SHOWTIME ★Theatre ★Arts ★Music

We've been here 345 years

Black History Feature

Ira Aldridge, the great Shakespearean actor said by some historians to have been born in Bel Air, Md. about 1804. Other historians place his birth in Africa or New York or that his parents brought him to Bel Air where in 1826 when he was taken to Europe by the celebrated actor Edmund Keene. Next week's AFRO will tell the the whole story of Ira Aldridge.

St. Peters P.E. Church at the corner of Druid Hill Ave. and Lanvale St. in 1873. Now home of Bethel AME Church, the Rev. John N. Bryant, pastor.

Maryland was one of the original thirteen colonies and in 1634 was established by 200 English Roman Catholic emigrants made up of gentlemen adventurers with their families and indentured and other servants.

Among the hardy voyagers who embarked at St. Clements Island were John Price, a black, and Mathias Tousa, a mulatto who had been taken aboard in the Barbados when the English vessels stopped for supplies.

The landing 345 years ago was at St. Mary's City in St. Mary's County. Cecil Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore received the charter in 1632. The new territory was named Maryland in honor of Maria, wife of King Charles of England. Baltimore City was laid out in 1730, 250 years ago.

Before the English came, Maryland was a wilderness with people in a stone age culture fashioned in the next hundred years into an English feudal domain, then into a state and then in 1776 into a union of states.

Traders from Virginia explored the shores of the Chesapeake around 1608; occassional Dutchmen after 1624 and before that Spaniards explored between 1526 to 1556.

Sir Walter Raliegh, knew of the Chesapeake Bay, then called Santa Maria on maps, during his unsuccessful colonization attempt of Roanoke Island between 1585 to 1587.

The historic Algonquin Indians were residents of the Chesapeake Bay country three centuries before the English settlers arrived. The colonists lived with four tribes or "nations" as neighbors.

There were the Piscataways of Southern Maryland and the Nanticokes and Pocomoke-Assateagues of the Eastern Shore of the Algonquin state who had similar dialect and customs. Another group was the Susquehannock or Sasquesahannock nation, an Iroquoian enemy of the Piscataway known in their own language as Andaste, Gandaste, Gandastoguez or Conestoga. Pressure from this tribe forced the Piscataway into a defensive alliance with the white newcomers and into intermarriage and freindship with the 8,000 free blacks in Maryland in 1790.

By an act of 1681, children born of a white woman and black men were free. After 1692, the issue of a union between any white woman and a slave of free blacks became servants for a long time. In 1715 a law was passed to forbid the marriage of a white to any black or mulatto slave. But by this law a white and free mulatto could marry. The law of 1717 made a free black or mulatto , except mulattos born of white women, slaves for life.

Some white settlers came to Maryland as teachers, scholars, skilled craftsmen, half-trained apprentices, sons of clergymen and businessmen. They worked as indentured servants to pay off their passage. A very large percentage of these white settlers were paupers who debtors, political and religious offenders who worked out their passage as indentured servants.

Germans arrived in Maryland in 1684 with the arrival of a small body of Labadists, mystics from Friesland. German immigration was especially large after the Napoleonic wars when people were driven out by famine and taxes. After the revolution of 1848, more came as political refugees.

Most of the Irish settlers who came as early as 1684 were Irish Roman Catholics. Early Irish were Charles Carroll, the signer of the Declaration of Independence; Protestant Irish came following the War of 1812 and the Great Famine, (1846-50), many coming to work on the B&O Railroad and as moners and farmers.

The first French settlers came to Maryland from Nova Scotia in 1775 and the first settlers from Rene le Blanc use "White" as their first family name.

Jews did not come to Maryland untik after the 1776 Revolution alihough Dr. Lumbroso, a Portugese physisician and the first Jew (1656) settled in St. Mary's County.

Poles began settling in Maryland during the Civil War originating in what was Prussian Poland, (Posen province). Their emigration was caused by collapse of the Central European grain market due to the importation of cheap American wheat.

A second period in 1890 can be traced to Galicia; and a third between 1905 and 1914 to the aftermath of the Russian Revolution of 1905.

There were Italians in Baltimore Town in 1796 and a few arrived arrived from seaports around Genoa. It was not until 1890 that a steady influx of Italian immigrants took place in Maryland.

By 1930, according to Maryland, A Guide To The Old Line State, Oxford Press-Sponsored by Governor Herbert R. O'Conor, there were 17000 Russians in Baltimore, the majority of them Jews; 9,000 Lithuanians who first started coming in 1876; 500 Finns; 1,200 Ukrainians; and 1,200 Greeks, the first five coming after the Turkish massacre of 1822.

Free blacks came to Maryland 345 years ago in 1634. By 1860 there were 90,000 free blacks in Maryland and on Oct. 12, 1864 every slave in Maryland became a free man. By 1930, blacks were 16 per cent of the total population of Maryland's one million six hundred and thirty thousand inhabitants. Six per cent were of foreign birth.

Today Baltimore's black population is sixty per cent of the total population. By understanding our history and the history of other Maryunderstand Martin Luther King's dream. After all, Thomas Jefferson said in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal and they are endowed by their creator with certian inalienable rights,".

If we can understand history and learn from it then the question before the house is, this is our Maryland too! We've been here long as everybody else and longer. Let's do something about it.

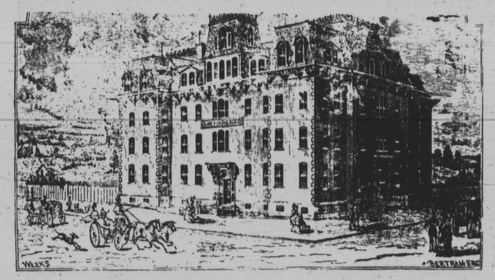
For more information:

"Men of Maryland"-Father George F. Bragg-1925

"Maryland-Oxford Press-1940

"The Negro In Maryland"-Maryland Historical Press, by Vera F. Rollo.

"Black Americans"-By John Hope Franklin-1970 —30—



The Home for the Aged of the Methodist Episcopal Church was located on the corner of West Franklin and Fulton Streets in 1873. Now a row of houses occupy the spot. Note open fields.

The State Normal School for whites occupied this building in Lafayette Square in 1873. Now razed, it is a vacant lot. Last use was as a vocational school.

Friends Meeting House and School House at Eutaw and Monument Sts. occupied this building in 1873. Later Maran Printers occupied the building. It is now a parking lot, one block from the AFRO - AMERICAN Newspapers at 628 N. Eutaw.

Black Baltimoreans in the Arts

Elton Clay Fax

By Ida Peters

Elton Clay Fax was born in Baltimore in 1909 and graduated from Douglass High School in June 1926. He is a painter, illustrator, author, printmaker and educator.

He studied at Claflin University and graduated from Syracuse University with a bachelor of fine arts degree in 1931. He did further study under the famous artist Augusta Savage.

He has been a teacher at Claflin University (1935-36); Public Works Administration Project; Maryland Federal Art Project and Harlem Community Center.

For seven years he was a chalk-talk artist for the New York Times Children's Book program. During 1959, he made his first trip to West Africa as a participant in the United States' Educational Exchange Program. He continues to lecture and sketch before public school audiences using Africa as his subject.

In 1964, he made a cultural good-will tour of East Africa for the U.S. Department of State. Elton Fax has traveled in South America and the Caribbean where he gave a series of chalk talks to student and professional art groups and also sketched portraits and caricatures of dignitaries.

In addition to publishing "West Africa Vignettes" he has designed and illustrated 27 books. His art work included murals for the old Dunbar High School. In 1932, under the late Mrs. Vivian Cook he won a gold medal from the Baltimore Women's Civic League. In 1939, his works were exhibited at the Baltimore Museum of Art under Roland J. McKinney.

Celebrated artist, Elton Fax, was honored at Morgan State University in 1976.

The work exhibited was "Portrait of a Young Man" then owned by the late Edward S. Lewis of the Urban League of New York. He is believed to be the first contemporary black artist to be exhibited at the Baltimore Museum of Art.

He has been honored by Corretta Scott King for "17 Black Artists," Louis Seley Nacal Award for Painting, 1972, Arena Players Award for Achievement in Contribution to Fine Arts, 1972.

Elton Fax is listed in "Who's Who in American Art;" "Who's Who in the East," and Roslyn Walker's "A Resource Guide to the Visual Arts of Afro-Americans," 1971.

Free lessons at Peabody

Students of the Peabody Conservatory of Music Pedagogy Class will offer a limited number of free private piano lessons which are open for all levels of proficiency, to anyone six years of age or older. The lessons are scheduled to begin the week of February 11 and continue through mid - May.

No previous musical training is necessary for acceptance into the program. Candidates must not be currently studying private piano, and must be able to meet with the teacher once a week for a half - hour lesson.

Night Scene

By Bob Matthews

Blame it on the weather, inflation or sundried other causes, but the truth of the matter is, Night Sceners aren't going out as much as they did a couple of months ago.

The beneficiaries of this tightening of the entertainment dollar, has to be the neighborhood bar, where happy hours are flourishing and people who live nearby are finding companionship.

Don't know whether or not you realized it, but for the people who now live out Liberty Rd. way, there really isn't a neighborhood bar for them to hang out in—unless you count the bar at D'Joint.

And so it was that we visited D'Joint this week, especially since we had heard so many glowing reports about the food in the upstairs dining room.

First off, it was a distinct pleasure to visit a place where parking was not a problem. Can imagine it might get a bit hairy on weekend nights, but there seems to be ample room for the average evening.

As you enter, there is a checkroom immediately to the left of the club entrance, presided over on the night we visited by a young lady who answers to the name of Kim. (Must give her credit for fortitude because without an electric heater, that checkroom was a frigid place.

Chatted with Charles Newby, the manager of D'Joint, he was a former manager of The Ritz, who told me that the restaurant plans to begin serving lunch in the very near future.

Also, the third floor of the place will be converted into a jazz room, with live entertainment on weekends, and jazz tapes being played during the other sessions.

Kim Evans

As for the food, if you're into soul food with class, then this is the place, for you'll find huge damask napkins, colorful tablecloths, and subdued lighting to go along with your dining pleasure.

The menu features such things as Chitterlings, hog maws, stewed chicken and rice or dumplings—you get the idea. And the crowning touch is the inclusion of hot rolls with every meal.

Then there is the downstairs bar area which has become a magnet for the upwardly mobile young businessmen and women. Dress is not the major thrust here, since we saw people wearing all sorts of garb—but decorum and just plain fun is order of things.

The room seems to be divided into three parts, with the bar proper occupying the entire left quadrant of the room. At the extreme right rear is the games area, with electronic shuffleboard prominently displayed in the center.

To the left are booths—in fact both walls are lined with them, for those who simply wish to have a little taste and talk. We rather liked the informality of the place for striking up a conversation is easy and the people are friendly without being boisterous.

For your information, the dining room is closed on Mondays, but stays open until 2 a.m. on weekends.

MOSTLY FOR MUSIC

The Left Bank Jazz Society presents the George Coleman Quintet, which will probably be the swingingest set so far this year. George is no stranger to Baltimore, having played for LBJS many times, and has fulfilled engagements at The Bandstand. With him will be Harold Mabern, piano; Clint Houston, bass; Danny Moore, trumpet, and Al Foster, drums. The group plays together on the N.Y. scene, so the LBJS appearance should be a smoker.

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At The Bandstand James Moody continues through the weekend, with Reuben Brown scheduled on piano; Hugh Walker, drums, and Reggie Workman, bass.

If last week is any indication, this is one of those "get there early" things, for it was SRO last weekend. And Moody showed why he is still one of the greatest.

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At The Sportmen's Lounge, Mickey Fields, along with Johnny Polite, Sonny Fowlkes and Shirley Fields are holding down the Friday and Saturday night slots, with the Saturday afternoon jazz jam being led by John Lamphkins.

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