



FROM 1903 TO 1906
SUPERVISOR OF SCHOOLS
HIS HEADQUARTERS
THE SPOT WHERE THE
FORCES LANDED AFTER

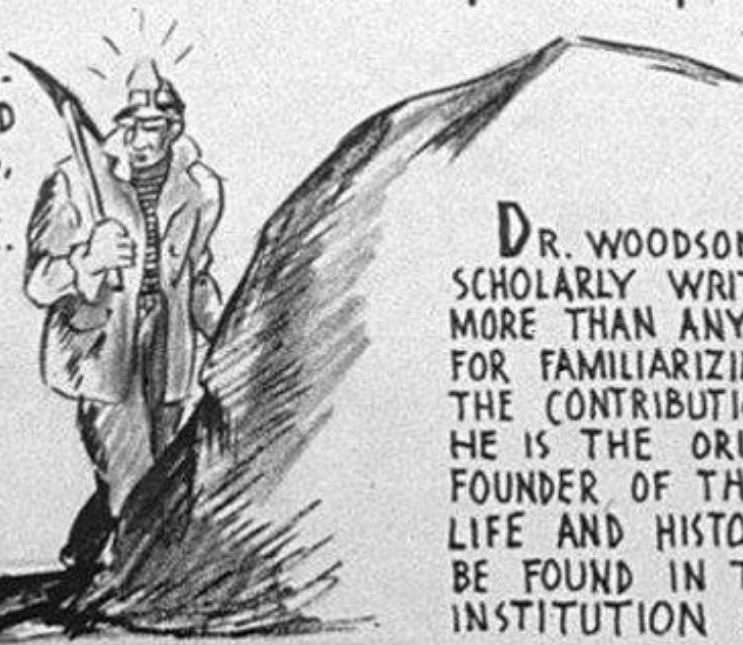
CARTER
G.

WOODSON

TEACHER, HISTORIAN, PUBLISHER

BORN OF EX-SLAVE
PARENTS, YOUNG WOOD-
SON COULD ONLY ATTEND
SCHOOL ON RAINY DAYS,
WHEN WORK ON THE
FARM WAS IMPOSSIBLE.

AT 17, HE WAS A
MINER IN WEST
VIRGINIA!



DR. WOODSON, THROUGH HIS
SCHOLARLY WRITINGS, IS RESPON-
SIBLE MORE THAN ANY OTHER SINGLE
PERSON FOR FAMILIARIZING THE AMERICAN
PEOPLE WITH THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE NEGRO
TO THE HISTORY OF THE COUNTRY.
HE IS THE ORIGINATOR OF NEGRO HISTORY
AND THE FOUNDER OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR
THE STUDY OF NEGRO LIFE AND HISTORY. HIS WORKS
CAN BE FOUND IN THE LIBRARIES OF THE
INSTITUTION OF LEARNING.



Carter G. Woodson

Carter Godwin Woodson (December 19, 1875 – April 3, 1950)^[1] was an African-American historian, author, journalist and the founder of the **Association for the Study of African American Life and History**. Woodson was one of the first scholars to study African-American history. A founder of *The Journal of Negro History* in 1915, Woodson has been cited as the father of black history.^[2] In February 1926 he announced the celebration of “Negro History Week”, considered the precursor of **Black History Month**.^[3]

1 Background

Carter G. Woodson was born in Buckingham County, Virginia ^[4] on December 19, 1875, the son of former slaves, James and Eliza Riddle Woodson. ^[5] His father helped Union soldiers during the Civil War and moved his family to West Virginia when he heard that Huntington was building a high school for blacks.

Coming from a large, poor family, Carter Woodson could not regularly attend school. Through self-instruction, Woodson mastered the fundamentals of common school subjects by age 17. Wanting more education, Carter went to Fayette County to earn a living as a miner in the coal fields. He was able to devote only a few months each year to his schooling.

In 1895, at the age of 20, Woodson entered **Douglass High School**, where he received his diploma in less than two years. ^[6] From 1897 to 1900, Woodson taught at **Winona** in Fayette County. In 1900 he was selected as the principal of Douglass High School. He earned his Bachelor of Literature degree from **Berea College** in Kentucky in 1903 by taking classes part-time between 1901 and 1903.

2 Career in education

From 1903 to 1907, Woodson was a school supervisor in the Philippines. Later, he attended the University of Chicago, where he was awarded an A.B. and A.M. in 1908. He was a member of the first black fraternity **Sigma Pi Phi** and a member of **Omega Psi Phi**.^[7] He completed his PhD in history at **Harvard University** in 1912, where he was the second African American (after **W.E.B. Du Bois**) to earn a doctorate.^[8] His doctoral dissertation, *The Disruption of Virginia*, was based on re-

search he did at the **Library of Congress** while teaching high school in Washington, D.C. After earning the doctoral degree, he continued teaching in public schools, later joining the faculty at **Howard University** as a professor, where he served as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Convinced that the role of African American history and the history of other cultures was being ignored or misrepresented among scholars, Woodson saw a need for research into the neglected past of African Americans. Along with **Alexander L. Jackson**, Woodson published *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861* in 1915.

Carter G. Woodson stayed at the **Wabash Avenue YMCA** during visits to Chicago. Dr. Woodson’s experiences at the Y and in the surrounding **Bronzeville** neighborhood inspired him to create the **Association for the Study of Negro Life and History** in 1915. The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (now the Association for the Study of African American Life and History), which ran conferences, published *The Journal of Negro History*, and “particularly targeted those responsible for the education of black children”.^[9]

Woodson believed that education and increasing social and professional contacts among blacks and whites could reduce racism and he promoted the organized study of African-American history partly for that purpose. Woodson would later promote the first **Negro History Week** in Washington, D.C., in 1926, forerunner of **Black History Month**.^[10] The **Bronzeville** neighborhood declined during the late 1960s and 1970s like many other inner city neighborhoods across the country, and the **Wabash Avenue YMCA** was forced to close during the 1970s, until being restored in 1992 by **The Renaissance Collaborative**.^[11]

He served as Academic Dean of the **West Virginia Collegiate Institute**, now **West Virginia State University**, from 1920 to 1922.^[12]

In addition to his first book, he wrote *A Century of Negro Migration*, which continues to be published by the **Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH)**. He studied many aspects of African-American history. For instance, in 1924, he published the first survey of free black slaveowners in the United States in 1930.^[13]

He once wrote: “If you can control a man’s thinking, you don’t have to worry about his actions. If you can determine what a man thinks you do not have to worry about what he will do. If you can make a man believe that he

is inferior, you don't have to compel him to seek an inferior status, he will do so without being told and if you can make a man believe that he is justly an outcast, you don't have to order him to the back door, he will go to the back door on his own and if there is no back door, the very nature of the man will demand that you build one."

3 NAACP

Woodson became affiliated with the Washington, D.C. branch of the NAACP, and its chairman Archibald Grimké. On January 28, 1915, he wrote a letter to Grimké expressing his dissatisfaction with activities. Woodson made two proposals:

1. That the branch secure an office for a center to which persons may report whatever concerns the black race may have, and from which the Association may extend its operations into every part of the city; and
2. That a canvasser be appointed to enlist members and obtain subscriptions for *The Crisis*, the NAACP magazine edited by W. E. B. Du Bois.

W. E. B. Du Bois added the proposal to divert "patronage from business establishments which do not treat races alike," that is, boycott businesses. Woodson wrote that he would cooperate as one of the twenty-five effective canvassers, adding that he would pay the office rent for one month. Grimké did not welcome Woodson's ideas.

Responding to Grimké's comments about his proposals, on March 18, 1915, Woodson wrote:

"I am not afraid of being sued by white businessmen. In fact, I should welcome such a law suit. It would do the cause much good. Let us banish fear. We have been in this mental state for three centuries. I am a radical. I am ready to act, if I can find brave men to help me."

His difference of opinion with Grimké, who wanted a more conservative course, contributed to Woodson's ending his affiliation with the NAACP.

4 Black History Month

After leaving Howard University because of differences with its president, Woodson devoted the rest of his life to historical research. He worked to preserve the history of African Americans and accumulated a collection of thousands of artifacts and publications. He noted that African-American contributions "were overlooked, ignored, and even suppressed by the writers of history

textbooks and the teachers who use them."^[14] Race prejudice, he concluded, "is merely the logical result of tradition, the inevitable outcome of thorough instruction to the effect that the Negro has never contributed anything to the progress of mankind."^[14]

In 1926, Woodson pioneered the celebration of "Negro History Week",^[15] designated for the second week in February, to coincide with marking the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass.^[16] The week of recognition became accepted and has been extended as the full month of February, now known as Black History Month.

5 Colleagues

Woodson believed in self-reliance and racial respect, values he shared with Marcus Garvey, a Jamaican activist who worked in New York. Woodson became a regular columnist for Garvey's weekly *Negro World*.

Woodson's political activism placed him at the center of a circle of many black intellectuals and activists from the 1920s to the 1940s. He corresponded with W. E. B. Du Bois, John E. Bruce, Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, Hubert H. Harrison, and T. Thomas Fortune among others. Even with the extended duties of the Association, Woodson made time to write academic works such as *The History of the Negro Church* (1922), *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (1933), and others which continue to have wide readership.

Woodson did not shy away from controversial subjects, and used the pages of *Black World* to contribute to debates. One issue related to West Indian/African-American relations. Woodson summarized that "the West Indian Negro is free." He observed that West Indian societies had been more successful at properly dedicating the necessary amounts of time and resources needed to educate and genuinely emancipate people. Woodson approved of efforts by West Indians to include materials related to Black history and culture into their school curricula.

Woodson was ostracized by some of his contemporaries because of his insistence on defining a category of history related to ethnic culture and race. At the time, these educators felt that it was wrong to teach or understand African-American history as separate from more general American history. According to these educators, "Negroes" were simply Americans, darker skinned, but with no history apart from that of any other. Thus Woodson's efforts to get Black culture and history into the curricula of institutions, even historically Black colleges, were often unsuccessful. Today African-American studies have become specialized fields of study in history, music, culture, literature and other areas; in addition, there is more emphasis on African-American contributions to general American culture. The United States government cele-

brates Black History Month.

6 Woodson's legacy

That schools have set aside a time each year to focus on African-American history is Woodson's most visible legacy. His determination to further the recognition of the Negro in American and world history, however, inspired countless other scholars. Woodson remained focused on his work throughout his life. Many see him as a man of vision and understanding. Although Woodson was among the ranks of the educated few, he did not feel particularly sentimental about elite educational institutions. The Association and journal that he started in 1915 continue, and both have earned intellectual respect.

Woodson's other far-reaching activities included the founding in 1920 of the Associated Publishers, the oldest African-American publishing company in the United States. This enabled publication of books concerning blacks that might not have been supported in the rest of the market. He founded Negro History Week in 1926 (now known as Black History Month). He created the *Negro History Bulletin*, developed for teachers in elementary and high school grades, and published continuously since 1937. Woodson also influenced the Association's direction and subsidizing of research in African-American history. He wrote numerous articles, monographs and books on Blacks. *The Negro in Our History* reached its eleventh edition in 1966, when it had sold more than 90,000 copies.

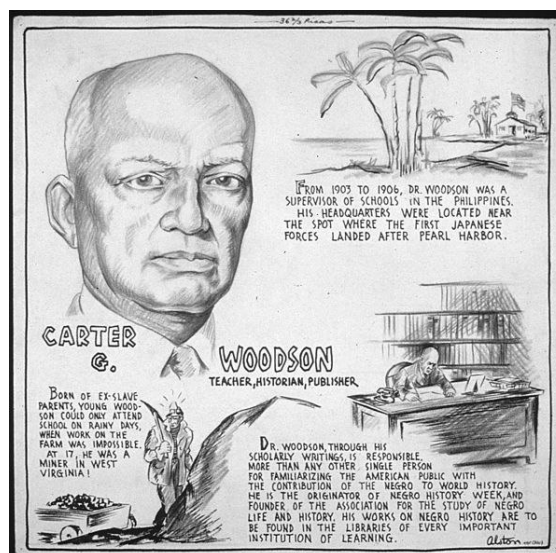
Dorothy Porter Wesley stated that "Woodson would wrap up his publications, take them to the post office and have dinner at the YMCA." He would teasingly decline her dinner invitations saying, "No, you are trying to marry me off. I am married to my work". Woodson's most cherished ambition, a six-volume *Encyclopedia Africana*, lay incomplete at his death on April 3, 1950, at the age of 74. He is buried at Lincoln Memorial Cemetery in Suitland, Maryland.

7 Honors and tributes

- In 1926, Woodson received the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Spingarn Medal.
- The U.S. Postal Service issued a 20 cent stamp honoring Woodson in 1984.^[17]
- In 1992, the Library of Congress held an exhibition entitled "Moving Back Barriers: The Legacy of Carter G. Woodson". Woodson had donated his collection of 5,000 items from the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries to the Library.

- His Washington, D.C. home has been preserved and designated the Carter G. Woodson Home National Historic Site.
- In 2002, scholar Molefi Kete Asante named Carter G. Woodson on his list of 100 Greatest African Americans.^[18]

8 Places named after Woodson



Carter Woodson biographical cartoon by Charles Alston, 1943

8.1 California

- Carter G. Woodson Elementary School in Los Angeles.
- Carter G. Woodson Public Charter School in Fresno.

8.2 Florida

- Carter G. Woodson Park, in Oakland Park.^[19]
- Carter G. Woodson Elementary School was located in Oakland Park. It was closed in 1965 when the Broward County Public Schools system was desegregated.
- Dr. Carter G. Woodson African American Museum in St. Petersburg.
- Carter G. Woodson Elementary School in Jacksonville.

8.3 Georgia

- Carter G. Woodson Elementary in Atlanta.

8.4 Illinois

- Carter G. Woodson Regional Library in Chicago.
- Carter G. Woodson Middle School in Chicago.

8.5 Indiana

- Carter G. Woodson Library in Gary.

8.6 Kentucky

- Carter G. Woodson Middle School in Lexington.
- Carter G. Woodson Center for Interracial Education, Berea College, in Berea.^[20]

8.7 Louisiana

- Carter G. Woodson Middle School in New Orleans.
- Carter G. Woodson Liberal Arts Building at Grambling State University, built in 1915, in Grambling.

8.8 Maryland

- Carter G. Woodson Elementary in Crisfield.
- Dr. Carter G. Woodson Elementary in Baltimore.

8.9 Minnesota

- Woodson Institute for Student Excellence in Minneapolis.

8.10 New York

- PS 23 Carter G. Woodson School in Brooklyn.

8.11 North Carolina

- Carter G. Woodson Charter School in Winston-Salem.

8.12 Texas

- Woodson K-8 School in Houston.
- Carter G. Woodson Park in Odessa

8.13 Virginia

- The Carter G. Woodson Institute for African-American and African Studies at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville.
- Carter G. Woodson Middle School in Hopewell.
- C.G. Woodson Road in his home town of New Canton.
- Carter G. Woodson Education Complex in Buckingham County, built in 2012.

8.14 Washington, DC

- Friendship Collegiate Academy in Washington is located on the Carter G. Woodson Campus.

8.15 West Virginia

- Carter G. Woodson Jr. High School (renamed McKinley Jr. High School after integration in 1954) in St. Albans, built in 1932.

9 Selected bibliography

- *A Century of Negro Migration* (1918)
- *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861* (1919)
- *The History of the Negro Church* (1921)
- *The Negro in Our History* (1922)
- *Free Negro Owners of Slaves in the United States in 1830, Together With Absentee Ownership of Slaves in the United States in 1830* (1924)
- *Free Negro Heads of Families in the United States in 1830, Together With a Brief Treatment of the Free Negro* (1925)
- *Negro Orators and Their Orations* (1925)
- *The Mind of the Negro as Reflected in Letters Written During the Crisis, 1800–1860* (1927)
- *Negro Makers of History* (1928)
- *African Myths, Together With Proverbs* (1928)
- *The Rural Negro* (1930)
- *The Negro Wage Earner* (1930)
- *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (1933)
- *The Negro Professional Man and the Community, With Special Emphasis on the Physician and the Lawyer* (1934)

- *The Story of the Negro Retold* (1935)
- *The African Background Outlined: Or, Handbook for the Study of the Negro* (1936)
- *African Heroes and Heroines* (1939)
- *The Works of Francis J. Grimké* (1942)
- *Carter G. Woodson's Appeal: The Lost Manuscript Edition* (2008)

10 References

- [1] Du Bois, William Edward Burghardt. *The correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois, Volume 3*. University of Massachusetts Press. p. 282. ISBN 1-55849-105-8. Retrieved May 30, 2011.
- [2] Bennett, Jr., Lerone (2005). "Carter G. Woodson, Father of Black History". *United States Department of State*. Retrieved May 30, 2011.
- [3] Daryl Michael Scott, "The History of Black History Month", on ASALH website.
- [4] "Virginian Started Negro History Week in 1926". *Norfolk (VA) New Journal and Guide*, February 9, 1957, p. 11.
- [5] Betty J. Edwards, "He Made World Respect Negroes". *Chicago Defender*, February 8, 1965, p. 9.
- [6] Maurice F. White, "Dr. Carter G. Woodson History Week Founder". *Cleveland Call and Post*, February 16, 1963, p. 3C.
- [7] 1904–2004: the Boule at 100: Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity holds centennial celebration |*Ebony*| Find Articles at BNET.com
- [8] "The End of Black History Month?" *Newsweek*, January 28, 2010.
- [9] Claire Corbould, *Becoming African Americans: The Public Life of Harlem 1919–1939*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: Harvard University Press, 2009, p. 88.
- [10] <http://bmrcsurvey.uchicago.edu/collections/1410>
- [11] "History", The Renaissance Collaborative.
- [12] Osborne, Kellie (January 29, 2015). "West Virginia State University Celebrates Black History Month with Series of Events". West Virginia State University. Retrieved February 5, 2015.
- [13] Charles H. Wesley, "Carter G. Woodson as a Scholar", *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (January 1951), pp. 12–24.
- [14] *Current Biography 1944*, p. 742.
- [15] Corbould (2009), p. 106.
- [16] Delilah L. Beasley, "Activities Among Negroes, *Oakland Tribune*, February 14, 1926, p. X–5.

- [17] "Stamp Series". United States Postal Service. Retrieved September 2, 2013.
- [18] Asante, Molefi Kete (2002). *100 Greatest African Americans: A Biographical Encyclopedia*. Amherst, New York. Prometheus Books. ISBN 1-57392-963-8.
- [19] "Dr. Carter G. Wilson Festival". The City of Oakland Park. Retrieved 2008-12-15.
- [20] "Carter G. Woodson Center for Interracial Education". Berea College. Retrieved April 1, 2013.

11 External links

- The Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH)
- Audiobook version of "The Mis-Education of the Negro"
- Homepage for Carter G. Woodson's Appeal
- Daryl Michael Scott, "The History of Black History Month", on ASALH website
- Dr. Carter G. Woodson African American History Museum
- "Some St. Albans Schools over the years", St. Albans Historical Society.
- Dr. Carter G. Woodson African American Museum

11.1 Woodson's writings

- Works by Carter G. Woodson at Project Gutenberg
- Works by or about Carter Godwin Woodson at Internet Archive
- *The History of the Negro Church*. ISBN 0-87498-000-3.
- *Mis-Education of the Negro*. ISBN 0-9768111-0-3.

11.2 Other information about Woodson

- Dr. Carter G. Woodson
- "Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson & the Observance of African History"
- Library of Congress Initiates Traveling Exhibits Program
- Library of Congress Traveling Exhibit re Dr. C.G. Woodson
- Carter G. Woodson Collection of Negro Papers and Related Documents
- Carter G. Woodson Wax Figure at the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum

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