

AfroPanamanian Newsletter



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No.11 Vol. II

December 2011

Donation



Controversy

Anecdotes

Poetry

**LOS AMIGOS :
Por la superación de la Etnia Negra**

A group of friends, in Panama, decided to join forces to work on the rescue of values, customs and cultural traditions bequeathed to us through our ancestors. These have been displaced by others, thus losing a large part of our Black Heritage. We are evaluating all these forgotten traditions and values and highlighting figures as examples for future generations.

“For Black history to be done right, we must do it ourselves.” Edward Gaskin

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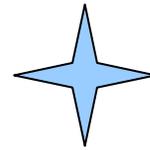
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**The editor is not responsible for the opinions
expressed by our collaborators**

Cover Page: The stamp which appears on the cover was proposed to the Canal Zone Government by Mr. George W. Westerman (r.i.p.) accepted and issued in 1951 as a 10 cent postage stamp, used for years. Permission for its continuous use was given by his grandnephew, Cecil Reynolds.

Editorial



Los

Amigos

wish you a very

Merry Christmas,

health, wealth and

happiness in the New Year.



--Kindness is the language the blind can see and the deaf can hear.--

FEEDBACK (from November Newsletter)

Hello to all,

I enjoyed reading your very informative reviews. I do recognize some of the artist and it gives me much pleasure to remember their contribution to enriching our culture. One of the artist that was not featured but was very popular among that circle of musicians was Reginald (Reggie) Johnson, very popular saxophonist who also played with the *Banda de la Policia Nacional*.

It was so funny to read of all the remedies for headaches you featured, I do remember my mom and her friends using all the above and when all else failed, she would go into the yard, cut a piece of aloes or "tuna", better known as aloe vera, slice it in half down the middle, warm it up and apply it to her forehead, holding it in place with a large head kerchief.

Continue the great work. I do look forward to your next periodical, and share it with family members and friends.

God bless,

CHA

Gloria Russell reminded us of Menticol, which was used for the same purposes.

Dear Ms. Sealy, Another GREAT (November) Newsletter! I, too, appreciate Jazz. However, we shouldn't forget the "Blues." As Duke Ellington said, "The Blues is the accompaniment of a musical duet about a man and a woman going steady." Maybe a future Newsletter will highlight development of the Blues in Panama. Saw that you published my comments to the last Newsletter. Here's wishing you a Very Happy Kwanzaa and GREAT Holiday Season! Very respectfully, Doc Robinson



Olden Days Sayings

"Hard ears, you won't hear, hard ears you will feel." So, now you sprain yuh foot. **"Wrap it with brown paper soaked in vinegar"**. Ah hah! yuh have a **"boil"**, **"put some brown soap on it and a pepper leaf, or some ictiol, or some soft grease"**, then if that doesn't **"bring it to a head"**, **"hot the point of a needle and slit it"...** **What!!!** alright, alright then, go to the doctor.

When you **"cast your bread upon the waters,"** you never know how it will be returned to you..

Proudly Black
Author: Luis A. Greenidge Barker

I

I am the proud descendant
Of an Adam and Eve
Who were hunted, chained and pulled out
Of the entrails of black Africa

II

I descend from those who lost their past
and history.
Where did my grandparents come from?
Angola, Botswana, Congo, Gabon,
Namibia, Nigeria or Zambia
I will never know!
That answer was neglected to me
sometime between centuries
XVI and XIX

III

I descended from the exodus in chains
Chains that took them to the shores of the
great lake
Where a Great Cayuco with great white
sails was waiting for them

IV

Chains that joined them into one piece
And bounded them in an inhuman way
In the stomach of the Great Cayuco

V

I proudly bear in my veins
The blood of a black man and a black
woman
Who were too proud to die
and did not give in to the inhuman voyage

VI

The Cayuco stopped in Barbados, and
they became English
Barker, Smith, Williams.....
The Cayuco stopped in Brazil, and they
became Portuguese
Da Silva, Do Santos, Ronaldo.....
The Cayuco stopped in Haiti, and they
became French
Bethancourt, Jean-baptiste, Racine.....
The Cayuco stopped in Panama, and they
became Spaniards
Fuentes, Perez, Rodriguez

VII

I proudly carry in my veins the blood
That God chose to be the dye of the world
Blood that is responsible for all those
beautiful shades of colors,
on the faces of people going by this land
of our Creator
Blood that may hide for generations
But sooner or later comes back to remind
those who neglect it
That it will always be present

VIII

Yes

I give thanks to that black Adam and Eve
who survived
In order that I could be here today,
honoring them
Even though, some people deny their
heritage
And try to hide what's impossible to hide

December 2011

Have you chosen your day to celebrate Kwanzaa?

We've invited other organizations to adopt a day between Dec. 26 and Jan. 1 to celebrate Kwanzaa.

Come and Celebrate Kwanzaa with LOS AMIGOS
Bring a Platter to share and \$5
Friday Dec. 30, 2011 2-6 p.m.
Rio Abajo Methodist Church hall



RSVP AT:

afropanamaniannewsletter@gmail.com or 221-4276, 224-4177

Kwanzaa seeks to enforce a connectedness to African cultural identity, provide a focal point for the gathering of African peoples, and to reflect upon the **Nguzo Saba, or the seven principles**, that have sustained Africans.

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The Lowe-Gobern's have chosen theirs

Wednesday, December 28 – 5:30 p.m. The Lowe-Gobern-Goodin Families will be sponsoring KWANZAA at the home of Alonso and Carmela Gobern, House 2361, Balboa.

We will share all seven principles in this one evening.

Speakers are all from overseas. We invite you to attend and to maintain the spirit of Kwanzaa, please bring a dish to share.

Please confirm your attendance at (507) 314-0398



Birth and decline of Gamboa

(continued from the November Newsletter) Taken from the Panama Canal Review, Composed by CZAngel

Names of old towns and some idea of Trans-Isthmian travel in those days

By 1913 a few buildings were beginning to appear in Gamboa, where there had been little except the old bridge and a few houses left by the French which, presumably, had been occupied by their hydrographic forces and the dam workers. A 1906 report mentions repairs made to a fluviograph tower and 19 buildings used as quarters.



In July, 1911, a Canal Commission committee recommended that a Gamboa town site be located on the first dump north of the Gamboa bridge, to house people in the seven mile stretch between **Tabernilla and Gorgona** who would have to move as the lake waters rose. At this time some 700 people lived in what is now Gamboa. Of these 203 were "Silver" roll employees, the remainder probably their families. **No Americans** are shown on the census of that date.

In 1914 Gamboa's population was down to 173. There was a police station, a four-family house which had been brought from **Empire**, a two-family house from **Culebra**. Bachelors lived in old box cars and south of the bridge more box cars housed married and bachelor "Silver" employees from the gravel plant. A married American employee had quarters in an old railroad tower. The commissary was made up of three box cars, according to Emmet Zemer, who was Gamboa commissary manager, and the town's fireman, for eight months in 1916. The commissary's main function was to provide provender for Dredging Division personnel working in the nearby section of the Canal. Each day anywhere from one to three box cars of cold storage and staples were pulled into the spur to be unloaded before dawn and reloaded into launches which ferried supplies to the floating equipment.

The mosquitoes were terrific. Mr. Zemer had malaria twice in his eight Gamboa months. Because of the high malaria rate the Chief Health Officer recommended no more building at "Gamboa Cabin," the section around the railroad station. Instead, he said, future building should be on the south side of the Chagres. This was the beginning of an argument which lasted many years.

Early in 1917 a Building Sites Committee was appointed to look into the advisability of moving what quarters there were in Gamboa across the Chagres River, to the general vicinity of the gravel plant. Col. Jay J. Morrow, later Governor but then Engineer of Maintenance, objected to the change and three months later the committee went along with him. One objection, they said, was that if the railroad station were moved south of the bridge at least two coaches of every train would stop on the bridge, jeopardizing passengers who might get on or off.

Historical excerpts from other articles: a chronology

In 1904 B/4,000,000 in coins was placed in circulation in denominations of: 2-1/2 cents (niap), 5 cents (nickel), 10 cents (dime), 25 cents (quarter) & 50 cents (1/2 a dollar) and \$1.

1904-1914 Caribbeans who were contracted to come to Panama: (for Canal Construction)

Barbados 10,448, Martinique 5,542; Guadeloupe 2,053, Trinidad, 1,284, St. Kitts 942, British Guyana 332, St. Vincent, 296, Grenada, 93, St. Lucia 55, Jamaica 47, Curazao 23.

On this day, Nov. 6, 1906, President Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt embarks on a 17-day trip to Panama and Puerto Rico, becoming the first president to make an official diplomatic tour outside of the continental United States.

Sunday, March 30, 1919, was the beginning of lottery drawings: the first prize played 1705; second prize (one below) 1704 and 1706 in the third prize (one above).

Samuel A. Inniss is one of the leaders in the 1920 strike of West Indian workers against the Canal Zone government.

The Panama Tribune was established in 1928. This English language weekly, with a circulation of 8000, was the voice of the West Indian community and a vehicle for protesting the denial of social justice to thousands of non-U.S. citizens working for the American government on the Canal Zone.

In 1935 and later, there were summer sessions in Education sponsored by the Panamanian Ministry of Education at the *Liceo de Señoritas* with distinguished educators such as Dr. Ryder, an outstanding graduate of Chicago University, then Assistant Director of Personnel of the Panama Canal, and Dr. Stoddard, Superintendent of Schools of Philadelphia.

Between 1939 and 1949, Education Offerings in Local Rate Zone Communities were Upgraded.

1940 saw the newly organized University of Panama in operation.

In 1941 the ninth grade was newly established in Canal Zone schools.

From 1942-1948, there was this fight for higher educational opportunities for Local Rate employees, and the establishing of an extension branch of the University of Nebraska for the benefit of all, regardless of color, creed **or national origin**.

1944 there was a reorganization period of the La Boca Elementary School concurrent with the establishment of the Occupational High School.

http://www.pancanalumni.com/uploads/Article_on_Former_Panama_CZ_School_August_2008.pdf

<p>Lloyd LaBeach is the winner of a first Bronze medal for Panama in the Olympic games in London, 1948</p>	<p>Lloyd La Beach</p>  <p>Lloyd LaBeach, 1922-1999 Medallista Olímpica 1948 primero y único varón en centroamérica</p>	<p>George W. Westerman</p> 	 <p>Alfredo Cragwell</p>
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Alfredo Cragwell, was elected Alternate Deputy for the Province of Panama, period 1948-1952. Principal Deputy elected to the National Assembly for the period 1952-1956.

Westerman supported the 1954 language and curriculum conversion policy in Canal Zone schools which affected non-U.S. citizens. This policy mandated a change from an American curriculum in English to a Spanish language curriculum emphasizing Panamanian history and culture. The purpose was to facilitate the transition of students into Panamanian society and citizenship; however the rapid transition to the new curriculum caused many West Indian teachers who could not speak Spanish to lose their positions. The Westerman Committee organized and established the first library at the La Boca School - the nucleus of the present enlarged library, now known as the Technical Resources Center.

Ernesto de la Guardia, Panamanian President (1956-1960) appointed Westerman Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the General Assembly of the United Nations, where he served from 1956-1960. Westerman was the first Panamanian of West Indian parentage to enter Panama's diplomatic service.

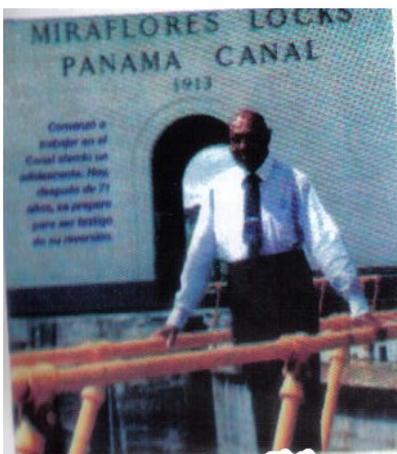
December 22, 1959, Sydney Young, founder/editor of the weekly The Panama Tribune, died.

In 1967 the Panamanian government appointed Westerman Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary in order to achieve diplomatic relations with the new Caribbean nations and to support their admittance into the Organization of American States. He was also appointed honorary Consul to Barbados while in Panama, a position he held in 1968 and 1969.

In 1978, Cirilo McSween was appointed Alternate **Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the General Assembly of the United Nations.**

1984 Cirilo McSween was appointed Honorary Vice Consul of Panama for the West Central region of the United States.

Cecil F. Haynes



The Elks Lodge has been donating scholarships to deserving students mainly in the Provinces of Panama and Colon.

Salem Mission soup kitchen in Colon supplied sustenance for many a- needy.

Participating in Politics beside Cragwell and Westerman: Fernando Bradley, Leroy Husband, Tito Chandler, Hector Spencer, Thelma King, Hector Gadpaille.

Captain Earle Hubert Holder Hunte is the First Black Master Pilot of West Indian descent to pilot and command ship transits through the Panama Canal. He worked for the Panama Canal for half a century.

Mr. Cecil F. Haynes received the Canal in 1999 and still holds the record as the Longest Worker for the Panama Canal "**72 Years of Service**".