

Black History 2015



Principal Anna Jones (standing, left) leads a class at Douglass School in Kansas City, Missouri. Circa 1911.
Image courtesy: The Black Archives of Mid-America

JANUARY

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Rebecca L. Bloodworth



1901 - 1991

Sumner High School English teacher Rebecca L. Bloodworth was born in Bethpage, Tennessee, received her bachelor's degree from Atlanta University, and earned a master's in English from New York's Columbia University. She started her career in Kansas City, Kansas, teaching at Northeast Junior High School before joining the faculty of Sumner High School. In 1965, this respected educator was named a Kansas Master Teacher of the Year by Kansas State Teachers College (now Emporia State University). Upon her retirement, the students of Sumner High School dedicated the 1966 yearbook to Bloodworth, writing that she had "proven to be much more than just a teacher, but a dear friend and a person dedicated to the profession of educating young people.

... She has enriched our lives and elevated our thoughts to higher ideas."

Bloodworth lived out her last years in Tuskegee, Alabama.

Image courtesy: Sumner High School Alumni Collection, Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas Libraries

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Dr. Girard T. Bryant



1905 - 1993

Longtime teacher and administrator Girard T. Bryant was the first African American to serve as president of Penn Valley Community College in Kansas City, Missouri. Born in St. Louis, Missouri, he earned a bachelor's degree in English and history from the University of Chicago in 1922 and a doctorate in education from St. Louis' Washington University in 1963. Bryant began his teaching career in 1926 at Western Baptist Bible College in Kansas City, Missouri, joined the faculty of Lincoln High School in 1930, and served in the Kansas City School District for more than 30 years. He later served as vice principal of Lincoln High School and dean of Lincoln Junior College and held administrative positions at Manual High School and Central High School before being appointed president of Penn Valley Community College in 1970. Bryant further served the public through professional and community service, editing the *Journal of the State Association of Negro Teachers*, helping to found Fellowship House in 1945, and serving on the boards of the Paseo YMCA, Queen of the World Hospital, and the Urban League. A colleague once noted that he believed "students are the most important part of a school and that empathy between students, teachers and administrators is what makes a school either good or bad."

Image courtesy: The Black Archives of Mid-America

Black History Month 2015



Hugh O. Cook



1873 - 1949

Hugh O. Cook, the longest-serving principal of Lincoln High School in Kansas City, Missouri, was born in Washington D.C., graduated from Cornell University, and taught at Normal A&M College in Huntsville, Alabama. He moved to Kansas City in 1901 to teach mathematics and psychology at Lincoln High and assumed leadership of the school in 1922. Cook's tenure saw Lincoln High's move into its new Woodland Avenue facility, which is now on the National Register of Historic Places. Awarded the Distinguished Service Medal from the Missouri State Association of Negro Teachers in 1940, he also was instrumental in the founding of the Paseo YMCA and the Kansas City branch of the NAACP. Cook joined the Army YMCA during World War I and was attached to the 371st Infantry Regiment, which provided the "comforts of home" to black troops. He and his wife had two children and became foster parents to dozens of others without homes of their own. Following Cook's retirement in 1944, he lived out the remainder of his life with his wife in Los Angeles, California.

Image courtesy: The Black Archives of Mid-America

Black History Month 2015



John A. Hodge



1882 - 1969

John A. Hodge, the longest-serving principal of Sumner High School in Kansas City, Kansas, was born in Shelbyville, Indiana, and received bachelor's and master's degrees in physics from Indiana University. He came to Kansas City, Kansas, in 1910 to accept a teaching position at Sumner High and became principal in 1916. During his tenure, the school established a teacher training program and a junior college. He also oversaw construction of a new school building. Hodge's community activities spanned both sides of the state line as he served as president of the Kansas City, Kansas, branch of the NAACP, secretary of the Committee of Management of the Paseo YMCA, and secretary of the First Baptist Church building fund committee. At the time of his retirement in 1951, *The Call* noted, "In a humanitarian way the educator has purchased books, clothing and food for students from his personal funds. One Sumner student, a promising violinist, studied in Russia because of the school principal's holding of a benefit concert in his behalf." A former president of the Sumner High School Alumni Association once observed that Hodge "believed in the capability of all black youth. He did not want them to think of themselves as inadequate, and he did everything in his power to see to it that his students were successful."

Image courtesy: Dorothy Hodge Johnson Collection, Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas Libraries

Black History Month 2015



Anna H. Jones



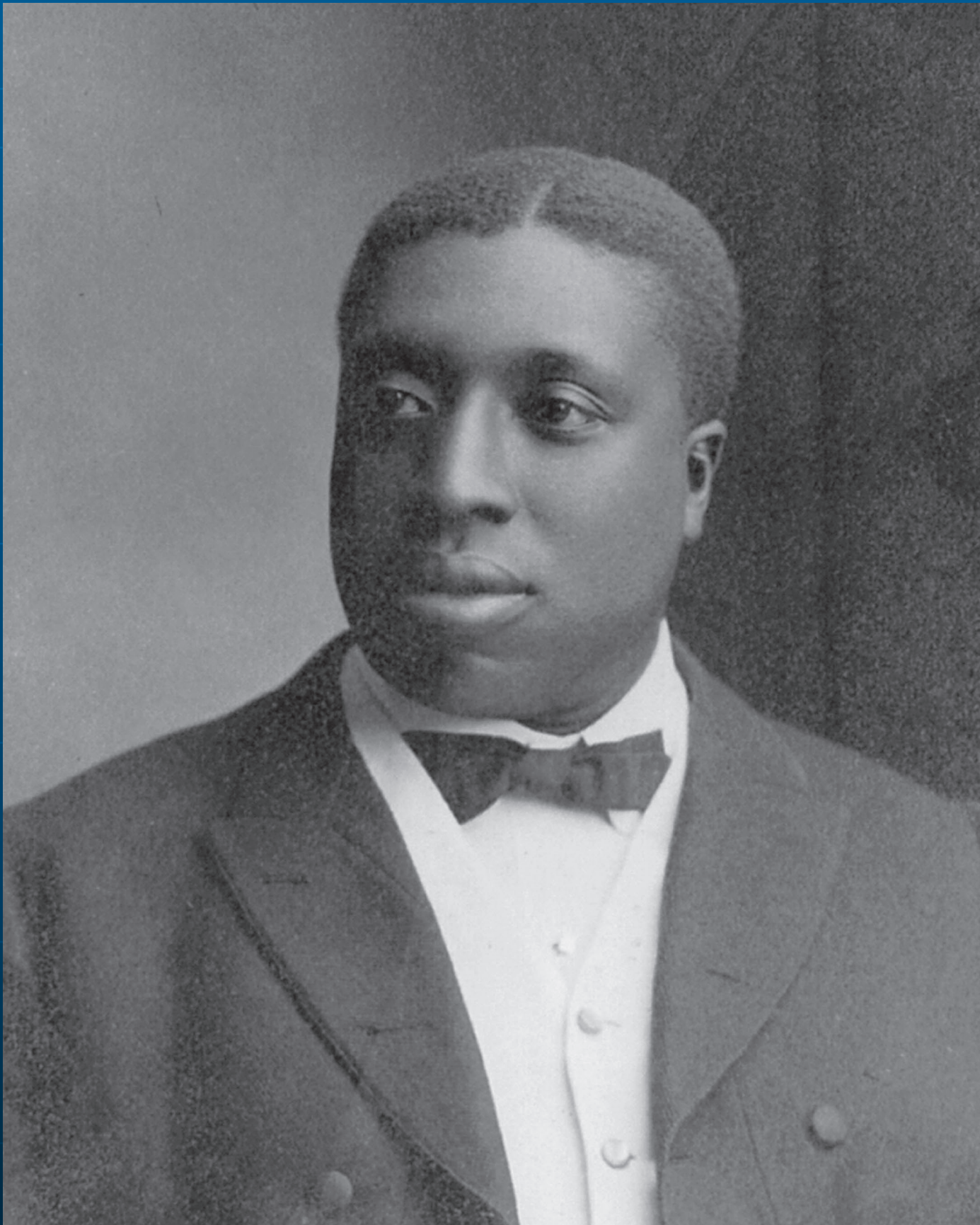
1855 - 1932

Anna H. Jones was born in Canada before the American Civil War and graduated from Oberlin College, a private Ohio school noted for having been the first American institution of higher learning to regularly admit black students. She taught at historically black Wilberforce University in Ohio before moving to Kansas City, Missouri, in 1892 to teach at Lincoln High School and later become the first black woman to serve as a school principal, assuming leadership of Douglass School in 1911. Jones was a co-founder, with Josephine Silone Yates, of the Kansas City Colored Women's League, led fundraising for the YWCA, and served as president of the Missouri Association of Colored Women's Clubs from 1903-06. She retired from Lincoln High School in 1919 and moved to Monrovia, California.

Image courtesy: The Black Archives of Mid-America

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Bishop William T. Vernon



1871 - 1944

Bishop William T. Vernon served twice in leadership positions – including president – at Western University, the first African American college founded west of the Mississippi River. Born in Lebanon, Missouri, he went on to become valedictorian of his graduating class at historically black Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, in 1890 and later earned a degree in theology from Wilberforce University in Ohio. In 1896, Vernon was appointed president of Western University in Quindaro, Kansas. Under his administration, Western developed its industrial training curriculum and acquired financial support from the state legislature. Vernon left the school in 1906 to serve as register of the U.S. Treasury during Theodore Roosevelt's presidential administration. He was consecrated a bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church in 1920 and worked for four years in South Africa. After his return to the United States in 1924, he continued as a bishop in the Midwest. Vernon returned to Western University in 1933, serving as superintendent of its industrial department until 1938.

Image courtesy: Library of Congress

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