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**Tarragona Club of Bangor, 1905**

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The program of the First Annual Ball of the Tarragona Club governs what appears to have been the club’s premiere social event, held in Bangor’s Essenic Hall on May 31, 1905. Printed by the Bangor Co-Operative Printing Company, the program features a floral cover, a front page announcing the ball, a two-page order of dances, and a back page listing officers and event supervisors. There are several intact copies of the program; one even has its tiny, original pencil attached. A true gem of the Gerald E. Talbot Collection, the Tarragona Club program/dance card is a perfect symbol of Bangor’s Black community, a group that was growing and thriving in the early 1900s.

According to the 1900 United States Census, 176 Blacks lived in Bangor—a significant increase from the 84 Blacks recorded there in 1870. Black Bangor would increase in number to 228 in 1930, before declining to a reported 112 in 1950. Migrants from along the eastern United States, Canada, and the Caribbean augmented Bangor’s Maine-born population to create a vibrant hybrid community. Tarragona Club membership reflects this diversity. Tarragona President Charles Raynolds Talbot was a native of Bangor; Vice President Edward Buck was from New York (or possibly New Jersey); Secretary Charles Smallwood was from Virginia; Treasurer William Stewart was from the Caribbean—possibly Martinique or Puerto Rico. Other noted members of the Club included Bangor native Charles A. Talbot and New Brunswick native Sterling A. Dymond.

The men of the Tarragona Club worked a variety of jobs. Charles A. Talbot was the proprietor of a seemingly successful catering business, but exclusively took care of his growing family. Panzy Dymond Talbot, wife of Charles R. Talbot, was a well-known cateress. The Talbot family included Bangor native Panzy Dymond Talbot; her husband, Charles R. Talbot; and their growing family. Panzy Dymond Talbot, wife of Charles R. Talbot, was a well-known cateress.

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His son, Charles R. Talbot, worked as a dining car chef before taking employment at the distinguished Bangor House Hotel. Edward Buck was a railroad porter. William Stewart was another delivery man, and Sterling Dymond was a manager for the Great Northern Paper Company. While the Tarragona Club appears to have been a men’s club modeled after the city’s exclusive Tattarrine Club, the women of Black Bangor are not to be forgotten. Josephine Smallwood was a restaurant cook turned caterer. Janie Dymond did not work outside the home, but exclusively took care of her growing family. Panzy Dymond Talbot, wife of Charles R. Talbot, was a well-known cateress.

The Tarragona Club program illustrates the mystery of Bangor’s Black community. On one hand, reliable sources of information, including the manuscript census, newspaper articles, obituaries, and city directories, aid in constructing the identity of the organization’s men and women. However, a complete understanding of its origin, purpose, and ultimate durability remains elusive. Some of these questions may never be completely answered, but they do not diminish the charm and value of this historical artifact. In fact, the unanswered questions may just enhance these qualities.

In Review


My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr., was first published in 1969, but was revised and reissued in 1993. I read Coretta Scott King’s autobiography when I was in grade 13. Yes, grade 13. Each morning during home room, we had a mandatory fifteen minutes of reading time. A voracious reader even then, I found those fifteen minutes blissful and inspiring. I gained valuable insight into the life of Martin Luther King, Jr., a man I idolized at the time, and into the personality of his wife, a woman whom I admired, but did not really understand.

Coretta Scott King’s biography changed that. In what must have been a labor of love and sorrow, King allows the reader entry into the joy and pain of having loved and lost one of the most important men—African American, American, Christian, human—in recorded history. King’s biography reminds us that before she was “Mrs. King,” she was Coretta Scott, an ambitious, engaging, and highly talented woman.

Some of the most heartwarming moments in the book are the funny, highly normal moments that take place inside any given family during any given day. My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr. illustrates how very normal the King family home was, and yet, how very atypical it was as the home of a Nobel-Prize winning civil rights activist. The drama of My Life is found in moments like the murder of Medgar Evers in Jackson, Mississippi, a murder that preceded and even foreshadowed King’s own assassination in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1968. Coretta Scott King also reveals that her husband’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech, delivered at the 1963 March on Washington, D.C., was inspired. After agonizing over what to say at that critical moment, King began his speech only to depart from the written words and speak from his spirit, with his spirit.

My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr. allows the reader insight into the quiet dignity of the womanhood of Coretta Scott King. After finishing it, I had a greater appreciation for the complexity and strength of Coretta Scott King, qualities that have continued to serve King in creating the King Center in Atlanta and protecting the integrity of the King family name.

Recent Publications

The following books were recently reviewed on H-Net Humanities and Social Sciences Online and may be of interest to readers of the Griot. The reviews may be viewed in their entirety at www.h-net.org/reviews.


Benita Roth. Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America’s Second Wave. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. [Reviewed by Tim Hodgdon, Mellon Fellow, Duke University.] Roth argues that women of the 1960s and 1970s were encouraged to organize their own feminist movements, resulting in separate feminist histories.


Recent Publications