

# Born 42 Years Ago, Defender Is A Giant In Its Field Today

## Weekly Exceeded Dream Of Founder Robert Abbott

By VERNON JARRETT

MAY 6, 1905—A young printer held his four-page creation close to the window, took a final glance, grabbed an armful of his best work and hustled out to the streets—introducing to Chicago the "World's Greatest Weekly."

Thus Robert Sengstacke Abbott, one-man staff and vendor of the Chicago Defender, launched a medium of Negro expression 42 years ago which is today a recognized American institution.

### Born In Georgia

Born in St. Simon Island, Ga., only five years after the Civil War, Abbott entered Hampton Institute during the turn of the century as a young man "interested in printing." When he graduated, however, his bent for printing had widened from an interest in mechanics to the idea of a strong Negro voice in America.

Young Abbott chose Chicago to show his wares. But Chicago's printing firms in 1897 didn't look kindly toward Negroes. Working on odd jobs he kept his type-setting fingers in shape at the old Conservator, a Negro paper edited by Ferdinand L. Barnett, father of the present Defender news editor, Albert G. Barnett.

Disillusioned, he enrolled at Kent

Law College and graduated from its night school. But as a lawyer, he walked into another dead end. A friend suggested that he may be "too black" to influence a Chicago court. A fresh attempt was made in budding Gary, Ind.

His complexion was the same in Gary.

### A Man Rebels

At this point, the mild mannered youth who stood enthralled when Fred Douglass lashed American hypocrisy at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, rebelled against Jim Crow. The color bar had convinced him that the militant Douglass tradition must be continued, "American Race Prejudice Must Be Destroyed."

From 1893 to World War I, the Defender's rise was phenomenal, the nation's industrial potential was flexing its muscles. Northern cities bristled with smokestack and skyscraper. The Defender became the 20th Century Moses, leading Negroes to the urban North's vast labor market.

Defender In Transition  
Historians under line the World War I period as a decisive turning point in the Defender's evolution. It had become more than a "protest" paper, it had begun an affirmative program.

While maintaining that "American Race Prejudice Must Be Destroyed," Defender editorials gave positive expression to a people's demand for full equality in education, trades, trade unions, business and politics.

### Stresses Positive Program

On its 42nd anniversary, the Defender continues to stress offense along with defense, as evidenced through its national housing plan, national youth program, talent-search series, weekly radio show, "Democracy—USA," and other programs outside of general news services.

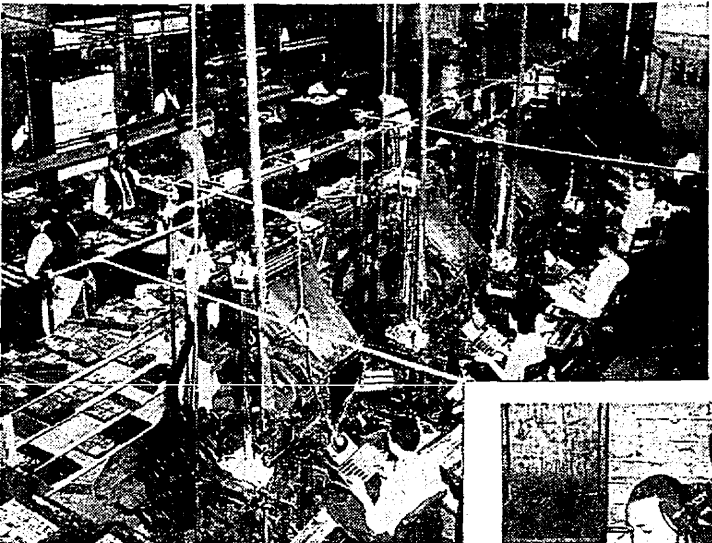
Typical of the Defender's prestige is its role as master informant and advice dispenser. Letters and telephone calls flood this office, seeking data on everything from politics to the best "quarter of the moon" to plant rhubarb.

Last Sunday, Charles "Bung" Thornton, one of the Defender's oldest employees and Abbott's Hampton printing instructor, stood before the old South State street building where the Defender was born.

### Left National Imprint

He recalled how Abbott left his imprint everywhere American Negroes fought second-class citizenship, and how he was the professional sire of many top newsmen today, including Lucius Harper, Frank "Fay" Young, David "Bud Billiken" Kellum, Artist Jay Jackson, P. L. Prattis, Julius Adams, and others representing the nation's leading weeklies.

"Son, you don't bury a man like that in one square hole," old Bung told a Defender newcomer.



COMPOSING ROOM, where paper is assembled before printed.



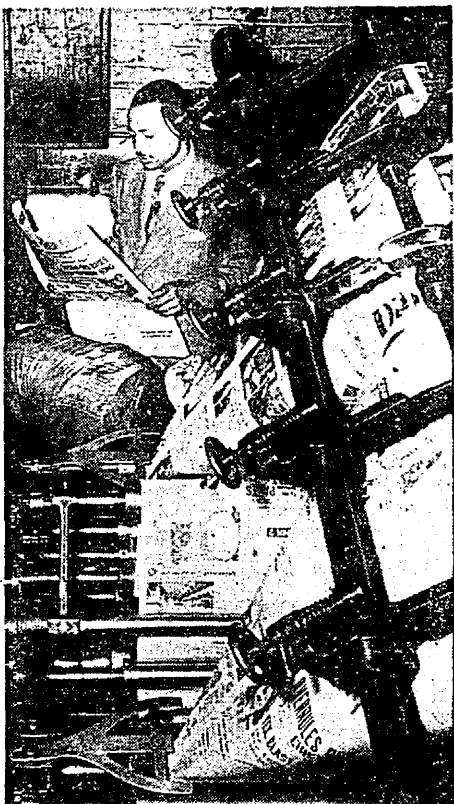
ROBERT SENGSTACKE ABBOTT, 1870-1940, founder of the Defender.



STEREOTYPE DEPARTMENT, where metal cast of each page is made.



MAILING ROOM



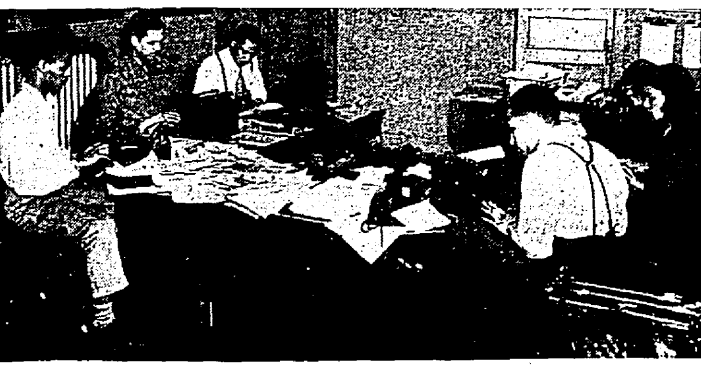
JOHN H. SENGSTACKE, editor-publisher of the Defender and nephew of Robert S. Abbott, looks over proof from massive press.



CHARLES "BUNG" THORNTON, former printing instructor of Abbott at Hampton Institute and oldest living Defender employee. Thornton was inspiration for original "Bungleton Green" cartoon.



A SECTION of Defender Photo-engraving Department



EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT, where copy is written and rewritten for publication.