

Below is a text transcript for the 2021 Black History Month Timeline.

1850 - Blacks begin to arrive in significant numbers to the Kansas frontier.

1859 - Emporia's first school district is organized.

January 29, 1861 - Kansas enters the Union as a free state.

1863 - The Old Stone School becomes the first school building built in Emporia.

March 1863 - Kansas State Normal School is founded.

June 20, 1863 - The Adairs (O'Dairs) arrive in Emporia, under the protection of Union soldiers, as the town's first Black family. The family was headed by Henry O'Dair and his wife, Dicey. The spelling of their surname changed while in Emporia. Their son, Abraham Lincoln O'Dair, was the first Black child born in Emporia, and he and his brother and sisters were the first Black children to enter Emporia's public school system. Daughter Ellen attended the Normal School, which became Emporia State University.

1864 - William Allen White's mother, Mary Ann Hatten White, is fired from her first teaching appointment in Council Grove for inviting an African American girl to her classroom.

March 1864 - Abraham Lincoln O'Dair, son of Emporia's first Black family, is born.

May 9, 1865 - The Civil War between the Union and the Confederacy ends.

February 1865 - The first term at Kansas State Normal School begins.

December 6, 1865 - The 13th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America abolishes slavery.

July 9, 1868 - The 14th Amendment to the Constitution grants citizenship to former slaves and protects due process for all. This amendment would later be used to support the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision in 1954.

February 3, 1870 - The 15th Amendment is ratified to protect Blacks' right to vote. However, it would be about a century before this was truly enforced. Few Blacks were able to vote, especially in the South, during this interim period due to poll taxes, literacy tests, "grandfather clauses" which allowed only those whose ancestors voted in the 1860s to have the right to vote, and other forms of discriminatory disenfranchisement.

1879 - Thousands of Exodusters, participants in a great migration of Black Americans from the South to other parts of the nation, arrive in Dunlap, Kansas, a town near Emporia in Morris County.

1882-1973 - Construction for the College of Emporia, a Presbyterian school, begins in 1885 following the 1882 proposal acceptance for the school. The college was active in Emporia until 1973, when it closed due to a financial crisis.

May 18, 1896 - The Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson* upholds the doctrine of “separate but equal” in public facilities, which would be used to legally justify the segregation of public schools until 1954.

1899 - Gaitha Page begins studying at the Kansas State Normal School in 1897 and graduates after two years in 1899, making him one of the first Black graduates of the Kansas State Normal School. John R. Smith, another Black student, also graduates in 1899.

September 27, 1920 – On September 29, 1920, Floyd S. Lucas follows the advice of local businessmen and writes to William Allen White explaining that he had applied to the College of Emporia in the summer. Faculty members such as President Lewis and Mr. Vandervale cited losing other students as a reason to deny entry to a Black student, and encouraged Lucas not to attend. William Allen White wrote a letter to F. J. Atwood, a board member of the school, expressing his support of Floyd Lucas and his entry into the College of Emporia.

May 31, 1921-June 1, 1921 - The Tulsa Race Massacre results in 35 blocks of Greenwood, Tulsa, Oklahoma’s prosperous Black community, being destroyed and over 300 individuals being killed.

June 1921 - Mary White, daughter of William Allen White, was a known advocate for equality. Following her death in May 1921, Emporia High School named the newly established African American girls' lounge in honor of Mary White, in recognition of her endeavors for Black accommodations at the school.

1923 – Kansas State Normal School becomes Kansas State Teachers College (KSTC).

1934 - The first Black sorority on campus, Alpha Kappa Alpha, organizes at KSTC.

1934-1938 - Paul Terry graduates from high school and enrolls at KSTC in 1934. He graduates from KSTC with a degree in social sciences and a minor in geography four years later in 1938.

1949 - The Kansas Supreme Court case of *Webb v. School District No. 90* decides that Black students can attend the newly constructed, all-white school in Merriam, Kansas, following a boycott and case filing by parents, activists, and educators.

May 17, 1954 - The Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* overturns *Plessy v. Ferguson* in public schools, eliminating *de jure* segregation in them, though *de facto* segregation persisted and continues to persist in many school districts across the country.

1957 - Geraldine Strader graduated from Kansas State Teachers College in 1957 with a bachelor's degree in foreign language and home economics. She was the first Black student to be inducted into the business fraternity Delta Sigma Pi and the honorary Spanish fraternity. In 1967, she earned a master's degree in library science. She used her degrees to serve as a French and Spanish teacher and as a high school librarian. A plaque in her honor can be found in William Allen White Library.

1960 - Dr. Thomas Bonner becomes the first Black faculty member at KSTC.

1962 - Bonita Horn becomes the first Black teacher in the Emporia public school system when she is hired as a seventh-grade English teacher at Lowther Junior High School. She was a graduate of Bethel College in Newton, Kansas.

1963 - Gwendolyn Orendorf becomes the second Black teacher in the Emporia public school system. She serves as a special education teacher at Walnut Elementary. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from the College of Emporia in 1949 and later received her master's degree from what would become Emporia State University. She also served as an instructor at Village Elementary School.

1964 - Dr. Mary Winstead Bonner becomes the first Black woman faculty member at KSTC.

1964 - President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

1965 - President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Voting Rights Act of 1965, enforcing the 15th Amendment to the Constitution, aiming to remove legal barriers and prohibiting racial discrimination in voting.

1965 - Nellie Essex is hired as a teacher's aide at the Head Start program of Emporia.

September 30, 1965 - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. writes to President John King of Kansas State Teachers College to thank him for the school's contributions to the efforts of the Summer Community Organization and Political Education project (SCOPE). He writes, "On behalf of myself, the Board of Directors, and the staff of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, we extend our gratitude in appreciation for your efforts in our struggle for human dignity."

1966 - Sue Banks is hired as an art instructor at Lowther Junior High School. Banks received her Bachelor of Science degree from KSTC in May 1966.

1967 - Wendell Derritt is hired by the Emporia school district. He graduated from the College of Emporia. In 1969 Derritt was a Liberty Bell recipient for his outstanding community service and promotion of respect for the law. He served as the Coordinator of Physical Education in Emporia elementary schools.

1968 - Cheryl McGibray is hired to teach English and social studies at Lowther Junior High School. She is a graduate of KSTC, where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Education degree in 1966.

1969 - The Black sorority Sigma Gamma Rho organizes at KSTC with the help of Dr. Mary Bonner.

1969 - Phi Kappa Alpha, established on campus in 1964, becomes the Black Student Union.

1970 - The Black fraternity Omega Psi Phi starts a chapter at KSTC with the help of Dr. Thomas Bonner.

1970 - Phyllis Derritt is hired by the Emporia school system.

1970 - Brenda Green is hired by the Emporia school system.

1970 - Never Orié is hired by the Emporia school system.

1970 - Newgene Ray is hired by the Emporia school system. A graduate of KSTC, he serves as a sixth-grade teacher at William Allen White Elementary.

1970 - Verdell Taylor is hired by the Emporia school system in 1970 and becomes a teacher at Walnut Elementary and then the assistant dean of student affairs at Emporia State University. He was a student teacher to Mrs. Frank Miller at William Allen White Elementary School, where he was intended to teach in 1968, but was called up for active duty by the National Guard. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Education degree and a Master of Science degree in counseling from KSTC.

1971 - Lillian Morrow becomes the first Black teacher at the Emporia Community Day Care Center.

1971 - Lana Johnson is hired at William Allen White Elementary School to teach reading. Johnson is a graduate of KSTC, where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Education degree and Master of Science degree in reading. She served as a reading specialist in the Emporia schools for six years. In 1977, she became the assistant dean of student affairs at Emporia State University.

1971 - Stewart Nelson is hired as an American history instructor at Emporia High School. He also serves as the assistant wrestling coach there. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Education degree with a major in social sciences in 1970 from KSTC.

1971 - Lois Ray is hired at Whittier Elementary School. She graduated from KSTC with a degree in elementary education and also worked in the Emporia Head Start summer program. She served as a first-grade teacher at Mary Herbert School.

1971 - Only five of the 212 teachers in the Emporia Public School System are Black. However, at a school board meeting, thirty-nine people sign a petition for the school board to hire more Black educators.

May 12, 1973 - Odessa Terry is the “Woman of the Week” in the May 12, 1973, edition of the *Emporia Gazette*. Odessa was a graduate of KSTC, where she earned her bachelor’s degree in elementary education. She was deeply involved in educating the youth of Emporia, serving on the executive board of the William Allen White Elementary PTA, serving on the boards of the Emporia Community Day Care Center and the Lyon County Youth Mobilization Center, and teaching at the Head Start school. She was also the superintendent of Sunday schools at Mt. Olive A.M.E. Church and would frequently act as the Sunday school teacher for the church.

1974 - KSTC becomes Emporia Kansas State College.

1975 - Emporia Kansas State College receives a \$109,449 grant to conduct a year-long desegregation institute to train forty-four public school teachers from the communities of Chanute, Coffeyville, Emporia, Humboldt, Hutchinson, Iola, and Parsons.

1977 - Emporia Kansas State College becomes Emporia State University.

1989 - The National Teachers Hall of Fame launches, with the purpose of honoring exceptional teachers.

2001 - *Black Emporia: The African-American Experience Through the Lives of Emporians* is published. This book was the work of Nellie Essex, Elizabeth Williams, and Carol Marshall. They worked to preserve the personal histories of Black Emporians to tell the stories of African American experiences.