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2018: Jessie Hathcock

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During Women's History Month, the University of Dayton Women's Center coordinates, as an experiential learning opportunity for students, an annual exhibit highlighting the contributions women have made at the University of Dayton.

Theme for 2018: Trailblazers

2018: Jessie Hathcock

Written by Kristina Schulz

A true trailblazer, Jessie Hathcock was the first African American woman to graduate from the University of Dayton. She sought a degree, first at Otterbein College near Columbus and then at the University of Dayton after she moved here with her husband. She graduated from UD with a bachelor's degree in education in 1930.

Born near Columbus, Ohio, in 1894, Hathcock learned the value of service to her community as a young child. Encouraged by her parents to help others in their rural community, she related that these early lessons helped her develop "empathy and compassion". After earning her bachelor's degree, Hathcock began work in the Dayton Public Schools as a visiting teacher. She then served Dunbar High School as an English teacher and dean of female students for 29 years, retiring in 1964.



While at Dunbar, Hathcock endeavored to make a difference in the lives of those she interacted with, both as teacher and mentor. She gave generously of her time and energy to encourage her students to graduate from high school and pursue higher education. She also contributed time to the development of the Parent-Teacher Association at Dunbar and worked with the student council.

In addition to serving the Dayton community through education, she worked with the Dayton Council on World Affairs, the City Beautiful Council, the Wegerzyn Garden Board, the American Association of University Women, and founded the Dayton and Miami Valley Committee for UNICEF. She also was a charter member of Beta Eta Omega, Dayton, Ohio chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and served as its first president in 1934.

In 1978, she received an honorary doctorate from the University of Dayton. Hathcock is the first African-American woman in the University's history to achieve this honor. In her words of thanks to the University, she stated, "May the University of Dayton continue to grow in influence for the betterment of our city and may its doors of learning be forever open to all races, creeds and nationalities, for the Glory of God, who taught us the meaning of brotherhood and the oneness of mankind."

Humanitarian, community leader and educator, Jessie Hathcock served as an inspiration to many in the Dayton community.

