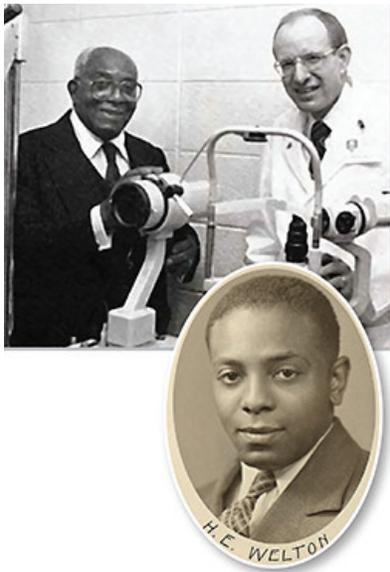




Celebrating BLACK history MONTH



H. Edward Welton OD, FAAO

- Tennessee State University
- Ohio State University
School of Optometry

Look for a new
Black History Month
profile every Friday
in February.

Remembering a Pioneer

H. Edward Welton, OD, FAAO, became the first African American Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry during the Academy's annual meeting in Chicago in 1955. Although he died in 1994, his influence and generosity live on.

Welton was born in 1911 in Nicodemus, Kansas. After graduating from high school in Zanesville, Ohio, he earned his bachelor's and master's degrees at Tennessee State University. He then attended The Ohio State University School of Optometry, becoming the first African American graduate in 1938.

In an interview for the school's 2014 centennial website, Jacqueline Davis, OD, MPH, FAAO, talked about the impact Welton had on her as she pursued her degree, "I will say that he was a true inspiration to me when I was in school. I did not meet him until after my graduation, but there were many days during my optometric training that I stood under the stairs in the basement of Fry Hall, looking at his graduation picture, saying to myself, 'If he could do this in 1938, then I can do it, too!'"

Welton was in private practice in Atlanta and Cleveland before becoming the chief of optometry for Northeast Ohio Neighborhood Health Services, where he was known for his perceptive and caring manner.

"He was always concerned about less fortunate patients having access to quality eye care, and because I had the same concern, I went to work where he did at Northeast Ohio Neighborhood Health Services," said LaVelle Jenkins, OD, FAAO, in an interview with Optometric Management Magazine. "When he retired, I took over his position as chief of optometry for optometric services, and he told me, 'Remember to listen with your ears and your eyes because patients may tell you things through their expression that they may not say verbally.' It was great advice."

Welton believed greatly in the value of obtaining an education. He and his wife, Maxine, established scholarships at The Ohio State University College of Optometry and Tennessee State University to further minority pride and education, according to the centennial website. Today, the interest from their \$100,000 endowment to Ohio State in 1989 goes to assist minority students who want to become optometrists.

One recipient, Kefla George, OD, MS, said, "Not only did this scholarship enable me to come to Ohio State, but it made me more aware of the college's efforts to recruit more minority students to a career in optometry and the need for adequate eye care in underprivileged communities."

A lasting legacy indeed. Thank you, Dr. Welton.



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