

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

February marks Black History Month, but how did this celebration come to be -- and why does it happen in February?

Carter G. Woodson, considered a pioneer in the study of African-American history, is given much of the credit for Black History Month.

The son of former slaves, Woodson spent his childhood working in coal mines and quarries. He received his education during the four-month term that was customary for black schools at the time.

Disturbed that history textbooks largely ignored America's black population, Woodson took on the challenge of writing black Americans into the nation's history.

To do this, he established the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. He also founded the group's widely respected publication, the *Journal of Negro History*.

In 1926, Woodson developed Negro History Week. He believed "the achievements of the Negro properly set forth will crown him as a factor in early human progress and a maker of modern civilization."

In 1976, Negro History Week expanded into Black History Month.

Woodson chose the second week of February for his celebration because it marks the birthdays of two men who greatly influenced the black American population:

- Frederick Douglass, who escaped slavery and became an abolitionist and civil rights leader; though his birthdate isn't known, he celebrated it on February 14.
- President Abraham Lincoln, who signed the Emancipation Proclamation, which abolished slavery in America's confederate states; he was born on February 12.

For his work, Woodson has been called the Father of Black History.



St. Louis natives that have made an impact!



Learn about St. Louis's Black History:

Several museums and historical sites offer an opportunity to learn more about Black history throughout the year:

- Learn about Dred Scott's fight for freedom at the [Old Courthouse](#) at Jefferson National Expansion Memorial

- Explore the history of the Blues and its continuing impact on music at the [National Blues Museum](#), located at 615 Washington Ave., St. Louis.
- Visit Missouri's first nationally recognized Underground Railroad site, the [Mary Meachum Freedom Crossing](#), located on the Mississippi Greenway just north of Merchant's Bridge in North St. Louis City (28 East Grand, St. Louis, MO). The site commemorates the work of Mary Meachum, a free woman of color who guided slaves to freedom by helping them cross over to the free state of Illinois. Meachum also led education efforts for African-American men, women and children in St. Louis.
- Learn about notable African Americans from the St. Louis area by exploring the wax figures, art and artifacts housed at the [Griot Museum of Black History](#).
- The "King of Ragtime," Scott Joplin, produced many of his best known compositions while living on what's now Delmar Boulevard. Visit and take a guided tour of the [Scott Joplin House State Historic Site](#) to learn more about his life.
- Segregation, the civil rights movement and several other aspects of African American history are interwoven with the history of St. Louis in the Seeking St. Louis exhibit at the [Missouri History Museum](#).

Sites:

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/02/01/us/history-of-black-history-month-trnd/index.html>

https://www.stltoday.com/entertainment/more-than-50-african-americans-who-carved-a-place-in-st-louis-history/collection_34a8ded9-fa0a-546c-a43f-05b60b63761c.html#49