

The Augusta Chronicle

Laney's desire to teach left an enduring legacy

Source URL: <http://chronicle.augusta.com/225/2010-08-29/laney-s-desire-teach-left-enduring-legacy>

From Staff Reports
Sunday, Aug 29, 2010

Augusta has much for which to thank Lucy Craft Laney.

The woman who lived from 1854 to 1933 founded the area's first schools for black students, and her legacy of determination and hard work in the face of adversity continues to inspire.

Born in Macon before the Civil War (her parents were former slaves who had bought their freedom), Laney attended Atlanta University before moving to Augusta. She told people she came here because she liked the weather.

In 1883, Laney began work on the area's first school for black children in the basement of Christ Presbyterian Church, then at 10th and Telfair streets. It evolved into the Haines Normal School, chartered in 1886, which graduated its first class in 1888.

Kindergarten and nursing programs began in 1890 and 1892, respectively.

Laney never married, "but she was known as a mother because she was so interested in the development of children," said Christine Betts, the director of the Lucy Craft Laney Museum of Black History.

It was rare for a woman -- let alone a black woman -- to live such a fiercely independent life at the turn of the century. But Laney never let the vestiges of slavery dampen her spirit.

"She was very kind. She was very knowledgeable," Betts said. "She used all of that energy to develop herself and others."

Laney lived on the site of the museum, 1116 Phillips St., until she died."

Today, the museum is next to Lucy C. Laney High School.

Links:

[1] <http://chronicle.augusta.com/sites/default/files/editorial/images/feed/msms/photos/4366347.jpg>

[2] <http://chronicle.augusta.com/sites/default/files/editorial/images/feed/msms/photos/4366346.jpg>