

PROJECT

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*Interview with
Joseph S. Richard
141 W 135th St*

Negroes of New York

Wilbur Young

Interview with

Joseph L. Prichard

Joseph L. Prichard, diminutive retired business man of 141 West 135th Street is one of Harlem's most unusual figures. In the first place, Mr. Prichard is about the tiniest man in Harlem. Barely four feet tall and weighing the equivalent of a good size cake of ice, Mr. Prichard has lived at his present address for the past 25 years and up until recently was the owner and operator of the Alpha Cigar store located in the same building which he kept for 25 years.

Mr. Prichard came to New York city from Petersburg, Va. his birthplace in 1878, 61 years ago and during that time has seen New York city grow from the status of Little Ole New York with its horsecars, buggies, and gas street lamps to the largest metropolis in the world. He recalls with a vivid imagination such events as the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge, the teeming activity of Jefferson Market, the old Lyric Music Hall which once occupied the spot now known as Bryant Park. Also the old horsecar stable which is now the home of the Hippodrome Theatre.

"In those days," says Mr. Prichard, "Harlem was a vast tract of farmland with grazing cattle, pigs and poultry. The center of activity was in lower Harlem down near the old slip and what is now Greenwich Village."

In a period of fifty years, Mr. Prichard has lived at two addresses; 25 years at #9 Gay Street and 25 at 141 West 135th Street. He is one of the few men not in public office who can receive mail

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promptly without designating the number of the street. He moved to Harlem in 1911 and was one of the first Negroes to open a business there. In 1914, he became a notary public and when this country entered the World War, did a thriving business aiding volunteers to fill out their applications.

Mr. Prichard also has the distinction of being the first Negro candidate to run for the office of State Committeeman in 1920. He was treasurer of the United Civic League, a progressive Negro civic organization and also treasurer of the Association of Trade and Commerce for over ten years.

In speaking of the Negro in business, Mr. Prichard feels that the Negro hasn't the opportunities that he had during wartime. One of the greatest handicaps of the Negro business man today is that he cannot successfully compete against the Jewish merchants therefore the success of his business is limited to such trade as Undertakers, barbers, beauticians, and small grocery stores.

Another accomplishment of Mr. Prichard's is the fact that he has been married to the same woman for over fifty years. She is Kate Johnson, a childhood sweetheart of his from Petersburg, Va. The couple were married on March 14th, 1889, a year after the great blizzard by Reverend Daniel Wisher, the first pastor of Mount Oliver Baptist church. They have no children. Mr. Prichard is over 70 odd years but looks to be in his fifties and both he and his wife are in excellent health. They still reside at 141 West 135th Street.

Note: In an effort to extract further information from Mr. Prichard regarding present ^{uplet} development of Negro business, Mr. Prichard was reluctant and declared as a retired man, he did not care to give any viewpoints and stated that it would be best to get such matter from active businessmen in Harlem.