

Summers County West Virginia Salutes Black History

Summers County West Virginia is rich in hard-working individuals who have flourished in community development, and many who have gone on to excel throughout the world. Hinton was a railroad town, in which the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway invested. The C&O built a huge railroad yard to marshal the coal from the surrounding counties to the power plants. Our population was predominantly white, with only about 5 percent of the population being black. The 2010 census showed the African American population in Summers County as 12.5%. (In the early days, the Black population was called Negroes, originating from the peoples of West Africa, along the Niger River. The old maps defined the area as Negroland. Many of these peoples were captured by the African tribes and made to be slaves. They were taken to the coast and auctioned off in the Atlantic slave trade industry. Many of these slaves were taken by ship to America. We all know the history of plantations and railroad workers. President Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves in 1865. Those freed people moved to various parts of America and the world. There were great minds and tremendous work ethics in those folks. The term Negroes ended in the 1960s and this race was called Black. The term African American was coined in the 1990s.) Summers County was fortunate to have some of these great minds and workers. We had educators, physicists, doctors, attorneys, inventors, athletes, and many other leaders. February is designated each year as “Black History Month” nationally.

Making A Difference would like to recognize several of those black citizens who made our community a better place. Dr. Swanson Carter researched the below list of successful African American citizens, passed and living from Summers County, to let us know of their achievements. This lesson teaches us to not judge an individual by the color of one’s skin, but by the heart and mind of that person. We hope you enjoy this article and learn more about Summers County’s contributions to the world.

Unwritten Black History Lesson

(This article was taken from the Hinton News February 15, 2011)

Editor’s note: This article is primarily for the benefit of *all* the youth in our community – youth who may have no hope or who may see limited possibilities or

realizing goals that improve their life chances and opportunities. Its aim is to present evidence, as illustrated by the examples provided, that with an appropriate attitude one can become a productive, respected and outstanding citizen.

By: Dr. Swanson D. Carter

A question is raised: What is an appropriate attitude?

My favorite answer is provided by Rick Pitino, successful coach of a college basketball national championship team. During a tour of a successful New York investment company, Pitino asked the

company's founder how he created his employment base. "I hire Ph.Ds." the founder said, people who were poor, hungry, and driven. They were not poor economically, but poor in terms of knowledge and constantly worked to learn more, he explained. Hungry people are those who have a tremendous desire to succeed and are not satisfied with an ordinary level of accomplishment, he continued. Driven people set ambitious goals and pursue them with great ferocity.

Summers County, with its small African American population, has produced a significant number of remarkable people. Many are second and third generation descendants of former slaves. Their early education was received by walking through the portals of historically segregated Lincoln School, with its inferior and inadequate resources. Yet they triumphed over trying conditions and the omnipresent Goliaths that stood in their pathways.

As the nation celebrates **Black History Month**, this is a perfect opportunity to reflect on the significant accomplishments of African Americans with roots in Summers County.

Some of these remarkable natives of Summers County: (*in alphabetical order*)

Goldie Baker Alvis – first African American female attorney from Summers Country.

Dr. Swanson D. Carter – West Virginia's first African American FBI Special Agent and the first to be a faculty member at the FBI Academy. He is a retired Senior Executive Service Member.

Everett G. Crawford – the highly esteemed and influential principal, and football and basketball coach of Lincoln School who mentored many of the individuals who went on to achieve great things. He was the first African American teacher at Hinton High School.

Col. Theodore Crawford (U.S. Army, retired) – highest ranking African American military officer from Summers County.

Monte Crockett – first professional football player from Summers County. He played for three years with the Buffalo Bills.

Louise Gibbs - Homemaker, Piano Teacher and Musical Director, Telephone Company Employee, NCAACP Local President, City of Hinton Emergency Dispatcher, Camon Babbist Church Leader, WV State Advisory Council on Vocational Education.

William L. Gibbs – CEO and president of the fifth largest African American bank in the United States.

Dr. Blinzy L. Gore – the only African American from Summers County to earn both a Ph.D. and a J.D. He retired as vice president for academic affairs at Claflin College in South Carolina.

Carroll E. Haynes – first African American to become president of Local 237 in New York, the largest Teamsters Local in the United States. He was an executive member of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, where he held the position of International Vice President and Director of the Public Services Division.

James Jackson Jr. – the first and only African American from Summers County to be in the U.S. Army Special Forces, known as the elite Green Berets. He was a POW during the Vietnam War.

Dr. Jerry Jackson – the first and only African American podiatrist from Summers County.

Jessie Henry “Doc” Kinley – a ground crew member with the famous Tuskegee Airmen.

Dr. Charles Laws – Renowned community leader and physician. He volunteered for military service and was commissioned 1st lieutenant, becoming the first

African American physician in the U.S. Army Medical Corps, the 372nd Infantry. He was elected to Hinton's first City Council and served four terms.

Adolphus Lee – the first African American accountant from Summers County and a summa cum laude graduate of West Virginia State College.

Richard “Dick” Leftridge – one of the first African Americans to star on the football field for West Virginia University. He was a first-round draft pick of the NFL's Pittsburgh Steelers.

Kenni Jackson Pierce – the last African American educator to teach in Summers County.

Dr. James Orlando McDowell – a professor at East Carolina University and author of two books on education.

Dr. James Nelson – the first African American from Summers County to earn a medical degree. He went on to practice medicine in Charleston, WV.

Ethel Pace – the first African American registered nurse from Summers County. She worked at the National Institutes of Health.

Dr. Titus Pankey - the first African American to earn a Ph.D. in physics from Howard University, and one of the first 10 African Americans in the United States to earn a Ph.D. in physics. He was a government scientist and a member of Phi Beta Kappa, the prestigious academic honor society.

Charles Rogers – the first and only African American Marine Corps pilot from Summers County.

Edward “Ed” Smith – the first African American from Summers County to serve in the Marine Corps.

Eddie Sweeney – an elementary school Principal in the Kanawha County, WV school system.

Thomas Sweeney – a middle school Principal in the Columbus, Ohio school system.

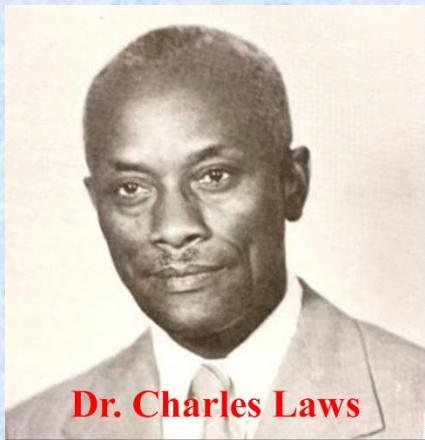
This brief list of individuals of accomplishment represents evidence of the value of education and training. Someone once said,

“Education removes shackles. To the young people, remember that success.” is a function of opportunity resulting from having a clear head, setting goals, staying focused, working, sacrificing, serious study, strong character and having superior literacy and deft communication skills.

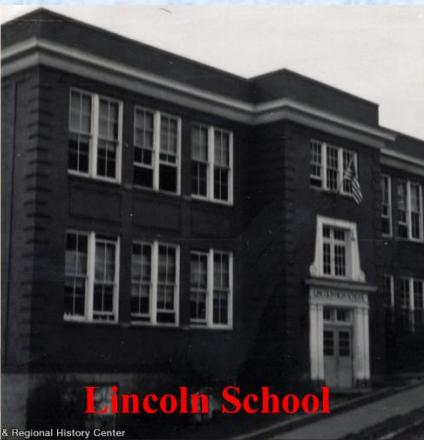
“Chance favors the prepared mind,” Louis Pasteur said. Thus, the practical lesson from knowing Black history demonstrates the power of education. Education really does remove shackles.

**Celebrating Black History Month – For all African Americans
and their many accomplishments.**

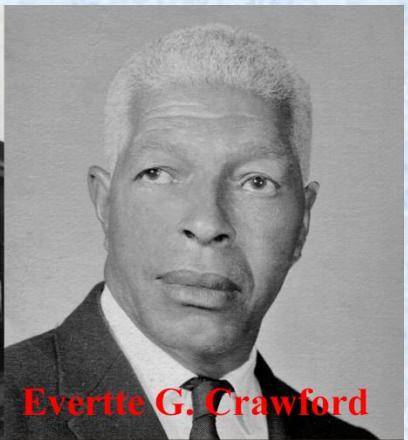
We Salute You!



Dr. Charles Laws



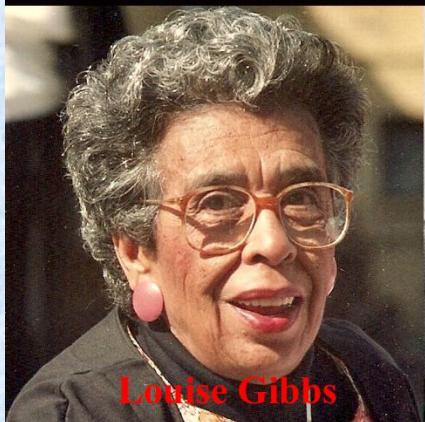
Lincoln School



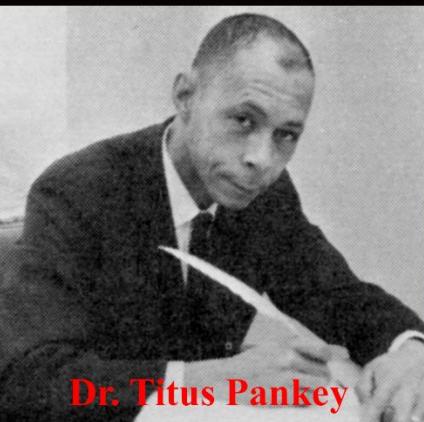
Everette G. Crawford

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

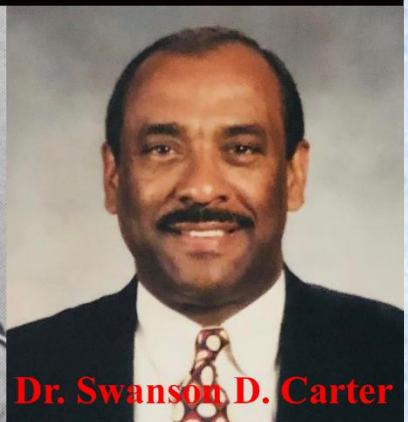
Summers County West Virginia



Louise Gibbs



Dr. Titus Pankey



Dr. Swanson D. Carter