

# African American Patent Holders Database

Adapted and verified from About.com Black History Inventors - Patent Holders List Index by Mary Bellis  
Mrs. Cheryl J. Mason-Middleton, Black Studies Library The Ohio State University Libraries.

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In celebration of United Black World Month and Black History Month 2006.

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## *Abstract*

Over five hundred African American inventors are listed with the number of inventions each has patented, a description of each invention, the patent number, date and year of each patent. This listing is presented in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and may be sorted by each of the criteria listed above except by date.

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## *African American Patent Holders*

In response to patron questions relating to inventors in the United States of African descent, we have developed a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet entitled [Black Inventors.xls](#), based upon an index presented by Mary Bellis, on About.com:

[http://inventors.about.com/od/blackinventors/a/Black\\_History.htm](http://inventors.about.com/od/blackinventors/a/Black_History.htm)

The [Black\\_Inventors.xls](#) spreadsheet has been modified to create a database searchable by inventor's first or last name, the number of patents held by each inventor, descriptions of the inventions, patent number, and year of patent. We have also created a more universally accessible .pdf version that is not search-able ([Black\\_Inventors.pdf](#)).

Ms. Bellis listing is generally comprehensive in its scope, and has provided a magnificent base from which to work. Her original list, while only searchable by the inventor's last name, includes numerous links that provide details about inventors and their efforts. We did not include those links in our database as they were not relevant to our efforts toward search-ability. Those links may be followed by visiting the About.com page.

Our modifications include the addition of the numbers of patents of each inventor and the year of patent. While the actual date of each patent is listed, the limitations of the Excel program will not allow sorting of dates prior to 1900, and leaves nineteenth century patents unsorted. For this reason, we added the year as a sort field.

Further editing involved removing unverifiable listings (two in total) and listings of inventors not holding United States patents (one from Brazil). Exceptions to this exclusion include contributions of Benjamin Banneker, Edmond Berger, Henry Blair, Dr. Charles Richard Drew, Thomas L. Jennings, Robert A. Pelham, Lewis Temple, Madame C. J. Walker, and Daniel Hale Williams.

These individuals were kept in the list either because they made significant contributions that were not patented (for unspecified reasons), or because their contributions predate the existence of the United States Patent Office. The patent field for these inventors contains a "0."

Added to the list are Ellen F. Eglin, Annie Turnbo Malone, Michael A. Holmes, Mack Edward Johnson, Anthony W. Preston, Diane Nixon Johnson, and Joan Clark.

The result is a listing of over five hundred American inventors of African descent.

It is suggested that the user download *Black\_Inventors.xls* to their own computer, and remove the protection by clicking on Tools and Protection and Unprotect Sheet. Searches may be accomplished by selecting the entire list from cell A5 to cell G1090, and clicking on Data, then Sort, and selecting the criteria by which one wishes to search. Care should be made to select the entire list, including every column from row 5 on down to row 1090. Not doing so could scramble the list. As the first four rows are headings, it is not necessary to select them with the rest of the list.

Not listed are the numerous unknown inventors whose contributions go un-recognized because of the restrictions of slavery and Jim Crowism. Such inventions as the ironing board, invented by an unknown woman in slavery, are things that we use everyday, but are bereft of the knowledge of the genius behind them.

America and the world owe a great debt of gratitude to these many inventors who have added their innovative genius to the improvement of our lives through science, technology and design.

For more information on inventors and invention, the reader is encouraged to consult the resources listed in the bibliography below.

*Bibliography:*

*Black inventors in the age of segregation : Granville T. Woods, Lewis H. Latimer, & Shelby J. Davidson* by Rayvon Fouche. Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003. ISBN 0801873193.

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*About.com - Black History Inventors - Patent Holders List Index* by Mary Bellis.

[http://inventors.about.com/od/blackinventors/a/Black\\_History.htm](http://inventors.about.com/od/blackinventors/a/Black_History.htm)

*Black Inventor Online Museum*

<http://www.blackinventor.com/>

*United States Patent and Trademark Office*

<http://www.uspto.gov/>