

# DID YOU KNOW?

FEBRUARY IS  
BLACK HISTORY  
MONTH

by Dr. Yvonne Lewis

February is Black History Month—a time when we celebrate the contributions African Americans have made to American society. I'm amazed at the ingenuity and creativity found in the black community, even those demonstrated by the slaves, whose resources and opportunities were so limited.

## Amazing Inventors

For example, Benjamin Montgomery was born into slavery in 1819, in Louden County, Virginia. He worked at a general store owned by his slave master, Joseph Davis. Benjamin did so well that he eventually took over all the shipping and purchasing operations of the store. During those days, merchandise was shipped by boat to various locations, and timely deliveries were unlikely, because the depths of the river in different spots made navigation difficult. So Benjamin invented a propeller that could navigate more easily in shallow waters.

Then there was Henry Boyd, a Kentucky slave who was an inventor, carpenter, and a master mechanic. He invented the corded bed with the wooden rail screwed into both the headboard and the footboard. Because of the laws prohibiting patenting by slaves, Henry was unable to patent his invention. He eventually earned enough money by 1826 to buy freedom for himself, his brother, and sister. In 1843 Henry was among the most successful furniture makers in Cincinnati, Ohio, where his company was based.

The U.S. Patent Office records Henry Blair as “a colored man.” In fact, he is the only one identified as such. Blair was born around 1807, and received two patents: one for a seed planter, and the other for a cotton planter.

There are some major contributions to current society as well. Meredith Gourdine was born in 1929 and was raised in Harlem and Brooklyn, New

York. He pioneered the area of research known as electrogasdynamics to disperse fog and smoke. In fact, Meredith was responsible for the engineering technique that aids in the removal of smoke from buildings. He also created a generator that allowed for a less expensive transmission of electricity.

A button on the chair would buzz the waiters' station, and a light on the chair would indicate to the wait staff that service was needed. This invention was later adapted and used in the U.S. House of Representatives.

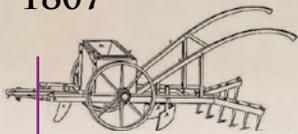
## Celebrating Black Achievers

At Dare to Dream, we are committed to sharing these and other black achievers with our viewers. We want our children to know that they can dare to dream, and that with hard work and God's blessings, they can achieve anything they set their minds upon. We have some spots that air between our programs called, *Did You Know?* These air year-round, not just during Black History Month. We feel that all can benefit from knowing and celebrating the contributions made by fellow Americans. ☪



Dr. Yvonne Lewis is a naturopathic doctor, author, lecturer, and singer, as well as the general manager of 3ABN's Dare to Dream Network for urban audiences.

1807

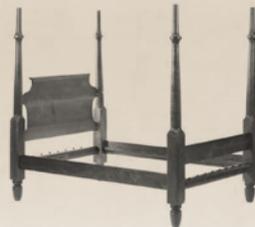


HENRY BLAIR  
Seed planter

1819



BENJAMIN MONTGOMERY



1843

HENRY BOYD made the “Boyd Bedstead.” He stamped all the beds he made. To ensure quality.

1850s

BENJAMIN MONTGOMERY invented the steam-operated propeller to provide propulsion to boats in shallow water.

1888

MIRIAM BENJAMIN Gong and Signal Chair patent.



1929

MEREDITH GOURDINE Developed techniques to aid removing smoke from buildings and disperse fog from airport runways.

