

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR ZEV YAROSLAVSKY

February 24, 2009

During the tumultuous period in U.S. history leading up to the Civil War, the City of Los Angeles, with a population then numbering more than 4,000 residents, was home to about 60 African Americans. The constitution of the new State of California had banned slavery, and black men and women – many having fled the Southern states in search of freedom and opportunity in the American West – were able to work and own property, and developed what became a vibrant black community.

John Ballard was one these pioneers. Marrying his wife Amanda in Kentucky in 1859, they moved to Los Angeles, and the 1860 census identifies him as a teamster. By 1869, he had become active and grown prominent in civic affairs. Along with six others, he founded the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, purchasing the property for \$1,860, as recorded in a deed dated March 13, 1869.

By 1870, John and Amanda were the parents of seven children, but in 1871, tragically, Amanda died in childbirth. John was subsequently remarried to a woman named Francis. In 1880, the Ballards decided to relocate out of the city. By then, the population of Los Angeles had soared, and with this influx of new residents from the East and Midwest, the political climate was changing. Historians speculate that the

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Ballards may have been responding to growing segregationist policies and attitudes many thought they had safely left behind in the antebellum South.

The Ballard family made their new home in the Santa Monica Mountains near Seminole Hot Springs, and John remained there after the death of Francis in 1896. With the enactment of the Homestead Act, John and his daughter Alice filed homestead applications, and in 1900 each received 160 acres of land, including the property near Seminole Hot Springs. Not long after, John Ballard passed away at Los Angeles County Hospital, and was buried at Rosedale Cemetery.

The highest peak in the vicinity of Seminole Hot Springs, more than 2,000 feet above sea level, is named Negrohead Mountain. A considerable body of historical and cartographic evidence suggests this was in recognition of the Ballard homestead. At this time, noting the civic contributions made by John Ballard and his family, it is only fitting in honor of Black History Month, 2009 that we initiate this effort to rename the mountain peak Ballard Mountain in their honor.

**I, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors submit a formal proposal to the United States Board on Geographic Names, U.S. Geological Survey, to rename Negrohead Mountain as Ballard Mountain, as a lasting tribute to the pioneering spirit and civic contributions of this courageous African-American man and his family to the political and cultural vibrancy of his community in the formative years of our city's growth and development.

GK/JB: \Ballard Mountain

