

Ruth Ella Moore Biography

Ruth Ella Moore

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Biography

Ruth Ella Moore achieved distinction when she became the first African American woman to earn a Ph.D. in bacteriology from Ohio State in 1933. Her entire teaching career was spent at Howard University in Washington, D.C., where she remained an associate professor emeritus of microbiology until 1990.

Moore was born in Columbus, Ohio, on May 19, 1903. After receiving her B.S. from Ohio State in 1926, she continued at that university and received her M.A. the following year. In 1933 she earned her Ph.D. in bacteriology from Ohio State, becoming the first African American woman to do so. Her achievement was doubly significant considering that her minority status was combined with that era's social prejudices against women in professional fields. During her graduate school years (1927-1930), Moore was an instructor of both **hygiene** and English at Tennessee State College. Upon completing her dissertation at Ohio State--where she focused on the bacteriological aspects of **tuberculosis** (a major national health problem in the 1930s--she received her Ph.D.

Moore accepted a position at the Howard University College of Medicine as an instructor of bacteriology. In 1939 she became an assistant professor of bacteriology, and in 1948 she was named acting head of the university's department of bacteriology, preventive medicine, and **public health**. In 1955, she became head of the department of bacteriology and remained in that position until 1960 when she became an associate professor of microbiology at Howard. She remained in that department until her retirement in 1973, whereupon she became an associate professor emeritus of microbiology.

Throughout her career, Moore remained concerned with public health issues, and remained a member of the American Public Health Association and the American Society of Microbiologists.