

Alice Augusta Ball

ALICE AUGUSTA BALL ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

REASON FOR THE GIFT

Paul Wermager worked for nineteen years as a science librarian faculty and fifteen years as Head of the Science and Technology Department at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Hamilton Library. His position enabled him to assist students, faculty and the public with their informational needs. For fifteen years, he has been researching, publishing and lecturing about Alice Ball so that she and her remarkable achievements will not be forgotten again. His aim for establishing the Alice Augusta Ball Endowed Scholarship Fund is to enable underrepresented minority students at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa to not only graduate with rewarding careers but to also be inspired by Alice Ball and her accomplishments so they, too, may employ their unique talents to improve society and our world.

ABOUT THE HONOREE



Alice Augusta Ball was born on July 24, 1892, in Seattle, and attended the University of Washington to earn two degrees: Pharmaceutical Chemistry (1912) and a Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy (1914). For her graduate studies, she attended the University of Hawai‘i (then the College of Hawai‘i) and overcame the racial and gender biases of the time to be the:

- First African American to graduate from the University of Hawai‘i (1915).
- First female to graduate from the University of Hawai‘i with a Master’s degree in Chemistry.
- First African American female Chemistry Instructor at the University of Hawai‘i.
- First African American female to be published twice in the prestigious Journal of the American Chemical Society (1914 and 1917, posthumously).
- First person in the world to develop a treatment for Hansen’s disease (leprosy) from Chaulmoogra oil (1916).

Alice Ball, age 24, touched the lives of thousands of people that few had wanted to physically touch for centuries – Hansen’s disease patients – by tackling the problem that had thwarted numerous chemists, pharmacologists and researchers in sophisticated and well-equipped laboratories around the world. Over several months, she succeeded in isolating an injectable form of Chaulmoogra oil that was used for almost two decades, permitting patients who had been banished to isolated leprosariums (e.g., Kalaupapa) to return to their families. After her diligent work, Alice became ill, returned to her family in Seattle and tragically died on December 31, 1916. Over time her name, life and accomplishments were lost in the pages of history. In 2006, the University of Hawai‘i Board of Regents awarded Alice Ball their Medal of Distinction, posthumously.