



# Mamie Dillard

(b.1859-d.1912 )

Mary J. "Mamie" Dillard was born on September 10, 1874 in Lawrence, Kansas, the daughter of Jesse and Fannie (Johnson) Dillard.

Dillard's early education was at the segregated Pinckney School, at 801 West Sixth Street, for African American children. Later, in high school, she was involved with the Harmonics Club and played the piano for meetings and literary gatherings. Dillard was the only African American student in her graduating class at Lawrence High School in 1892. As part of her graduation program, she delivered a speech in favor of the American Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). She joined the segregated African American WCTU in Lawrence that year at the age of 18. She believed in the organization's efforts to promote woman's suffrage and leadership opportunities and advocated for other young women to join the movement. Dillard went on to receive a bachelor's degree from the University of Kansas in 1896.

Following graduation, Dillard began her teaching career at Pinckney School. Renown writer Langston Hughes was one of her third-grade students. Recognizing his talent, she encouraged his writing and maintained a close relationship with her former student after he left Kansas. Upon completion of her course work for a graduate degree, Dillard became principal of Lincoln School, an African American grade school in Lawrence. She was appointed by as one of four delegates to the convention of the Negro National Educational Congress in 1916 by Governor Arthur Capper.

Mamie Dillard is known as an American educator, clubwoman and suffragist. In addition to the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Dillard was also a member of the Double Six Club, the Home and Garden Club, the Self Culture Club (an organization that promoted education and community building for African American working mothers), and the Sierra Leone Club. She was a patron of the University of Kansas chapter of the Delta Sigma Theta sorority Her home served briefly as the chapter sorority headquarters in the 1920s. As a suffrage activist, she is reported to have worked with Carrie Langston to advocate for African-American women to become involved with the suffrage movement.

Rosalyn Terborg-Penn's 1998 study *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920*, (based on her 1977 Howard University dissertation) pioneered academic studies on this topic and Mamie Dillard is identified as a suffragist primarily attributable, it is believed, to speech(es) on women's suffrage.

Mary J. "Mamie" Dillard lived in Lawrence her entire life and devoted herself to improving her community. She was an advocate for rights and votes for women and for civil rights and leadership for the Lawrence African American community.

Mary J. Dillard died November 24, 1954, and is buried in Oak Hill Cemetery, Lawrence, Kansas.

#### Sources:

<https://www.kshs.org/index.php?url=kansapedia/mamie-dillard/20194>

<https://chalkboardchampions.org/mamie-dillard-kansas-teacher-and-avid-suffragist/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mamie\\_Dillard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mamie_Dillard)