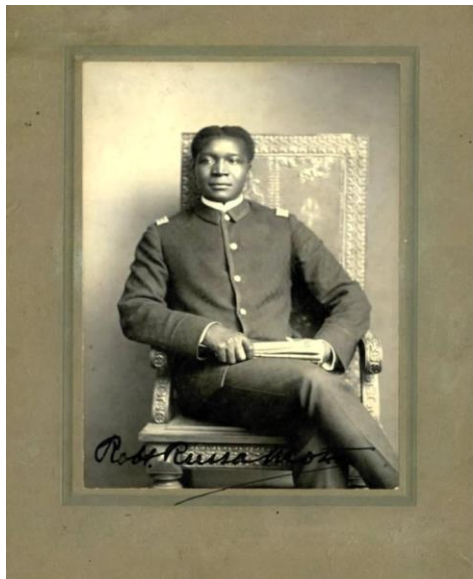


Dr. Robert Russa Moton



Dr. Robert Russa Moton was born on August 26, 1867, just two years after the end of the Civil War. Although fortunate to be born free, Moton grew up on a sprawling plantation in Amelia County Virginia, his parents, Emily and Booker Moton were slaves on a different plantation before his birth.

Moton was lucky to have parents that knew the importance of education. Emily risked her life during slavery and learned a limited amount of reading, which she passed on to her son during late night sessions. One night, the Master of the plantation caught Emily and Moton during one of their sessions, however, instead of punishing them, he sent his daughter to their cabin to teach both of them.

Moton wanted to continue his education, however without money, his parents could not send him to school. Moton worked for two years in a lumber camp in Surray County to pay for his education at Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, now Hampton University. He was accepted in 1885.

While studying at Hampton, Moton met Booker T. Washington, who would become his mentor, and close friend. Together they traveled throughout the country promoting the importance of education for African-Americans, and cooperative unification of all races.

Upon graduating from Hampton in 1890, Moton was appointed Commandant over the male students, and was known as Major Moton. He held this position for the next 25 years.

In 1900, Moton was elected president of the National Negro Business League, trustee of the Anna T. Jeanes Fund in 1908, which supported black rural schools. In 1912, he founded the community-building Negro Organization Society of Virginia

In 1905, Moton married Elizabeth Hunt Harris, who unfortunately died the following year. In 1908 Moton met and married Jennie Dee Booth. Together, the couple raised five children, including Charlotte Moton Hubbard (1911-1994), a deputy assistant secretary of state for public affairs from 1964 until 1970.

While attending a seminar in Chicago in 1915 Moton received word that his dear friend, Booker T. Washington was very ill. Rushing to his side in New York, Mr. Washington expressed to Moton that he was born in the South, and wanted to die in the south. It is said that Moton drove his dear friend back to Alabama, where he passed.

Dr. Moton succeeded Washington as the second president of Tuskegee Institute that same year and retained that position until 1935. Under Dr. Moton's leadership, Tuskegee Institute's endowment grew from \$2.2 Million to \$7.7 Million. Moton introduced college level courses and eventually the school offered degreed programs in Education and Agriculture.

Dr. Moton became one of the most prominent and respected African-Americans of the 1920's, 30's, and 40's. To this day, he is the ONLY African-American who has advised 5 different Presidents, (Wilson, Harding, Coolidge, Hoover, and Roosevelt), He was a regular guest at the White House. One day his lawyer came to visit him and Moton told him to accompany him on a drive. Before the lawyer knew it, they were pulling up the White House; Moton exited his vehicle and went straight to the front door and rang the doorbell. The butler opened the door and gave Moton a friendly greeting and invited both of them inside.

In 1918, Dr. Moton was asked by President Wilson to travel to France to address, and look into the conditions of the African-American Soldiers fighting during World War I. In 1922, Dr. Moton was personally asked by President Harding to give the keynote speech at the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial.



Due to his close relationship with Julius Rosenwald, the Chairman of the Board for Sears and Roebuck, hundreds of Rosenwald Schools were built throughout the south to educate Black students. Moton was also largely responsible for the creation of the Veterans Hospital in Alabama for African-American soldiers returning from World War I. Ignoring

threats from the Ku Klux Klan, and others, Moton demanded and ensured that the hospital was governed by African-American Administrators, and Doctors.

In 1927, President Hoover approached Dr. Moton for help concerning the Great Flood of 1927. President Hoover promised Moton and other prominent African-American leaders positions of unprecedented levels in his administration, as well as to divide the land of bankrupted farmers into small farms for African-Americans in return for their help. Once elected President in 1928, Hoover turned

his back on Moton. In turn in 1932, Dr. Moton left the Republican Party and supported Franklin Delano Roosevelt in his campaign for the Presidency. It was at this time that a historic shift took place and African-Americans abandoned the Republican Party, the party of Abraham Lincoln, and voted for Roosevelt and the Democratic Party.

*In 1935, Dr. Moton retired with his wife to their home in Cappahosic, VA, in Gloucester County VA. They called their home Holly Knoll. The Georgian style home sits on the banks of the York River. That same year, Marc Connelly, the Director of the movie *Green Pastures*, visited Moton in his home, and asked him to play the part of Da Lawd in his new movie. Mr. Connelly wanted Moton to play the part so badly, he told Moton to write his own salary for the part. Although Moton contemplated his offer, in the end, he decided to turn the part down due to his declining health.*

Dr. Moton, along with other prominent African-Americans put a lot of pressure of President Roosevelt to approve a program Moton wrote for a pilot training program for African-American. This program was the Tuskegee Airmen Training Program. Moton also purchased the first plane for this program in 1937. During World War II, the Tuskegee Airmen flew from Moton Field, named after Dr. Moton.

Dr. Moton passed away on May 31, 1940 at his home, Holly Knoll at age 72. His home was renamed the Moton Conference center and became the birthplace of the United Negro College Fund. Many notable people have stay at his home including Dr. Martin Luther King, who wrote part of his I have a Dream Speech under the 400 year old oak tree in the front yard. Although abandoned in the 1980's, Holly Knoll was purchased in 2005 by the nonprofit group The Gloucester Institute, which offers various programs to assist youth in furthering their dreams.

During his lifetime, Dr. Moton accomplished an extensive amount of accomplishments including traveling the world and being entertained by various Kings, Presidents, and Heads of States, something unknown for an African-American of his time. Dr. Moton earned honorary degrees from Oberlin and Williams College, Virginia Union, Wilberforce, Lincoln, Harvard, and Howard Universities. He was recipient of the Harmon Award in Race Relations (1930) and the Spingarn Medal (1932), among other awards and recognitions.

*In 1939 the Robert Russa Moton High School was built in Prince George County, VA. It was the only high school for African-Americans living in the area. In 1951 students led by Barbara Johns and John Stokes walked out of the school to protest the deplorable conditions. In 1954, Moton High became one of the schools in the fore front that brought about the decision to desegregate schools in *Brown vs. Board of Education*. The school now is a museum that educates people on the life of Dr. Moton, this school named after him, and the students that helped change America.*

Tragically, Dr. Moton is one of many forgotten American heroes. Dr. Moton contributed a great deal to the lives of African-American and has left a legacy unparalleled to others. In 2013, Dr. Moton was honored at the Library of Virginia's Strong Men and Woman in Virginia History Banquet. In May of 2014, his retirement home was highlighted on the tour of historic homes for Virginia's Garden Week.

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