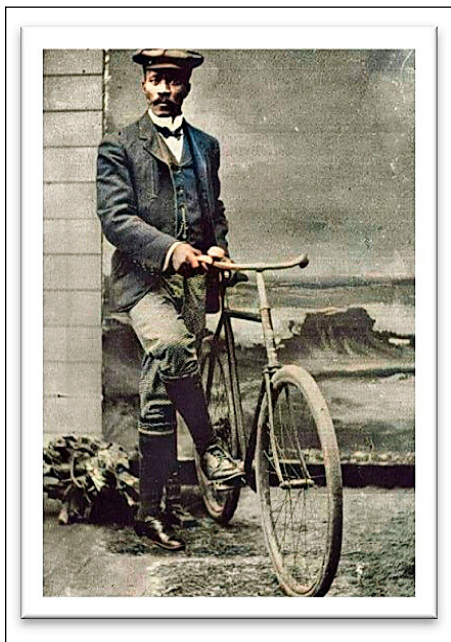




Louisa Van Horne was the first teacher of color in Newport public schools. She began teaching in 1902 at the former Edward Farewell Street School. Her historic appointment made national news with one Southern newspaper reporting, "The colored people of Newport, Rhode Island have won a notable victory in bringing about the election of Miss Louisa Van Horne as a teacher in the public schools. Miss Van Horne is refined and educated." Collection of the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society.



Dr. M. Alonzo Van Horne was born December 9, 1871, at his family's 47 John Street home in Newport. His father, Rev. Mahlon Van Horne, was pastor of the historic Union Congregational Church. Dr. Van Horne graduated from Rogers High School and the Bryant & Stratton Business College. He received his medical degree in dentistry from the Howard University Dental School in 1896. That same year, he would become Newport and Rhode Island's first licensed African heritage dentist with offices at 22 and 166 Broadway. He was also a very active social and political leader. He was a founding member of the Newport Branch of the NAACP in 1919. He led several political organizations, including the Charles Sumner Political Club, that promoted the inclusion of people of African heritage in all aspects of government. He was also one of the most prominent leaders in early Masonic fraternities, including Grand Master of the Stone Mill Lodge, Commander of the Benjamin Gardner Commandery, Deputy Grand Master of the Eureka Lodge of Rhode Island and Odd Fellows. He was among the few men of color to receive the 33rd Degree of Masonry. Collection of the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society.



A streetscape photo of the George T. Downing Block circa 1905. Newport Historical Society Collection.



The George N. Barclay children of Newport, circa 1913.

Preservation Society Of Newport County —

## GILDED AGE NEWPORT IN COLOR

NEWPORT, R.I. — The Preservation Society of Newport County, in partnership with the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society, has launched the exhibition "Gilded Age Newport in Color," taking visitors back to the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries when families of African heritage were active members of a new type of urban setting — the resort community.

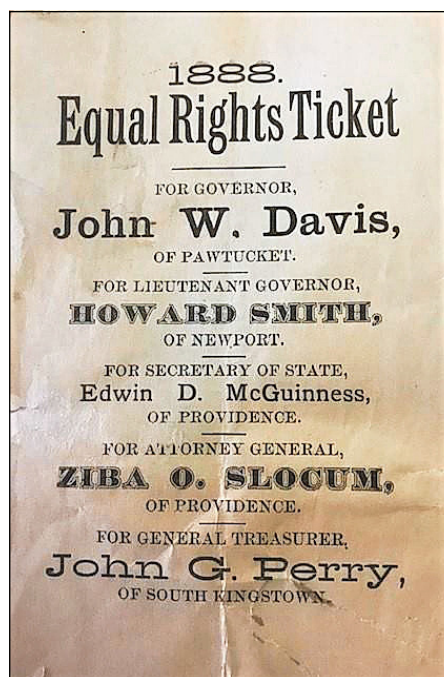
At Rosecliff through June 30, this exhibition will display more than 150 objects ranging from photographs, handbills, business cards and news clippings to furniture, clothing, jewelry and ceramics, from the collections of the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society, The Preservation Society of Newport County and other institutions.

The exhibition examines various aspects of everyday life in the African heritage community of Gilded Age Newport, including where they lived, worked, played, traveled and worshipped. The city offered a rare opportunity for persons of color from Providence, R.I., Boston, New York City, Philadelphia and Washington, DC, to experience an uninhibited social exchange.

"The 'Gilded Age Newport in Color' exhibition explores an important chapter in American history, when African American families could unite and promote their economic and social well-being through self-reliance, entrepreneurship, political advancement and cultural interchange," says Theresa "Soni" Guzmán Stokes, executive director of the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society. "Rhode Island's Black Heritage Society has drawn from its more than 9,000 linear feet of collections representing an African heritage experience that dramatically marks African heritage excellence. As best described by Booker T. Washington, America's leading civil rights advocate of the Gilded Age, 'Success always leaves footprints.'"

"We are proud to continue telling stories of the Gilded Age from different perspectives that give us a broader understanding of Newport during this important era," says Trudy Coxe, chief executive officer of the Preservation Society.

Newport's earliest African American doctors, dentists, teachers, hospitality entrepreneurs and elected officials appeared during the Gilded Age. Visitors will see how African heritage entrepreneurs leveraged their commercial enterprises to promote economic security and advance their political interests by hosting numerous African heritage social



An 1888 Equal Rights ticket. Stokes Family Collection.

and political gatherings that ran the broad spectrum of political rallies and became the foundation for the later Twentieth Century Civil Rights Movements. Additionally, these entrepreneurs built wealth to invest in and advance civic, recreational, social and political interests for all people of color.

Visitors will be introduced to significant historical figures like Dr. Marcus F. Wheatland, the first known African American physician to live and practice in Newport and a medical specialist to many of the city's summer elite; accomplished journalist Lillian Susie Fitts Jeter, who wrote for *Ladies Home Journal*, *The Saturday Evening Post* and *McCall's Magazine* among other publications; soprano opera singer Abbie Mitchell; and prominent literary critic and poet William Stanley Beaumont Braithwaite.

The Rhode Island Commerce Corporation will assist with marketing the debut of the exhibit on the national stage as part of the state's plan to promote the rich and diverse history of Rhode Island.

"Newport is well known as the blissful summer retreat destination for America's wealthiest families and individuals back in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, but it was also home to an abundant African American community that played critical roles in the economic and cultural development of African her-

itage and the county overall," says Anika Kimble-Huntley, Rhode Island Commerce Corporation's chief marketing officer. "African heritage families were not looking to integrate or emulate the white elite families of Newport; they were looking to do business with them and gain interdependence and establish their own communities. This exhibition is an important step in sharing the holistic picture of Newport's diverse history."

This exhibition is included with admission to Rosecliff.

The Preservation Society of Newport County, Rhode Island, is a nonprofit organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. It is dedicated to preserving and interpreting the area's historic architecture, landscapes, decorative arts and social history. Its 11 historic properties — seven of them National Historic Landmarks — span more than 250 years of American architectural and social development.

The Rhode Island Black Heritage Society, formed in 1975, is one of America's oldest African heritage and historical organizations and a founding member of the Association of African American Museums. Constituted for the purposes of collecting, preserving, and interpreting materials relating to the history of the African Heritage people of Rhode Island and beyond. For more information, [www.riblackheritage.org/](http://www.riblackheritage.org/).

Rhode Island Commerce Corporation is the official full-service, economic development organization for the state of Rhode Island. The Corporation works with public, private and nonprofit partners to create the conditions for businesses in all sectors to thrive as well as improve the quality of life for Rhode Island citizens. Rhode Island Commerce Corporation's tourism division works in partnership with local convention and visitors' bureaus, chambers of commerce and private travel-related organizations to promote economic opportunity and prosperity for Rhode Island through both domestic and international tourism. In 2022, Rhode Island attracted 27.7 million visitors, and tourism spending contributed \$5.3 billion to the state's economy with a total economic impact of \$7.9 billion. Tourism subsidized 84,386 jobs, representing one in every eight jobs in the state, providing more than \$1.9 billion in government revenues as well as contributed \$903 million in state and local taxes.

Rosecliff is at 548 Bellevue Avenue. For information, [www.newportmansions.org/events](http://www.newportmansions.org/events).