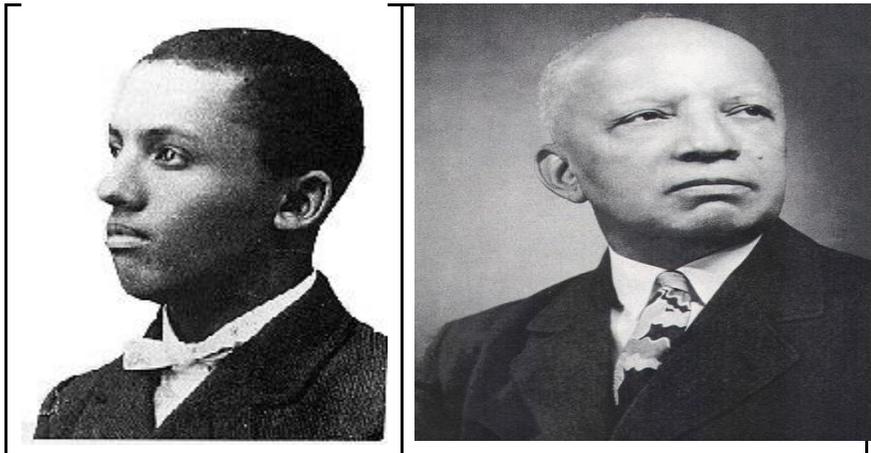


**ORIGIN OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH** *by Joan Howard, MSN.Ed, FNP*



**Carter Godwin Woodson, Ph.D. 1875-1950**

Experts call him the “**Father of Black History.**”

February 1 marks the beginning of Black History month in the United States.

Carter Godwin Woodson was born in New Canton, Buckingham County, Virginia, to former slaves Anne Eliza (Riddle) and James Henry Woodson, neither of whom could read or write. He was the fourth of nine children. Woodson was an American historian, author, journalist, and the founder of the “Association for the Study of African American Life and History.” He was one of the first scholars to study African-American history.

**EDUCATION & SCHOOLING:** Woodson had a strong interest in education and was mostly self-taught. He spent much of his youth helping his family by working in farming and mining. Ambitious for more education, Woodson and his brother Robert Henry moved to Huntington, West Virginia, where they hoped to attend the Fredrick Douglass High School. However, on arrival Woodson was forced to earn his living as a miner in coal fields and was only able to devote a few months each year to his schooling.

**1895:** Woodson entered Fredrick Douglass High School, West Virginia at the age of 20 and received his diploma in less than two years. He went on to become the second African-American in history to earn a doctorate from Harvard University (Du Bois).

**1897- 1900:** Carter G. Woodson teach in Winona, Fayette County.

**1900:** He returned to Huntington as the principal of Fredrick Douglass H.S.

He went on to receive his Bachelor of Literature degree from Berea College, Kentucky.

**1903 – 1907:** School supervisor in the Philippines and traveled throughout Africa, Europe, and Asia and studied at the Sorbonne University in Paris.

**1908:** He received his M.A. from the University of Chicago in History, Romance, Language and Literature.

**1912:** He received his Ph.D. in history from Harvard University.

Continued teaching in public schools, he later joined the faculty at Howard University as a professor, and served as the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

**HISTORICAL CONTRIBUTION:** Woodson launched a publication called the Journal of Negro History, later renamed the Journal of African American History where other African-American expert writers published their works.

**BOOKS by Woodson:** He wrote more than 12 books on Black History topics during his lifetime.

**1915:** First book published “*The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861*”

**1918:** “A Century of Negro Migration” which traces the migration of southern blacks to the north and the west from the colonial era through the early 20th century .it gave a vivid account of decades of harassment and humiliation, hope and achievement of Blacks.

### **ORIGIN OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

**1926:** Woodson developed an education program on the study of African-American history a one- week program called “Negro History Week.” Woodson chose February because it was the birth month of abolitionist Frederick Douglass and President Abraham Lincoln.

The first Negro History Week brought together historians and public school teachers, business leaders and educators, church leaders and lay people in a week-long celebration of the accomplishments of blacks in the United States. Woodson documented the lives of black soldiers during World War I, solicited oral histories from surviving slaves, and uncovered rare letters and artifacts along the way. As Woodson’s professional network grew, so did his conviction that a better understanding of black history would help overcome prejudice in the United States.

Woodson worked with state Departments of Education to further the program.

After Woodson’s death in 1950, & his tremendous work about Negro history, grew popular that it was championed by leaders of the students’ movement at Kent State University in the late 1960s, and expanded to a month long celebration in 1976 (42 years ago).

**BELIEF:**

Carter G. Woodson believed that Blacks should know their past in order to participate intelligently in the affairs in our country. He strongly believed that Black History – which others have tried so diligently to erase – is a firm foundation for young Black Americans to build on, in order to become productive citizens of our society.

Dr. Woodson often said that he hoped the time would come when “Negro History Week would be unnecessary; when all Americans would willingly recognize the contributions of Black Americans as a legitimate and integral part of the history of this country. Dr. Woodson’s outstanding historical research influenced others to carry on his work. Among these have been such noted historians as John Hope Franklin, Charles Wesley, and Benjamin Quarles. Whether it’s called Black History, Negro History, Afro-American History, or African American History, his philosophy has made the study of Black history a legitimate and acceptable area of intellectual inquiry. Dr. Woodson’s concept has given a profound sense of dignity to all Black Americans.

**COLLEAGUES:** Woodson believed in self-reliance and racial respect, values he shared with Marcus Garvey. Woodson became a regular columnist for Garvey’s weekly *Negro World*, New York.

**1950:** Woodson died suddenly from a heart attack in his home- office in Washington, D.C., on April 3, 1950, at the age of 74.

He is buried at Lincoln Memorial Cemetery in Suitland, Maryland.

His legacy has deep roots in Florida

- Carter G. Woodson Park, in Oakland Park, Florida
- Carter G. Woodson Elementary School was located in Oakland Park, which 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.

**Quotes:** *“Those who have no record of what their forebears have accomplished, lose the inspiration which comes from the teaching of biography and history.” Carter G. Woodson*

*“When you control a man’s thinking you do not have to worry about his actions.” C. G. Woodson*