Woodson: Father of Black History

Carter G. Woodson war the premier Afro-American historian. Born at New Canton, Buckingham County, Va., his parents were poor, former slaves who struggled to support their nine children by farming.

Unable to attend regularly the five-month term of the district school for blacks, through self-instruction, young Woodson was able to absorb the rudiments of elementary schooling by the time he was 17

Since Buckingham, like other Virginia counties, provided public high schools only for white students, he moved to Huntington, W. Va., to attend part-time the Douglass High School because he had to work in the distant Fayette County coal mines to support himself and his family.

In 1896, he entered Douglass High full-time and completed high school in a year and a half, receiving his diploma in 1896.

In 1896 Woodson entered the South's one interracial institution of higher learning, Berea College, in Kentucky, and from there went to the University of Chicago.

He received his doctorate at Harvard in 1912, the second black to hold a Ph.D. in history. The first black Ph.D. in the field of history was W. E. B. DuBois (Harvard, 1895).

Not only did he work in the fields on his family's farm and in the coal mines, but later spread himself into many other fields: high school teacher (Dunbar in Washington, D.C.) principal, supervisor of schools in the Philippines, a year of study and travel (1906-1907) in Asia and Europe including a semester at the Sorbonne, the University of Paris, college professor, dean, researcher and author, executive secretary of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, editor and publisher.

Dr. Woodson deserves the title of Father of Black History because he founded the main organizations and journals, systematically gathered the basic source materials and wrote prolifically about the history of his people.

Almost singlehandedly, he rescued black history from neglect and made it an important, respected discipline, inspiring the many black historians who came after him.

DR. CARTER C. WOODSON
Founder of Black History program

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18 S.S. ships named for heroic men, women

Few persons realize that there were at least 18 S.S. ships named after black honorary shipmasters.

These include the following: the S.S. Robert S. Abbott, the S.S. George Washington Carver, the S.S. Frederick Douglass, the S.S. Paul Dunbar, the S.S. John Hope, the S.S. James W. Johnson;

The S.S. Toussaint L'Ouverture, the S.S. John Merrick, the S.S. John H. Murphy, the S.S. Edward A. Savoy, the S.S. Harriet Tubman, the S.S. Robert L. Vann,

The S.S. Booker T. Washington, the S.S. Bert Williams, the USS Jesse Brown, the USS George Washington Carver, the USS Harmon and the USS Miller.

Before the S.S. Robert S. Abbott had been completely outfitted and launched, it was renamed the S.S. Kamenets - Podolsk and loaned to Russia prior to the end of the Second World War (1946). It was returned to the U.S. after the war and scrapped.

In November 1943, after it had been completely refurbished, the S.S. George Washington Carver became the hospital ship S.S. Dogwood. It was converted into a troop carrier in January 1946, however, and sailed under the latter name; it resumed its original name in 1964 and was reduced to scrap metal within that year.

The S.S. Frederick Douglass was slightly damaged by one of the torpedoes from U - Boat 236 on October 20, 1943, while it was at sea; however, it was finally sunk by a torpedo from U - Boat 645 at a much later date.

In May 1959, after it had served its usefulness, the S.S. Toussaint L'Ouverture was reduced to scrap.

Sometime during the year 1967, the S.S. John Merrick was sent to the scrap pile.

John Merrick (1859 - 1919) was born in Clinton, North Carolina, and became one of the most outstanding business executives and civic leaders Wilmington and Durham have ever known.

S.S. Robert L. Vann sank at sea after it rammed into an enemy mine. Robert Lee Vann (1887 - 1940) founded the Pittsburgh Courier in 1910, and he built it into the leading black - owned newspaper in the United States.

The S.S. Booker T. Washington ended up as scrap iron in July, 1969.

The S.S. Bert Williams i was completed as the Belgian Unity, but it eventually became the S.S. Earl ... Toomquist, which is presently riding at anchor in "the mothball fleet" on the Hudson River in New York.

Breaking in two while it was being towed at sea, the S.S. Bert Williams II's bow section was joined to the aft section of the S.S. Nathaniel Bacon; but, before it left its refitting lay, it became the Boccadasse and loaned to the Italian government. Upon its return, however, it was reduced to scrap iron.

Still in service are several ships named after honorary black shipmasters. These include the USS Dorie Miller, the USS Leonard Harmon, and the USS Jesse L. Brown.

Miller, who was unschooled at handling the weapons of the ship to which he was assigned, manned a vacated machine gun position on the crippled U.S.S. Arizona and single - handedly shot down four attacking Japanese Zeroes before he was compelled to abandon ship.

Leonard R. Harmon (1916 - 1942) was born and educated in Cuero, Texas. He served in the U.S. Navy with distinction until he was killed in action on the U.S.S. San Francisco while trying to save the life of one of its wounded officers.

Jesse L. Brown (1926 - 1950), who was born and raised in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, was the first black pilot in the history of the U.S. Navy, and the first black - American officer in its history to be killed in action in the Korean War.

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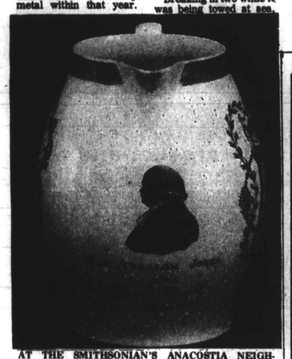

AT THE SMITHSONIAN'S ANACOSTIA NEIGHBORHOOD MUSEUM — Liverpool ware pitcher with silhouette of Absalom Jones. The Rev. Jones (1746-1818) is credited with organizing black churches and establishing a school for black children. The pitcher is included in the exhibition — "Out Of Africa: From West African Kingdoms To Colonization," which opened Feb. 4.

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World traveler calls Antarctic ultimate

Antarctica is a continent that is different from any other on this earth, according to Nathaniel J. Jordan of Washington who has accomplished several 'firsts' as a world traveler.

Jordan has walked on every continent and has visited all of the 50 states. He went to Antarctica in 1977 as a tourist.

He notes that, "It is the coldest, highest and windiest of the seven continents, and the only one without politics or natives. It is also the most

Further observations are:

Since 1820 when Capt. Nathaniel Palmer, an American discovered it, very few blacks have seen it or walked on it. Peter Harvey from Philadelphia who was a crewman on Palmer's ship "Hero" is the first black known to see Antarctica.

Since then, blacks have been there as crew members of the ships that supply the various scientific stations of the Antarctica Treaty signers, and the stations located in different parts of the continent.

In 1965, a black man was among the crew of the first helicopter to reach the South Pole and may have been the first one there.

Jordan set a precedent when he stepped onto the continent at the Argentine Adm. Brown Station in the Antarctic Peninsula on Dec. 24, 1977.

As a member of the M.S. World Discover cruise ship's inaugural cruise to the continent, he then completed his record of walking on all the continents. During that cruise, this ship became the first to take tourists on both sides of the Antarctic Peninsula.

Jordan also visited the Argentine Esperanza Station at the northernmost tip of the continent where Emilio Palma became the first born in Antarctica on Jan. 7, 1978.

Jordan is of the opinion that "Antarctica is the ultimate adventure on this earth."

Craftsmanship. A Tradition In Black America.

The Silversmiths: they left a legacy of beauty in silver.

There were Black silversmiths in America before the Revolution. Their work was often displayed in the shops of the silversmiths for whom they worked. Although no one knows exactly how many Black men were practicing the craft in the 1700's, three slaves distinguished themselves. Joe Grimke fashioned fine jewelry and buckles that were prized by affluent people in the Colonies. Limus and Abraham, who were owned by silversmith Andrew Dupuy, designed and executed elegant knives, spoons, teapots, ladles and bells for everyday use in the home. The objects these men created have become treasured antiques.

The artistic and functional contributions of the Black silversmiths are an important legacy to the entrepreneurial spirit and craftsmanship of Black people today. You can read more about 'The Silversmiths' and other Black craftsmen in our booklet "Craftsmanship. A Tradition in Black America"—now available in limited quantities. For your free copy write: RCA, Dept. 119N, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10020.

The original drawings commissioned for this booklet now hang in Philadelphia's Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum

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Pioneer sports early stars history-makers

This month is the month dedicated to telling Black History and throughout the month much will be said about black soldiers, scientists, doctors and civic leaders that have been instrumental in making the United States what it is today.

But often forgotten are those in the sports field, particularly those before the time Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier to become the first black to play on a modern day major league baseball team.

There were in the early 20th century between the 1920s and the 1940s many black stars in the sports arenas. They did not receive much recognition then, and now most of them are just names with only sketchy information in today's sports books about their feats.

An individual who played for the Homestead Grays in the 1920s through the 1940s was one such athlete. Josh Gibson, a power hitting, surehanded catcher, so the almanacs say, played for the Grays of the black baseball league. In this circuit he became known as the "Babe Ruth" of black baseball. But whether he broke the Ruth record or even approached it is not mentioned.

Ageless Leroy "Satchel" Paige with his wide assortment of pitches, was probably the greatest control pitcher in baseball's long history. His prowess was recognized in 1971 however, when he received baseball's highest award by being inducted into its Hall of Fame.

Joe Louis, the "Brown Bomber," held the heavyweight title for over eleven years, longer than any other man — white or black. While holding the title, he fought 25 bouts to keep it, more than any other heavyweight champion since. His power is still remembered and spoken of in the boxing world today.

The Ohio State track star, Jesse Owens, went on to win four gold medals during the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. Adolph Hitler, who preached blond - haired, blue - eyed superiority was reported to have been so upset he left the stadium rather than witness the Owens victories.

Not to be forgotten is one of the greatest basketball teams during the 1920s and 30s. The New York Renaissance, popularity known at the time as the "Rens" won 1,588 games and ten world championships between 1923 and 1941. In the 1936 - 39 season alone they won 112 games.

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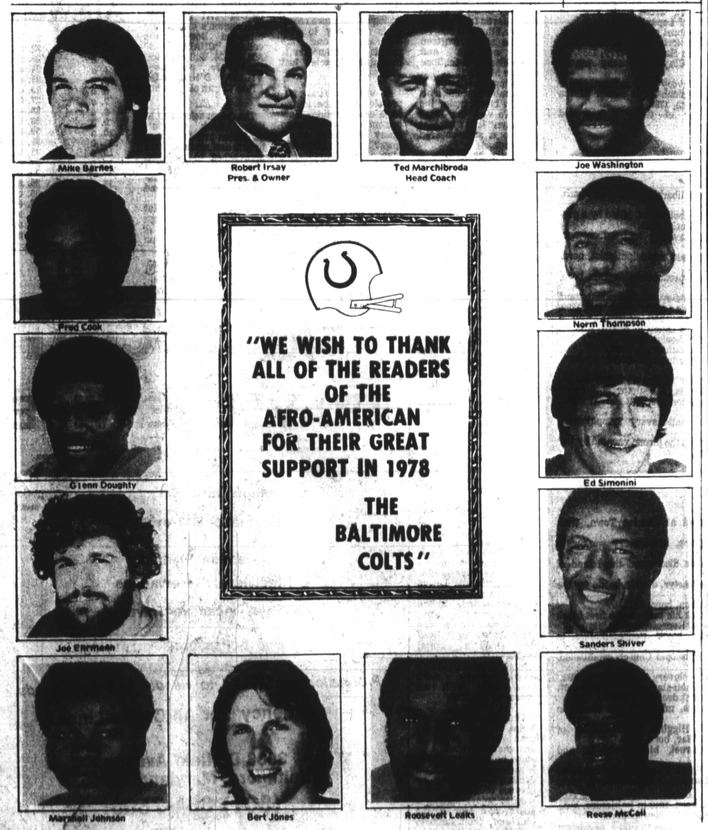

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