

MOSSELL, AARON ALBERT (1863 - 1951), lawyer, mining engineer and civil rights campaigner

Name: Aaron Albert Mossell

Date of birth: 1863

Date of death: 1951

Gender: Male

Occupation: lawyer, mining engineer and civil rights campaigner

Area of activity: Law; Business and Industry; Activism

Author: Rebecca Eversley-Dawes

Aaron Mossell was born on 3 November 1863 in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, into an African American family, the youngest of six children of Aaron Mossell, a brickmaker and grandson of enslaved people, and his wife Eliza Bowers Mossell. His siblings were: Charles W. (1849-1915), Mary E. (1853-1886), James (b. 1853), Nathan Francis (1856-1946) and Alvaretta (b. 1858). The family later moved to Lockport in Niagara County, USA, where they owned a hotel and became well known for their championing of civil rights.

Aaron attended Lincoln University where he graduated in 1885, and in 1888 graduated from Pennsylvania Law School, becoming the first African American to do so. He practised law in Philadelphia, and was the secretary of the Douglass Memorial Hospital which was founded by his brother Nathan.

Aaron married Mary Louisa Tanner (1865/6-1935) in 1890 at her family home in Philadelphia in a ceremony officiated by her father, Bishop Benjamin Tucker Tanner. Together they had three children, Aaron Albert Mossell (1893-1959), Elizabeth Mossell Anderson (1894-1975), and Sadie Tanner Mossell (1898-1985).

Shortly after Sadie's birth, Aaron and Mary divorced, and Aaron spent some time in Africa before eventually coming to south Wales, where he trained as a mining engineer between 1906 and 1909. A newspaper report of 1909 describes him as 'a coloured Canadian student who came to Mountain Ash from West Africa a few years ago.' He moved to Cardiff in 1926, lodging with the Jason family in Loudoun Square and later with Jacob Enfield and his family.

Aaron continued in the family tradition of supporting those less fortunate than himself, and became an avid campaigner for the rights of Black seamen in Cardiff. He was the Secretary of the Kru Fraternity which supported African seamen and their families (not solely those from the Kru tribe), and was instrumental in uniting various Black groups in Cardiff into the United Committee of Coloured and Colonial Organizations. In 1945 he gave an address at the Pan-African Congress in Manchester.

It was when he was living in Loudoun Square that he received a visit from Paul Robeson. Aaron and Paul had relatives in common, Aaron's brother Nathan having married a sister of Paul's mother, Gertrude Emily Hicks Bustill.

Aaron Mossell died in Cardiff on 6 February 1951 and is buried in Cathays Cemetery.

Author

Rebecca Eversley-Dawes

Sources

Information from Heidi Ziemer and the Mossell family

Charlotte Williams, 'Cardiff' in David Dabydeen, John Gilmore, Carwyn Jones (eds.), *Oxford Companion to Black British History* (Oxford 2007)

The Heritate & Cultural Exchange Archive [Tiger Bay and the World](#)

'Aaron Albert Mossell 1863-1951', University Archives & Records Centre, PennLibraries, University of Pennsylvania

Ancestry

'A Brief History of the Christian Recorder', The Christian Recorder

Lockport Daily Journal & Courier, 24 October 1870, NYS Historic Newspapers

The Aberdare Leader, 8 September 1906, Welsh Newspapers

Weekly Mail, 21 August 1909, Welsh Newspapers

Further reading

Wikipedia Article: [Aaron Albert Mossell](#)

Additional Links

Wikidata: [Q4661804](#)

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