



ALABAMA AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

BEYOND

THE BOOK

THE ALABAMA BICENTENNIAL COMMISSION
AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE COMMITTEE



ALABAMA AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

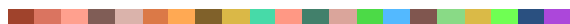
BEYOND

THEBOOK

In 2019, The Alabama Bicentennial Commission African American Heritage Committee published ***The Future Emerges from the Past: Celebrating 200 Years of Alabama African American History and Culture***. This book highlights the history, people, events, institutions, and movements that contributed to the Great State of Alabama, the nation, and world during the state's first 200 years.

The **Alabama African American History Beyond the Book** website continues the journey and goes beyond what could be included in the book's 244 pages. On a monthly basis this site will not only highlight past Alabama African American history makers and events, it will also contain present day icons, unsung heroes/heroines, and current events. Short articles along with links to videos, photos, reference material, and additional information will be uploaded monthly for all to enjoy.

The website's goal is the same as the book's: to inspire the young and young at heart to dream big and never allow obstacles to stop their march toward achieving those dreams.



Nell C. Jackson, PhD

Olympian, coach, educator, administrator, hall of famer



At the 1956 Melbourne, Australia Summer Olympics, Dr. Nell Jackson made history by becoming the first African American to serve as head coach of a U.S. Olympic team (track and field).

In 1973, Jackson was hired as director of women's athletics at Michigan State University, becoming the first African American woman to head athletics at a major university.



Nell Cecelia Jackson, Ph.D.

Dr. Nell C. Jackson was born on July 1, 1929, in Athens, Georgia and grew up in Tuskegee, Alabama. Dr. Jackson was an Olympian, an American record holder in the 200-meter dash, hall of fame coach, educator, and administrator.

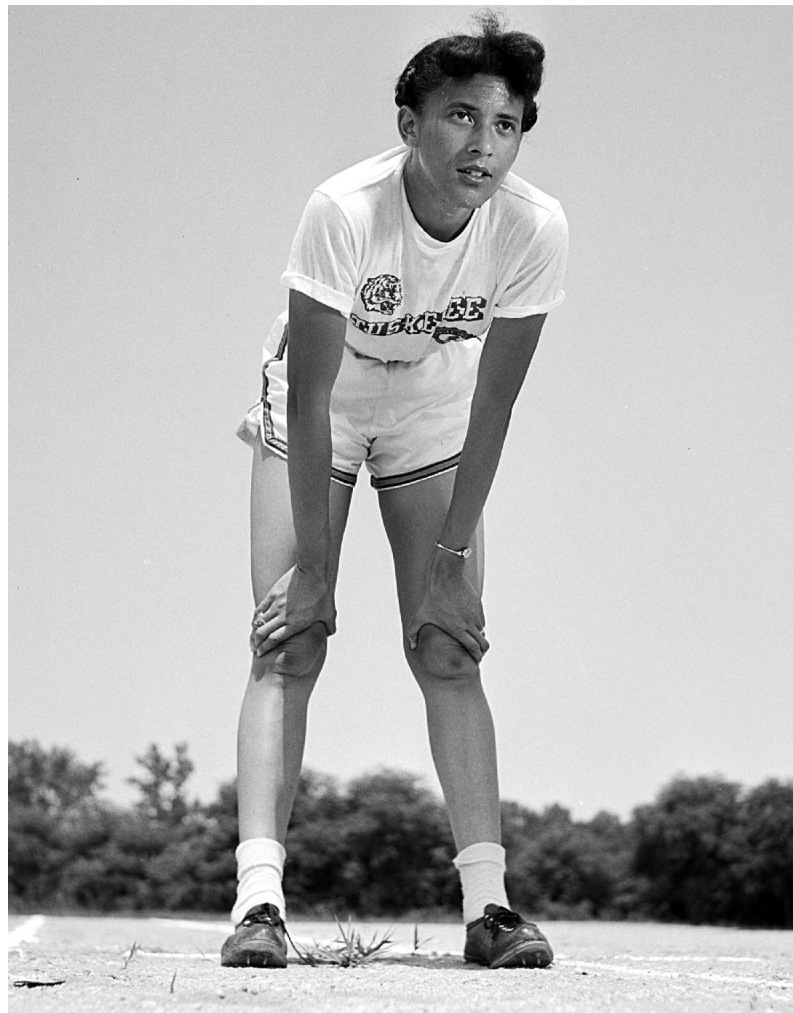
At the 1956 Melbourne, Australia Summer Olympics, Jackson made history by becoming the first African American to serve as the head coach of a U.S. Olympic team.

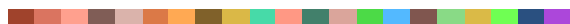
In 1973, Jackson was hired as director of women's athletics at Michigan State University, becoming the first African American woman to head athletics at a major university.



Above: Nell Jackson, left, with teammates (l. to r.) Evelyn Lawler and Ella McNabb, Tuskegee, Alabama, 1952.

Far right: Nell Jackson rests during training, Tuskegee, Alabama, 1952. (Images ©John G. Zimmerman Archive)

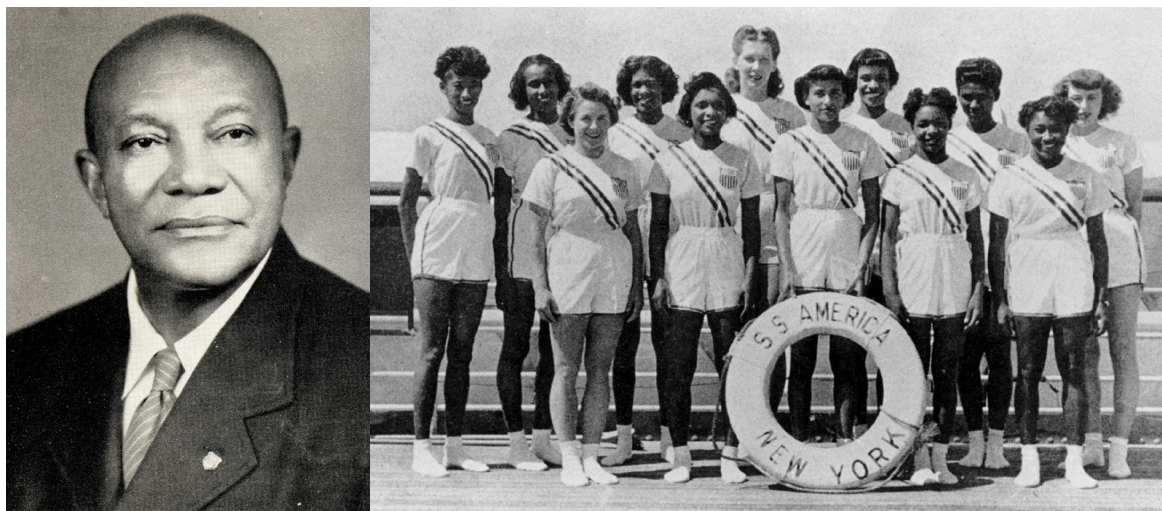




As a young girl, Jackson was an all-around athlete competing in basketball, tennis, swimming, and track. In the eighth grade her basketball coach noticed how fast she was and suggested that she try out for the track team. Jackson's speed and endurance led her to specialize in the 200-meter dash.

At 15, she competed in her first national track and field championship meet. A year later, in 1945, she placed second in the 200 at both the indoor and outdoor AAU championships. As a senior at Tuskegee Institute High School, Jackson was honored by being selected to the U.S. Track & Field All-America team in the 200-meter dash.

From 1947-51, under **Coach Cleveland Abbott's** training, Dr. Jackson continued her amazing track career as a student-athlete at Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University). Jackson won a spot on the 1948 U.S. Olympic team competing in both the 200-meter dash and the 4x100 meter relay in London, England.



Above left: Legendary Tuskegee coach Cleveland Abbott. (Image courtesy South Dakota Hall of Fame)
Right: 1948 U.S. Olympic Women's Track team. Nell Jackson is front row, third from the left. (kidlitwhm.blogspot.com)

In 1949, Jackson won the 200-meter dash at the AAU national championships, running a blistering time of 24.2 seconds, breaking the 14-year-old American record by two-tenths of a second. The following year she won two national titles, one in the 200-meter dash and the second as the anchor leg on Tuskegee's 4x100 meter relay team.



In 1951, during the first Pan-American games in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Jackson won a silver medal in the 200-meter dash and a gold in the 4x100 meter relay.



President Harry Truman and African American female Olympians (left to right) Emma Reed, Theresa Manuel, Audrey Patterson, Nell Jackson, Alice Coachman and Mabel Walker, 1948.

Understanding the importance of education, Dr. Jackson received her B.S. in physical education from Tuskegee Institute in 1951, and in 1953, she received her M.S. in physical education from Springfield College in Springfield, Massachusetts.

After receiving her master's degree, Jackson returned to Tuskegee Institute where she taught physical education and coached the women's track & field team from 1953 to 1960. In 1958, she started Tuskegee's men's swim program and served as its first coach.



In 1956, the U.S. Olympic Organization made Jackson the first African American head coach of a U.S. Olympic team.



However, it was her outstanding track & field coaching skills that caught the eye of the U.S. Olympic Organization that in 1956 made her the first African American to be named head coach of a U.S. Olympic team.

After receiving her Ph.D. from the University of Iowa in 1962, she again returned to Tuskegee Institute where she remained until 1963. In 1972, she was once again named the head coach of the U.S. Olympic women's track & field team that competed in Munich, Germany.

In addition to Tuskegee Institute, Dr. Jackson taught at the University of Iowa, Illinois State University and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she organized and coached the Illinois Track Club for Girls, the first track & field team for women at the university.

In 1968, Jackson chaired both the U.S. Women's Track and Field and the AAU Women's Track and Field Committees. She also served as a member of the board of directors of the U.S. Olympic Committee.



In 1981, Jackson accepted the position of Director of Physical Education and Intercollegiate Athletics at the State University of New York (SUNY) in Binghamton. In her lifetime Dr. Jackson published many track and field papers and articles, conducted numerous workshops and clinics, and authored the highly regarded textbook, *Track and Field for Girls and Women*.

***Dr. Nell Jackson
was enshrined in the
Tuskegee University
Athletics Hall of Fame
in 1974.***



Jackson is honored in several Halls of Fame, among them the:

- Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Hall of Fame
- U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association (USTFCCCA) Hall of Fame
- International Women's Sports Hall of Fame
- Tuskegee University Athletics Hall of Fame

Several awards are also given each year in her honor, including awards given by:

- National Association of Collegiate Women Athletic Administrators
- Michigan State's Varsity Alumni 'S' Club
- Binghamton University

At the time of her death, on April 1, 1988, Dr. Jackson was serving as secretary of The Athletics Congress (TAC; now USATF) and had previously been a TAC vice president.



Nell Jackson (1929–1988)

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/women/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/jackson-nell-1929-1988>

Sources: Bortstein, Larry. *After Olympic Glory*. NY: Frederick Warne, 1978. d will end in 15

Smith, Jessie Carney. *Notable Black American Women*. Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1992.

Barbara Morgan, Melrose, Massachusetts

USA Track & Field – 1989 Hall of Fame Inductee

<https://www.usatf.org/athlete-bios/nell-jackson>

Nell Jackson

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nell_Jackson

Alabama Legacy Moment

<https://www.alabamalegacy.org/nell-jackson/>