



Dr. Luther Porter Jackson

Luther Porter Jackson, Sr. (1892-1950) was born on July 11, 1892 in Lexington, Kentucky, the ninth of twelve children born to former slaves Edward and Delilah Culverson Jackson. He began teaching in 1913 at Topeka Industrial and Educational Institute in Kansas as an Instructor of History and Music. He also taught and served as Director of the Academic Department at Voorhees Industrial School (now HBCU Voorhees College) in Denmark, South Carolina from 1915 to 1918. While teaching in South Carolina Jackson researched his first two articles that eventually appeared in the Journal of Negro History. He was instrumental in helping his good friend Carter G. Woodson establish the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1916.

Desiring more education, he entered Columbia University in 1920; however, Columbia did not consider his degrees from Fisk up to their standards. He enrolled for one year at New York City College and returned to Columbia in 1921, graduating from their Teachers College in 1922.

After completing his second Master's degree, Jackson joined the faculty of Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute (now Virginia State University) and married Johnella M. Frazer (1896 - 1981), a music professor whom he met while they were students at Fisk University.

Johnella Frazer, a native of Shelbyville, Kentucky, was the daughter of Laura and Patterson Tilford Frazer, President of Hopkinsville College in Kentucky. She completed the conservatory course at Fisk University at the age of seventeen and toured with the Fisk Jubilee Singers for two years. In 1915, a concert was given in Richmond and a few Fisk graduates on the faculty at Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute came to hear it. The next year she joined the staff of Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute as the first full time instructor of piano, nine years before there was an official music department. During the summer vacation she studied at Temple University, the Chicago Music College and at Columbia University. Frazer composed the music to the Virginia State University Alma Mater.



After marriage, Luther and Johnella had four children;

-Edward (1929-2010) received a Bachelor's from Virginia State College and a Masters from Columbia University before retiring as Supervisor of Music for Passaic Public Schools in New Jersey.

-John T. Jackson graduated from Oberlin Conservatory in Ohio. He resided in New York and toured professionally playing flute and piccolo.

-Laura Frances Jackson (1923-1960) graduated from Virginia State College and gave private piano lessons. She married Corporal Malcom D. Fulcher, Editor of the Lee Traveller at Camp Lee (now Fort Lee).

-Luther, Jr. (1925-2008) received a Bachelors degree from Virginia State College and a Masters from Columbia University. He became one of the first African-American Journalists at the Newark (New Jersey) Evening News, the Washington Post and ultimately the first African-American professor at Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism where he retired.

Soon after his arrival at Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute, Jackson took over the college high school from 1923 to 1928. In 1930, he organized the history department and served as chairman until his death. He also served as assistant to the president and eventually became professor of history and chairman of social science. In 1934, he formed the League of Negro Voters, and in 1937 organized the Petersburg Business League, which became the Virginia Trade Association.

In 1935, Carter G. Woodson asked Jackson to head all fund-raising activities for the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. As chairman of the Virginia chapter, Jackson went on to establish that chapter as one of the most productive of all state chapters. In addition, he conducted the Petersburg Community Choir of 100 voices and earned his Ph.D. in history in 1937 from the University of Chicago.

From 1942 until 1948 he wrote a column for *The Journal and Guide* in Norfolk, Virginia under the general heading of *Rights and Duties in a Democracy* to encourage blacks across Virginia and nationwide to vote. In 1944, Jackson was appointed to the Virginia World War II History Commission and worked with the N.A.A.C.P, for which he received a plaque for service in 1948.

As a community activist, Jackson was concerned about the lack of voting rights in the South. He was involved in most civil rights initiatives in Virginia and provided

leadership in political education among the state's African Americans. With the support of the Virginia Teachers Association and several leaders from Petersburg (Raymond Valentine and Robert Cooley, both attorneys), on May 3, 1941, Jackson was an essential component of the establishment of the Virginia Voters League during an education conference hosted at Virginia State.

With the assistance of students at the college, Jackson canvassed 2000 houses in Petersburg regarding blacks' thoughts about voting. From this research, he produced a report entitled, *What the People Think about Voting in Petersburg, Virginia*. Luther Porter Jackson was a leading teacher, historian, and active voice of the history of African Americans in the South.

Jackson devoted his professional career to searching tax ledgers, marriage records, lists of land and property owners, wills, and records of plantations to reconstruct the history of African Americans in the South. Jackson's pioneering work on free black families in Virginia prior to the Emancipation Proclamation paved the way for many black Virginia genealogy searches. Over the course of his career he published over sixty books, articles, pamphlets, and newspaper articles regarding the history of blacks in the South.

Luther P. Jackson died two weeks after his dear friend Carter G. Woodson. Jackson passed on April 20, 1950 after suffering a heart attack in Petersburg at the age of 57. Johnella Jackson remained at Virginia State University for forty-nine years, retiring in 1965. Dr. and Mrs. Jackson are buried at Blandford Cemetery in Petersburg, Va.

Jackson authored the following books:

The History of the Virginia Stated Teachers Association (1937)

A Short History of the Gillfield Baptist Church of Petersburg, Virginia (1941)

Free Negro Labor and Property Holding in Virginia, 1830-1860 (1942)

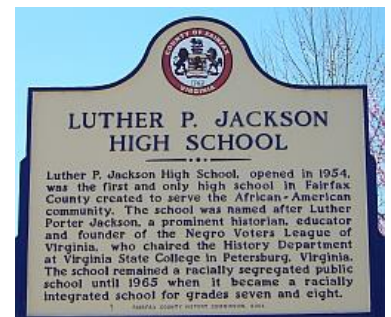
Virginia Negro Soldiers and Seaman in the Revolutionary War (1944)

Negro Office-Holders in Virginia, 1865-1895 (1945)

Namesakes:

He is considered to be the founder of the Department of History at Virginia State University and in recognition of his service, the street Jackson Place which runs beside Davis Hall and in front of Puryear Hall is named in his honor.

Originally known as the Luther Porter Jackson High School, the school opened its doors on September 1954 as a segregated high school to serve black students in Fairfax County, Virginia. Prior



to this, students were transported outside of Fairfax County for their education. After the integration of Fairfax County Public Schools, Luther Jackson Intermediate School opened its doors in September 1965. In July 1991, the school was renamed as the Luther Jackson Middle School.

In 1949, Jackson became one of the first African-American scholars to deliver a paper at a conference at the University of Virginia. In 1977, the University of Virginia's Office of African American Affairs established the Luther P. Jackson House on campus in his honor.



Luther Porter Jackson High School in Surry County, Virginia which is now L.P. Jackson Middle School.

Sources;

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By: Maurice B. Jones
mbjones@vsu.edu