

IS HE A NEW NEGRO?


Booker T. Washington at the Cotton States Exposition.

THE NEGRO BUILDING

A Great Exhibit of Negro Skill and Industry.

Bishop Turner Says There Is No New Negro, but a New White Man.

Atlanta, Ga., Sept. 28.—Staff Correspondence.—“We have a new woman and a new negro in the South, and you will find them both in this Cotton States Exposition.” So said a brilliant Southern woman, one of the social leaders of Atlanta, to me. She spoke only of what have been the greatest subjects of talk since the exposition opened. The new woman and the new negro are in evidence here, and they are attracting universal attention. I propose to take up both these subjects, and shall reverse the order of their consideration—not because I would put the new negro ahead of the new woman, but because the opening address of Booker T. Washington, of Tuskegee, Ala., was the sensation of that great day in Atlanta. Mr. Washington opened the eyes of the white people of the South. They heard his address in amazement. They applauded him as a new Moses of his people. They talked about it and about him. The papers wrote about both speaker and speech. Booker T. Washington is still the subject of more talk than any other man who figured in the exercises at the formal



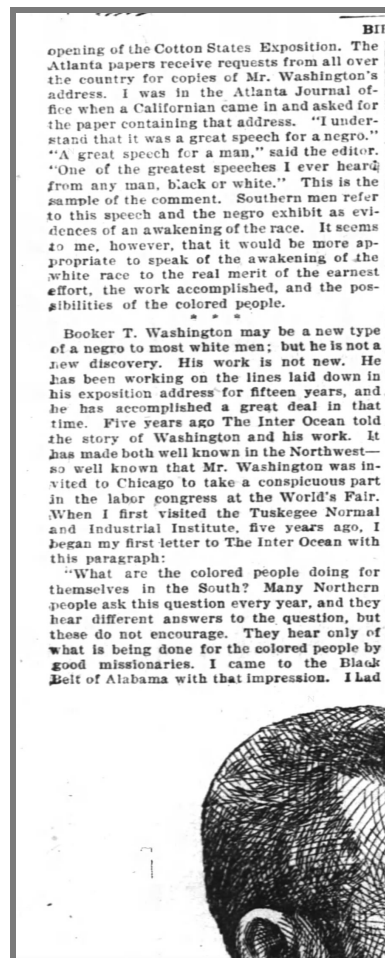
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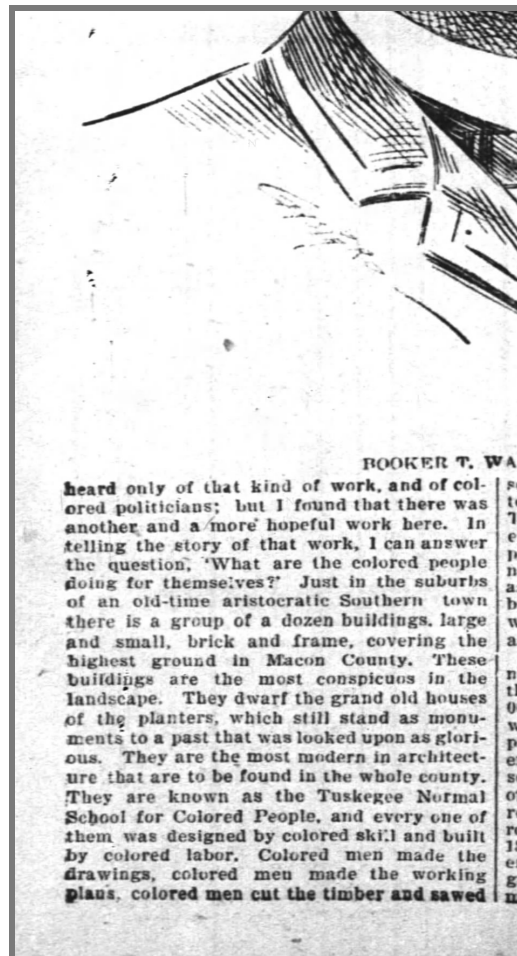
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BOOKER T. WA.
heard only of that kind of work, and of colored politicians; but I found that there was another and a more hopeful work here. In telling the story of that work, I can answer the question, "What are the colored people doing for themselves?" Just in the suburbs of an old-time aristocratic Southern town there is a group of a dozen buildings, large and small, brick and frame, covering the highest ground in Macon County. These buildips are the most conspicuous in the landscape. They dwarf the grand old houses of the planters, which still stand as monuments to a past that was looked upon as glorious. They are the most modern in architecture that are to be found in the whole county. They are known as the Tuskegee Normal School for Colored People, and every one of them was designed by colored skill and built by colored labor. Colored men made the drawings, colored men made the working plans, colored men cut the timber and sawed

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the lumber, colored men made the brick, colored men laid these brick, fashioned the timbers, and colored men alone are represented in the construction of these most modern buildings in the Black Belt; but the work of colored creation does not stop there. Grouped around among these school buildings and colleges are shops, where colored boys are making wagons to sell to the white merchants of Tuskegee; harness, buggies, house, office, and church furniture, for white people to buy; boots and shoes, clothing, bed mattresses, and, in fact, carrying on, in a small way, almost every industry known in the South. These colored boys and girls are not learning to handle tools in toy shops, to waste material in becoming familiar with them.



THE NEGRO


They are making their own tools in many instances, and in every school shop they are turning out goods ready for the market which the whites are glad to buy, and acknowledge that they do so because they cannot do better elsewhere."

The story of Washington and his practical work was then told in these columns and it has been told again and again, but when the man appeared on the platform at the opening of the Cotton States Exposition and delivered his address, saying what he had said many times before and giving utterance to ideas he had already worked out most successfully in a practical way, he was a revelation to the great majority of the people who heard him, and he was heralded as the



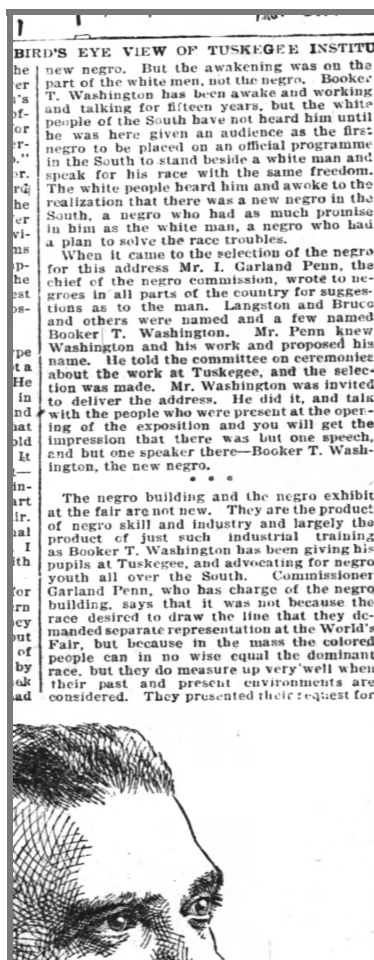
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picture, except in the story it tells, but it is well executed and it attracts much attention from whites and blacks for the conception and the story told. In the central square under the dome of the building there is quite a large collection of pictures and several pieces of statuary. Most of the work is from the Amateur Art Club, of Washington. Mr. Freeman has portraits of Douglass, Bruce, and Langston, and several other figure pieces which are very creditable. Mr. W. C. Hill, of Washington, has several pieces of statuary that are very good, one of them called "The Stubborn Shoe," representing a little girl trying to put on her shoe with her toes stuck into the heel of the shoe and puzzling her brain how to get it on. Another represents the negro with chains broken, but not free. The



THE TRANSPORTA

same society has a large collection of crayons, photographs of colored churches and schools and hospitals in Washington and some exquisite art needlework.

In the art collection there are also three pictures by Mr. H. O. Tanner, the son of Bishop Tanner, of the African M. E. Church. Mr. Tanner is a talented and finely educated young negro, and is now studying art in Paris. One of his pictures in the last Salon received honorable mention this year. There is also a marble bust of Charles Sumner, by Edmona Lewis, the colored sculptor, who has her studio now in Italy.

Two of the largest and best exhibits of industrial work are from the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute and Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute. Tuskegee is known as the child of Hampton, because Booker T. Washington had his training at Hampton, and was recommended as president of the Tuskegee Institute by General Samuel C. Armstrong, the founder of Hampton. But Tuskegee's exhibit in the negro building is almost, if not quite, equal to that from Hampton, and both show what industrial training has done for the negro.

In the Tuskegee exhibit there are large cases containing the work of the sewing, dress-making, and millinery departments, the tailor shop, the harness and shoe shops, desks, chairs, and tables from the furniture shop, a handsome carriage, a light buggy, a phaeton, and a farm wagon from the carriage shop, a steam engine built by the boys in the iron-working department, tools made in the same shop, and also exhibit farm products, fruits

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some trade before they are allowed to graduate. The work is not amateurish, but equal in finish to that put upon the market by manufacturers of these products.

In the Hampton Institute exhibit there are similar examples of students' work, some of it of a more pretentious character than that from Tuskegee. There is a handsome revolving bookcase, a richly-carved sideboard, a mantel, and a hall tree of exceptionally fine workmanship, and any of these pieces will compare favorably with any furniture exhibit to be found in the exposition. There are carriages, buggies, phaetons, and wagons from the Hampton shops, a large drill press and a half-power engine to run it. These were both made for use in the shops by the students who work there. Hampton also shows some fine ornamental iron work in banquet and large standard lamps, to show that there are artists in iron as well as artists in bronze, marble, and clay, some fine samples of book printing and binding from the printing department, and a large exhibit of various kinds of work to show how complete is the great industrial school established by General Armstrong, who had charge of the freedmen at that point at the close of the war, and started a school to teach colored youths how to earn their own living by systematic work from trained hands and developed intellects.

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There are many other school exhibits from the Knoxville College, Clark University, at Atlanta; the Georgia State Industrial College, at Savannah; the State Normal College, at Montgomery, Ala.; the State Normal and Industrial School, Normal, Ala.; the Gammon Theological Seminary, at Atlanta; the Atlanta Baptist Seminary; the Central Tennessee College, at Nashville; the Fisk University, at Nashville; the Atlanta University, the Spellman Female Seminary, at Atlanta; the Schofield Normal and Industrial Institute, at Aiken, S. C., and a number of other educational and industrial institutions for negroes. The colored people of Chicago have an exhibit of various kinds of work, and there are many individual exhibits of art, mechanical, and agricultural work. There are a number of patents by colored men, some fine tile mantels from a colored manufacturer at Atlanta; a large drug exhibit from the pioneer negro

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druggists in the South, fancy needle work, collections of fine fruits and grains, and enough excellent work of great variety to demonstrate the capabilities and development of the negro in every department of labor. The negro building has in its exhibits more variety than any other building at the exposition, because it shows the work of the race in all departments.

There is one small corner of the negro building which represents the other extreme of the race. It is marked "Uncivilized Africa," and is an exhibit of some of the natural resources and some of the crude manufactures of the west coast of Africa. Bishop Turner, who has been for years urging the negroes to emigrate to Liberia, brought this exhibit home with him when he returned from Africa, a few weeks ago. He says that it does not represent civilized Africa, but the uncivilized natives, the heathen of that country. He has a collection of their swords, knives, and spears, which, he says, were hammered out of iron ore found there so rich that the natives use it without any knowledge of smelting; samples of the woods that grow on the west coast of the Dark Continent; palm and coconut oils, made by the natives; samples of leather and cloth, made by the heathen; and many other curious specimens of African products. Over this exhibit the Bishop has strung a line of delicately woven birds' nests, which are shaped like the long-handled gourd. They are the nests of the weaver bird, and they are as carefully woven as a bit of wicker work. The long arm is attached to the limb of a tree, and through it the bird passes to the large and bulb-like nest in the bottom. There is one article in the Bishop's collection which is not heathen. It is a beautiful silk quilt of the same pattern as that made by a Liberian woman and presented to Queen Victoria. She duplicated the work for Bishop Turner. It is a delicate and intricate piece of patch work, and represents the African coffee tree in bloom.

* * *

Bishop Turner has little patience with those who talk about the new negro. He strolled through the negro building with me, but saw little that was new in the workmanship that was evidenced by the exhibits.

"There is nothing new in all this fine work," said he. "The negroes always did the finest kind of work in the South. The slaves were skilled carpenters and wheelwrights and blacksmiths. They did all the work in the old days of slavery. They were not mere druggists without skill. They built the grand old mansions of the planters. They made the carriages and wagons and buggies used by their masters; they did the iron work, as well as the wood work. They made much of the furniture, and were skilled cabinet-makers. In fact, the slaves did all of the work in the South then; and there were skilled mechanics and carpenters among them—more than we now have, perhaps. In that respect, we have a very old-fashioned negro exhibit here. The men who owned slaves gave the best testimony to their skill and intelligence as workmen when they had their own carpenters, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, and cabinet-makers among their slaves, and trusted them to build all the houses, manufacture most of the comforts which surrounded the Southern home. The women could do as fine sewing then as now, and they were the skilled cooks, famous for their dishes. No, this work is not the evidence of a new negro. It is the skill of the same old negro who was in slavery. The

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dence of a new negro. It is the skill of the
same old negro who was in slavery. The
only thing new about it is the freedom of the
negro to learn what trade he pleases and
work out his own salvation in his own way.
I am as proud of this exhibit as any one, but
I have no patience with the talk about the
new negro as a workman. Why, that was the
reason he was kept in slavery so long. He
was too valuable to be set free."
"Do you still think the negroes should emi-
grate to Africa?"
"Yes; several million of them. They can
be spared from this country, and they can do
much better in Africa. They will become the
leaders and the civilizers of that continent.
The stalwart old negro Bishop strolled
out of the negro building with me, and we
turned our steps to the Midway. In front of
the Dahomey Village there was a big-nosed
white man urging the visitors to not miss
seeing the wild cannibals from the west coast



PORTATION BUILDING.


of Africa. The old Bishop stopped and heard
the stereotyped speech, and remarked that
here must be the "new negro." Then he
walked up to the showman and said:
"Why do you white men pursue the negro
to Africa with your lying? You have for
years lied about the negro in this country,
and now, when you are being found out, you
are lying about the negro at home on his na-
tive heath."
The showman stopped, startled for a mo-
ment, while the crowd gathered about. Then
he asked, "What do you know about it?" and
began again on his speech. But the Bishop
was not to be ignored.
"I know all about it, sir," he replied. "I
am a negro, and I live in Africa a good part
of the time. There are not, and never have
been, any cannibals on the west coast of
Africa. You are simply repeating some of
the lies told by white men who went to Africa
and had to lie about the country to magnify
their own efforts and pose as heroes of great
courage and endurance. The natives of the
west coast of Africa may be heathens and
uncivilized, but they are more peaceable and
gentle than many of you civilized and enlight-
ened white men here in America; and these
wild negro cannibals you have here, cavort-
ing around like apes and baboons, never saw
Africa. They are lazy, good-for-nothing ne-




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groes from New York, or some other town, where they have been taught to jump about like monkeys and yell like hyenas, while you tell these people that they are talking in their native tongue. Stop your lying about the negro!"

The crowd shouted, the showman looked stupefied, and the Bishop walked on down the Midway, telling me that there was no new negro. He was simply the same old negro, showing his capacity as he was given opportunity by the new white man; and I am not sure that he is wrong. Booker T. Washington and Bishop Turner are not so far apart, except on the question as to where the negro is to work out his own salvation. Washington insists that by applying the industry and capacity that made the negro valuable in slavery to the new condition of freedom the negro can do the work and become independent here in America. Bishop Turner wants the negro to go to Africa and apply these new conditions in a new country. General Armstrong said to me, just before he died:

"This man Washington is worthy the name he bears. He will live to be known as the Washington of his race.

The speech of Washington has awakened the white men of the South to the realization that there has been a change. The negro building, with its exhibits of the work of negroes, offers its testimony to the truth of Booker T. Washington's teachings.

L. W. B.

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Part 12

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