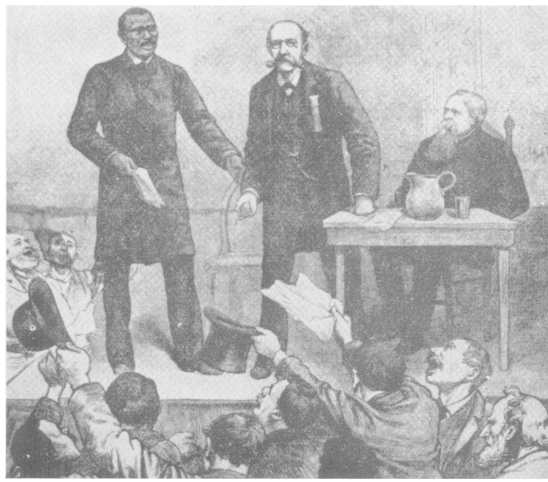
Meanwhile, an organization that believed in the solidarity of all workers was founded in 1869. The Knights of Labor was not a federation but a membership organization. It started with a local of nine Philadelphia garment workers and its emphasis was far more on units by trade than has been credited. But it welcomed all workers, skilled and unskilled, black and white, men and women. The Knights made a real effort to organize black workers and by 1887 were reported to have some 90,000 Negro members, about one-eighth of their total.

At the Knight's 1885 convention the proposal was made and referred to the executive board that "a colored organizer be appointed for each of the old slave states." Whether or not that was done is uncertain, but some organizers must have been sent, for at the next convention progress was reported especially in Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, and Alabama. "The colored people of the South are flocking to us, being eager for organization and education."

The *Proceedings* of the Knights' conventions do not distinguish assemblies and individuals by color; this is ascertained only by incidental information from discussion reported during the conventions. Spero and Harris[20] report "the organization of two district assemblies at Richmond, one of which was composed entirely of colored members. The latter, District Assembly 92, had 13 local assemblies of Negro workers in Manchester (South Richmond) and Richmond with a paid up membership of 1,285. Likewise at Durham, North Carolina, a local assembly with more than a hundred Negro members had been formed. At one time or another Negro local assemblies were formed at Harrisburg, Texas, Birmingham, Alabama, and Nashville, Tennessee. Prosperity Assembly, Wheeling, West Virginia, included both Negro and white hod carriers, but Progress Assembly was composed exclusively of Negroes."

Instances are also known of special action against discrimination taken by the Knights. The fact that when the General Assembly convened in Richmond in 1886

[20] See sources.



Frank J. Ferrell Introducing General Master Workman Powderly at Knights of Labor Convention, 1886.

a Negro machinist, Frank J. Ferrell of District Assembly 49, New York City, was selected to introduce the General Master Workman, is something mentioned in a sentence characterizing the tolerance of the Knights. The full story is even more interesting. Sixty or seventy delegates, including Ferrell, went to the hotel where accommodations had been engaged, and when the hotel refused to accept Ferrell the others would not stay either; a similar incident took place at a theater. G. M. W. Powderly chose Ferrell, after the incident — and in the presence of the Governor of Virginia — in order to make clear that "we practice what we preach." Other instances were the Knights' recommendation to District Assembly 41, Maryland, that it admit Negro apprentices into the mechanical department; and a notification to local assemblies in Texas that "they must treat . . . colored members with respect."

Relations of the Knights with the various craft unions varied; some were members, others kept aloof, but the influence of racial solidarity had some effect. During the years of their strength the cigar-makers, the bricklayers, and the carpenters organized Negro craftsmen into separate locals in cities where they could not organize interracial locals. The Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners

had 14 local unions of Negro carpenters in the South in 1886. Most of the Negro members of the Knights were unskilled, but so were most workers. And this period of organization no doubt enabled some black craftsmen to survive in some areas, and to pass on their skills.

The Knights' chief weapon was the boycott, and they were nearly ruined by several strikes of which they did not approve, and which they did not know how to support (following one very successful strike that attracted membership and influenced tactics). They adopted a broad program of social reform, including support for cooperatives, and secured a wide support that actually weakened the organization. For as the order spread from eastern industrial centers into areas where workers were outnumbered in the assemblies (despite constitutional regulations) it became less able to service its core members, the workers. And it could not withstand the impact of a national reaction against unions and of periodic depressions. The at-first friendly American Federation of Labor, organized in the 1880s and composed mainly of skilled craftsmen, became a hostile rival and took away the strongest economic sections of the Knights.

The early A. F. of L. included the carpenters, the cigar makers, the printers, iron and steel makers, and iron molders. Its limited objectives — shorter hours, better working conditions, higher pay — made for steady rather than dramatic growth and avoided national confrontations it did not have strength to meet. It should be remembered that the A. F. of L. never came near organizing all workers; it was not just black workers who were left outside. Even after industrial organization in the thirties, most workers were not in unions, and the South in particular is still weak in organization.

Exclusion Policies

As a federation, the A. F. of L. brought together unions that had already been established for decades with the varying policies of their local and national bodies. In 1890, one of the conditions of affiliation to the A. F. of L. was an oath not to discriminate on account of race. But in 1896 a charter was granted to the Boilermaker and Iron Shipbuilders Union even though its constitution restricted membership to whites. Other unions followed suit, but there were always at least a few voices of protest and attempts to re-establish labor solidarity; in theory, unions were for all workers. A number of indirect techniques were developed by the restrictive unions. The bar might not be in the constitution, but in the ritual. Tacit agreement could keep Negroes from apprenticeship and hence from membership. Separate locals might be set up — or federal locals directly under the national A. F. of L. (Neither of these had strong enough bargaining power to help the members economically as the stronger white locals could.) Above all, white unions were merely representative of the white community in their racism,

and could count on its help. For example plumbers' licensing had political ramifications in many areas; unions and employers were represented when laws and regulations were drawn up. In Philadelphia, the licensing board would not grant a Negro a license. "If a Negro is in some way able to set himself up as a plumber, when he goes to buy fixtures from a plumber's outfitter they refuse to sell to him. When certain plumbers' outfitters have sold fixtures to Negro plumbers the plumbers' organizations have boycotted these firms." Most construction unions had similar ties because of legislation and regulations dealing with their trade.

As late as the 1940's, there were 16 international unions which excluded Negroes entirely by provisions in their constitutions or rituals; five (all construction unions) which excluded them tacitly; and eight which provided only separate locals with second-rate status. Yet the greatest factors for change were already present and moving.

Both the North and the Negro community itself were considerably altered by two great migrations from the south to northern and western cities, brought on by the job opportunities of the two world wars. The transfer of Negroes from a rural to an urban people was well under way. This had two relevant consequences. They became a significant component of the basic sections of the American economy. And they began to gain at least limited political power.[21]

This new position had long-range consequences. When, in the late 1930's, the CIO began industrial organization of the huge corporations that craft unionism had been unable to organize, it found Negroes by the thousands in the auto, steel, rubber, and other plants and it organized them side by side with the white workers.[22] For the first time in the twentieth century, Negroes had a significant role and voice in the labor movement. In 1915 another necessary reversal began, in a series of court decisions restoring the civil rights won[23] by Negroes in the aftermath of the Civil War, and lost in the violence of the white Reconstruction.

The struggle for equal employment opportunity followed that for political rights although it had never been totally quiescent.[24] But the first really wide public support, including the support of a large section of the labor movement led by the CIO, appeared in the campaign for Fair Employment Practices legislation late during the Second World War. The campaign developed from the March on Washington Movement led by the President of the Brotherhood

[21] In the post World War II period the influx of Spanish speaking peoples on both coasts added another dimension.
[22] The United Mine Workers, which led the drive, had always been noted for non white memberships.
[23] The decision, first of many won by NAACP to restore voting rights, outlawed the "grandfather clause" in Oklahoma. Permitting a citizen to vote only if his grandfather did, meant, for instance, that illiterate whites could vote while Negroes could not.
[24] Voices like that of Randolph in the AFL were never silent. Localities saw varied campaigns "don't buy where you can't work," and the like. The Urban League also pressed for change.

Carpenter in the JAP Program.

of Sleeping Car Porters, A. Philip Randolph. The MOW succeeded in 1941 in securing an executive order outlawing discrimination in defense industries and government by the threat of a descent on Washington by many thousands. Continuous campaigning through the years resulted in the adoption of city, state, and finally federal fair practices legislation. It was particularly useful in the north, but the legislation lacked strong enforcement powers and did not come to grips with the particular problems of the skilled trades.

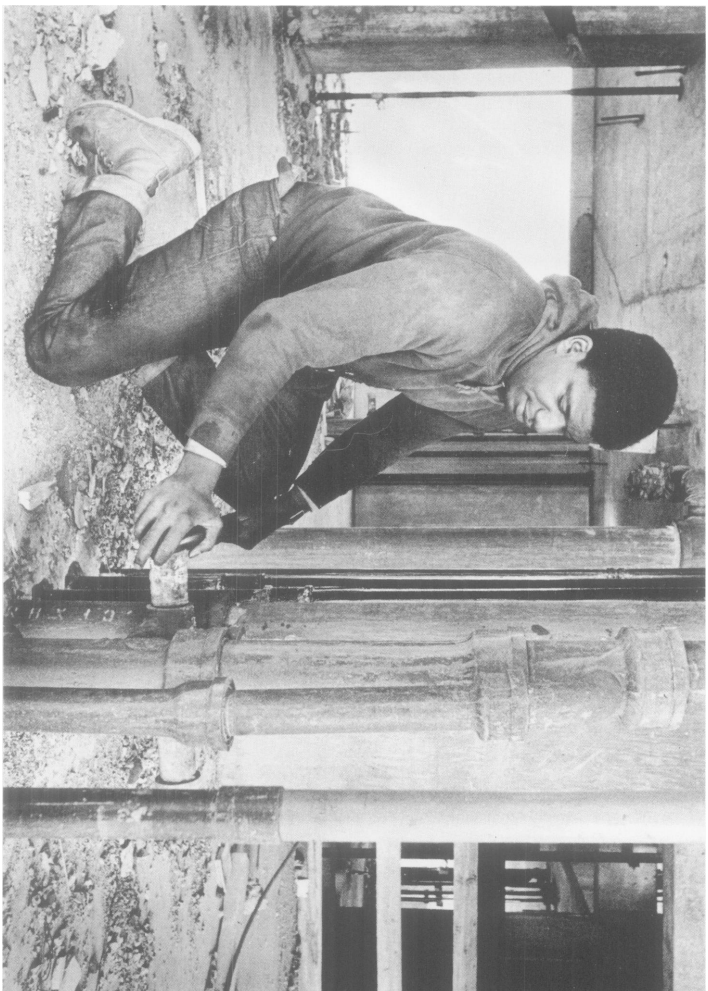
Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship does not provide many jobs, when measured by the over-all problem of Negro unemployment, and it did not have a high priority in the struggle for equal employment opportunity. In 1964, the year after civil rights demonstrations at construction sites, there were only 59,491 new registered apprentices in all trades all over the country while 25,700 completed training and became journeymen (typically, only about half of the apprentices finish the course). Thus out of this number there would have been, under the best circumstances, only a few thousand jobs for Negroes. But apprenticeship is important for other reasons. According to the 1960 census, only 2.52 per cent of all apprentices in training were nonwhites, far less than their proportion of the age group represented. The skilled trades provide better incomes than most jobs non-whites now hold. The long and intensive training means that, while unskilled jobs disappear under the impact of mechanization and automation, the skilled worker is more secure. And finally, studies have shown that apprenticeship is a training ground not only for the particular craft but for supervisory work and often for independent contracting and business.

Government Remedies for Discrimination

The National Apprenticeship Act of 1937, administered by the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training in the Department of Labor (BAT), established minimum standards for apprenticeship and encouraged the development of similar bodies in the states (there are now 30). But it was not until 1963, under the impact of the civil rights revolution and demonstrations at constructions sites across the country, that new federal standards were issued which included the requirement that apprentices be selected on a nondiscriminatory basis, by objective standards. However, BAT and the state SACs had very limited powers to obtain compliance, and the criteria of "objective standards" allowed the barring of nonwhites by indirect methods — ie they couldn't meet the standards as the result of inferior education.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits both unions and employers specifically from discrimination, and apprenticeship is included. Moreover the



Plumbing-pipefitter Apprentice Learning the Trade.

Attorney General is authorized to initiate civil actions against persons or groups engaged in a pattern of practice of resistance to the legislation, and has done so.[25] The National Labor Relations Board has also strengthened techniques available to end discrimination by declaring that a union which violates the duty of fair representation is guilty of an unfair labor practice; the case involved a Negro worker trying to gain admission to an apprenticeship program.[26] The President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, 1961-1965, was concerned with projects where federal funds were used, and though it had little power it gathered valuable data and did considerable educational work with unions and employers.[27]

The Department of Labor began, in 1963, to play a more active role in ending discrimination by setting up Apprenticeship Information Centers. These dealt with a key problem in the lack of information in nonwhite communities about apprenticeship opportunities and how to qualify for them. Such centers now exist in 24 cities.

The Department has also helped (as have some foundations) to finance community programs to bridge the gap between the nonwhite community and employment in the skilled trades. These programs are directed by a variety of groups: sometimes the Department itself, sometimes the Urban League, sometimes a local Trades Council.

The most successful of the programs, however, has been that initiated by the Workers Defense League in New York City in 1963. Its full story is told elsewhere.[28] It started with the belief that nonwhites could meet the standards for apprenticeship and qualify as craftsmen, for it knew their history. It tried to break down the mystery surrounding the skilled trades and to get information out to the community and because it worked inside the community instead of in a federal building "down town," it succeeded better. It set up a testing and tutoring program to prepare applicants for the tests given by the Joint Apprenticeship Committees of unions and employers under the new state criteria. And it cooperated with unions and employers wherever possible.

The real breakthrough came with the Sheet Metal Workers, Local 28, the union that had been involved in the court case and had never in more than 70 years had a nonwhite member. In spring, 1965, the first Negro was admitted to the apprenticeship class; in fall, 1965, 12 of WDL's 25 applicants placed within

[25] The St. Louis Building and Construction Trades Council was involved in the first such action.
[26] Hughes Tool Company, Houston, Texas. 147 NLRB 1573, 1964.
[27] In New York State, which is singled out because all states and cities cannot be discussed, and it is the area in which the work of the Joint Apprenticeship Program was initiated, a particularly favorable legal situation existed. New York was the first state to adopt FEPC legislation, yet the usual situation of nonwhite exclusion applied in the skilled trades. Following demonstrations at construction sites legislation was adopted in 1964 specifically barring discrimination in apprenticeship. State apprenticeship regulations were then written, and they were stronger than the federal. Both City and State Human Rights Commissions held investigations, and a test case against Local 28, Sheet Metal Workers, went from the Commission to the courts, where the commission's finding against the union was upheld.
[28] See sources.

the top 65 and were accepted. In fall, 1966, 24 of its 32 applicants placed near enough the top for acceptance, and although it took another court case (the union said their scores were too high), they got in.

The same thing is happening in other programs and across the country. Negroes are back in the skilled trades, and back in the unions.

The list of Joint Apprenticeship Program Placements, January 1967 through May 1969, follows:

City	Number Placed	Number Dropped Out
Brooklyn	398	24
Harlem	233	27
Newark	113	30
Buffalo	88	40
Cleveland	208	14
Rochester	25	0
Nashville	45	7
Boston	16	0
Westchester	19	1
Lexington	13	20
	1,158	143

The number now in training is 1,015. (The drop-out rate is low. In the past, only 50 per cent of apprentices have completed training.) In addition to these placements, figures from the Department of Labor for outreach programs as of March, 1969, are:

Number of Apprentices Indentured	2,961
Number Dropped Out	508
Number In Training	2,453

This is only a beginning, and not an end. For efforts of private organizations should not be necessary to secure rights guaranteed by law. And special tutoring programs should not be needed if public education systems were adequate. Some of the country has not yet been reached at all; and the proportion of nonwhite apprentices in the skilled trades does not yet resemble their proportion in the population.

Yet one of the hopes for the future must be that the opening of closed unions (to all, not just nonwhites; for they were mostly father-and-son affairs) means a more alert, more capable, and more socially conscious membership; higher standards of workmanship; and the taking back of leadership that had passed, by default, to the law and the community. The future of the black craftsman is secure, as his past is proud.

Sources

Chapter One

The basic sources from which African material is drawn are three, all easily available in paperback:

Bohannan, Paul: *Africa and Africans.* New York. 1964.

Davidson, Basil: *The Lost Cities of Africa.* Boston. 1959.

Oliver, Roland, and Fage, J. D.: *A Short History of Africa.* Baltimore. 1962.

More limited geographical or craft areas are discussed in the following works:

Balandier, Georges: *Daily Life in the Kingdom of the Congo.* New York.

Bovill, E. W.: *The Golden Trade of the Moors.* London. 1961.

Bradbury, R. E.: *The Benin Kingdom.* London. 1957.

deCenival, Jean-Louis: *Living Architecture. Egyptian.* New York. 1964.

Cole, Sonia: *The Prehistory of East Africa.* New York. 1963.

Edwards, I. E. S.: *The Pyramids of Egypt.* Alesbury and London. 1947.

Egharemba, Chief Jacob: *A History of Benin.* Ibadan. 1960.

Ethnographic Survey of Africa, parts 1-4. London. 1951.

Fagan, Brian: *Southern Africa.* New York-Washington. 1965.

Fage, J. D.: *An Introduction to the History of West Africa.* Cambridge. 1962.

Herskovits, Melville J.: *The Myth of the Negro Past.* Boston. 1941.

Kees, Hermann: *Ancient Egypt. A Geographical History of the Nile.* Chicago. 1961.

Miner, Horace: *The Primitive City of Timbuctoo.* New York. 1965.

Warmington, B. H.: *Carthage.* Baltimore. 1964.

Readers who are interested in the more specific sources of information cited may address inquiries to the author in care of the Joint Apprenticeship Program. This list is neither exhaustive nor well rounded as an African bibliography; it is simply sources used for the information on crafts they contained.

Chapter Two

The material in this chapter is drawn mainly from:

Bancroft, Frederic: *Slave Trading in the Old South.* New York 1931. 1959.

Litwack, Leon F.: *North of Slavery. The Negro in the Free States.* 1790-1860. Chicago-London. 1961.

Wade, Richard C.: *Slavery in the Cities. The South.* 1820-1860. London-Oxford-New York. 1964.

Additional useful references were:

Davidson, Basil: *The African Slave Trade.* Boston. 1961.

Franklin, John Hope: *The Free Negro in North Carolina.* 1790-1860. Chapel Hill, N. C. 1943.

Herskovits, Melville J.: *The Myth of the Negro Past.* Boston 1941. 1958.

Spero, Sterling D., and Harris, Abram L.: *The Black Worker.* New York 1931. 1968.

Stampp, Kenneth M.: *The Peculiar Institution; Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South.* New York. 1956.

Wesley, Charles H.: *Negro Labor in the United States.* New York. 1927.

Wright, James M.: *The Free Negro in Maryland.* 1634-1860. New York-London. 1921.

About half of this chapter uses material originally drafted as part of Chapter Three of a pamphlet published by the League for Industrial Democracy: *Black Builders: A Job Program that Works,* The Story of the Joint Apprenticeship Program of the Workers' Defense League and the A. Philip Randolph Educational Fund and available from the Joint Apprenticeship Program.

Chapter Three

duBois, W. E. B. (ed.): *The Negro Artisan.* Atlanta. 1907.

Faulkner, Harold U., and Starr, Mark: *Labor in America.* New York. 1944.

Hughes, Langston: *Fight for Freedom. The Story of the NAACP.* New York. 1962.

Jacobson, Julius (ed.): *The Negro and the American Labor Movement.* New York. 1968.

Marshall, F. Ray: *The Negro and Organized Labor.* New York. 1965.

Marshall, F. Ray, and Briggs, Vernon M., Jr.: *The Negro and Apprenticeship.* Baltimore. 1967.

Marshall, F. Ray and Briggs, Vernon M., Jr.: *Equal Apprenticeship Opportunities. The Nature of the Issue and the New York Experience.* Washington, D.C. 1968.

Spero, Sterling D. and Harris, Abram L.: *The Black Worker.* New York. 1968.

Ware, Norman J.: *The Labor Movement in the United States.* 1860-1890. New York. 1929. 1964. *Note*: This is a history of the Knights of Labor but, disappointingly, mentions its black membership only in passing.

This chapter also draws in part upon material originally prepared for the pamphlet: *Black Builders: A Job Program that Works.* The Story of the Joint Apprenticeship Program of the Workers' Defense League and the A. Philip Randolph Educational Fund.

PHOTO CREDITS

Page 3: deCenival, Jean-Louis; *Living Architure: Egyptian.* Grosset & Dunlap. New York. 1964.

Page 4: F. Addison, Esq. in Edwards, I.E.S.: *The Pyramids of Egypt.* Penguin Books. Harmondsworth. 1947.

Page 8: After A. Whitty in Fagan, Brian: *Southern Africa.* Praeger. New York. 1965.

Page 10: Plans from Official Rhodesian Monuments Commission records in Fagan.

Page 11: After Fagan, based on Fage.

Page 14: Miner, Horace: *The Primitive City of Timbuctoo.* Doubleday. New York. 1965.

Page 16: Bovill, E. W.: *The Golden Trade of the Moors.* Oxford University Press. London. 1961.

Page 21: *Picayune* in Bancroft, Frederic: *Slave Trading in the Old South.* Fred erick Unger Publishing Company. New York. 1959.

Page 23: *Register* in Bancroft.

Page 28: United Nations.

Page 33: Culver Service in Faulkner and Starr: *Labor in America.* New York. 1944.

Page 36: Irene Fertik.

Page 38: Irene Fertik.

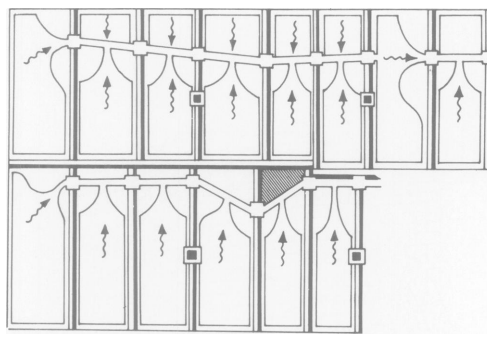
Page 45: deCenival, Jean-Louis; *Living Architure: Egyptian.* Grosset & Dunlap. New York. 1964.

Page 46: deCenival, Jean-Louis; *Living Architure: Egyptian.* Grosset & Dunlap. New York. 1964.

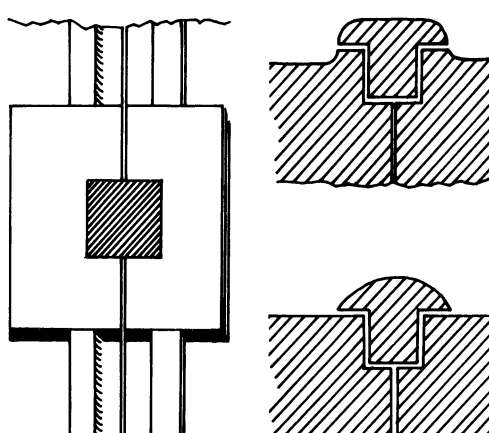
About the Author

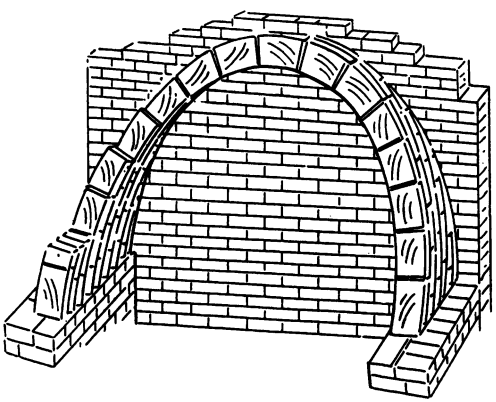
Robin Myers is a member of the Board of the Workers Defense League and was chairman of its Minorities Committee when the apprenticeship program was initiated. She wrote the widely circulated report, "The WDL Apprenticeship Training Program; Report of a Year's Experience. May, 1965." At present she is a staff associate of the American Committee on Africa.

Drainage system for rainwater in a section of the temple at Abydos



Watertight joints between two ceiling slabs (Abydos, Medinet Habu)





Sketch showing constructional method for arched brick vaults

JOINT APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM
and
THE INSTITUTE OF THE JOINT APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

WORKERS DEFENSE LEAGUE / A. PHILIP RANDOLPH EDUCATIONAL FUND

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

CO-CHAIRMEN
Bayard Rustin **Rowland Watts**

NATIONAL OFFICE 1520 Bushwick Avenue
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11207
Phone: 443-1250 (212)

Ernest Green, National Director
Charles E. Bremer, Assistant Director
William M. Ross, Field Supervisor
Lois Ricks, Administrative Assistant
Don Roffle, Journeyman Program Developer
Mary Elstak, Controller

Maizie Fulston, Director
Institute of the JAP
1520 Bushwick Avenue
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11207
Phone: 443-1665 (212)

FIELD OFFICES:

BOSTON
466 Blue Hill Avenue
Roxbury, Mass. 02121
Phone: 442-8982 (617)

BROOKLYN
1315 Fulton Street
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11216
Phone: 783-5313 (212)

BUFFALO
367 Northampton Street
Buffalo, N.Y. 14208
Phone: 882-7630 (716)

CAMDEN
711 Broadway
Camden, N.J. 08103
Phone: 964-0838 (609)

CLEVELAND
10608 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44106
Phone: 791-3431 (216)

JERSEY CITY
176 Monticello Avenue
Jersey City, N.J. 07304
Phone: 435-0682 (201)

LEXINGTON
637 Georgetown Street
Lexington, Ky. 40503
Phone: 252-2208 (606)

NASHVILLE
1033-B Jefferson Street
Nashville, Tenn. 37208
Phone: 254-1881 (615)

NASSAU COUNTY
10 West Columbia Street
Hempstead, N.Y. 11550
Phone: 486-3542 (516)

NEWARK
430 Springfield Avenue
Newark, N.J. 07103
Phone: 242-1144 (201)

NEW BRUNSWICK
165 Remsen Avenue
New Brunswick, N.J. 08902
Phone: 249-8876 (201)

NEW YORK CITY
2364 Eighth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10027
Phone: 666-4710 (212)

ROCHESTER
465 Joseph Avenue
Rochester, N.Y. 14605
Phone: 325-2200 (716)

SUFFOLK COUNTY
1313 Straight Path
Wyandanch, N.Y. 11798
Phone: 643-6780 (516)

WESTCHESTER COUNTY
106 West First Street
Mt. Vernon, N.Y. 10550
Phone: 664-5551 (914)