

# Culture Keepers

## African American Facts

African American History Education and Culture

Fall 2009

Volume 1, Issue 1

**Special points of interest:**

**Bishop Wm. T Vernon & Family**



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In 1926 Carter G. Woodson created Negro History Week

William Tecumseh Vernon served as Registrar of the U.S. Treasury under the administration of President Theodore Roosevelt. He signed certain paper currency of the nation. He later became a bishop in the A.M.E. Church and he fostered the building of churches and schools in South Africa.

### AME Church Missionaries in South Africa 1922

Born and raised in Missouri, Bishop Vernon received his formal education from Lincoln Institute in Jefferson City, Missouri and Wilberforce University in Ohio. After teaching in the public schools of Boone Terre and Lebanon, Missouri, he followed his father's religious calling and joined the ministry of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E.). In 1896, the A.M.E. church assigned him to serve as president of Western University, a post-secondary school in Quindaro, Kansas that operated by the church. Under his direction, the school expanded its academic program and physical plant by acquiring financial support from the Kansas State Legislature. As an eloquent orator and active member of the Republican Party, he gained a national reputation for his leadership skills. President Theodore Roosevelt appointed him to serve as Register of the United States Treasury in 1906 and in 1912 he was reappointed to that position by President William Taft. He retired from government service in 1912 to return to school administration and the ministry. In 1920, he was elected to serve as the Bishop of the A.M.E. district in South Africa where he fostered the building of churches and schools

for four years. When he returned to the United States in 1924, he continued to serve as Bishop in areas throughout the Midwest and the South. He returned to Kansas in 1933 to accept an appointment by Governor Alfred Landon to serve as superintendent of the State Industrial Department at Western University. Five years later he retired and spent his remaining years in Kansas City, Kansas.



**Bishop William T. Vernon and Mrs. Emily Vernon South Africa 1922**

### BISHOP WILLIAM T. VERNON AND MRS. EMILY VERNON 1922



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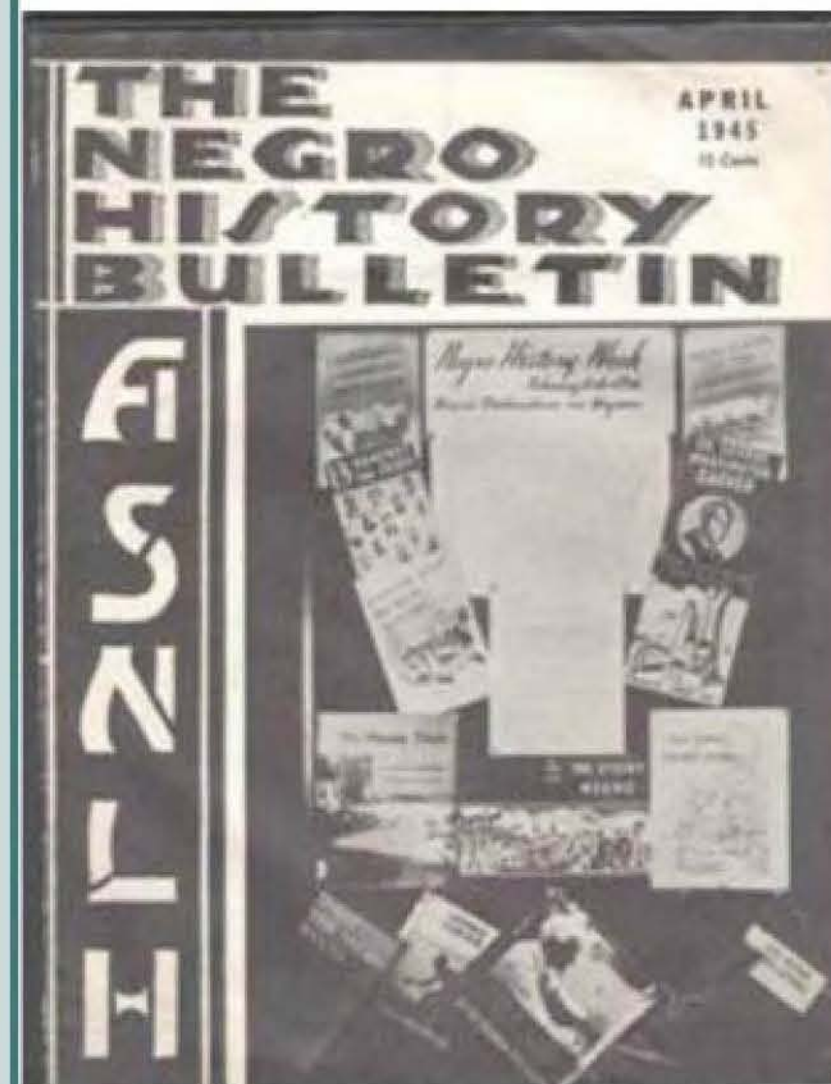
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**Carter G. Woodson**  
Creator of  
"Negro History Month"

## "Negro History Month"



In 1926 Carter G. Woodson created  
Negro History Month

In 1926, Carter G. Woodson created Negro History Week. The goal was to "popularize the truth...[we] are not interested so much in Negro History as in history influenced by the Negro." Dr. Woodson, considered by many to be the "Father of Black History," chose the second week in February because of the birthdays of Frederick Douglass, and Abraham Lincoln. The celebration of Negro History Week continued; however, in the early 1960s the word "Negro" was replaced with "black" and "African American." The week of celebration was then called "Black History Week." In 1976 America celebrated its Bicentennial, at this time, Black History Week became the celebration that we know as "Black History Month." Black History Month is mostly due to an outstanding individual of American history: Carter G. Woodson. Born in 1875 in Virginia, he was the son of former slaves. The eldest of nine children, he began working at an early age to help his family. Guided by a constant thirst for knowledge, he kept up his self-taught education until he was able to enter high school at twenty. He went on to Berea College in Kentucky, then to the University of Chicago and finally earned a Ph.D. from Harvard in 1912.

## From the Collector

It is important that students understand that of all the people who make up the great "mixed salad" of this nation, the African-Americans were the only group to arrive here in chains. This factor alone makes the African-American culture unique. Not only did they come involuntarily, but they were denied opportunities to learn the new language and customs. To further their isolation, they were denied the right to speak their native language and to practice their native customs and traditions. The denial of practicing the customs and speaking the native language was just the opposite for other immigrants. Other immigrants came here voluntarily in hope of finding a better life and were not forced to abandon their customs. This profusion of differences among immigrants created a singularity or bond that contributed to making this nation great. It was different for African-American because they were totally disenfranchised, stripped of freedom, rights and dignity.



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### **Next issue:**

"Ordinary People doing  
Extraordinary Things! "