

# African-American ENTREPRENEURS (PART 5)



## Parker David Robbins

Parker David Robbins was born in Bertie County, North Carolina in 1834. Parker was born into a free, mixed-race family at a time when most African Americans were born into slavery. In 1862, he joined the Union Army to fight in the Civil War. Although promoted many times, he had to leave the Army in 1866 due to health reasons. After returning home, he entered North Carolina politics. He was one of fifteen black delegates to the North Carolina constitutional convention. In 1868, Parker was elected to the North Carolina House of Representatives. After leaving politics in 1872, Parker became an inventor and builder. He built numerous houses and a sawmill in Bertie and Duplin counties before retiring. Parker passed away at the age of 83 in Magnolia, North Carolina.

1. Name two reasons why Parker David Robbins is famous.
2. What convention did Parker David Robbins attend?



# John Merrick

In 1859, John Merrick, an African American businessman, born in Clinton, North Carolina. Originally born a slave, Merrick gained his freedom and moved to Raleigh, North Carolina and worked various jobs. In 1880, he moved to Durham, North Carolina and worked at a tobacco factory where he became a floor manager. In 1898, Merrick and other black businessmen founded the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company. The company helped provide life insurance policies to African Americans; many had been denied policies by white-owned companies. Under Merrick's leadership, the company grew rapidly. It was one of the largest African American-owned businesses in the United States. Merrick also created a hospital for African Americans in Durham. He also gave money to help found what is now North Carolina Central University.

1. **What business did John Merrick help start?**
2. **What other important activities did Merrick do?**