Elbert Frank Cox Encyclopedia Article

Elbert Frank Cox

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Elbert Frank Cox

1895-1969

American mathematician who became the first African-American to receive a Ph.D. in mathematics. Elbert Frank Cox was born in Evansville, Indiana, in December 1895. He earned his bachelor's degree in mathematics from the University of Indiana in 1917. After serving in the U.S. Army in France during World War I, he returned to the States to teach mathematics at public schools in Kentucky, and later at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina. In 1925, Cox became the first African-American to receive a Ph.D. in Mathematics, from Cornell University. That same year, he accepted a teaching position at West Virginia State College, then in 1929, he transferred to Howard University. Cox remained at Howard until his retirement in 1965, serving as chairman of its mathematics department from 1957-1961.