



WHEREAS, February is celebrated as Black History Month in the United States; and African Americans have a rich history of developing inventions; and

WHEREAS, despite the extent of formal education was negligible during slavery and marginal during segregation, there is a long line of inventions by creative Black Americans that not only eased the work burdens for many of them, but benefited all people; and

WHEREAS, African Americans were able to obtain patents on many of their inventions, thus documenting their inventions and their improvements to existing inventions thus sealing that information into the future; and

WHEREAS, many of the inventions that we use today are the result of these contributions, such as:

Frederick M. Jones- 1938 - the 1st practical portable refrigeration unit for trucks enabling longer distance transport of perishable foods, medicines and any other perishable items preventing spoilage (no more melting ice); additionally, he received over 60 other patents for inventions before his death

Thomas J. Marshall- 1872 - fire suppression sprinkler systems in buildings consisting of pipes, valves and sprinkler heads with shutoff and turn-on valves to allow management of the system within zones inside a building (rather than relying on water flowing by gravity from above the building). This was a patent on improvements to the patented 1812 sprinkler system.

Philip Downing- 1891- secure, stand-alone, public mailbox on 4 legs. This ingenious creation was important for at least two reasons: 1) no longer would sending mail require the public to make a trip to the post office as these were set up in public spaces throughout communities and 2) there was a safety door associated with the pulldown door to deposit the mail or smaller packages. As the exterior door was pulled down to deposit the mail, an interior door closed off the larger depository area of the mailbox to protect mail from the weather and nefarious actors.

Then when exterior door was closed, the interior door opened, and the mail dropped securely into the larger compartment.

Thomas A. Carrington- 1882 - the stethoscope and 1892 – the range oven where you could heat on left and right sides of range as well as upper and lower levels of the oven.

Sarah Boone- 1892 – patented the most unique improvements to the then modern-day ironing board with more narrow, curved surface, allowing sleeves of clothing to be slipped over and under the end of the board and whose shape allowed shifting garments while ironing without developing wrinkles. Further, it collapsed for storage. Sarah was the 1st African American woman to receive a patent in the United States.

Osborn Dorsey- 1878 - the doorknob of cast iron with an internal latching mechanism.

Dr. Shirley Ann Jackson- Between 1973 and 1991, she was a theoretical physicist working at Bell Labs and her research led to the development of the touch-tone telephone, caller ID, Call waiting, and the fiber-optic cable and the solar cell; she was the 1st African American female to earn a doctorate in nuclear (particle) physics from MIT in 1973.

WHEREAS, additionally, 2025 marks the 100-year anniversary of the creation of Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids by labor organizer and civil rights activist A. Philip Randolph, which became the first Black union chartered by the American Federation of Labor.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT PROCLAIMED, the Williamson County Commissioners Court designate and celebrate, February 2025, as Black History Month in Williamson County in recognition of Black Americans' contributions, past and on-going, to our country's rich story despite oppression, death threats, and the historical omissions and changes in fact of their lives and contributions and invite our county residents to research and celebrate the same.

Passed by Commissioners Court and Signed on this date: _____

Bill Gravell, County Judge

On behalf of the Williamson County Commissioners Court Members