

## FACT SHEET

Ohio and its citizens played crucial roles in building the network that came to be known as the Underground Railroad. In addition, the state has built an enduring legacy of African-American freedom and advancement. Accomplishments along the way include:

- **Paul Laurence Dunbar**, born in Dayton, Ohio and friend of the Wright Brothers, was the first black poet to receive national critical acclaim. Dunbar, whose mother was a former slave and whose father escaped slavery via the Underground Railroad, died from tuberculosis at age 33 in 1906.
- Ohio's Oberlin College was the nation's **first coeducational institution of higher learning** to admit African Americans. The College, a small liberal arts institution established in 1833, remained that way until after the Civil War.
- **Wilberforce University** in Wilberforce, Ohio is the nation's oldest private, historically black university. Founded in 1856, Wilberforce was the first college owned and operated by blacks. Today, Wilberforce is a four-year, liberal arts institution.
- **John Mercer Langston** of Ohio became the first known African American elected to public office in the United States. He was elected clerk of Brownhelm Township in April 1855.
- **The Black Brigade of Cincinnati** in September 1862 served as the first African American unit of the Union Army to be formed and deployed during the Civil War. The brigade came about after the Confederate Army devised plans to attack Cincinnati. The brigade prepared to defend the city but did not see action and was phased out after three weeks of work.
- Cincinnati's **Charles Henry Turner** was one of the most prolific publishers of scientific articles in his day. In all, the teacher and researcher published 49 articles between 1892 and 1923.
- Before he died in 1910, the **African American inventor Granville T. Woods** secured more than 60 invention patents, many involving electrical devices and railways. The Columbus native even fended off two patent challenges from Thomas Edison.
- Ohio was also home to **inventor Garrett A. Morgan**, who claimed the Morgan safety hood, better known as the gas mask, among his many inventions. It saved many American lives in World War I. The United States Department of Transportation considers Morgan to be the father of transportation safety technology as he is credited with inventing the automated traffic signal.

- Ohio writer and lecturer **Naomi Bowman Talbert Anderson** was a pioneer in the black women's suffrage movement in the late 19th century.
- **Frances Ellen Watkins Harper**, known as the "Bronze Muse," was an influential poet and abolitionist who was also the first woman to teach at Union Seminary in Wilberforce, Ohio.
- Wilberforce University graduate and **professor Hallie Q. Brown** was prominent on the state and national stage regarding women's suffrage, civil rights and temperance. Brown united women in an effort to fight lynching laws and led a boycott of the All-American Music Festival in Washington, D.C., in 1925 because of discriminatory seating for blacks.

