

Black History Additional Facts

- **Thomas L. Jennings (1791 - 1859)** was the first African-American to receive a patent in 1821. It was for a dry-cleaning process in 1821. He used the money earned from the patent to purchase relatives out of slavery and support abolitionist causes.
- **Judy W. Reed** was the first African-American woman to receive a patent in 1884 for a hand-operated machine used to knead and roll dough.
- **Bessie Coleman (1893-1926)** was the first licensed African-American pilot in the world. She received aviation instruction in France.
- **Booker T. Washington (1856 - 1915)** was the first African-American to be honored on a U.S. stamp, in 1940.
- **George Washington Carver (1864 - 1943)** who made agricultural advancements and inventions pertaining to the use of peanuts and Percy Julian, who helped create drugs to combat glaucoma, were the first African-Americans admitted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 1990.
- **Althea Gibson (1927 - 2003)** was the first African-American tennis player to compete in the U.S. Championships in 1950 and at Wimbledon in 1951. In 1957 she won the women's singles and doubles at Wimbledon in 1957, which was celebrated by a ticker tape parade when she returned home to New York City.
- **Madame C.J. Walker (born Sarah Breedlove) (1876 - 1919)** invented specialized hair products for African-American hair and became the first American woman to become a millionaire.
- **Robert L. Johnson (1946 -)**, founder of Black Entertainment Television (BET) is the first African-American billionaire.
- **Lee Elder (1934 -)** was the first African-American golfer to play in the Masters Tournament in 1975. He has won 4 PGA tournaments and 8 Senior PGA tournaments in his career.
- **The Tuskegee Airmen** were the first African-American pilots in the U.S. armed forces. Beginning in 1941, select groups of extensively tested and rigorously trained African-Americans were trained at The Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. The Tuskegee Airmen are depicted in the G.I. Joe action figure series.
- **Black Swan Records**, founded in 1921 by Harry Pace in Harlem, was the first U.S. record label owned and operated by African-Americans. It was originally the Pace Phonograph Corporation and was renamed Black Swan Records after the 19th century opera singer Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield, who was known as the Black Swan.

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- **Maya Angelou's (1928 -)** autobiographical, "I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings" is the first non-fiction work by an African-American woman to make the best-seller list.
- **Alexa Canady** became the first female African-American neurosurgeon in the United States. She graduated from medical school in 1975.
- **Ben Carson (1951 -)** a skilled neurosurgeon, led the first successful operation to separate a pair of Siamese twin infants who were joined at the back of the head in 1987.
- **Ralph J. Bunche (1904 - 1971)**, a politician and a U.N. diplomat, was the first African-American to win the Nobel Peace prize in 1950 for mediating the Arab-Israeli truce.
- **Deford Bailey (1899 - 1982)** was a "wizard" at playing the harmonica and was most notable for mimicking the sound of locomotives. He was the first African-American to perform at the Grand Ole Opry and one of the first African-American stars of country music.