

Contributions to Virginia in the Twentieth Century

Many Virginians made social, political, and economic contributions to our state and nation during the twentieth century.

Maggie L. Walker: In the early twentieth century, women did not benefit from many of the rights and privileges enjoyed by men. They were not allowed to vote and those that worked held only the lowest paying jobs. One woman refused to accept this poor treatment. Her name was Maggie L. Walker and she opened St. Luke's Penny Savings Bank in Richmond, Virginia. Maggie became the first woman and the first African American to hold the position of bank president in the United States.

Harry F. Byrd, Sr.: Harry F. Byrd, Sr. was a very powerful leader from the state of Virginia. He served as the governor of Virginia and as a United States Senator. As governor he modernized our state government and improved state roads. As senator his motto was "Pay As You Go." He did not believe that Virginia should borrow money to improve its roads. Instead he proposed that the needed money come from taxes on gasoline.

Arthur R. Ashe, Jr.: Arthur R. Ashe, Jr. was the first African American winner of a major men's tennis singles championship. His illustrious 10-year career began on the public recreation courts in Richmond, Virginia. During this period he won three Grand Slam singles titles and accumulated over 800 career victories. He was also known as an author and spokesperson for social change. His popularity gave him many opportunities to speak out about inequities in the world of tennis and society as a whole.

A. Linwood Holton, Jr. was an important Virginia governor. He promoted racial equality. He appointed more African Americans and women to positions in state government than previous governments.

L. Douglas Wilder: In 1989, voters in Virginia elected L. Douglas Wilder, the grandson of an African slave, as their governor. The Richmond teenager, who once shined shoes and washed windows to help support his family, had become the first African American to be elected a state governor in the United States.