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“Famous Americans”: The Changing Pantheon of American Heroes

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Meeting at the Wabash Avenue Young Men's Christian Association on Chicago's South Side on September 9, 1915, four African American men laid the foundation for the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History

(ASNLH), the first scholarly society promoting black culture and history in America. The force behind that initiative was Carter G. Woodson, the only black of slave parentage to earn a history Ph.D. from Harvard University. A tireless institution builder, Woodson not only kept the ASNLH afloat through years of financial uncertainty, but also established the *Journal of Negro History* in 1916 and served as its editor until his death in 1950. Woodson authored and edited scores of publications—scholarly monographs, textbooks, pamphlets, newsletters, circulars, and reports—all aimed at spreading knowledge about blacks' contributions to American history. Yet, even more than his prodigious list of publications, the...

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