



Student Name:
Class Period:
Date:

Meet the Originals

Texas Originals is a radio series about people who made an impact on Texas. You can hear it online and on radio stations around the state. Read or listen to the episode on Matthew Gaines. Then, answer questions about it.

Matthew Gaines 1840–1900

As one of Texas's first Black legislators, Matthew Gaines fought to secure constitutional rights and establish a system of public education for free Black Texans during Reconstruction.

Born enslaved in Louisiana in 1840, Gaines was sold into Texas as a young man. During the Civil War, he worked as a blacksmith in Fredericksburg after a failed attempt to escape to Mexico. He moved to Washington County when the war ended, where his civic role as a Baptist preacher led voters to elect him to the state senate in 1869.

As a state senator, Gaines championed issues important to Black Texans in the Reconstruction era. He was an advocate of free, integrated public education and pushed the legislature to accept the federal land grant that made possible the creation of Texas A&M University. He fought against voter intimidation and mob violence during the tumultuous 1870s.

Gaines's uncompromising advocacy for formerly enslaved Texans made him a targeted figure. Political opponents charged him with crimes, and though his spurious conviction was overturned, Gaines was declared ineligible for office upon his reelection in 1873. His political career ended, Gaines returned to Washington County and the pulpit. No longer a statewide public figure, he died unheralded in 1900.

In 2021, after a decades-long effort to commemorate his contributions to education in the state, Texas A&M dedicated a Matthew Gaines statue on its campus.

Check for Understanding: Answer the questions below based on evidence from the episode on Matthew Gaines. Refer to the text included above if needed.

1. Describe Matthew Gaines's life prior to election to the state senate in 1869.
2. Name two of the causes that Gaines fought for in his time as a state senator.

Going Further: Write or discuss your answer to the question below, supporting your answer with evidence from the episode or additional information you have learned in class.

3. **Making Inferences.** In the context of the episode, what does the word "spurious" mean?