

## President's Message

By Charles Guest

Happy New Year Metropolitan Bridge Unit of New York! Welcome to 2026. As we enter this tumultuous and stressful time in this country and the world, I have tried to make sure that our bridge club environment does not reflect the chaos we all see in the media. I have strived to create and foster a vibrant and inclusive community. A community, unlike our world right now, where everyone feels welcome and valued.

When I accepted the honor and challenge to serve as President of the MBU, I pledged to work diligently to achieve certain goals. Some goals have been successfully met, and others are still a work in progress.

One of my goals was to make sure we had financial transparency in all financial decisions and operations, ensuring that every member is aware of how our funds are being utilized. I feel we as an organization have improved in this area. I am grateful to our Vice President who taught me that "no man is an island unto himself." In addition, I learned that following protocol is extremely important when it comes to getting things done for the betterment of the unit. I wanted to make sure that we became tax exempt this year. Through collaborative investigation and research, I am happy to announce that we were able to acquire and maintain tax exempt status for our organization just like our parent organization. And through our highly successful fundraising endeavors, such as our AAA Tournament, steered by the efforts of our committee members led by Pat Binyard, we are solvent and in the black.

Another goal of mine as your MBU president in 2025 was to increase our membership and attract new members. We are still moving forward with that effort. We need someone to steer this effort and create innovative ideas to attract new members. I would personally like to thank Annette Wallace, Cheryl Jones, Janice McBean, and Vice President Linda Straker for their efforts to attract and recruit new members.

An especially important goal I set in 2025 and will still push forward to make it happen in 2026, is the plan to secure transportation for seniors who are no longer able to drive. Our effort is to provide them with reliable transportation services, so they are still able to connect with our organization and still able to participate in bridge events. We will continue to seek grants and donations to provide a van and/or bus for our seniors.

During the past year we have had personnel changes, regrettably we lost our previous treasurer Faye Liverpool leading up to our AAA, but we want to say thank you for your dedicated work prior to your departure. I also need to give a special thank you to Viola Porter for her willingness to pick up the mantle of treasurer to assist us in our time of need. I would be remiss to not personally thank John Demos for all his years as our Tournament Chair and Steve Bond, as our

incoming Tournament Chair. Both of you have helped our tournament be as successful as they were in 2025.

As we start this new year, I encourage more club support and collaboration among bridge clubs and other organizations such as the Alzheimer's Association. Thank you again to Tamika Phillips for her presentation about Alzheimer's. The more support and collaboration we engage in, the more it strengthens our overall community spirit. Thank you to all of you for your hard work, team play and community spirit!

# **New Years Greetings and Highlights**

**By Dolores Watson**

## **Think Big**

As we welcome in the year 2026, we wish everyone good health, love, and prosperity. Although we continue to face unprecedented world events that challenge our sensibilities through constant media coverage, we choose to value our time and move forward with optimism, confidence and determination.

## **January General Meeting Highlights**

The Metropolitan Bridge Unit (MBU) held its general membership meeting on January 27. Unlike previous meetings held at the Community Bridge Home, this gathering was via Zoom. Charles Guest, president of MBU, presided over the meeting, which saw the participation of forty-five members. The Board 's decision to meet virtually was influenced by Winter Storm Fern which delivered freezing temperatures, snow, and ice to our area and many more.

The next General Membership meeting is scheduled for April. At that time, members will hold a Memorial Service to honor our Grand Slammers who passed in 2025.

During the meeting, President Guest announced several staff changes. Viola Porter of Mount Vernon has been appointed as Treasurer and Steven Bond will take over from John Demos as Tournament Chair. The Unit's treasury is in good standing; for full details, refer to the official Zoom meeting minutes when available. It may also be noted that Janice McBean is the longest serving Executive Board secretary within the MBU. She has consistently accepted both elected and appointed positions with remarkable competence and dedication. Valerie Brooks Vice President, reported on the necessity to identify equipment and supplies that require repair or replacement.

## **Bridge Education and Recruitment**

Bridge education and recruitment of new members is still an area of strong concern. Fortunately, Lynda Straker and Annette Wallace have joined forces to implement a strategic plan that produced positive results. To learn more about how this was achieved, please read "Recognition of New Players" which first appeared in the July 2025 Consumer and should appear in the ABA Bulletin, March 2026 issue.

## **AAA Tournament and Fundraising**

The AAA Tournament, held for several years in December at Resorts Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City, New Jersey, continues to be a highlight of our unit. Patricia Binyard is serving as chair again this year, and she and her team are prepared to facilitate another fun and successful event. Your participation in fundraisers is most needed, as it

significantly impacts the tournament team's ability to provide the best possible experience. Your attendance is essential.

Philippe Gerdes did an outstanding job for a second year as organizer and coordinator in planning for charter bus transportation to Resorts Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Two locations for departure and return were designated, one at CBH in Queens and the other at Atlantic and Vanderbilt Avenues in Brooklyn, New York. He made sure everything went smoothly for travelers.

### **ABA Membership Committee**

The American Bridge Association Membership Committee invites you to watch, subscribe and click "like" on its YouTube podcast channel. The committee has produced six interviews with a variety of ABA members sharing their bridge experience and addressing questions by the interviewer. Rita Thompson is the chairperson and she welcomes suggestions and participation from the membership.

# Bayview DBC

By Valerie Brooks

Happy 2026! Welcome back Debra Michlewitz and new members Nora Gamer and Toni Kalfus.

Save the date for Bayview C games:

Chinese New Year Celebration:  
Tuesday, February 17th

Welcome Spring Celebration:  
Tuesday, March 31st

Lunch Time: 11 am  
Game Time: 12 pm

## Seminars by Cheryll Jones

To help us prepare for the ABA Spring National, Cheryll will conduct classes on four Tuesdays in March from 10:30 am to 11:15 am. The dates are March 10th, 17th, 24th and 31st. Club and C Games will follow.

Happy birthday to Christian Baxter, Ruth Brennan, Larry Gutman, Toni Kalfus, Dennis Papper, Sylvia Simmons, Pat Thomas, and Donna Woo.

Warm get well wishes to our beloved Rudy Cummings.

Team Bayview will be playing to win the Round Robin Games.

Good luck to everyone at the ABA Spring National and Eastern Sectional Games.

# Brooklynites DBC

By Jane Atlas

The Brooklynites DBC wishes you good health and happiness during 2026.

We hope to see you at our Friday bridge games, at 625 Quincy Street, Brooklyn, New York. Lunch is at 12:30 pm. The game begins promptly at 1:00 pm. Street parking is available at 12:30 pm.

Thanks to all those who come to our games on a regular basis.

We welcome Diana Cooke, our newest member.

Happy birthday to the following:

January	Terry Drayton
February	Daryl Powell
March	Mary Lewis
	John Hopkins

## Cosmopolitan DBC

By Steven Bond

**WOW!!!** What a year so far. In January, Cosmo celebrated with our annual Holiday C Game. Before the month was out, the worst snowstorm in years, followed by an extended cold spell, brought bridge playing to a screeching halt. NO live bridge for 3 WEEKS! As life is returning to “normal”, we sense how our lives might never be the same.

A profound thank you goes to each and every one of you who have supported COSMO during the last 7 months; your presence at our games is greatly appreciated.

**CONGRATULATIONS!** to Steven Bond and Cheryll Jones, who placed Nationally with their partners in the September Nationwide, and to Pat Jackson and Cheryll Jones who placed nationally in the December Nationwide. **CONGRATULATIONS!** to Philippe Gerdes, Pat Jackson, Cheryll Jones, and Ronald Prester, who all placed with their partners in the Fall Sectional, and who also all placed in the MBU AAA tournament.

Looking ahead, we will have our Herman Huff game on March 19<sup>th</sup>, playing fee \$14; our Swiss Team game in prep for the spring sectional, on May 7<sup>th</sup>, and our Annual Bridge Home Benefit game on Saturday, June 13<sup>th</sup>, playing fee \$15.

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY!** to Therese Hamilton and Doris White in March, Fabienne Jean-Louis in April, Martha Hewitt and Vernetta Nelson in May, and Cheryll Jones and Ruth Shuler in June.

As we slowly crawl out of Winter, we look forward to new experiences in the upcoming months, such as the individual game we just held, to enjoy with our Bridge family. May we always remember to take care and be safe.

# Springfield DBC

By Eliza Brann

Greetings everyone! Springfield is excited to welcome two new members -- Dawn Harrison and Norris McBean. We encourage them to read and play often and know that we would love to see you at the table soon. Our January birthday was Marcia Demos, in February, Edwin Ward II and Stephanie Straker celebrated theirs. Marion Mercer, James McKeown, and Lynda Straker were next. Then, Sharon Fox and Janice McBean, in May and in June we will cheer for Diana Green. May health and happiness follow you all.

Thank you, Lynda Straker and Janice McBean for recruiting and teaching the new member classes. We look forward to future classes and encourage our members to continue making efforts to bring friends and families to join us. Our thoughts and prayers go out to Edwin Ward II for a speedy recovery and for his return to the bridge table very soon.

# Westbury DBC

By Patricia Binyard

Hello bridge family. We hope you had a wonderful holiday and are ready to enjoy the 2026 new year. We continue to wish you good health, happiness, and tremendous fortune for the New Year.

Westbury has been very busy teaching beginners and intermediate bridge to our ever-growing student population. Bridge classes are held on Wednesdays at the "Yes We Can Center" (141 Garden Street, Westbury, New York) from 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM. We have successfully recruited two students to become members of our club. Please join us in welcoming Ruth Barrie Lieberman and Ralph Di Palma into our bridge family.

Our first C game of the season will be held on Saturday, March 28 at the "Yes We Can Center" at 11:00 AM for refreshments and game start time at 12:00 PM. Please join us and help make this a successful event.

# Escape from Icy New York: Sun, Sea & Slams in Barbados

By Rita Thompson

When word spread that a bridge tournament would be held in Barbados, I didn't hesitate. A week of bridge and sunshine sounded like the perfect antidote to a brutal New York winter.



A lively group of bridge players from the Eastern and Southern Sections of the American Bridge Association joined more than 250 international participants -- mostly from the USA and Canada -- for the Sun, Sea & Slams Bridge Tournament, held February 9–14, 2026, at the Barbados Beach Club.

Our host, Roglyn Hinds, Tournament Chair and President of the Barbados Bridge League, shared that this beloved event is now in its 36th year. The organization was impeccable, and the

schedule left us plenty of time to enjoy the warmth, beauty, and culture of the island between sessions.

The week opened with a seminar by Barbara Seagram, the renowned bridge teacher and author who was born and raised in Barbados and returns regularly to teach and support the local bridge community.

When we weren't at the tables, we explored the island. A highlight was Harbour Lights, a beach club and entertainment venue on Carlisle Bay -- one of the most stunning stretches of sand in Barbados. Between relaxing on beach chairs and braving the surf (some of us were tossed around in the waves like rag dolls), it was a perfect Caribbean day.

We also enjoyed a private guided tour with Cynthia, a local expert who seemed to know every inch of the island. She even pointed out Rihanna's childhood home and the luxury condominium she now owns.



Dinner at Narma Restaurant was another standout. With its Mediterranean-Caribbean fusion menu, DJ, and live entertainment, it delivered both flavor and atmosphere.

An afternoon was spent at Garrison Savannah, Barbados' historic horse racing track, in operation since 1845 and home to the Barbados Turf Club. We even managed to pick a few winners.

No trip to Barbados feels complete without joining the crowds at the famous Oistins Fish Fry, where open-air stalls dish out perfectly seasoned Bajan fried fish, mahi-mahi, and snapper while live music and entertainment fill the night air.

The week concluded with a festive Awards Dinner, where winners of multiple events were recognized. Lynda Straker and Janice McBean won the Best Ladies Pair in the two-session Pelau Pairs; and Faye Hines and Annetta Wallace placed 2nd East/West in the



Friday morning pairs. Prizes awarded included prints by Virgil Broodhagen, a well-known local artist. It was also announced that the tournament hosted 585 tables this year -- 36 more than last year.

With the perfect blend of bridge, sunshine, culture, and camaraderie, one can't help but wonder: Are destination bridge tournaments becoming the next big trend in our community?

# The History We Share, The History We Must Honor

By Rita Thompson

Black history is not a separate chapter -- it is woven into the very foundation of the United States. You cannot tell the story of America without the contributions, struggles, brilliance, and resilience of Black Americans. Recognizing Black history is simply recognizing the full truth of American history.



Black History Month began with the vision of Dr. Carter G. Woodson (1875-1950). He believed that a people's history is essential to their dignity and progress. Born to formerly enslaved parents in Virginia, he worked in coal mines as a teenager before pursuing education with extraordinary determination, eventually earning a Ph.D. from Harvard.

In 1915, Dr. Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (now ASALH -- the Association for the Study of African American Life and History) to preserve and promote African American achievements. His most enduring legacy came in 1926 when he created Negro History Week, the precursor to today's Black History Month. He chose February as the opportune month because it included the birthdays of both Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. Fifty years later, coinciding with the nation's bicentennial in 1976, and in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement, President Gerald Ford decreed a national observance and called upon the people to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history."

Woodson's mission was simple but revolutionary: to ensure that Black history was studied, taught, and celebrated as an integral part of American history. One hundred years later, the 2026 national theme selected by ASALH -- "A Century of Black History Commemorations" -- honors that legacy.

# Professor Blackwell: A Mathematical Genius Who Helped Shape the Age of AI

By Dolores Watson



Professor David H. Blackwell (1919-2010) exhibited exceptional skills in mathematics from an early age. He was unaware at the time of how his genius would shape the future of technology. Blackwell's brilliance as a mathematician and statistician contributed significantly to game theory and probability theory.

President Barack Obama presented a National Medal of Science award posthumously to two of Blackwell's children at a White House ceremony on November 20, 2014.

Nvidia, an American multinational technology leader in Artificial Intelligence, announced in March 2025, the Blackwell Super chip, a graphic processing unit (GPU) the fastest processor on the market. Microsoft, Google and Amazon have placed massive orders for the Blackwell chips. It allows AI to use less time in training and learning.

Like the heroes portrayed in *Hidden Figures*, Blackwell's mind power operated in the shadows for decades, even as his work transformed the fields of game theory, probability, and modern computing. Today he is honored as a forefather of Artificial Intelligence, a visionary whose insights laid the groundwork for decision theory and machine learning. Blackwell often reminded young scholars, "don't let your race be a handicap," a philosophy he lived by as he broke barriers and redefined what was possible. His legacy stands as both a scientific triumph and a testament to resilience, brilliance, and quiet revolution.

# **Brilliant Minds, Hidden Stories: African-American Inventors**

**By Lemuel “Bill” Copeland**

This report about African-Americans whose inventions have contributed significantly to the “American way of life” was prepared by Brother Lemuel Copeland in 2002 as part of Gamma Rho Sigma Chapter, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity’s presentation at the Roy Wilkins’ School, (P.S. 132 in Queens. NYC) for their Black History Month observation. It has been updated in 2026 to make it more contemporary. This report reflects Brother Copeland’s (now approaching 90 years of age) own life experiences growing up in the Jim Crow south and information summarized from Nathan Aaseng’s book, “Black Inventors” and from the “Black Inventors” Internet web site.

Americans take pride in being a self-reliant people. We place a considerable value in individuals who rely on their own mind and hard work to plan and control their own destinies. We tend to scorn people who constantly rely on others to make life easier for themselves. This image of rugged individualism, however, is misleading. We are in constant debt to inventors who created useful products, processes and machines that we could never have devised ourselves. Few of us Americans can get through even a few minutes of a day without depending heavily on the efforts of hundreds of people who have created many things to make our comfortable day-to-day life possible. Our day has barely begun before we have used so many ideas and devices from others that we barely take notice of them. We wake up in the morning in a spring mattress bed to the sound of an alarm clock, flick on a light switch and turn on the radio and TV to hear weather reports compiled by satellites and computers. We take milk from a refrigerator, which has been pasteurized and packaged by machines and transported in air-conditioned vehicles.

You probably have been told that Thomas Edison invented the electric light, that Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone, that Samuel Morse invented the telegraph, that Henry Ford invented the automobile, that Orville and Wilber Wright invented the airplane, that Cyrus McCormick invented the grain harvester, that Charles Goodyear invented the rubber tire, that Robert Fulton invented the steam boat and that Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin. How many African-Americans does the above list include? None. Most of you can rattle off a long list of prominent African-American athletes and entertainers, yet few of

you can recognize the names of African-Americans who have changed the way we live. Most Americans would be hard-pressed to come up with a name of a single African-American inventor. George Washington Carver might be the lone exception. Even the National Inventors Hall of Fame established in 1973 has been slow to honor the work of African-Americans.

One might conclude that African-Americans have had little interest or success in inventing. The truth is we can hardly get through a day without taking advantage of the creative genius of black inventors. An African-American developed the processes that bring sugar to your table and shoes to your feet. An African-American developed the process that lubricates much of our machinery that keeps the country going. An African-American developed the mechanism that keeps the food frozen in your refrigerator. You cannot tee up a golf ball, bait a fishhook, or stop at a traffic light without bumping up against an African American invention.

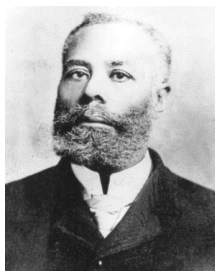
Unfortunately, no one knows the extent to which black inventors have contributed to our society. Many of their good ideas were stolen from them, quickly imitated and someone else took the credit. Slavery also made it more difficult for Blacks to get credit for their inventions. Most slave owners believed that educating blacks was a waste of time and that slaves who did learn would become less willing to do the hard manual labor required of them. Some masters were so opposed to slaves being educated that they whipped, beat, mutilated and/or sold slaves who were caught reading or learning to read. These restrictions on learning made it difficult for slaves to develop the knowledge and intellectual training needed to be creative. Also, slaves had neither the leisure time nor the equipment to carry out experiments needed to perfect their inventions. Even with those handicaps, however, African-American slaves developed innovative devices and processes.

You may have heard or certainly will hear the common expression, “necessity is the mother of invention”. Nearly all of their inventions involved ways to save labor or improve production on the farm or in the houses where these slaves worked day after day at their tedious and boring tasks. However, the masters claimed ownership of the slave inventions, took credit and put the inventions under their own name. This practice has made it

impossible to determine how much African-American have contributed to inventions that have reshaped our world. There is much evidence that Eli Whitney stole the idea of the cotton gin from a slave named Sam, whose father, also a slave, had invented a device that separated the seeds from cotton. This device made his work easier and enabled him to produce more for the master. There was also a mechanically gifted slave named Joe Anderson, who belonged to Cyrus McCormick. Many historians believe that Joe contributed to the invention of the grain harvester for which McCormick became famous and rich. Unfortunately, this disregard for the rights of slaves made it so that the claims of African-American contributions to the inventions will never be known.

The abolition of slavery did not remove the barriers to blacks getting credit for their inventions. They continued to struggle with inferior education and inferior economic opportunities. Racial prejudice caused many blacks to disguise their inventions by putting them in the names of white people. Again, because of this, the unfortunate result is that many of the inventions of African-Americans will never be known. A few early black Americans made significant contributions to the early development of this country. Benjamin Banneker, a black engineer, played a major role in helping George Washington to design the nation's capital in Washington, D. C. He also built the first clock in the United States. Around 1800 James Forten designed the device for raising and lowering sails on the ships that crossed the oceans.

**THE FOLLOWING ARE JUST FIVE OF THE “UNKNOWN” AFRICAN-AMERICANS WHOSE INVENTIONS IMPACT OUR EVERYDAY LIVES.**



**ELIJAH McCOY**  
*1844-1928*

Elijah McCoy was born in 1844 in Canada, near Detroit, Michigan. His parents were former slaves who had escaped from their masters and fled North with the help of the Underground Railroad. Runaway slaves lived in constant fear. Those who remained in the United States never knew when a bounty hunter might break down their door in the dead of night and drag them back to slavery. Many runaways, like the McCoy family, sought protection in Canada, where Elijah attended a school for black children. After ten years, no longer fearing the bounty hunters, the McCoy's came back across the border to live in Michigan. Elijah was a good student

and worked part-time in a machine shop where he became fascinated with the machines and developed a talent for taking them apart and putting them back together. His parents believed that a bright young boy like Elijah could do well in life only if he got a decent education. However, educational opportunities for Blacks were rare. Even people who were opposed to slavery believed that Blacks were inferior and incapable of higher education. Elijah's parents worked hard and saved all they could in order to give Elijah the education they had been denied. Recognizing Elijah's special talent, and the growing importance that machines played in America, they wanted to put Elijah in a school where he could learn more about machines. In 1860, he was sent to study in England where racial prejudice was not as strong as in the United States. He studied, trained and worked as an apprentice mechanical engineer for five years before returning to the United States. Elijah McCoy applied for many jobs that required a mechanical engineering background, but failed to get any of them. The myth that blacks were less intelligent than whites dominated the business world as well as the educational system. While many companies would hire African Americans for unskilled labor, almost none would take a chance on a black person for skilled or high level positions. Also, white workers refused to be supervised or instructed by Black co-workers. To his disappointment, Elijah had to take a job as a fireman with a railroad company, where his main jobs were to shovel coal and to pour oil from a cup to lubricate the train's steam engine. This was an important task because a well-lubricated train engine ran better, lasted longer and did not overheat and cause dangerous fires. However, any untrained, uneducated person could have handled these simple, routine tasks. Harking back to the idiom, "necessity is the mother of invention", searching for something to keep his mind occupied, Elijah started thinking about a process that would put oil into the engine without having to stop the train every few miles. He believed that the ideal solution would be to create an automatic device that could lubricate the engine almost continuously without the fireman having to be involved. Several inventors had developed such a device but none of them worked well.

Elijah spent many of his idle hours thinking of possible ways to create a self-lubricating machine. After two years of work in his tiny shop at home, McCoy came up with a machine that would continuously supply oil to the moving engine parts. On July 23, 1872, he was granted a patent by the United States Patent Office. McCoy's employer quickly recognized the value of the device and put it into use on all of its trains. When word of the invention spread, Elijah McCoy received many inquiries from people all over the world who were

eager to use his invention. However, once again, McCoy found that his race was a barrier. When they discovered he was Black, many executives withdrew their request for consultation and refused to buy his invention. His invention was referred to with a racial slur, the “nigger oil cup”. But McCoy’s lubricator cup worked so well that virtually all engineers eventually adopted it and by 1915 all trains in the United States and all foreign countries used McCoy’s invention. He became a full time consultant and inventor, adapting his invention to many other machine, including ocean going ships and automobile brakes and engines. He also created many household inventions as well. His fifty seven inventions included the ironing board, lawn sprinkler, rubber shoe heel, the car tire tread and cups for administering medicine. McCoy’s inventions became so well known that customers looked carefully for McCoy’s name on products. They would often ask if the product was “the real McCoy”, an expression that is commonly used today to refer to products of genuinely high quality.

Elijah McCoy died in 1928. His favorite advice to young people was STAY IN SCHOOL, BE PROGRESSIVE AND WORK HARD.

**A PERSONAL NOTE BY AUTHOR.** For the first twenty one years of my life, 1936-57, all of my personal and legal documents and affairs (high school and Virginia State University diplomas, State of Virginia drivers’ license, Social Security Card), reflected that my name was **LEMUEL McCOY COPELAND**. I never had a need to produce a copy of my legal birth certificate until I was drafted into the U. S. Army in 1957. It was then that I discovered that there was no middle name on my birth certificate. Since then, I never included a middle name in my personal or legal affairs. If I had known the significance of the name McCOY, I would have gone through the process to correct my birth certificate. My father was a farmer who always owned cars, many pieces of farm equipment and appliances. I was the youngest of six brothers. My father loved us all but I often wondered why he used to proudly refer to me as “**THE REAL McCOY**”.



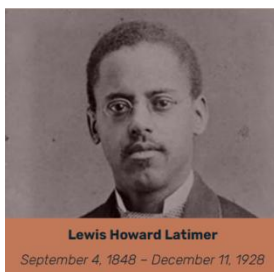
**GRANVILLE T. WOODS**  
*1856-1910*

Granville T. Woods developed a telegraph system that helped to make modern railroads possible. His inventions are used by Westinghouse,

General Electric, AT&T, AMTRAK, as well as the New York City Subway System. He was such a good inventor that some referred to him as “The Black Thomas Edison”.

Granville T. Woods was born on April 23, 1856 in Columbus, Ohio, one of the first black children to attend school in Ohio. Before he started school, there had been a law against black children attending school. He was always an observant, curious boy and absorbed all the information he could and then made use of that information to move on to better positions. When Granville took a job in a machine shop that repaired railroad equipment, he became fascinated by machines and read whatever he could find about them. With money saved from his small pay, he paid an expert mechanic at the shop to give him private lessons on how to operate the machines. He also took electrical and mechanical engineering classes. However, despite his education and experience, employers were unwilling to entrust a position of high responsibility to a Black man. In 1884 he and his brother formed their own company, The Woods Electric Company, where he invented the steam boiler furnace, which provides heat to our homes, offices and other large buildings.

In 1885 Woods was responsible for an invention that combined two of the most important inventions of the century, the telegraph and the telephone, enabling people to make long distance telephone calls. Granville Woods’ greatest invention deals with railroad train safety. During the early days several trains had to use the same track and there were frequent train wrecks. Woods developed a system of codes so that engineers could know who was in front of them and who was behind them. Today his invention is still used by the New York City Subway System and is known throughout the world as the “Third Rail”. During his career he and his brother had more than fifty other inventions, including an improved phonographic machine, the development of the automatic air brake and a new method for digging tunnels. He also invented the automatic egg incubator. But like so many other African-American inventors, he died a poor man on December 30, 1910 in New York City.



Lewis Howard Latimer  
September 4, 1848 – December 11, 1928

## **LEWIS LATIMER**

1848-1928

Thomas Edison has received all the credit for inventing the electric lights. However, he owes a major portion of his success to Lewis Latimer. Lewis Latimer’s father, George Latimer, was the child of a

white slave owner and a slave woman. George worked as a house servant but received harsh treatment from his slave owner father. Once, when the slave owner received a prison sentence, he sent George to serve time in his place. When George married another slave, Rebecca, the master would not allow them to live together and tried to keep them from seeing each other. When Rebecca became pregnant, she and George could not bear the thought of their child being born a slave. In 1842, they escaped to Boston, Massachusetts with the help of the Underground Railroad. When the slave owner learned where they had escaped to, he went to bring them back. However, George and Rebecca raised \$400 to buy their freedom and they were able to stay in Boston. However, they continued to live in fear that the bounty hunters would grab them and sell them back into slavery.

Lewis Latimer was born in Chelsea, Massachusetts in 1848, six years after his parents escaped. He was their fourth child. Lewis enjoyed school very much and did so well in class that he was skipped a grade. His favorite subjects were reading, creative writing and art. When Lewis was ten years old, his father disappeared. No one ever knew what happened to him but the likelihood was that he was picked up by bounty hunters and sold back into slavery.

Lewis' father's disappearance doomed the family to poverty. His mother took jobs as a seamstress on ocean ships that required her to be away from home for long periods of time. Lewis dropped out of school to work full time. When he was old enough, he joined the Union Army to fight against the South in the Civil War. After the war, Lewis got a job as an office boy with an engineering company, where he closely watched the mechanical engineers do their work. He bought books and tools and spent many hours at home reading the books and practicing, hoping that someday he might be able to use them. One day Lewis' opportunity came. He arrived early at work and found an engineer already on the job. When Lewis asked "Can I do some drawing for you?" the engineer laughed at him, thinking that Lewis, a black boy, must be joking. But playing along with the game, the engineer gave Lewis a minor job to do. To the engineer's astonishment, Lewis completed the job as quickly and as well as any professional engineer. Word of Lewis' skill spread thorough out the company and, before long, all the engineers were giving Lewis assignments. Eventually Lewis became the company's chief engineer before he left to establish his own company.

Until 1880, all lighting was done with candles and fuel lamps. The U. S. Electric Company had developed the light bulb and needed a person with delicate mechanical knowledge, skills and experience to get it patented. Lewis Latimer applied for the job. As was with Elijah McCoy, white businessmen were astonished at the thought of a Black man having the skill to perform such delicate and technical work. However, he was hired after it was obvious that he was the most qualified. Lewis got caught up in the excitement over the light bulb and learned all he could about electricity. A light bulb that had been invented would burn out after a few minutes. Lewis worked non-stop for nearly two years to perfect the light bulb that would burn for a much longer period of time. On July 17, 1882, he was granted the patent for the filament that would enable a light bulb to burn for hundreds of hours. However, it was patented as the “Maxim light”, the name of the company president, instead of the “Latimer light”, after the inventor.

Lewis Latimer later became the chief engineer of the company and was in demand all over the world. He set up lighting systems in large buildings, rail stations and on the streets of New York City, Philadelphia and Montreal. He was sent to England to oversee the construction of streetlights in London. Again, as was with Elijah McCoy, some businessmen refused to take orders from him because he was a Black man. Later, Lewis Latimer became the Chief Engineer for the now well-known company, Con Edison, the electric company for New York City. While Lewis Latimer is primarily known for his work on electricity, his other inventions include: bathroom compartments on railroad trains, a safety device in elevators, a rack for hats, coats and umbrellas, and a service used in libraries to keep rows of books from toppling when one book is removed.

Lewis Latimer died on December 11, 1928.



**PERCY JULIAN**  
1899-1975

Percy Julian was born on April 11, 1899 in Birmingham, Alabama, the oldest of six children in a family where education was considered a sacred privilege. He was never allowed to forget the price that one of his grandfathers paid for knowledge: a slave owner chopped off two of the man’s fingers after discovering him secretly trying to learn to read and write. The emphasis on education

proved successful as his two of brothers became doctors and his three sisters would all receive Masters Degrees. However, it was Percy who would become the best known and perhaps the most successful. He graduated from the Alabama State Normal School for Negroes in 1916, one of the few high schools in the South for Negroes. He received a scholarship to attend DePauw University in Indiana, where he was the only Negro on campus. Even though he excelled academically, became a member of Phi Beta Kappa, was valedictorian of his class and received a degree in Chemistry, he was not recommended to attend graduate school. He was told that as a Black person, he would never be able to get a job in the business world. Instead, he taught college for two years at Fisk University before he studied for a Master's degree at Harvard University where he finished at the top of his class with a straight "A" average. Still, he was not able to get a teaching job at a major college because it was felt that White students would refuse to learn under a Black teacher. Instead, he taught at West Virginia State College for Negroes and Howard University, before going to Europe to study for a PHD in Chemistry.

Julian became the Chief Chemist and Director of the Glidden Company, becoming the first Black scientist in such a position in the United States. He developed a foam product from soybeans that was used in fire extinguishers used by the United States Navy to save thousands of sailors from painful deaths during World War II. Julian also developed female hormones from soybeans that would help to prevent miscarriages in pregnant women and would also be used to fight cancer and other ailments. He also developed cortisone from soybeans that would relieve the pain and swelling of arthritis, enabling millions of people around the world to relieve arthritic pain at a reasonable price. Previously, cortisone was so expensive that only the rich could afford it.

In 1954, Julian established his own research company, Julian Laboratories, where he discovered sweet potatoes to be more effective than beans in the developing his synthetic medical products. In 1961, Julian sold his company for 2.3 million dollars, an incredible amount of money for a Black man at that time. After years of struggling for respect in his field, Julian was recognized as a genius and a pioneer. He was known worldwide as a trailblazer in the world of Chemistry and as an advocate for Black scientists.

Percy Julian died in 1975.



**GLADYS BROWN WEST**  
1930-2026

Dr. Gladys Brown West was a pioneering mathematician who helped invent the Global Positioning System (GPS). West, a graduate of Virginia State University, went from a childhood in rural Jim Crow Virginia to an adulthood formulating pioneering models for the shape of the [Earth](#)—which helped inform the technology of global positioning systems (GPS) for navigation by developing complex, precise mathematical models of the Earth's shape. In the 1970s and 80s, working for the U.S. Navy, West programmed computers to process satellite data, which led to the accurate modeling required for satellite navigation. But West didn't really describe herself as one of the [four billion users](#) of GPS. When asked about it in 2020, West said she used GPS on a "minimal" basis. "I prefer maps," she added.

Gladys West died in January 2026



*Happy birthday,  
bridge players*

**January**

Marcia Demos  
Terry Drayton  
Beverly Riley  
Sylvia Simmons

**February**

Ruth Brennan  
Thomas Holloway  
Tony Kalfus  
Parvez Mehta  
Peggy Pair  
Rhonda Phoenix-Tildon  
Daryl Powell  
Beverly Session-Kelly  
Fannie Smiths  
Stephanie Straker  
Harriet Walcott  
Edwin Ward II

**March**

Ann Brandwein  
Lemuel (Bill) Copeland  
Minnie Hagans  
Therese Hamilton  
John Hopkins  
Mary Lewis  
Marion Mercer  
James McKeown  
Lynda Straker  
Dolores Thompson  
Doris White

**April**

Errol Grant  
Charles Guest  
Larry Gutman  
Fabienne Jean-Louis  
Deborah Mabry  
Kathleen Marshall  
Charlotte Roberson  
Donna Woo

**May**

Harvey Brandwein  
Sharon Fox  
Martha Hewitt  
Alicia Mapp  
Janice McBean  
Vernetta Nelson  
Dennis Papper  
Grace Parris  
Patricia Thomas

**June**

Christian Baxter  
Lenny Binyard  
Diana Green  
Elmond Harley  
Cheryll Jones  
Donna Lewis  
Ruth Shuler



**2025-2026**

**We honor the memory of our Final Grand Slammers, whose sportsmanship and friendship enriched the tables. Their love of the game and spirit of camaraderie remain part of every deal we play.**

**Beryl Battle  
Lorelei Blackman  
Harry Gaines  
Alfred Knight  
Clarence Schmidt  
Dorothy Smith  
Delius Wilson**