



In Honor of Black History Month Amherst Recognizes the Many Inventions Created by Black Inventors that Affect Our Daily Lives

GETTING READY FOR WORK IN THE MORNING

Lyda Newman: Patent

- A remarkable Black female inventor who patented the first hairbrush with synthetic bristles. She is the third Black woman to ever receive a patent.
- Newman used synthetic fibers which were more durable and easier to clean. The brush contained evenly spaced rows of bristles with open slots to clear debris away from the hair into a recessed compartment. The back could be opened with a button for cleaning out the compartment. Newman received a patent for her invention on November 15, 1898.
- Beyond inventing, Newman was also recognized for her involvement in the Women's Suffrage Movement of the early 20th century. She was a key organizer of a Black branch of the Woman Suffrage Party, which was trying to give women the legal right to vote.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE FOR WORK YOU MAY SET YOUR HOME ALARM

Marie Van Brittan Brown: Home security system

- In 1966, she and her husband Albert Brown invented the home security system. She felt unsafe in her neighborhood and so created a device that would make her feel safe in her own home.

- She built the foundation for a home security system in which several of her design elements are used in our home security systems today.

W. A. Martin: Lock

- In 1889, W. A. Martin patented the lock.
- His invention was an improvement to the original invented by the Chinese over 4000 years old. It then paved the way to the design of modern door locks.

ON YOUR WAY DRIVING TO WORK TODAY

Garrett Morgan: Traffic signal

- In 1923, Garrett created the traffic light signal system. This idea stemmed from when he witnessed the streets were crowded with all different kinds of vehicles and he knew there had to be some way of regulating the traffic occurring.
- His initial idea began with Stop and Go lights but realized that drivers did not have time to react once the lights changed.
- This then led to today's yellow light which gives drivers a warning that they need to act upon. He then sold the rights to his invention to General Electric for \$40,000.

WHEN USING THE ELEVATOR IN YOUR OFFICE

Alexander Miles: Elevator door design improvements

- In 1887, Alexander Miles improved the method of opening and closing the elevator doors which allowed them to open and close automatically rather than having to do it yourself manually.
- Although he wasn't the first inventor of the elevator itself, his improvements and design were a crucial part for elevator technology and helping prevent possible accidents.

AS YOU ATTEND MEETINGS IN WARM BUILDINGS

Alice H. Parker: Patent

Alice H. Parker was a Black inventor in the early 20th-century, best known for patenting a central heating system that uses natural gas.

- Her invention played a key role in the development of the heating systems we have in our homes today.
- Parker was a highly educated woman who graduated with Honors in 1910 from Howard University
- Parker felt that the fireplace alone, was not enough to keep her home warm during the cold Jersey winter. She went on to design the first gas furnace that was powered by natural gas and the first heating system to contain individually controlled air ducts that distributed heat evenly throughout the building.
- What made her invention particularly unique, was that it was a form of "zone heating" where temperature can be moderated in different parts of a building. Parker received a patent for her design in 1919.
- Parker's invention also decreased the risk of home or building fires that heating units posed by eliminating the need to leave a burning fireplace on throughout the night.
- In 2019, the National Society of Black Physicists honored Parker as an "African American Inventor famous for her patented system of central heating using natural gas." It called her invention a "revolutionary idea" for the 1920s, "that conserved energy and paved the way for the central heating systems".

It is with great pride and gratitude that Amherst honors these inventors of our past that helped to shape our future innovations.