



- *Educator*
- *Missionary*

Helena Maud Brown Cobb

1869–1922

Inducted 2003

Helena Brown Cobb was an educator, missionary worker, editor, writer and feminist at a time when African Americans were denied many basic human rights. Her vision was to create an educational oasis for black youth, combining education with Christian leadership and living - thus making their lives better. She was widely known as one of the most influential female black educators in Middle Georgia.

Helena was born in Monroe County on January 24, 1869, to religious parents who wanted the best Christian education and training for her. She graduated from Stools School (an embryo of Clark Atlanta University) with honors. Following her heart, she entered the field of education and she became involved with her religious calling through the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church (C.M.E.).

After 15 years of perfecting her educational skills through teaching in a number of public schools in Georgia (often as the school principal), Helena became dissatisfied with the inadequacy of resources in the school system. An intelligent black woman, who didn't know the meaning of the word "no," she decided to start her own church-supported private educational institution.

A few years earlier, at age 30, Helena Brown married Andrew Jackson Cobb, an active minister in the C.M.E. church. The marriage solidified her belief that missionary work and a love for education could coexist in the training of young people.

On October 7, 1909, the Helena B. Cobb Institute opened in Barnesville, GA, with an enrollment of 50 students and five

teachers. By 1916, the school had 183 students, 33 of whom were boarders. In a U.S. Department of the

"God help us to be heroines in taking upon our shoulders our part of the burden of the world - contributing our mites toward spreading the church of Christ and in educating the needy children of the race."

—Helena Maud Brown Cobb

Interior Bureau of Education study, the school was cited as a Christian institution where students could supplement the limited training they received in rural public schools and it was noted that more facilities like it were needed.

Along with her teaching, Helena was widely known as one of the most active missionary workers in her church. She rose in leadership positions in the women's group, promoting the recognition of women for their Christian charity work within the church.

In 1906, the C.M.E. General Conference adopted the Women's Missionary Age as the official publication of the women's missionary movement - with Helena B. Cobb as editor-in-chief. She was often called upon to write articles and to give lectures for women's causes. She wrote a pamphlet entitled *Our Women - A Sketch of Their Work*, that praised the good works of the women in her church. Today the Women's Connectional Council, a successor to her work, is one of the most powerful organizations in the C.M.E. church.

Helena Maud Brown Cobb died in 1922. Her personal charm, stately image and intelligent foresight made her one of the most influential women in the C.M.E. church. Her dedication and hard work make her a Georgia Woman of Achievement.

Additional Resources

Dr. Carole R. Taylor

Department Head, Henry Alexander Hunt Memorial Library

Fort Valley State University

1005 State University Dr.

Fort Valley, GA 31030-4313

(478) 825-6342