

HOUSING

Courtesy of Portland City Club

In general, houses owned or rented by Negroes are old. This results from the practice of restricting sale of houses to Negroes to older districts of the city from which other races have moved out. No new housing is available to the Negro buyer unless it is located in the segregated or concentrated area. Land values in this area are high, thus discouraging building. No mortgage firms were found to be interested in soliciting or financing loans to Negroes for building.

There are very few apartments in the city available to Negroes. Such as are offered for rent to Negroes are small two to four-room apartments owned by Negroes. A few are houses which have been converted into apartments.

Representatives of the Apartment House Owners' Association said they had no policy prohibiting renting to Negroes, claimed they had received no applications from Negroes for rent of apartments, agreed that Negro occupants would not be welcomed unless in a segregated project.

One private apartment house owner stated that the tenants of his apartments are chosen on the basis of character and reputation in the community regardless of race, color or creed.

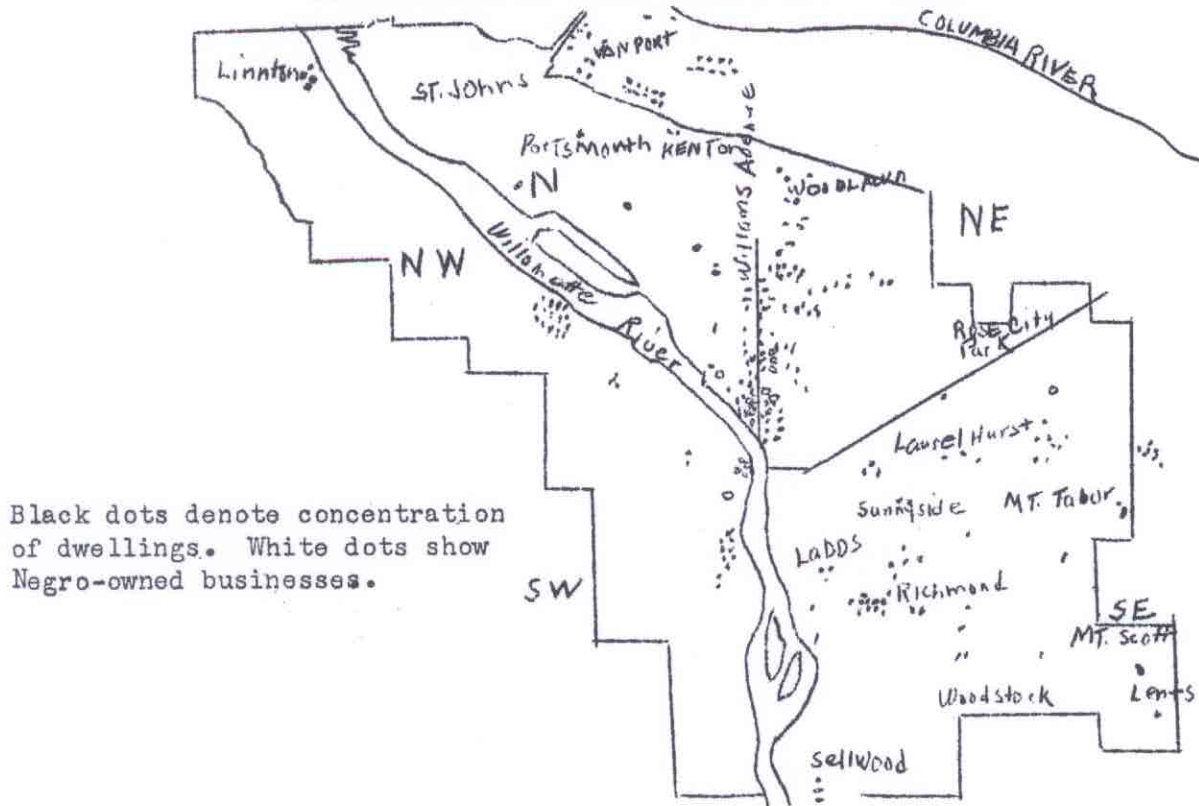
Interviews with representatives of the Portland Realty Board and prominent realtors disclose a policy of restricted sale of property to Negroes. Such restriction confines the sale of any member of the Realty Board to Negroes to the segregated area (bounded by N.E. Holladay, North Russell, North Williams and the Willamette River), with limited sale in Woodlawn, Alberta, and Waverly Heights are. This policy being more fully set forth in the Portland Realty Board's Code of Ethics, Part III Article 34, an By-Laws Article III, Sections 3 and 5 as follows:

Part III Article 34 -- CODE OF ETHICS --- A Realtor should never be instrumental in introducing into a neighborhood a character of property or occupancy, members of any race or nationality, or any individuals whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood.

Note: Article III sections 3 and 5 of the By-Laws provide that a Realtor is not relieved of this responsibility even where the owner instructs him to sell to anyone. These sections also provide for the penalty of violating these "ethics")

A recent survey by the Portland Council of Churches supports the finding of the City Club Committee that Realtors, generally, are willing to adopt a more liberal policy in selling to Negroes if there is evidence that the public sentiment favors such policy.

DISTRIBUTION OF NEGRO POPULATION IN PORTLAND



The map reproduced herewith gives a spot check of the distribution of Negro residents in Portland, indicating that Negro families live in 60 of 63 (U.S. Census Bureau) districts. The district bounded by N.E. Holladay, North and N.E. Russell, N.E. Union and the Willamette River, containing a large majority of Negro residents in the city may be said to constitute an area of concentration of Negro families.

This concentration has largely been brought about by an unwritten code of real estate interests governing the sale of property to Negroes only, in a part of this area bounded by N.E. Holladay, N. Russell, N. Williams and the river. Also, because of its close proximity to downtown Portland, Union Station, the railroad shops and yards making easy transportation to centers of Negro employment.

During the years of the existence of the Negro community, there have been established in it 18 places of business and amusement, among which is found one physician and one dentist's office, two fraternal buildings, several clubs and restaurants.

The other principal concentrations of Negro population are in the Woodlawn, Alberta, and Waverly Heights districts. In these areas, permanently employed Negroes live in well-kept individual family dwellings.

There is a large block of Negro families living in Guilds Lake and Vanport, temporary war housing projects. There are a few Negroes living in a housing project in Linnton, also in Fairview Homes. In Guilds Lake, Vanport and Fairview Homes, the Negro houses are segregated from other residents. The main theory given as reason for this is that in constructing war housing, the pattern set by the community was followed.

Occupancy of housing project dwellings has fallen off substantially since V-J day. Neither the Vancouver Housing Authority nor the Portland Housing Authority are in a position at present to give definite information concerning the future of the projects or as to what use will be made of the units in the future.

There is evidence of migration of Negroes from the housing projects into Portland. Most of the migrants are finding temporary space in rooms or are sharing homes with friends. The number of prospective Negro home buyers is on the increase.

A rumor that there was a plan to move some temporary homes from a housing project to the Montavilla District where they would be opened to Negroes. as a result of the rumor a group of citizens in Montavilla called a mass meeting at Vestal School and attempted to develop organized resistance to the rumored plan. According to reports on the meeting three schools of thought were expressed: 1. Opposition to any further increase in the present small Negro population, 2. Opposition of a segregated Negro section, 3. Opposition to a low-cost housing project in the area regardless of race or color of occupants. Those in the first category seemed to have charge of the meeting.

There seem to be no constructive plans for providing public or private housing that will be made available to Negroes. As pointed out above, the land values in the area set aside by real estates interests as available to Negroes is high. Thus, it is not considered good investment for housing.

Real estate dealers follow the policy of restriction very closely in selling to Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino people. Restrictive covenants are in force against minority group peoples in some sections of Portland.

While companies do not actively solicit Negro business, general and fire insurance is available to minority group property owners.