



Sherry Peters / Special to The Courant

Ted Anderson of Windsor, the First Congregational Church historian, has researched the life of Joseph H. Rainey, a former slave who was the first black to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives. Rainey kept a summer home in Windsor.

Windsor historian studies black statesman

By JOSEPH A. O'BRIEN
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WINDSOR — A mailman's love of history led to his research into the life of Joseph H. Rainey, a former slave who more than a century ago became the first black to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Ted Anderson of Windsor, a letter carrier at the Canton post office, said Rainey's life and accomplishments should be remembered during February, which is designated as Black History Month.

Anderson, who grew up in Windsor and graduated from Hartwick College in Oneonta, N.Y.,

with a bachelor's degree in English literature, spends his spare time studying old New England and has done archaeological digs at Indian sites along the Susquehanna River in New York.

He is also historian for the First Congregational Church in Windsor, which has its roots in the founding of Windsor in 1633.

Through his study of church archives, Anderson learned that Rainey had a tie to Windsor and set out to learn more about the 19th-century civil rights pioneer.

He found that Rainey, who became a U.S. representative from South Carolina in 1870 and served until 1879, bought a home in Windsor in 1874. Rainey spent summers in Windsor for

more than a decade with his wife, Susan, and their children.

"These were pleasant years for the Raineys," Anderson said. "They were involved in the community and active in the Congregational Church."

In a paper he wrote about Rainey's life Anderson said, "In May 1874, in the absence of the speaker, Joseph H. Rainey presided over the U.S. House of Representatives. This was the second of two illustrious firsts for him, for he was the first black seated in the House of Representatives and the first black to occupy

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