

The Clerk's Black History Series



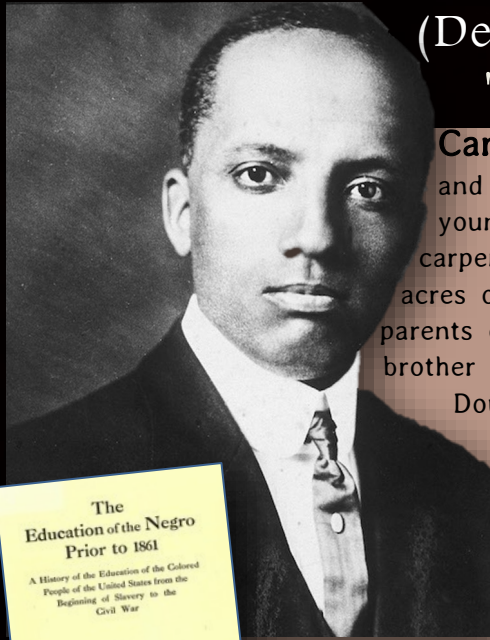
Debra DeBerry
Clerk of Superior Court
DeKalb County



Carter Godwin Woodson

(December 19, 1875 – April 3, 1950)

"The Father of Black History"



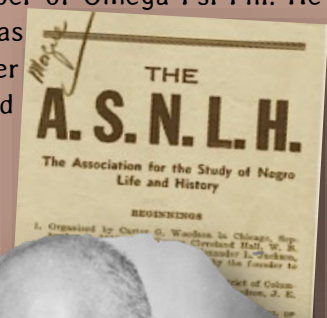
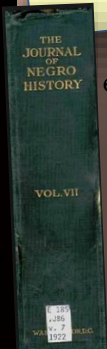
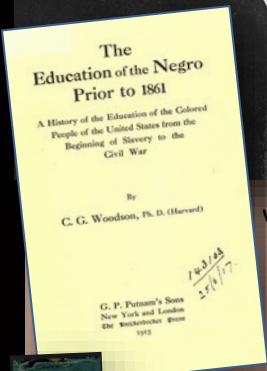
Carter Godwin Woodson was born December 19, 1875, in New Canton, Virginia, and was the youngest child of Anne Eliza (Riddle) and James Henry Woodson. As a young man, Carter's father escaped slavery and joined Union soldiers, working as a carpenter and then as a sharecropper. In 1872, as a freed man, his father purchased 21 acres of farm land. As a child, Carter was often pulled away from school to help his parents on their farm. In 1892, at the age of 17, Carter left home, following his older brother to Huntington, West Virginia, in hopes of attending a new secondary school, Douglass High School. Instead, he worked in the coal mines to survive.

In 1895, determined to continue his education, 20-year-old Carter Woodson, entered high school. Just two years later, he received his diploma and began teaching in the small community of Fayette County, WV. In 1900, just three years after graduating, Carter became the principal of Douglass High School. Soon after, he enrolled in Berea College and in 1903, the same year his father died, Carter received his Bachelor of Literature degree. For the next four years, Carter worked in the Philippines as part of the US War Department and traveled to Africa, Asia, and Europe and briefly attended the Sorbonne in Paris, France. In 1908, he received a Master's degree in History, Romance Languages, and Literature from the University of Chicago in Illinois. There he became a member of the first black professional fraternity Sigma Pi Phi and a member of Omega Psi Phi. He completed his Ph.D. in History at Harvard University in 1912, where he was the second African American, after W. E. B. Du Bois, to earn a doctorate. After earning his Ph.D., he continued teaching in public schools and later taught at Howard University, where he also served as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

In 1915, Carter Woodson published his first book, *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861* and co-founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (A.S.N.L.H.). A year later, he launched *The Journal of Negro History* which was published quarterly. On July 18, 1922, he purchased a three-story house in Washington D.C. that became his personal residence as well as the office for the Associated Publishers, Inc. and the national headquarters of the ASNLH.

In 1926, Carter Woodson launched the annual February observance of "Negro History Week" to increase awareness and interest in black history. It is said that he chose February for the observance because February 12th was Abraham Lincoln's birthday and February 14th was the accepted birthday of Frederick Douglass. In 1976, Negro History Week became "Black History Month."

On April 3, 1950, Carter G. Woodson died suddenly from a heart attack in his home in Washington, D.C., He was 74 years old. He never married and had no children, but his enduring legacy lives on every February and throughout the year.



The Carter G. Woodson stamp, issued in 1984.

CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY