

# AVENUES OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

AFRICAN  
AMERICAN  
WOMEN IN  
VICTORIAN  
AMERICA



# ACCOMPLISHED

“A race no less than a nation, is prosperous in proportion to the intelligence of its women.”

Monroe Alpheus Majors, M.D. (1893)



# PHILLIS WHEATLY

(1753 – 1784)

Brought to Boston, Massachusetts as a Young Slave at Seven Years Old

Purchased by Mrs. Wheatly From the Slave Market in Boston to be a Faithful Nurse

Wheatly was First African-American Author of a Published Book of Poetry

Phillis Was Taught to Read and Write by Mrs. Wheatly's Daughter

George Washington Spoke Highly of This Gifted Poetess



# OTHER WRITERS OF IMPORTANCE

## Lucretia Newman Coleman (1856 - 1948)

- A Fugitive and Former Slave
- Educated at Oberlin College
- Wrote Spicy Philosophical Literature for Many African-American Journals

## Lillian Alberta Lewis (1861 - ?)

- First African-American Journalist in Boston; Wrote With a Witty Style
- Used Her Pen as a Sword in Defense of Her Race

## Lavinia B. Sneed (1867 – 1932)

- A Great Writer and Principal of the Phillis Wheatly School



# ANNA JULIA HAYWOOD COOPER (1858–1964)

Author, Educator, Sociologist, Speaker, Black Liberationist  
Activist

Graduated From Oberlin College in 1884

Earned a PhD in History From Sorbonne in 1924

Fourth Woman in America to Earn a Doctoral Degree

Author of *A Voice from the South*





## SOJOURNER TRUTH (1797 – 1883)

Abolitionist , Writer, Lecturer,  
Women's Rights Activist

Born as Isabella "Belle" Baumfree

Born into Slavery, Escaped with  
an Infant Daughter

An Antislavery Giantess



# FRANCES ELLEN WATKINS HARPER (1825 – 1911)

Abolitionist, Suffragist, Poet, Teacher, Public Speaker,  
Writer

Left School at Fourteen Years

Excellent Lecturer with Eloquent, Fluent Speech

Considered the Mother of African-American  
Journalism



# ADDITIONAL ACTIVISTS

## SARAH FORTEN (1814 -1893)

- Anti-Slavery Activist
- Contributor to William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator*
- Established the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society
- An Articulate and Persistent voice in the Anti-slavery Movement

## MARIA BECRAFT (1805 – 1833)

- Educator and Nun
- One of First Black Nuns in Catholic Church
- Established a School for Black Girls in Washington D.C.
- Possessed Great Intelligence





# ELIZABETH TAYLOR GREENFIELD (1809–1876)

Born into Slavery

A Quaker Lady Brought Elizabeth to Philadelphia when she Was One Year Old

Became the Most Famous Black Concert Singer of Her Time

Reached Perfection in the Art of Music and Song

Known as the “Black Swan”

The Press Loved Her and Gave Her Great Reviews





Albertype: Forbes Co., Boston.

Allen & Howells, Photo., Boston.

GEO. E. BARRETT,  
PATTI MALONE.

MATTIE L. LAWRENCE.

C. W. PAYNE.

ELLA SHEPPARD.

F. J. LOUDIN.

MAGGIE L. PORTER.

B. W. THOMAS.

MABEL R. LEWIS.

JENNIE JACKSON.

LAURA WELLS.

# ELLA F. SHEPPARD (1851 - 1914)

Soprano, Pianist, and Composer

Born as a Slave on Andrew Jackson's Hermitage Plantation

Enrolled at Fisk Free Colored School in Nashville, Tennessee

Member of the Fisk Jubilee Singers

1871

**THE JUBILEE SINGERS,**  
From Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn.

1881-2



# MORE PERFORMING ARTISTS

## AMELIA LOUISE TILGHMAN (1856- 1931)

- Studied at the Boston Conservatory of Music
- Musical Writer and Vocalist
- A Graduate of Howard University
- Known as “The Queen of Song”
- Editor of the *Musical Messenger*

## FLORA BATSON (1864 – 1906)

- Child Singer at Six years
- Professional at Thirteen years
- Strongly Endorsed by the Press



# HENRIETTA VINTON DAVIS

## (1860 – 1941)

Received an Exceptional Education

At Age of Fifteen, Passed Examination for Teaching

At Twenty-Four, She Studied Acting

Henrietta Became the Premier Actor of All 19<sup>th</sup> Century  
Black Performers on the Dramatic Stage.

Received Fame and Testimonials on Her Remarkable Talent



HENRIETTA VINTON DAVIS.

# EARLY EDUCATORS

- **Sarah Jane Woodson Early** (1825 -1907) Attended Oberlin College - A teacher for 36 years
- **Blanch Brooks** (1849 - ?) Graduate of Oberlin College – Became Teacher for the Freemen
- **Frankie E. Harris Wasson** (1850 – 1933) Attended Oberlin College – Taught for 54 Years
- **Della Irving Hayden** (1851 – 1924) Born into Slavery – Founded Franklin Normal & Industrial Institute in Virginia 1904
- **Rosa D. Bowser** (1859 – 1941) Prominent Educator, Suffragist, and Activist – at 17, First Black Teacher Hired in Richmond
- **Clarissa M. Thompson** (1859 – 1941) First Black Assistant at Howard School – Principal of Popular Grove School
- **Fannie Jackson Coppin** (1837 – 1913) Founder of a College, Teacher, Lecturer, Writer, Scholar
- **Prof. Mary V. Cook Parish** (1862 – 1945) Graduate of Simmons University, Writer on Christian Education, Journalist
- **Lucy Wilmot Smith** (1861 – 1889) Writer, Teacher, Journalist, Editor, Suffragist, Historian



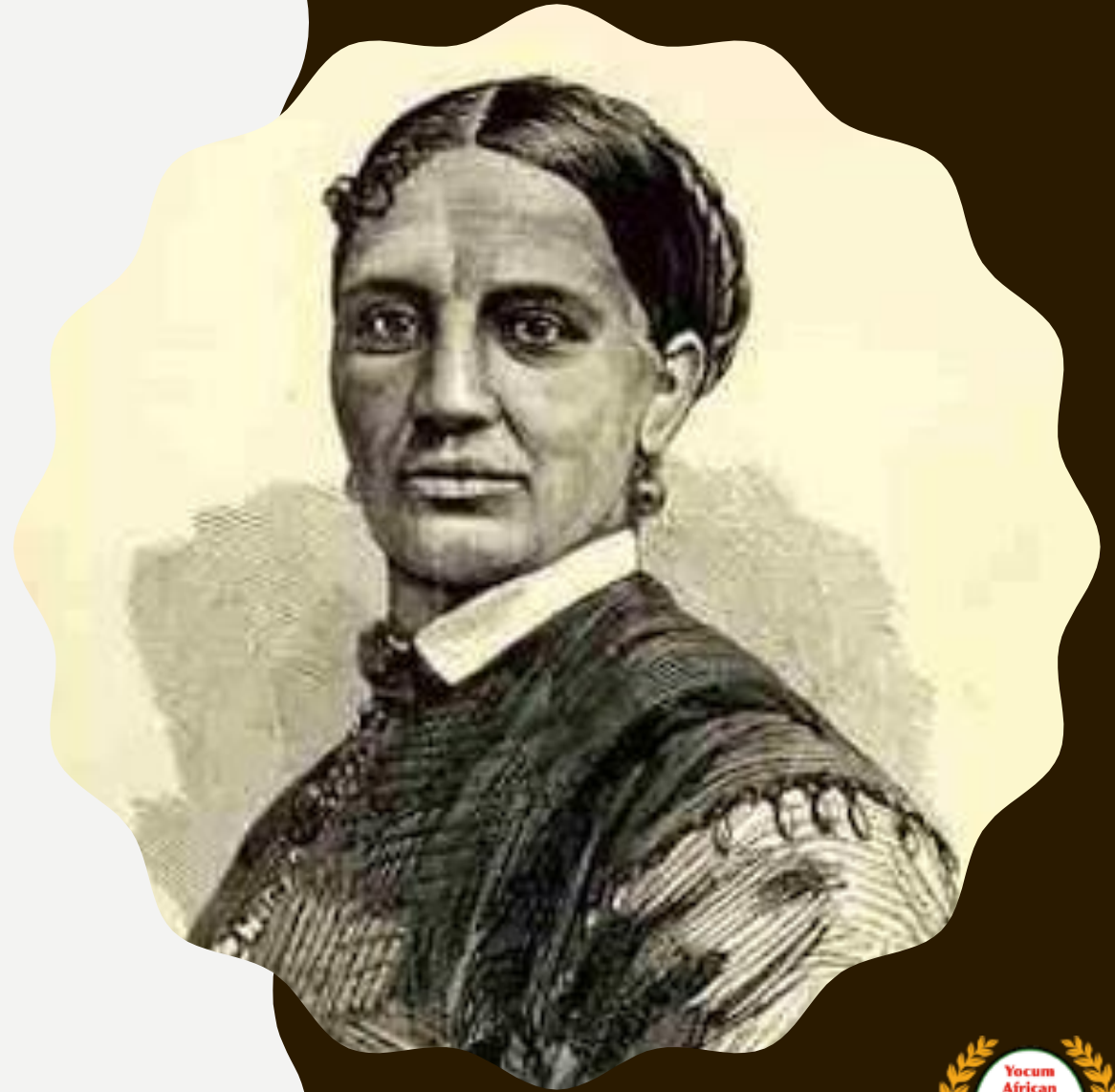
# ELIZABETH KECKLEY (1818 – 1907)

Former Slave, Civil Activist, & Author from D.C.  
Successful Seamstress and Confidant to Mary  
Todd Lincoln

Author of *Behind the Scenes*

Teacher of Sewing at Wilberforce University

(Keckley was portrayed by actress Gloria Reuben  
in Steven Spielberg's 2012 film, *Lincoln*.)





AMANDA SMITH

## AMANDA SMITH (1837 – 1915)

Born into Slavery

Married in 1863, Had Three Children – Within Three Years, Her Husband and Children Died

Became a Minister, Preached in England, India and West Africa

Opened an Orphanage for Africa-American Girls



# ROSETTA DOUGLASS SPRAGUE

(1839 – 1906)

Daughter of Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass fought for School Choice for Rosetta

Rosetta Was a Teacher and Activist

Founding Member of National Association for Colored Women







# IDA B. WELLS

(1862 – 1931)

Investigative Journalist

Educator, Civil Rights Leader

Anti-Lynching Advocate

Women's Suffrage Advocate

One of the Founders of the  
NAACP (National Association for  
the Advancement of Colored  
People)



# EDMONIA LEWIS

(1844 – 1907)

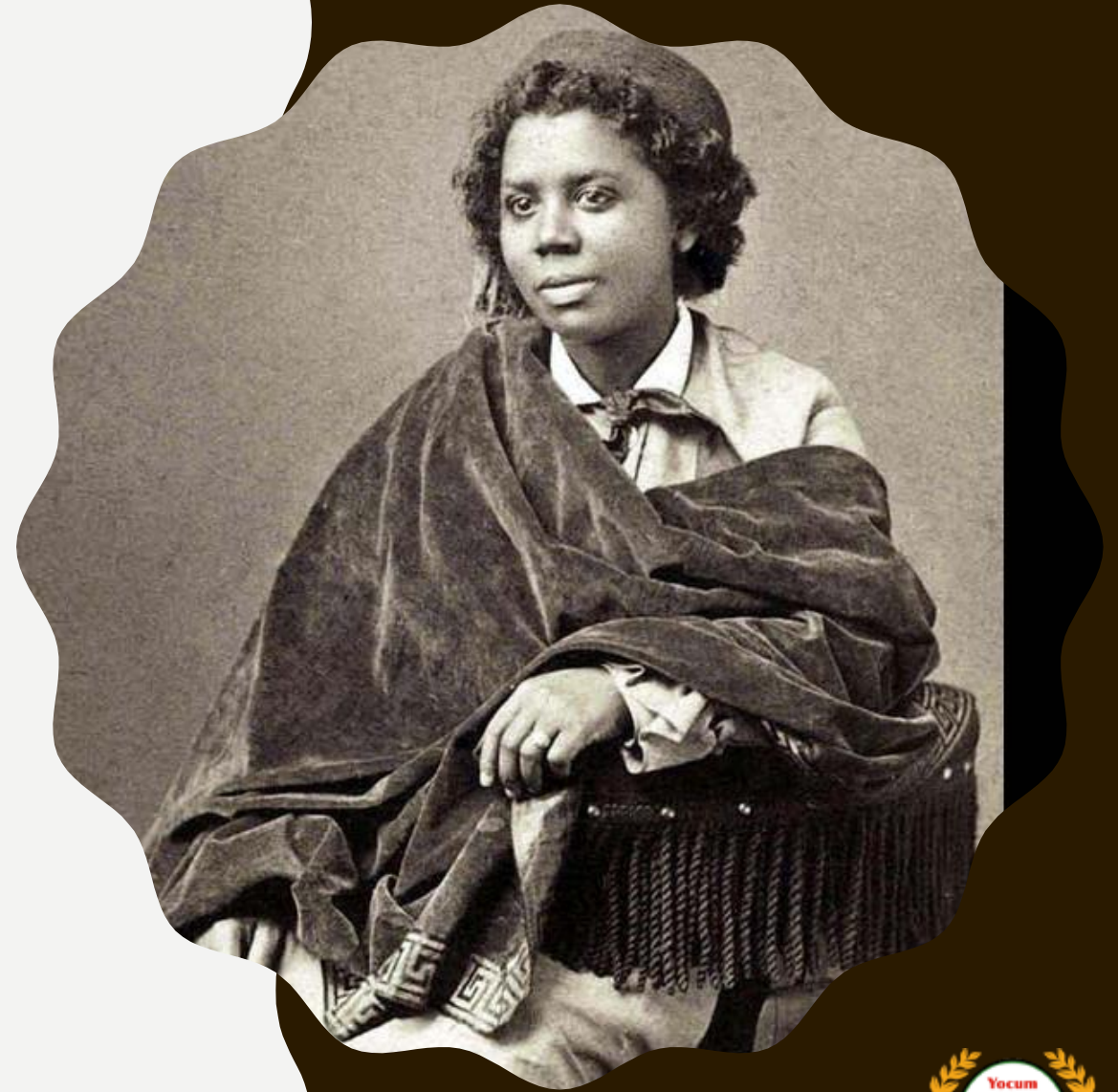
Self-Taught Sculptor Who Lived Most of Her Life in Rome, Italy

Father Was black, Mother an Indian; Both Died Leaving Edmonia Raised by Chippewa Indians

Homeless and Poor; a Sculpture of Benjamin Franklin Caught Her Eye and Inspired Her

Not yet 25, When Fame and Fortune Found Her

Her Sculptures Were Sought by the Cultivated and Wealthy in Europe



# SUSAN SMITH MCKINNEY, M.D./PHD (1847 – 1918)

Physician and Author

Third African-American to Earn a Medical Degree in United States;  
First in New York State

Graduated From New York Medical College for Women in 1870

Most Successful Practitioner of Medicine of Her Sex and Race in  
the United States

Member of the Brooklyn College of Pharmacy



# MORE EARLY PHYSICIANS

- **Mary E. Britton (1855-1925)** First Black Woman Licensed in Lexington, KY
- **Georgia A. Lee Patton (1864-1900)** First Black Woman to be Licensed Surgeon in Tennessee
- **Consuello Clark (1865-1910)** Graduated From the School of Medicine at Boston University
- **Sarah G. Jones (1866-1905)** First Woman to be Licensed in the State of Virginia



# CHARLOTTE E. RAY

## (1850-1911)

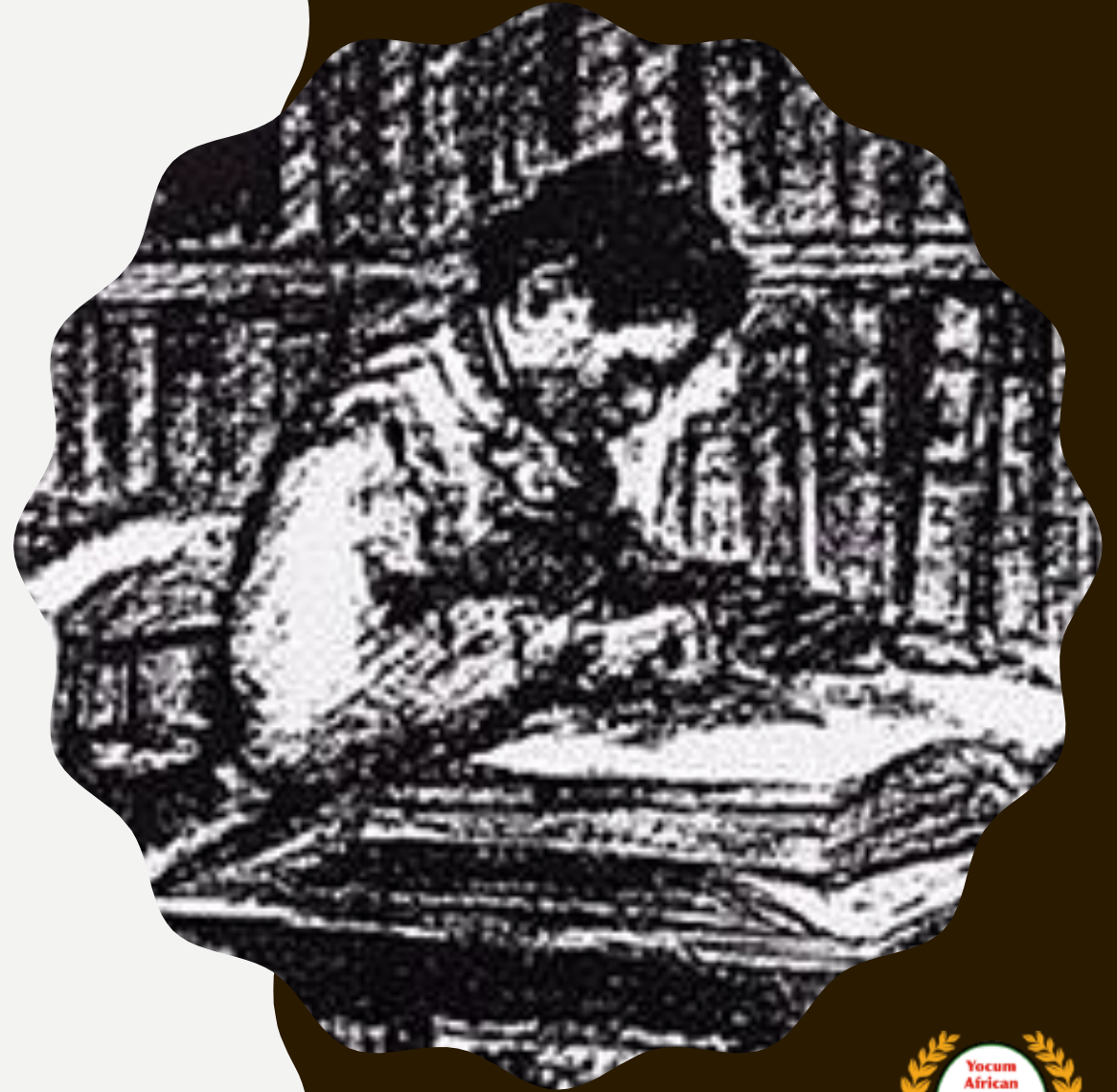
First Black American Female Lawyer in U.S.

Judge and Gifted Scholar

Her Father, Rev. Charles Bennett Ray, Was an Important Figure in the Abolitionist Movement

She was Admitted to the Howard School of Law in the District of Columbia in 1872

She was First Woman to Practice and Argue in the District of Columbia Supreme Court





# JOSEPHINE A. SILONE YATES

(1859-1912)

Studied at Rhode Island State  
Normal School

A Chemist

One of the First Black Professors  
Hired at Lincoln University

Studied Physiology & Physics at  
the Age of Nine; Well Advanced  
in Mathematics



# JULIA RINGWOOD COSTON (1863-1931)

A Journalist From Cleveland, Ohio

Editor of *Ringwood's Afro-American Journal of Fashion*

The Only Illustrated Color Journal for Black Ladies in the  
World

A Very Popular Journal for Black Women





# IDA GRAY

(1867 – 1953)

From Cincinnati, Ohio

Graduated from University of Michigan in 1890

First Black Dentist in the U.S.

Had Equal Number of White and Black Patients

Moved to Chicago, Illinois in 1895

The University School of Dentistry Offers the Ida Gray Award to qualifying students





# SUMMARY

- All These African-American Women Were Born Between 1753 to 1872
- Slavery, Segregation and Prejudice Could Not Stop Early Black Women Leaders From Numerous Avenues of Accomplishment
- Black Women Strived to be Educated and Were Represented as Activists, Teachers, Writers, Physicians, Lawyers, Performing Artists, Journalists, Visual Artists, and Leaders
- These Women Were Recognized for the Powerful Influence of their Intellectual Leadership
- They Blazed a Path for Others to Follow

