Dr. Anderson Ruffin Abbott
(C. 1837-1913)
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The Plight

We know that the truth has been told over to the world a thousand times but we have had no ears to listen yet for more than fragments of it, we have heard a murmur now and then, an echo here and there. What has truth done to us that we must always be afraid of it, as of a monster with a shape unknown.

Edwin Arlington Robinson
WILSON RUFFIN ABBOTT

Wilson Ruffin Abbott was born of free parents in Richmond, Virginia in 1801. As a lad he apprenticed to a carpenter, but ran away from home at the age of 15 and went to Alabama, where he worked in a hotel. Later he became a steward on a Mississippi steamboat. He was hurt when a cord of wood fell over on him, and Ellen Toyer, a Black maid who was on the boat, nursed him back to health. The two young people were married and settled down in Mobile, Alabama, where Abbott opened a general provisions store. His wife taught him to read and write, but he needed no one to teach him mathematics. He had been born with a natural ability for figures and could do large sums in his head.

Before long Mobile's city council passed a law requiring all free Blacks to post a bond signed by two white men, guaranteeing their good behavior, and to wear badges showing that they were under bond. Abbott refused to obey the new regulations. He soon received an anonymous letter warning him of a plot to destroy his store and advising him to leave the city at once. That very day Abbott drew his money out of the bank and put his wife and children on a steamer for New Orleans. He followed them the next day. The warning had been true; Abbott's store was ransacked. Abbott never returned to Mobile, although he tried unsuccessfully to get compensation for his property there.

The Abbotts moved to New York, but finding that Blacks were treated unfairly there as well, decided to settle in Toronto; they arrived in 1825. Two years later Abbott was one of the city's Blacks who joined Captain Fuller's Company of Volunteers during the Mackenzie Rebellion.

Abbott started up a tobacco shop; when it failed he began to buy and rent houses, warehouses and offices. By 1875 he owned more than 75 properties in Toronto, Hamilton, Dundas and Owen Sound. He was active in Toronto's Colored Wesleyan Church, the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada and the politics of St. Patrick's Ward, where he lived. Ellen Toyer Abbott founded the Queen Victoria Benevolent Society, which helped hundreds of refugees who were coming into Toronto.

The Abbotts, who had five daughters and four sons, moved to Elgin for a short time to give their children the advantage of a classical education at the famous Buxton School. They returned to Toronto, where Abbott died in 1876. He was buried on a hillside in Toronto's Necropolis, overlooking the Don Valley.
NAME: ABBOTT, Wilson R.
YEAR OF BIRTH: 1801
PLACE OF BIRTH: Richmond, Virginia
PRESENT OCCUPATION: Businessman (Real Estate)

CASE HISTORY

Wilson R. Abbott was born in the city of Richmond Virginia in 1801, of free parents. He was apprenticed to a carpenter, but becoming tired of restraint, ran away from home at the age of 15 and went to Alabama, where he worked in a hotel for his board. Afterwards he secured employment as steward on one of the palatial steamboats plying upon the Mississippi. It was while thus employed that he received a severe injury by a stick of cord wood falling upon him from a great height. The accident was witnessed by a Miss Ellen Toyer, who at that time was acting in the capacity of maid to a lady from Boston who was on board the steamer. She sought out the unfortunate young man and nursed him during the voyage. This acquaintance evolved into marriage in the year 1830.

Shortly afterwards, he settled down with his family in the city, accumulated considerable means by this time, bought property, and opened a provision store. He was very successful in business and his prosperity began to provoke the jealousy of the poor whites. He was also known to assist slaves to free themselves by paying their masters for them and allowing the slaves to work and repay him themselves. For this reason also he was looked upon with suspicion. About this time the Nat Turner insurrection broke out and the feeling of prejudice and hatred of colored men became very intense. So much so that spies were put upon their tracks. They were not allowed to get together or stand upon the streets or to be out after nine. It finally culminated in an ordinance passed by the council that all free colored men should give bonds signed by two white men for their good behaviour and should wear a badge to indicate that such bonds had been given. This was too much for the spirit of Mr. Abbott to submit to, and he refused to do either. He thus received an anonymous letter informing him that a plot had been formed to attack his store that night, and destroy his goods; and advising him to remove himself and family from the city before night. He had good reason to believe his information was reliable. He accordingly drew out what money he had in the bank, put his wife and children on board a steamer for New Orleans that afternoon, and followed them on another steamer at night. That night his store was entered and pillaged and what goods that were not destroyed were carried away. He never returned to Mobile but went with his family to New York.

Finding the feeling towards colored men no better in the North he decided to settle in Canada. He arrived in Toronto in the year 1835, and he remained until he died in 1876.

He never returned to Mobile; in fact he dared not return to lay claim to one dollar of his property or goods. He made several attempts through agents to recover the real estate, but all were ineffectual so he finally give it up as lost.
After settling in Toronto the rebellion broke out. He took part in the defense of the city [serving in Captain Fuller's company of volunteers.] He commenced business as a tobacconist on the site now occupied by the Canada Life buildings. He did not succeed very well. He then turned his attention to real estate, and purchased considerable property, and built houses for renting. He could write his name only and was taught by his wife to read. He had a mathematical turn of mind and could compute large sums mentally. He also had a ready faculty of applying the rules of common sense to the everyday business transactions. He was regarded as an honest, industrious, reliable citizen and ran at one time as representative in the council for St. Patrick's Ward, beating the Hon. Captain Elmsley by 40 votes, and was for many years a member of the Reform Central Committee.
Anderson R. Abbott, a son of Wilson Ruffin Abbott, was born in Toronto in 1837. He became the first Canadian-born Black doctor and served as one of eight Black surgeons in the Union Army during the American Civil War. He himself wrote the following sketch of his life:

I was born in the City of Toronto, April 7th in the year 1837...I was married on Aug. 9th - 1871 to Mary A. Casey, daughter of T.F. Casey - a Canadian born in St. Catharines, Ont. I received my elementary education in private and public schools afterwards at the Toronto Academy in connection with Knox's College...A.M. Lafferty, Samuel R. Moore and myself were the only Colored students in attendance - I remained at this school about three years and was very successful in carrying away either prizes or honors in all my classes - I afterwards attended school in Oberlin, Ohio, remained there about three years. On returning home I matriculated in medicine for four years under the care of the late Dr. A.T. Augusta N.B. Trinity College, and passed the primary examination for the degree of Bachelor of Medicine at Toronto University in 1857 also the Medical Board of Upper Canada for a licence to practice in 1861 - I graduated in medicine when I was 23 years of age. In 1863 I was appointed surgeon in the U.S. Army and...was placed in charge of (Camp Baker and Freedman's) Hospitals in Washington...until my resignation April 5th 1866. I...returned home, was married in 1871 and went into practice in Chatham, Ontario. In Chatham I held the following positions: President of the Wilberforce Educational Institute from 1873 to 1880, Coroner, County of Kent, 1874...President of Chatham Literary & Debating Society, President Chatham Medical Society in 1876. In 1881...I removed from Chatham to Dundas. Appointed Doctor for Dundas Mechanics Institute in 1881...I removed from Dundas to Oakville in 1889, and in 1890 removed to Toronto - In April 1890 I was elected a member of Jas. S. Knowlton Post No. 532 Grand Army of the Republic and on Nov. 21st, 1892 appointed Aide de Camp on the Staff of the Commanding Officers Dept. of N.Y...On resigning I was presented with Sword, Sash and Belt by the officers and Comrades of the Post. I was also honored by being presented with a Sheppard Pleat Shawl which Mr. Lincoln wore on his way to the 1st inauguration and which formed part of a disguise which it is alleged he wore on that occasion to escape assassination - The shawl was presented to me by Mrs. Lincoln after the assassination of the President.

Abbott was also an active member of the York Pioneers and of the Canadian Institute. In 1834 he became Medical Superintendent of Provident Hospital in Chicago, where he stayed until he retired in Toronto. In his later years he wrote articles for the Chatham Planet, the Dundas Banner and the New York Age. He was a leader of Toronto's Black community and attacked discrimination wherever he found it.
History of A. R. Abbott

Facts concerning life furnished at the request of Mr. J. C. Hamilton Barrister - Toronto Oct. 1889.

My name and title in full is Andersen R. Abbott, M.D. I was born in the City of Toronto in April of the year 1837 - on the spot on King Street which is now occupied by the Canada Life Insurance Building. I was married on Aug. 9, 1871 to Mary A. Casey, daughter of T. F. Casey, a Canadian born in St. Catherine, Ont. I received my elementary education in private and public schools, afterwards at the Toronto Academy in connection with Dr. Knox College on the site now occupied by the Queens Hotel. The names of some of the teachers that were at that time employed were Rev. Mr. Laing, Rev. Mr. Thomas Henning, Mr. MacDonald, Rev. Alex Gale, principle (sic) J. G. Clark, Prof. of Music and __________, Prof. of French — Moss Ruttary, Ross McIntosh, Wells, McKenzie, Saltison, MacDonald were some of the senior pupils. A.M. Lafferty, Samuel R. Ward & myself were the only coloured students in attendance. I remained at this school about three years and was very successful in carrying away either prizes or honors in all of my classes. I afterwards attended school in Oberlin, Ohio, remained there about two years. On returning home I matriculated in medicine in the University of Toronto and studied medicine for four years under the care of the late Dr. A.G. Augusta, M.B. Trinity College and passed the primary examination for the degree of Bachelor of Medicine at the Toronto University in 1867, also the Medical Board of Upper Canada for a license to practice in 1867. I graduated in medicine when I was 23 years of age.

In 1863 I was appointed a surgeon in the U.S. Army and served till the close of the war. I was placed in charge of Hospitals in Washington, D.C. after being in the service a few months and remained
until my resignation April 5th, 1866. When resigned returned home, was married in 1871 and went into practice in Chatham, Ontario. During my residence in Chatham, I held the following positions: President of the Wilberforce Educational Institute from 1873 to 1880; appointed Coroner, County of Kent, 1874; Associated Editor of "Missionary Messenger" the Literary organ of the B.M.E. Church in 1874. President of Chatham Debating Society; President Chatham Medical Society in 1878; Worthy Chief Templar Banner Lodge I.O.G.T. (?) In 1881 I removed from Chatham to Dundas. Appointed Director for Dundas Mechanics Institute in 1881; Vice Pres. in 1883, President in 1884. Appointed High School Trustee in 1883 and Chairman of Internal Management Committee from 1885 - 1889. I served as Warden of St. James Church and Registrar of St. James Guild. I removed from Dundas to Oakville in 1889, and 1890 removed to Toronto. In April 1890 I was elected as a member of Jas. S. and surgeon of the post in 1892. Knobton Post No 532 Grand Army of the Republic, and Nov. 21st, 1899 appointed Aide de Camp on the Staff of the Commanding officer, Dept. of M.I. I received very flattering testimonials from my superior officers of my efficiency as asst. surgeon in the Army. On resigning I was presented with sword sash and belt by the officers and comrades of the Post. I was also honored by being presented with Shepard Plaid Shawl which Mr. Lincoln wore on his way to the 1st inauguration and which formed a part of the disguise which it is alleged he wore on that occasion to escape assassination. The shawl was presented to me by Mrs. Lincoln after the assassination of the President. See N.Y News June 29, 1866.

Personal History of Dr. Abbott
MEDICAL HISTORY

ANDERSON RUFFIN ABBOTT, MD, 1837—1913

Henry S. Robinson, PhD
Washington, DC

Anderson Ruffin Abbott was born in Toronto, Canada, on April 7, 1837, the son of Wilson R. and Ellen Toyer Abbott, who had emigrated as "free people of color" from Mobile, Alabama, to Toronto in 1835. Anderson Abbott was educated at Toronto Academy where he was an honor student, and Oberlin College, Ohio, Preparatory Department, 1856-1858. In 1861 he graduated in medicine from Trinity College, University of Toronto. He was a licentiate of the medical board of Upper Canada in 1862. His mentor was Dr. Alexander T. Augusta, who was born free in Virginia, matriculated at Trinity Medical College in Toronto, and graduated in 1856 with a bachelor of medicine degree.

Doubtlessly influenced by Dr. Augusta, who had successfully requested a commission in the United States Army in 1863, Abbott wrote the Secretary of War, E.M. Stanton, on February 6, 1863:

"I have just learned by our city papers that it is the intention of the government of the United States to raise 150,000 coloured troops. Being one of those, I beg to make application for a commission as assistant surgeon. My qualifications are that I am 24 years of age; I have studied medicine five years; I am a licentiate of the college of Physicians and Surgeons of Upper Canada; I am also a matriculant of the Toronto University where I intend to take my degree in the spring of Bachelor of Medicine."

On April 30, 1863 Abbott again wrote Stanton:

"Sir:

I beg most respectfully to apply for a situation as medical cadet in the army. I am a coloured man, and would desire to be appointed in one of the coloured regiments, if you think favourably of my application.

It may be some recommendation to add that I have been a pupil of Dr. A.T. Augusta for several years—he received a commission from you, as surgeon, recently. He will give you all the information you may require concerning my character and attainments.

Yours respectfully,
A.R. Abbott"

The records of the National Archives in Washington, DC, show that on September 2, 1863, Dr. Abbott took the oath of allegiance to the United States as Acting Assistant Surgeon. His rank was that of captain. By contract of February 26, 1864, Abbott received the sum of $100 per month ($113.83 per month, and transportation in kind, when performing in the field). His initial contract of June 26, 1863, stipulated a monthly wage of $80.

Dr. Abbott's tour of duty in Washington between 1863 and 1866 was outstanding. He was one of eight black physicians to be appointed to the Army Medical Corps and a founder of Freedmen's Hospital. In 1864 he served several months as chief executive officer of Freedmen's Hospital. He unsuccessfully suggested on December 30, 1864, that the name of the hospital be changed to "John Brown" or "Butler" because of the confusion regarding the spelling of the hospital: Freedmen's or Freedman's. The name "Freedman's Hospital" first appeared on the official records on June 15, 1864.

Dr. Robinson is professor of history, Morgan State University, Baltimore, Maryland.
In his memoirs Dr. Abbott states that on July 10, 1863, he and Mrs. A.T. Augusta traveled to Washington, DC via New York City. While at the train depot in New York, he and Mrs. Augusta were abused by two thugs. Unable to elicit aid from the depot authorities, they successfully eluded their tormentors, taking refuge in an oyster saloon until the time of their train's departure. Dr. Abbott was convinced that he and Mrs. Augusta "had been marked out as the first victims of the New York draft riots." They were abused on a Friday night and on the following Monday, Abbott remarked, the draft riot broke out, culminating in the deaths of scores of innocent black people.

While on duty in Washington, Drs. Abbott and Augusta were warmly received by President and Mrs. Lincoln at a White House levee in the winter of 1863-1864. In Abbott's own words:

We appeared at the White House in full uniform. As we entered the porch we were conducted to a room and relieved of our wraps for it was in the winter. The White House was a blaze of light. Soldiers were guarding the entrance. Carriages containing handsomely dressed ladies . . . and soldiers were continually depositing the elite of Washington at the entrance of the porch. Music was wafted to our ears from the marine band which was stationed in the Conservatory. Ushers, lackeys, waiters, messengers were scurrying here and there attending to guests. After leaving the vestibule we were led along a wide hall to a door. There we were met by Mr. B.B. French, a commissioner of the Treasury Department, who conducted us with all the urbanity imaginable to the President who was standing inside the door . . . Mr. French introduced Dr. Augusta first. We had previously given him our cards. Mr. Lincoln on seeing Augusta advanced eagerly a few paces forward, grasped his hand, and as he held the doctor's hand, Robert Lincoln, who had been standing beside his mother about six paces off, came up to the President and asked a question very hastily, the purport of which I took to be—"Are you going to allow this innovation?"—referring doubtless to our presence there. The President replied promptly "Why not?" Nothing more was said and Robert Lincoln returned to his mother's side while the President turned again to the doctor who gave his hand a hearty shake, and then I was introduced and the President shook hands with me also, and we passed on to a position in front of Mrs. Lincoln and were again introduced to that lady.

We then passed out into a room on the opposite side from where we entered called the East Room and there we were destined to undergo an ordeal in comparison with which what we had experienced thus far was only a dream. The moment we entered the room, which was crowded and brilliantly lit up, we became the cynosure of all eyes. I never experienced such a sensation before as I did when I entered the room . . . I suppose it was because it was the first time in the history of the US that a colored man had appeared at one of these levees.
What made us more conspicuous of course was our uniforms. Colored men in the uniforms of US military officers of high rank had never been seen before. I felt as though I should have liked to crawl into a hole. Some stared at us merely from curiosity; others with an expression of friendly interest, while others again scowled at us.

On the death of President Lincoln in April 1865, Mrs. Lincoln presented as a memento to Dr. Abbott the plaid shawl which Lincoln wore on his way to his first inauguration and which, "it is alleged, formed part of a disguise which he wore on that occasion."

From the records of the Bureau of Freedmen, Refugees and Abandoned Lands in the National Archives we find much relevant information regarding the military career of Dr. Anderson Abbott. On January 2, 1866, Brevet Major G.B. Carse, writing from Headquarters, Freedmen's Village, Virginia, to Dr. Abbott, stated:

Allow me to say without desiring to flatter that I consider you the most skilled of any surgeon ever in charge of this post (and there have been many). I shall ever remember with pleasure our association. Be assured of my kind regards and wishes for your success.

The following May 12, Dr. Robert Reyburn, surgeon-in-chief, District of Columbia, wrote:

It is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity of testifying to the professional ability and gentlemanly deportment displayed by Dr. A.R. Abbott while on duty in this district.

Dr. Abbott has been on duty in this city (in the capacity of acting assistant surgeon, USA) for upwards of two years and is hereby cordially recommended to the favourable consideration of his professional associates as a competent and judicious physician and as possessing excellent business habits and moral character.

On May 14, 1866, Caleb W. Horner, Surgeon US Volunteers, Chief Medical Officer, wrote the following testimonial on behalf of Dr. Abbott:

I take great pleasure in bearing testimony to the good and faithful service rendered by assistant surgeon A.R. Abbott to sick and destitute freedmen.

While supervisor of Freedmen's Affairs for the District of Columbia under the Surgeon General USA for nearly a year prior to the organization of the Bureau, my attention was directed to Dr. Abbott, then executive officer of the contraband camp and Freedmen's Hospital, where his efficiency soon gained for him the promotion to the position of surgeon in charge. Since which time he has continued to discharge with credit to himself and the entire satisfaction of his superior officers, duties involving professional and administrative responsibilities.

His resignation is accepted with regret.

On the following day, May 15, Dr. R.O. Abbott, Surgeon US Army and Medical Director, Department of Washington, stated that: "Dr. Abbott served in this department as acting assistant surgeon at the contraband camp and Freedman's Hospital from June 1863 until August 1865. He was efficient and zealous in the discharge of his duties."

Dr. Anderson Abbott was on duty in the Contraband Camp, Washington, DC, from June 26, 1863, to June 25, 1864, and at Freedmen's Hospital from June 26, 1864, to August 21, 1865. A letterhead of January 22, 1865, shows Dr. Abbott as
the director of Abbott Hospital in Freedmen's Village, Virginia. He resigned his position as acting assistant surgeon in April 1866, and returned to Canada. He passed the primary examination for the degree of medicine at Toronto University in 1867 and in 1869 he became a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Ontario.

In August 1871, Dr. Abbott married Mary Ann Casey in Toronto. From this union there were five children. Abbott practiced in Chatham, Ontario, Canada. In 1874, he was appointed coroner of Kent county and was allegedly the first black man to hold that position in Canada. In 1878, he was elected president of the Kent county medical society. He also served as acting resident physician of Toronto General Hospital. While a resident in Chatham, Dr. Abbott served as president of the Wilberforce Educational Institute from 1873 to 1880 and on the board of Chatham Collegiate Institute. He was also associate editor of The Messenger, an organ of the British Methodist Episcopal Church. Dr. Abbott was instrumental in having abolished the segregated schools for blacks in Chatham.

In 1881, he settled in Dundas and in that year he was appointed director of Dundas Mechanics Institute; in 1883 he was appointed Vice Treasurer, and President in 1884. In 1883, Abbott was appointed High School trustee and chairman of Internal Management Committee from 1885 to 1889. Dr. Abbott served as warden of St. James Church (Anglican) and Registrar of St. James Guild. In 1889, he moved to Oakville and in 1890 to Toronto. In April 1890, Abbott was elected a member of James S. Knowlton Post No. 532, Grand Army of the Republic, and surgeon of the Post in 1892. He was appointed in November 1890 as aide-de-camp to the Commanding Officer of the Department of New York. In this capacity Abbott achieved the highest rank and prestige ever awarded a nonwhite of African descent in Canada or the United States. In Toronto he was affiliated with St. George's Anglican Church.

In 1894, Dr. Abbott was appointed Surgeon-in-Chief of Provident Hospital in Chicago in the absence of the famed heart specialist, Dr. Daniel Hale Williams. He served in that position until about 1897. He was licensed to practice in Illinois in 1895, and in Michigan in 1900. He returned to Canada on several occasions.

Dr. Anderson Abbott was a truly urbane and erudite man. He gave numerous lectures on education, medicine, Darwinism, history, and poetry. While domiciled in Chatham, he wrote for the Planet; in Dundas he was assistant editor of the local Banner; and in later years he contributed to the New York Age. His poem, "Neath the Crown and Maple Leaf (An Afro-Canadian Elegy)," appeared in The Colored American Magazine. In the ten-stanza poem, Abbott extolled the virtues and loyalties of Her Majesty's Afro-Asian subjects. He actively supported the Niagara movement of W.E.B. DuBois in opposition to the industrial and manual training orientation of Booker T. Washington and espoused the cause of Afro-Americans in Canada and in the United States.

Though Dr. Abbott had served well the government of the United States of America during the Civil War, his request, in a letter of February 18, 1891, to the US Secretary of War for an honorary or brevet rank in the United States Army, was rejected on the grounds that the "Brevet rank can be conferred only by direct and specific enactment of Congress.

His death on December 29, 1913, in Toronto was mourned by citizens on both sides of the Canadian-USA border.

Suggested Reading
1. Anderson Ruffin Abbott, papers in the Metropolitan Toronto Library, Toronto, Canada
2. Medical Officers' File—A.R. Abbott, acting assistant surgeon—the National Archives, Washington, DC
3. Records of the Bureau of Freedmen, Refugees and Abandoned Lands, Record Group 105, the National Archives
4. Lamb DS: Howard University Medical Department, Washington, DC, 1900
5. Morais HM: A History of the Negro in Medicine, 1967
6. Ullman V: Lock to the North Star, 1969
9. The Colored American Magazine 2:1901
10. Letters to the author dated November 5, 1979 and January 2, 1980 from A.W. Andson, MD, Secretary, Committee on Archives, The Canadian Medical Association, Ottawa, Canada
12. Letter to the author dated December 11, 1979 from M's Gertrude Jacob, volunteer researcher, Oberlin College Archives
THE LEVEE

Dr. Augusta and myself determined to visit the President at the next Levee that he held in the White House. On that evening we appeared at the White House in full uniform. As we entered the Porch we were conducted to a room and relieved of our wraps for it was in the winter. The White House was a blaze of light. Soldiers were guarding the entrance. Carriages containing handsomely dressed ladies, (citizens and ?) soldiers were continually depositing the elite of Washington at the entrance to the porch. Music was wafted to our ears from the Marine band which was stationed in the Conservatory. Ushers, lackeys, waiters, messengers were scurrying here and there attending to guests. After leaving the vestibule we were led along a wide hall to a door where we were met by Mr. B. B. French, a Commissioner of the Treasury department who conducted us with all the urbanity imaginable to the President who was standing just inside the door spoken of. Mr. French introduced Dr. Augusta first - we had previously given him our cards. Mr. Lincoln on seeing Augusta advanced eagerly a few paces forward, grasped his hand and as he held the Doctor's hand Robt. Lincoln who had been standing beside his mother about six paces off came up to the president and asked a question very hastily the purport of which I took to be - are you going to allow this (innovation ?) referring doubtless to our presence there. The president replied promptly Why not. Nothing more was said and Robt. Lincoln returned to his mother's side, while the President turned again to the president (??) who gave his hand a hearty shake and then I was introduced and the President shook hands with me also, and we passed on to a position in front of Mrs. Lincoln and was again introduced (to) that lady. We then passed out into a
a room on the opposite side from where we entered called the East Room
and there we were destined to undergo an ordeal in comparison with which
what we had experienced thus far was only a dream. The moment we entered
the room which was crowded and brilliantly lit up we became the cynosure
of all eyes. I never experienced such a sensation before as I did when I
entered the room. We could not have been more surprised ourselves or
created more surprise if we had been dropped down upon them through a
skylight. I suppose it was because it was (the) first time in the history
of the U.S. when a colored man had appeared at one of these levees. What
made us more conspicuous of course was our uniforms. Colored men in the
uniforms of U.S. military officers of high rank had never been seen be-
fore. I felt as though I should have liked to crawl into a hole. But as
we had decided to break the record we held our ground. I bit my lips, I
took Augusta's arm and sauntered around the room endeavoring or pretend-
ing to view the very fine pictures which adorned the walls. I tried
also to become interested in the beautiful music discoursed by the Marine
band but it was the first time that music had failed to absorb my attention.
Whenever we went a space was cleared for us and we became the center of
a new circle of interest. Some stared (at) us merely from curiosity -
others with an expression of *zealous* friendly interest, while others again
scowled at us in sucha significant way that left no (doubt) as to what
views they held on the Negro question. We remained in the room and faced
monocles, lorgnettes, stares and fascinating eyes leveled at us for
about half of an hour or so and then we passed out of the room, secured
our wraps from the attentive assistants and just as we were leaving we
were seized by the ubiquitous reporter who wanted to interview us. We
handed him our cards. The following morning there appeared in the
Washington Star the following item among the News from the White house.
"During the evening Dr. Augusta the Colored Surgeon of the District of Columbia Colored Regiment dressed in his Major's uniform, also Dr. Abbott, colored, of the same regiment, called upon the President and was kindly received by him." And so ended our first visit to the White house. I don't know whether we were the first who had visited the President of the U.S. at his levees or not - but I am inclined to think we were. I asked an attaché of the Haytien Embassy whom I met in Washington if he had visited those levees. He replied that he had frequently done so without any embarrassment. But I can understand that in his case that he was so light complexioned that he would pass unnoticed in a throng like that. However, we had broken the ice.

The Hon. Fred Douglas shortly afterwards visited one of the President's levees and was received very cordially.