

Mack H. Hannah, Jr.

Businessman/Educator
(1904-1994)

Mack Henry Hannah, Jr., born in Brenham, Texas, moved to Port Arthur with his parents when he was eleven. He was born into an enterprising family. His grandmother Lottie Brown had become the first Juneteenth Queen on June 19, 1869, and his parents were themselves pioneers in settling Port Arthur.

His father, "Daddy Mack," was a colorful character who was associated with many business ventures in the early days of the city - saloons, a barbershop, poolhalls, a restaurant, a drug store, and in 1920 the Hannah Funeral Home, which still operates in Port Arthur today.

His son Mack Jr. became one of the nation's outstanding citizens. He graduated from Lincoln High School and Bishop College, where he became that school's first All America football player.

He worked as a physical education teacher at Lincoln High School then later joined the Orange Casket Company, becoming their first black salesman. In 1937, he purchased the Joseph A. Porter Casket Company in New Orleans, Louisiana.

During World War II, Hannah was employed by the nation's first synthetic rubber plant, built in Port Neches. He ran the housing and food concession, taking care of over 6,000 workers. Mack Hannah then moved to Houston, where he became the president of the Mack H. Hannah Life Insurance Company, founded the Gulf Western Mortgage Company, and the Standard Savings and Loan Association, and became director of the Homestead Bank.

Educational institutions also prospered under Hannah's direction. He served for over thirty-one years as a trustee of Bishop College. He held the office of Regent of Texas Southern University, and the University of Houston. Hannah had the honor of being the only person in Texas to have served as Chairman of the Board of Regents of two Texas institutions of higher learning.

In 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed Hannah as Consul to the Republic of Liberia, a post he held for over 42 years. In 1966, he attended the Subregional Meeting on Economic cooperation in Niamey, Nigeria, as the personal representative of President Johnson. Hannah received numerous other honors and citations. Texas Southern University conferred the honorary Doctor of Humanities Degree on him in 1974.

In 1968, he was awarded the honorary Doctor of Laws Degree from Bishop College.

Hannah was also appointed to serve as a member of the White House Conference on Youth and Children.

Humanitarian, community and land developer, banker, financier, and diplomat, Hannah left a concrete mark on Port Arthur by developing three subdivisions: Hannah Estates, Hannah Gardens, and Sunset Gardens.

He will long be remembered in Houston and Port Arthur for his service to his community and his nation.

