

Robert S. Abbott Dies; Publisher Of Negro Paper

Son of Ex-Slave Founded 'Chicago Defender' in '05; Wrote on Race Migration

From the Herald Tribune Bureau

CHICAGO, Feb. 29.—Robert Sengstacke Abbott, Negro publisher, died at his home here today. He was sixty-nine years old and had been in ill health for the last six years.

The son of a former slave of St. Simon's Island, Ga., Mr. Abbott learned the printing trade at the Hampton (Va.) Institute, and in 1905 founded "The Chicago Defender," a weekly, devoted to the interests of the Negro race. "The Defender," one of the oldest and most important Negro publications in the world, attained a peak circulation of 185,000 copies, and today has a circulation in excess of 100,000.

The weekly is widely read in both Northern and Southern states, and Mr. Abbott's editorials exerted considerable influence, notably in the extensive migration of Negroes from the South during and immediately after the World War. The editor indicated his conception of this migration by the following title of one of his editorials: "The greatest race migration since the exodus of the children of Israel out of Egypt."

Mr. Abbott was born in Savannah, Ga. His parents were born in slavery. His father, Thomas Abbott, grew up on St. Simon's Island and was taught surveying. Later, he surveyed the route for the first streetcar line on the island. Mr. Abbott's mother, Flora Butler Abbott, had carried copy in a printing shop and, perhaps, fired her son's ambition to become a printer.

As a youth, Mr. Abbott studied in the public schools of Savannah, at Claflin University, in Orangeburg, S. C., and at Hampton Institute. In 1898, in Chicago, Mr. Abbott studied law at the Kent College of Law. For a time he practiced law in Chicago.

Mr. Abbott acted as both editor and publisher of "The Defender," and won wide recognition as a leader of his race. Governor Frank O. Lowden of Illinois appointed him to a special race relations commission in 1919. In 1933, Mr. Abbott was named to the board of commissioners of the Century of Progress Exposition.