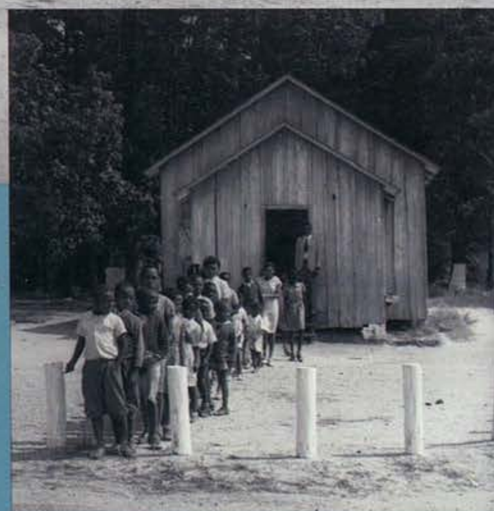
In Relentless Pursuit of an Education



African American Stories from a Century of Segregation (1865 – 1967)

In Relentless Pursuit of an Education

African American Stories from a Century of Segregation

(1865 - 1967)

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Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions of
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Lexington Park, Maryland

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Front Cover: Children coming out of Scotland School at noon. September 1940. Photography by John Vachon, Farm Security Administration, Courtesy of the Library of Congress.
Back Cover: Children going home from school at noon. Scotland, Maryland, September 1940. Photo by John Vachon, Farm Security Administration; Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

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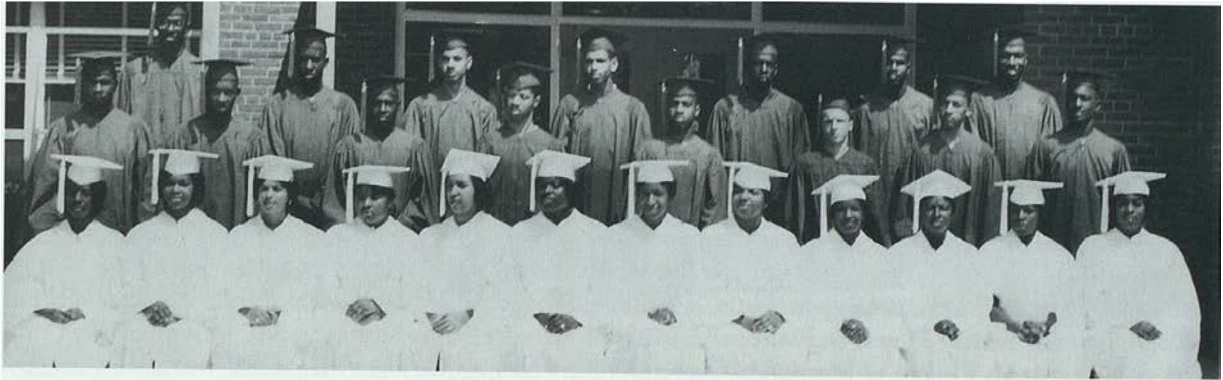

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. . . an intense desire for education . . .
. . . we went on . . .
. . . “colored” schools (map and photographs) . . .
. . . she could really tell you something
. . . what a school day was like . . .
. . . a school day at Drayden . . .
. . . it was a big event. . . .
. . . we didn’t rate the bus . . .
. . . parents and teachers worked together . . .
. . . Dr. Brown - he tried to start a high school. . .
. . . one lesson you could learn real fast. . .
. . . I went to Jarboesville . . .
. . . it began as a Catholic high school. . .
. . . they knew what you had to do to make it. . .

. . . a passion for children and education . . .
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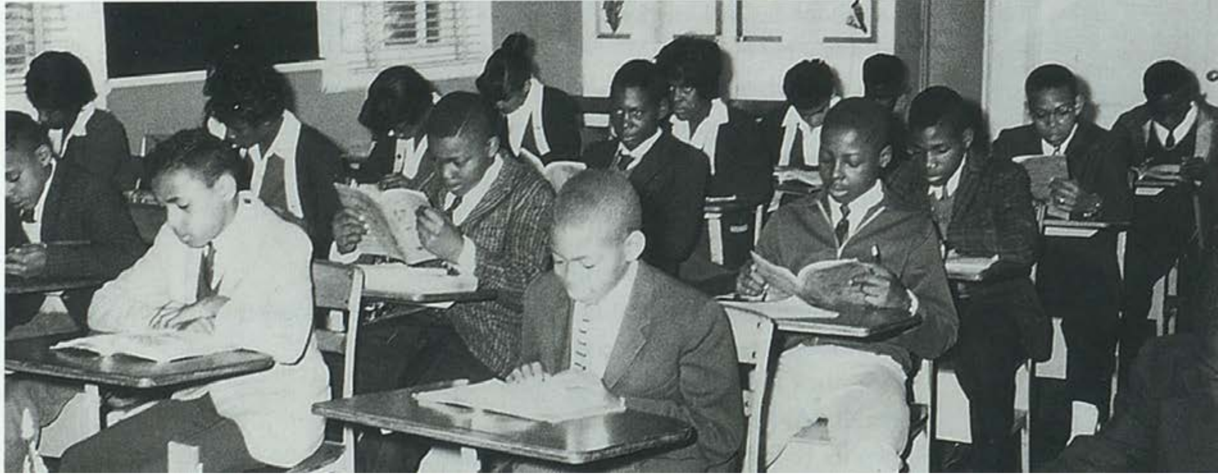

St. Peter Claver School; Photo by Alice Bennett.

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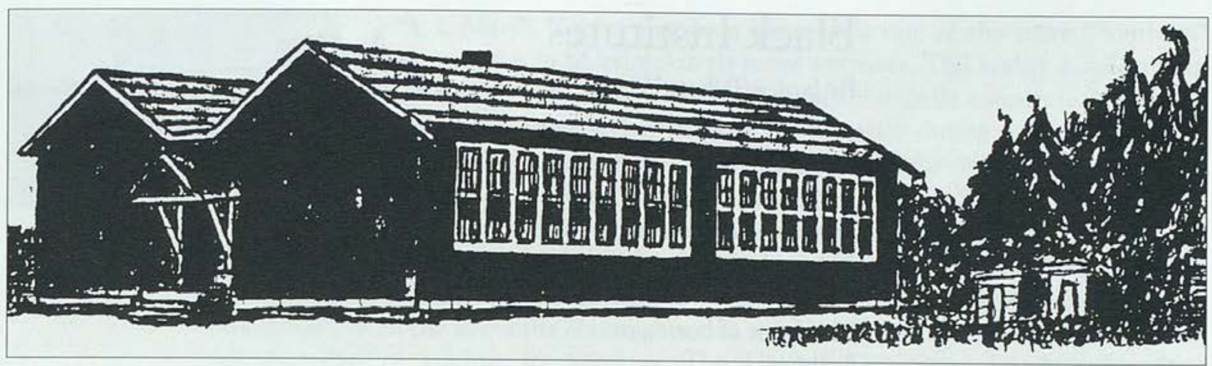

Second Jarboesville School. Drawing reprinted by permission of Ed Stokel.

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Black Institutes

By Janice Talbert Walthour

Walls torn down
Buildings structures
Destroyed demolished
Ruins whisked away

The spirit of heritage
Lurking
No place to nurture
Young black
Hearts souls minds

Though demolished
Soul filled memories
Once housed within
Bring pride nostalgia

Bring joyful thanksgiving
From those once
Loved nurtured
Educated empowered with religion
Motivated in black institutes

Let not those memories
Be whisked away
Like these structures designed
To create success

Build!
Build monuments within
That reflect heritage
That create vision

Build monuments that
Sing praises of love

Encouragement to ourselves

Build monuments that solidify
Dignity self-esteem
Monuments that embrace the
Strength and unity of black institutes

Dedicated to Brenda Thompson Coates and the Catholic community who supported the erection of a monument in memory of Cardinal Gibbons Institute, the first black institute in St. Mary's County, Maryland.

Preface

St. Mary's County has been historically one of the more "Southern" counties in Maryland in its racial attitudes. This reality is reflected in the fact that African Americans, who currently constitute 14% of the county population and comprised the majority during most of the nineteenth century, have been largely neglected in the official histories of the county. As the county that is the center of the 17th-century Maryland colony and site of its first capital, St. Mary's City, St. Mary's County has played a large role in the state's history and is the site of Historic St. Mary's City and other historical sites and museums. Throughout its history African Americans have played a prominent role in the life of the county, but one would not know it from visiting the county's museums or reading its histories. The Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions (UCAC) brought about a significant corrective step forward with the building of the African American Monument in Lexington Park, Maryland in 2000, and, hopefully, another advancing step with this book.

African American life in the county has been particularly affected both positively and negatively by the establishment of the Naval Air Station at Patuxent River, Maryland in the 1940s. It displaced many African American residents and yet drastically improved their non-agricultural employment opportunities. It has also recently contributed to a rapid increase in the county's population and development. The oral histories that the UCAC has collected have served to capture what these twentieth century developments have meant to the African American community, and

what contributions African Americans have made to county life. Both the general public and the African American community need to hear from what has definitely been an “alternative voice” in the life of the county - a voice that has only in the last generation begun to feel “free” to make its views and contributions known. Virtually all of our interviewees have been the product of a segregated community and have experienced a very rapid transition to the new order. Their experiences and views need to be known and preserved. In this book the story of the relentless pursuit of an education in the aftermath of slavery is told through the words of the students, parents, teachers, and administrators who lived it.

St. Mary’s County has, until recently, been a very rural county and is just now experiencing not only rapid residential, vocational, and commercial development, but a rapid influx of high-technology companies attracted by contracts with the naval base. Technology is increasingly the center of life in the county, and countians who have been here for generations are signing (or logging) on. However, in this book we pay tribute to the fascinating, often painful, but frequently triumphant struggles our elders endured to win an education during a century of segregation. The barriers they confronted included the unavailability of funding for school buildings, teachers, transportation, and educational materials. Despite these barriers, history shows that African Americans persevered to get the education that had been denied to them during more than 200 years of slavery in Maryland. It is only fitting that their stories of a time when they were often deprived of the most basic classroom material - books - are now in a book available to all.

—The Editors

Introduction

Many Americans do not realize that formal racial segregation afflicted half of all states in America in the early 1950s. In addition to the eleven former Confederate states, many places in the North, including Delaware, West Virginia, the southern third of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, much of Kansas, Oklahoma, Arizona, and some communities in California kept African Americans out of "white" schools, swimming pools, theaters, parks, and other spaces used by the public. As this book reminds us, so did all of Maryland. Indeed, not until the fall of 1967 did St. Mary's County, Maryland, comply with the 1954 decision by the United States Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* that outlawed racially segregated public schools.

This book shines the light of memory onto the separate and unequal schooling provided in Maryland before 1967. Until now, we had no volume that tells this story in southern Maryland, and from the viewpoint of the segregated minority at that. Doing so is crucial to our understanding. I know, because for the last six years I have been studying "sundown towns" - all-white towns that for decades were all-white on purpose. Very little has been written down about these practices. To "document" them, oral history is crucial. Yet as the years go by, those who know the incidents and practices that kept a town all white - or kept a school system segregated - are lost to us, their voices stilled by death.

Not now. Not for St. Mary's County. Not with this volume.

Some written observances of the fiftieth anniversary of *Brown* in 2004, even some by historians who should have known better, indulged in what might be termed "nostalgia for segregation." Things were better then, these pundits opined. The entire (black) community was invested in each child, and children behaved. Teachers were dedicated. The schools worked.

These citizens of St. Mary's County know better. First, they point out that "separate" did *not* mean "equal." "Whites would have a nice school, and we'd have a terrible old school - an old shanty school," recalled Pearl Thompson Furey. In parts of the county, there was *no* school after eighth grade. Not until 1952, when *Brown v. Board* was already being litigated, did black students across the county have access to twelfth grade. Everywhere, white children rode buses to school; black children had to walk.

Then there was the stigma. Separate schools can *never* be made equal, because the racial separation itself - established and enforced by the dominant race - expresses white supremacy. Lettie Dent, Superintendent of Schools for St. Mary's County, voiced that stigma by introducing her black teachers as "Aunt____" or "Uncle ____." The teachers were not her relatives, of course. Rather, "Aunt" and "Uncle" were the terms whites used to refer to older and more senior African Americans in the segregation era. "Mr.," "Mrs.," "Ma'am," or "Sir" would not have been appropriate, because such nomenclature implies blacks were fully human. (Relics of this system include Uncle Ben's Rice and Aunt Jemima's Pancake Syrup today.) Leroy Thompson tells of the small victory won by Mrs. Aggie Mack, the sole teacher at White Marsh Elementary School, who interrupted Dent as she was introducing her as "Aunt Aggie": "Don't you do it," said Mack. "If you can't call me Mrs. Mack, don't you call me nothing!" According to Thompson, from then on, Dent used the appropriate courtesy terms.

But the stigma would not die so easily. Even after St. Mary's recognized the necessity of having an African American on its school board, he could not eat with the white members at meetings. Fred Talbert recalls how "Somebody got him some crackers and sardines and cheese, and he sat out on the sidewalk and ate it." Sitting at the table of course implies basic social equality - exactly what segregation was constructed to deny.

The people interviewed here remember other problems of the segregation era, including a high dropout rate and a sense among the students that the white schools were more advanced, leading to problems after desegregation in 1967. Stuart Newkirk complained that he had "never heard about black history" during his eight years in black public schools. Many parents, determined that their children should not be handicapped by inadequate educations, coped by enrolling them in private Catholic schools.

During segregation, all was not bleak, however. The nostalgia narrative does contain a kernel of truth. Schools formed communities that held special days honoring athletic and academic accomplishment. Children invented ways to have fun, even in small muddy playgrounds that did not equal the athletic fields at white high schools. Our eyewitnesses also tell of heroic teachers even in this unequal setting. Parents and teachers knew each other, and parents reinforced the messages about the importance of education and proper deportment given by their children's teachers.

Some members of the "pioneer" generation - the first black children to attend interracial schools - noted that desegregation meant lighter discipline, both from white teachers and from their own parents, now disconnected from their children's schools. Desegregation also allowed racist white teachers to voice their racism - sometimes directly, using racial slurs, and sometimes more subtly, expecting less from black students and never suggesting they might be college material. But another strength of these interviews is their honesty. The pioneers are quick to credit some white teachers and administrators as fair and supportive. Conversely, Theodore Newkirk observes that some African Americans were satisfied with the status quo - or at least they preferred what they knew to volunteering for something different. After 1967, however, as Newkirk further points out, the black community hardly lay down and took whatever came its way. Its NAACP chapter conducted interviews that made clear the lack of welcome sensed by most members of the pioneer generation in the first years after school desegregation and protested this finding to the county authorities.

Another strength of the book is the focus in its late pages on the pioneer generation. Elizabeth Barber Walker tells how she went on to desegregate St. Mary's Junior College despite some opposition. Beverly Watts Dyson told of harassment from some white students against the first African Americans who ventured into "white" schools during the freedom of choice era before 1967. "We stuck it out," she recalled. "We had each other."

The unflinching honesty of these respondents continues right through to their analysis of the present. After desegregation, as Janice Talbert Walthour observed, African American children took a backseat." Leadership qualities were not developed in the larger interracial settings. "In integrated schools, we still have a lot of work to do to encourage

participation and self-motivation." Hopefully, the history recorded here will help the black community in St. Mary's County rededicate itself to its relentless pursuit of education.

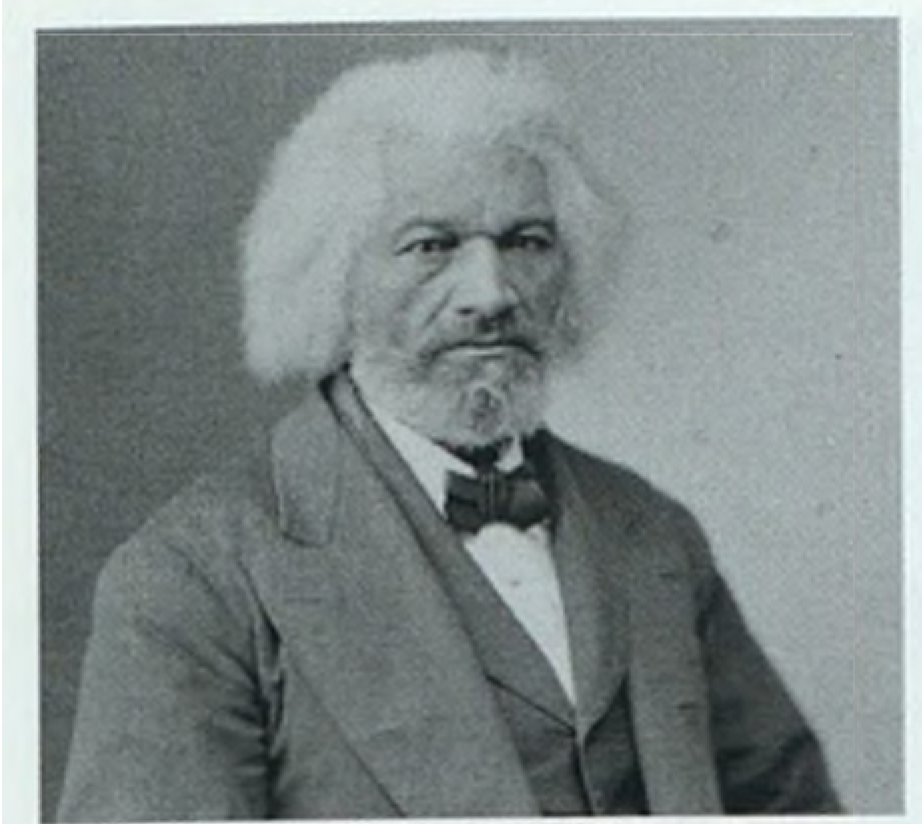
—James W. Loewen, author of
Lies My Teacher Told Me and
Sundown Towns

Timeline

1640	Maryland becomes the first colony to institutionalize slavery
1783	In the aftermath of the Revolution, some Maryland planters free their slaves
1808	Congress makes the importation of slaves into the United States illegal. Maryland plantations breed slaves for sale to newer states to the southwest
1861	The South secedes - February 9 - and the Civil War begins - April 9
1862	United States ends slavery in the District of Columbia. Enslaved African Americans from Maryland cross to the District of Columbia to be free
1863	Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Lincoln on January 1, 1863 (pertained to slavery in Confederate states only)
1864	Maryland ends slavery by vote
1865	Congress passes the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery — January 31
1865	Freedmen's Bureau established - March 3
1865	Civil War ends — April 9 — Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrenders at Appomattox Courthouse - all remaining forces surrender in May
1865	Union General Granger issues general order No. 3 proclaiming the slaves of Texas are free June 19 - known since as Juneteenth and celebrated as the day marking the end of slavery
1865	First school for "colored children" in St. Mary's County built by the Freedmen's Bureau
1896	In *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court establishes the

	“separate but equal” doctrine - May 18
1954	In *Brown v. Board* of Education, the Supreme Court rules segregation inherently unequal - May 17
1956	*In Robinson et.al. v. Board of Education of St. Mary’s County*, a class lawsuit requesting desegregation of county schools and admission of sixty-six African American students to schools of their choice is dismissed in Federal District Court
1958	In *Board of Education of St. Mary’s County v. Joan Elaine Groves*, the United States Court of Appeals Fourth District orders St. Mary’s County public schools to enroll Joan Groves in the all-white Great Mills High School. Groves is the first African American in St. Mary’s County to attend an “integrated” school
1967	St. Mary’s County Board of Education ends dual, segregated school system - 1967-68 school year

. . .there was much to overcome. . .



"Verily, the works does not end with the abolition of slavery, but only begins."

Frederick Douglass

From 1810 through the Civil War, Maryland had more free African American people than any other state. As a border state, Maryland had two distinct societies - the northern part of the state founded upon free labor and the southern part where tobacco was king and slavery predominated. During the Civil War, the Union prison camp at Point Lookout witnessed a mixing of these societies with the hiring of free African Americans to guard Confederate prisoners. In some cases, freed slaves guarded their former masters, leading to instances of kindness or brutality depending on their former relationship.[1]

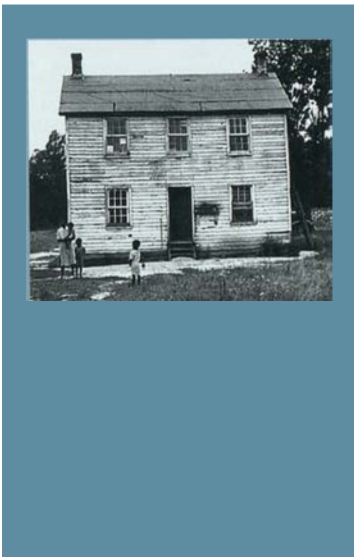
In March of 1865, as the fighting was coming to an end, the War Department established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, often referred to as the Freedmen's Bureau, to supervise all relief and educational activities for refugees and freed- men, including the issuing of rations, clothing, and medicine.

On August 29,1867, "about 1200 colored and 100 white persons" gathered in Leonardtown, Maryland to hear officers of the Freedmen's Bureau and Baltimore Association preach the value of education and inspire freedmen to build their own schools. But there was much to overcome.

"Resentment and discrimination against the Negro - his church, school, and home was sometimes evidenced by violence fanned by fear of endangerment of 'white supremacy.' Negro schools were often the target of resentment. In some areas of Maryland, churches housing schools were frequently burned – teachers intimidated, insulted and a few were killed."

Seventh Annual Report, Freedmen's Aid Society
Methodist Episcopal Church, 1874

Top left: Frederick Douglass, courtesy of the Library of Congress.
Top right: Ambrose farm house, Ridge, Maryland. Saint Mary's County, July 1941. Photo by John Collier, Farm Security Administration, Courtesy of the Library of Congress.
Middle: Classified ad from the Saint Mary's Beacon; February 8, 1860.
Bottom: Classified ad from the Saint Mary's Beacon, May 18, 1854.



$100 REWARD.

HAVING heard in the last few days more of the disobedience and threats of my run-a-way negro man ALONZO, I am more [illegible] his vol[illegible] He is about thirty years old, not tall but stout frame and limbs, nearly jet black, round face and short whiskers. I know of no marks on or about him. His wife and children are at my farm Indian Town, near Chaptico. He has a sister living in or near Leonard Town—his father and other relations live at or about Mr. J[illegible] Simms's in the Patuxent district in St. Mary's county. When taken, he may be found with but few old clothes, as my overseer, under strong suspicion of his intention, secured all his best new clothes. I will give the above reward for his delivery to my overseer, John H. Welch, at Indian Town, about three miles above Chaptico, Saint Mary's county, Maryland.

H. G. S. KEY.

Leonard Town, Jan. 20th, 1860.

$50 REWARD.

RAN away from the subscriber, residing near Leonard Town, a negro woman named Henrietta Young. The said woman was lately purchased by me at the sale of the personal estate of John Mattingley deceased; she is about 30 years of age, common height but stout built, and of dark complexion, with a perceptibly darker spot around the corner of the right eye. She wore away a new striped yarn frock, but has taken other clothing with her. The above reward will be paid if taken out of the county. If taken in the county $20 reward will be given. In either case to be delivered or secured so that she be got again.

IGNATIUS THOMPSON,
Leonard Town, P. O.

May 11th, 1854—tf.

The following excerpts, from an 1867 report drawn from Records of the Freedmen's Bureau, provide examples of the many incidents of violence against individuals, churches, and schools in the immediate aftermath of the war:

March 17th, 1866 - The Asst. Comr. D. C. reports the opposition to educating the colored people in Maryland is widespread and bitter. Teachers have been stoned and blackened, indignation meetings held and resolutions passed to drive them out. School houses have been burned. Colored churches too have been destroyed to prevent schools being held in them.

August 8th, 1865 - McVeigh Beverly, a white citizen of Maryland, for the offence of having voted for Abraham Lincoln, was assaulted on the public road at Port Republic, Calvert Co., Md. by James and John

Brown, who after striking him fired at him with a revolver but missed him, and he finally escaped by flight.

August 15th, 1865 - Isaac Craig, col'd, at a political meeting at Cracklingtown near Bryantown, Charles Co., Md. cheered a speaker who alluded to the Emancipation Proclamation, upon which Henry Burch, John Moran, Joseph Padgett, Osie Padgett, Kiah Canter, _______ Knighton, _______ Dudley, Samuel Smoot, Peter Nuttle, Frederick Dent (a Magistrate) and Dr. George Mudd beat him till life was nearly extinct and attempted to hang him but desisted.

A few minutes before the outrage last recorded, four (4) of these men badly beat Marshall Wilkeson (white) a discharged soldier for having declared himself a Union man.

Richard Butler, col'd, testifies that on the 16th of August 1865 at St. Joseph's Church, St. Mary's Co., Md. he was struck with the butt of a whip by John L. Loyd and also with Loyd's fist, without any provocation in presence of Robert Alvey, Constable, who did not interfere to prevent or rebuke it.

Milly Sewell, col'd, testifies that on the 18th of August 1865, on a plot of ground rented by her of Mrs. Jane Wood near Harrisburg, St. Mary's Co., Md., she was beaten by Mrs. Wood without any provocation and Mrs. Wood threatened to take a club to kill or maim her. Bvt. Maj. Clark, A. A. I. G. in a report alludes to this case and says Mrs. Woods' dislike to Milly arose partly from the fact that Milly had a nice tobacco crop on her ground and Mrs. Wood was anxious to drive Milly away and appropriate it.

February 7th, 1866 - Essex Barbour, col'd, late a soldier in the 30th USCI makes affidavit that on February 3rd he was assaulted and beaten at Choptico, St. Mary's Co., Md. by four white men, one of whom was a returned rebel soldier who makes it his business to injure col'd people, especially colored soldiers at all times and places.

Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the District of Columbia Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen

and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869 National Archives Microfilm Publication M1055 Roll 21 "Miscellaneous Reports and Lists"

The social values of the Confederacy lingered in southern Maryland, including terrorism against African Americans as they sought to gain an education. Newly freed African Americans often conducted schools in church buildings and these churches "attracted violence as velvet attracts lint."[2] African American school teachers and former Union soldiers were frequent targets of violence as well.

In some areas of St. Mary's County, the Civil War is still referred to as the "War of the Northern Invasion," notes Regina Combs Hammett in her *History of St. Mary's County: 1634 - 1990*. The sons of thousands of white countians fought for the Confederacy. Federal presence in the county from 1861-70 strengthened the climate of fear, anger, and resentment among whites: occupying troops, the POW camp at Point Lookout, and the Freedmen's Bureau all cast a long shadow.

Returning African American Union soldiers (558 served, 125 died) faced hostility, violence, and an Orphans Court which could "apprentice" their children to their former masters. "Black soldiers were favorite targets because they symbolized, perhaps more than anything else, the revolution that had taken hold of Maryland society."[3]

Isolation intensified the poverty that came with the end of the plantation economy. Hundreds left for jobs in Washington or Baltimore rather than trust former masters to pay them wages. Many who stayed ended up as sharecroppers. Even oystering was devastated by the war. As county residents struggled to reestablish economic stability, they were forced to grapple with the stark realities of establishing new social, political, and economic relationships.

In this period of great flux, hardship, and promise for the people of St. Mary's County, the hardest lot usually fell to the former slaves.

"The end of the war did not quite bring the jubilee that slaves had imagined freedom to be. Maryland ex-slaves fared better than blacks farther south, but they faced a hard struggle for equality. . . . The Maryland 'black code' - requiring blacks to find employment, outlawing black testimony against whites, restricting Negro travel and assembly - did not fall until

Congress in 1866 passed a civil rights act and federal courts began applying it. ... Nor did the [Republican] Party advocate black public schooling in the immediate aftermath of education. . . . blacks enrolled in classrooms that opened under the sponsorship of private societies to aid former slaves or, in hostile Southern Maryland, under the authority of the federal Freedmen's Bureau."[4]

Top: Slave quarters at Broome's plantation, St. Mary's City. From Swepson Earle's Chesapeake Bay Country, 1923. Courtesy of Historic St. Mary's City.
Middle: Civil War-era photo of Edmund Delaney, who served with the U. S. Colored Troops 117th Regiment Infantry. Courtesy National Archives.
Bottom: Hauling wheat to Ewell's wharf by oxcart, 1910. Courtesy Historic St. Mary's City. Images from Bicentennial photo contests.

I have endevered to do the best that I could for the colored people, and the result is that I have lost all my patemage.[5]

Joseph Hall

Tonging for oysters in the Chesapeake Bay. Photo by Alice Bennett.

Some white landowners donated land for African American schools and tried in other ways to aid the freedmen - often at great risk of retaliation.

No doubt many white countians supported the efforts of the newly freed men and women and did not, as did the majority of white southerners, object to education for "Negroes" on the grounds that it would lead to social revolution. There were white landowners in St. Mary's who donated land

for schools and who wrote petitions with and for African American parents asking that schools be established for "the colored children."

As the Civil War came to a close, the Maryland state legislators established laws governing public education. The state constitution of 1864, which abolished slavery, called for a uniform system of public education, and in 1865 the state legislature enacted a law providing a free public education for all white children ages 6-19. The legislature also enacted in that year the following code pertaining to black children:

> **Colored Population**
> 119. The total amount of taxes paid for school purposes by the colored people of any county and the city of Baltimore, together with any donations that may be made, shall be set aside for the purpose of founding schools for colored children, which schools shall be established under the direction of the school commissioners, and shall be subject to such rules and regulations as the Board of Education shall prescribe. 120. It shall be the duty of the city and county school commissioners, to visit such schools at least once in each quarter, and to make special report of the progress of the pupils; they shall suggest such modes of teaching as may be specially adapted to the need of this class of children, and advise the teachers, so that they will be able to impart to them knowledge by such means as are best suited to their wants.[6]

The statewide tax levied to support public education (in the 1860s, ten cents on each one hundred dollars of real estate value) was imposed based on total population, but only the money received from taxes on property owned by African Americans was applied to black schools. The result was that the vast majority of the money went to white schools.[7]

[1] "Life, Liberty, and Opportunity: The Struggle for Freedom in Tidewater Maryland, 1634-1865": A National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Landmarks of American History Program, 2005 (Home Page) www.smcm.edu/democracy/offerings/landmarkscontent.htm.

[2] Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) p.144.

[3] Fields, p. 143.

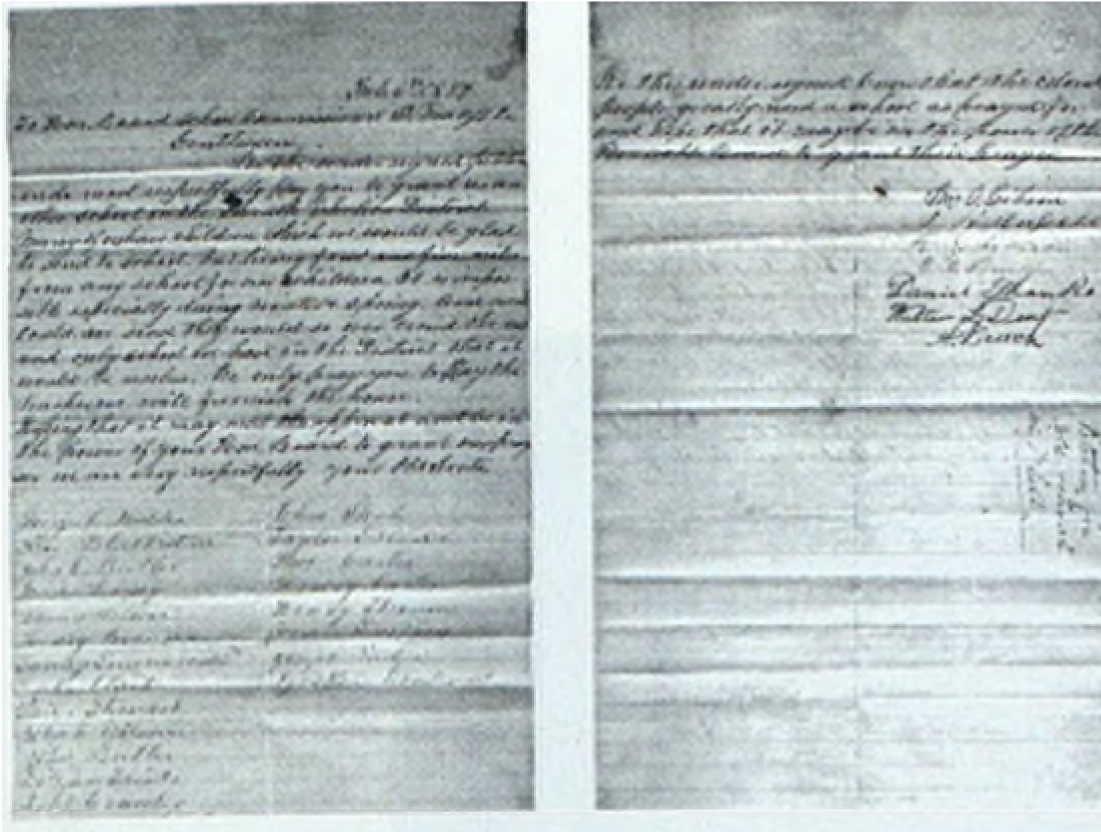
[4] Robert J. Brugger, *Maryland: a Middle Temperament 1634-1680* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1988) p. 308.

[5] Fields, p. 147.

[6] Supplement to the Maryland Code, Containing the Acts of the General Assembly Passed at the Session of 1865; Volume 383, Page 89.

[7] Brugger, p. 419.

. . . an intense desire for education . . .



The first school for African Americans was built in St. Mary's in 1865 by the Freedmen's Bureau with financial help from the New York Society of Friends (Quakers). According to the State Board of Education Annual Report of 1872, John F. Dent, president of the board of school commissioners for the county, stated that several school houses for "Negro" children had already been built by the Freedmen's Bureau upon lots donated by the citizens of the county. The Annual Reports also reveal that a number of school buildings were obtained from the white school department. "When the white school buildings became old and rather dilapidated they were sometimes turned over to be used for colored schools."[10]

As a result of the Freedmen's Bureau initiative, one- and two-room schools were established for "colored children" throughout the county. The

community, “colored” and white, provided buildings and petitioned the local school board for school needs.

. . . freedom does not mean idleness. . . ; that with all its blessings it confers upon us new duties, new obligations, new responsibilities, and we trust, new energies and purposes.[8]

Years of servitude had generated an intense desire for education, not only a desire for literacy but also a willingness to endure the hardships necessary to attain it.[9]

Feb. 6th, 1877

To Hon. Board School Commissioners St. Mary’s Co.

Gentlemen

We the under-signed petitioners do most respectfully pray you to grant us another school in the Seventh Election District. Many of us have children which we would be glad to send to school, but living four and five miles from any school for our children, it is impossible especially during the winter & spring. And even could we send they would so over crowd the one and only school we have in the District that it would be useless. We only pray you pay the teacher, we will furnish the house. Hoping that it may meet the approval and be in the power of your Hon. Board to grant our prayer we are very respectfully your Obt. Srvts.

George C. Maddox	Clem Short
Alx. Blackistone	Taylor Green
John C. Butler	Thos. Carter
Fred Dorsey	Henry Carter
James Wilson	Henry Thomas
Henry Branson	Len. Smothers
Sandy Sommerville	Joseph Parker
Luke Clark	Ignatious Woodland
Phil. Stewart	

John E. Wilson
John Butler
William Spinks
Robt Crawley

[reverse side]

We the under-signed know that the colored people greatly need a school as prayed for, and hope that it may be in the power of the Honorable Board to grant their prayer.

Wm.. G. Gibson
L. R. Ridgell
R. E. Sinclair
C. L. Burch
Daniel Shanks
Walter L. Dent
A. Burch

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Henry Carter
Henry Thomas
Ben. Smothers
Joseph Parker
Ignatius Woodland

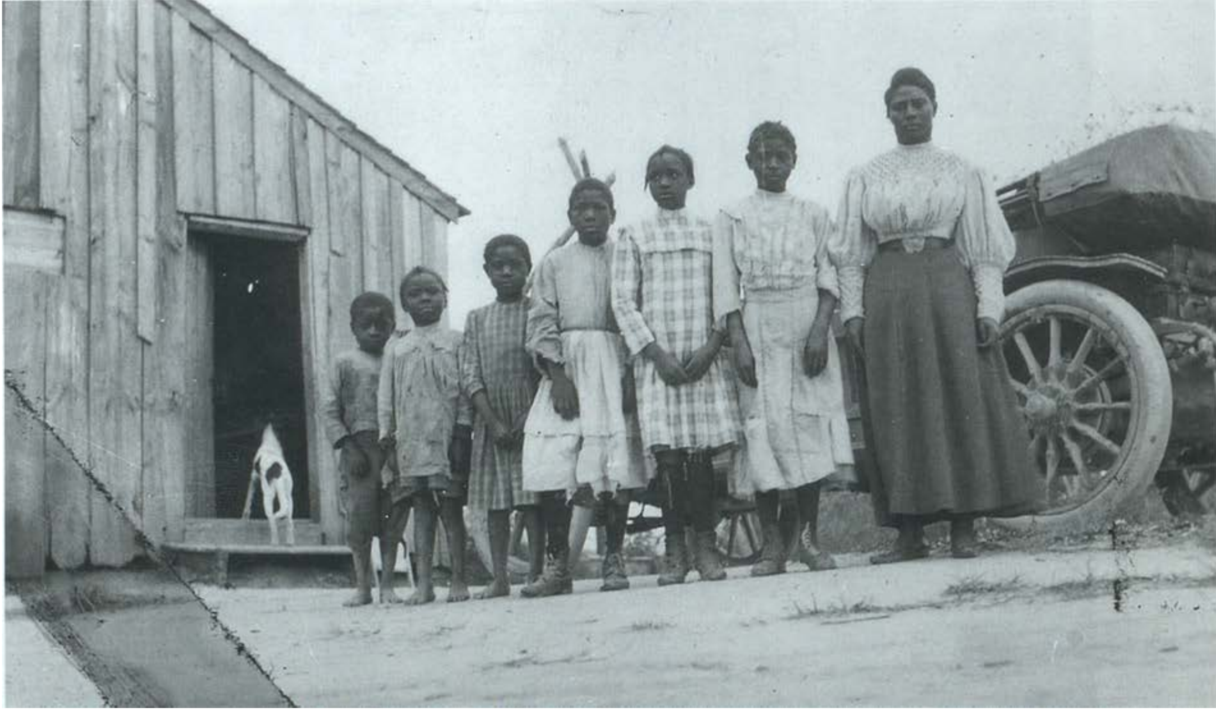
Front side of petition for colored school in the Seventh Election District. Property of St. Mary's County Historical Society, St. Mary's County School Records.

We the undersigned know that the colored people greatly need a school as prayed for, and hope that it may be in the power of the Honorable Board to grant their prayer.

Wm. G. Gibson
J. R. Russell
R. E. Sinclair
C. L. Burch
Daniel Shanks
Walter L. Dent
A. Beach

Petition for Col'd. School in 9th Dist.

Reverse side of the petition for colored school in the Seventh Election District. Property of St. Mary's County Historical Society, St. Mary's County School Records.



Children pose in a row, probably Hempstead Farm, 1912. Courtesy Historic St. Marys City. Images from Bicentennial photo contests.

During the years immediately following the establishment of the Freedmen's Bureau schools, efforts on the part of the African American community to acquire education are evident but not well documented. In the county, as elsewhere in the country, there was a belief that education was the key to progress. Classes were often held in churches or homes, and parents or their representatives wrote many petitions like the one shown. Adults, as well as children, who had been deprived of an education under slavery, attended the schools with adults coming most frequently in the evenings after the day's labors.

By 1874, there were twelve public schools in the county for "Negro pupils." And in 1875 the records show an enrollment of 681 Negro students and fifteen schools.[11]

When the Freedmen's Bureau was closed in 1870, an official said prophetically that withdrawal of federal support was "a blow which will be almost irreparable." State funding and local control started another, much longer struggle for educational opportunity, one which would begin to end only with the intervention of the United States Supreme Court in 1954-"[12]

By the 1880s, there was growing momentum and great optimism in the movement to establish schools for African American children. In addition to the establishment of public schools across the county, private organizations, beneficial societies, and churches were active in providing schools. The first parochial school in St. Mary's County was operated by the Knights of St. Jerome Beneficial Society and opened its doors in 1887.

Social hall of the Knights of St. Jerome, ca.1994. Courtesy St. Mary's County Department of Land Use and Growth Management.

The Knights of St. Jerome

Initially called the Saint Inigoes Beneficial Society, the Knights of St. Jerome took its present name on March 1, 1880, thus "uniting together the various beneficial societies into a single order."[13] Ever since it was first conceived, the organization has taken care of the widows and orphans, helped to bury the indigent dead, and cared for the sick and disabled.

Saint Inigoes Colored Parochial School

The Knights of St. Jerome met in their new hall on November 1, 1886, to form plans for the first parochial school for African American children in St. Mary's County. Mr. Nicholas Biscoe offered the resolution appointing Father Gaffney as treasurer for the school. Mr. Ignatius Smallwood was appointed a member of the financial committee. Nicholas Biscoe, Samuel E. Carroll, and Daniel Oliver Barnes were appointed for the building committee. They started to raise money, and by the following meeting on November 26, they had collected $37.50. At a meeting on December 4, the

Knights decided to hold the school on the ground floor of St. Jerome's Hall. The first teacher of the school was Daniel Oliver Barnes.

The Saint Inigoes Colored Parochial School began operations in the early part of May 1887. This was quite different from the start of the school year for "colored" public school students. The "colored" public schools generally had a shorter school year than the white schools, and the African American parents greatly resented this disparity. By beginning in May, the new school gave the children an opportunity to complete the normal school year.

In July 1887, the new school held its first end-of-year commencement. The priests of the area, Father Gaffney, Father Neale, and the newly arrived Father William Tynan, S.J. were invited to attend the commencement. When the group arrived at St. Jerome's Hall they found the hall-turned-schoolhouse decorated with flowers and evergreens. The children were dressed in their holiday attire, looking neat and orderly. There were outstanding recitations, dialogues, and singing.

In October 1888, the trustees of the school voted to require the parents to stock the wood shed or their children would be removed from the school. It is uncertain how long the school remained open. Mention of a school at St. Inigoes disappears from Hoffman's Catholic Directory after 1894- It may have still been in operation in April 1897. The Beacon reported that Mr. Daniel O. Barnes had accepted the post of treasurer of the Republican Party and referred to him as "the teacher of the Parochial School."[14]

On June 12, 1885, the Knights purchased a one-acre tract on the northwest corner of Trappe and Old Three Notch Roads in Dameron, Maryland for $30 from Allen C. Tyler. On September 30 the group held a cornerstone laying celebration at which Mr. John Cajay gave a rousing oration concerning equality and religious freedom. He was joined on the stage by several trustees of the organization, including the group's first president, Nicholas Biscoe. The resulting hall was a large two-story frame building covered with clapboard and a decorative, pressed-tin metal roof. This building immediately became a center point not only for Society functions but also for political meetings. In May 1887, the hall served as the parish's first parochial school for African American children. While the

building has been added on to and modified since it was initially built, the hall retains enough historic fabric to communicate its intended function.[15]

Carriage at Notley Hall, 1910. Courtesy of Historic St. Mary's City. Images from Bicentennial photo contests.

John Cajay, born in New York City in 1835 and a member of the New York State Militia during the Civil War, arrived in St. Mary's County in 1870 on assignment from the Freedmen's Bureau. He stayed for decades, developing young minds as an educator and participating in local politics. He taught in Leonardtown, Maryland for three years and was principal of Colored Public School No. 2 (The Pine) in Ridge, Maryland for fifteen years. He taught school at The Pine until 1896, at which time he worked several miles to the north at School No. 1 (Fairfield).

On September 30th, 1885 Mr. Cajay gave the following inspiring speech to mark the laying of the cornerstone of the Knights of St. Jerome Hall. His speech was printed in full in The Beacon newspaper on October 8, 1885, an indication of the importance of the event to the community. The text of the speech, reprinted on the next two pages, will help us appreciate the hopes and dreams cherished by African Americans twenty years after

the war. (Fifteen years earlier, Mr. Cajay had addressed a gathering in the Sheep-Pen Woods outside Leonardtown to celebrate the newly won enfranchisement of African American men.)

Speech given by Mr. John Cajay at a Dedication Ceremony for the Knights of St. Jerome, as printed on the front page of The Beacon, October 8, 1885.

Friends and Fellow Citizens

We have assembled here today to dedicate an emblem to our progress - a temple to the honor of the Knights of St. Jerome - a temple dedicated to Love, Charity and Benevolence, the great trip that makes the good and patriotic citizen - Love with its never ceasing adherence to the Great Giver of all good for His many blessings. Charity, like its foster-sister, Love, makes friend and foe clasp hands in one general embrace and brightens the home of the orphan and the widow, the poor and the needy, the homeless and the friendless, the heathen and the savage, then voices in one general shout the thanksgiving for the many blessings bestowed by its munificence. The last of the trio, Benevolence, last but not least, joins with the rest in rendering the necessary support to carry on the great cause of Humanity.

Through Benevolence we have raised a temple, not to Apollo nor Minerva, not to Jupiter nor to Mars, not to Bacchus nor to Venus, but to Freedom, Liberty and Christianity. This triumvirate is the foundation of this order and upon its crest we have laid this stone as a memento to our posterity and a monument of our advancement.

Reared in the arms of Slavery, rocked in the cradle of Adversity, clothed with the lash of Oppression and bathed with the tears of our loved ones, we stand today like Calvert at St. Mary's where, mingled with the Protestant and the Quaker, the Indian and the Catholic around the cross of Christianity, offering up prayers that there had been find a land of deliverance and o home where "none dare molest them or make them afraid."

Yes, today the Caucasians and the African, the Master and the Slave, stand side by side under the blue canopy of heaven and vie with each other to see who shall do the most in honor of this noble occasion. The

slave, rejoicing with his Hallelujahs at his deliverance from bondage to freedom, the master taking up the echo and passing it over the magnetic wires from the noble Atlantic to the majestic Pacific, from the frozen fields of the North to the sunny slopes of the South, thot there is found in the grand old fabric of 1776, which is cemented together by [illegible] and hands of steel, a land where in the Caucasian and the African, the Chinaman and Indian could, under the azure blue and scarlet stripes with its galaxy of bright stars, found deliverance from oppression where none dare molest or make them afraid.

The flog of our country! How grand it floats over our heads and protects within its folds American citizens in every clime! The corner stone that was loid in 1776 laid the foundation of the temple of freedom. This assemblage proves its good works today, for the corner stone which is here laid by the Knights of Jerome lay the foundation for advancement, elevation and protection to our posterity.

Then let us all rejoice that the era of good feeling and brotherly love may always exist among us. There are no rents in the grand old fabric now. They have all been mended. The wounds on many battle fields tell how many rents were mode and what heavy stitches it took to prevent the old corner stone from being rent asunder. Mounds now bedecked with the green sod commingling with the daisy and the violet, the pink and the pansy, the willow, cypress, and the rose, cover beneath their tendrils the remains of some loved one. The white and the black, the blue and the gray, with arms folded across their breast in mother earth are mementos of the struggles. Weep not for dear ones gone before. They have done their duty to God and their country. They have cemented the rents in the old stone and maintained the good old flag. Well can we say our flag is still there.

Now, one word to our fallen foe. You heroes of the Lost Cause, we extend to you as black Americans the right hand of fellowship and hope thot the fraternal feeling which now exists among us may exist forever. The black man in blue shakes hands with the white man in gray. The destinies of our country depend upon our united efforts to maintain it, and I believe that the many old veterans I see of the Lost Cause doing homage to the Negro's elevation mean to prove to him their promotion and the perpetuation of interest in our union. We know that your homes like our own have been desolated by the ravages of war, and we feel for

you. Although we were foes in the strife, let us be forever friends in peace.

Yes, peace, while we live in this life,
No more to battle and to flight
The strife is o'er, the battle won,
All is bright beneath our sun.
Solders of those trying days,
Our flag still floats, our country saved,
And beneath its folds in fond embrace
Rest the blue and the gray face to face.

Now let the youth emulate the Knights of St. Jerome. Let them swell its numbers to such an extent that there will be a necessity for several corner stones to be laid in old St. Mary's. Let them lay the corner stone of knowledge within their brain - Education,- the corner stone of wealth - Prosperity; the corner stone of respect - Truth; the corner stone of Christianity - a faithful performance to God and your church.

By laying these corner stones upon firm foundations, you will be able to accomplish much. You will be able not only to build temples to yourselves but to God, your race and your country. Five years ago, the fox, the hare and the squirrel gamboled and sported in these wilds and by their antics, they frightened the sire and the matron, the lover and his lassie, the youth and the maiden, the child and the babe, by the rustling of the leaves. Little did they think that the spot that frightened them would score them no more. Time moved on until 1885. The old trees that stood in these woods began to bow their heads. The oak whispered to the gum, the chestnut to die pine, the small ones thrashed and tugged at the old giants to know what was the matter, but time moved on. A noise was heard in the distance like the tramping of feet. What noise is that.

It is the onward march of civilization, the advance guard of the Knights of St. Jerome. With axes and hoes they cleared this spot, the promised land of their advancement and erected this Temple. There it stands a monument to their genius and perseverance. How elated they must feel at their success!

The road has been a rugged one. The stumbling blocks of bondage, hatred, prejudice and spite which have impeded the progress of our race for over two hundred years, have been obliterated. Bondage has turned to freedom; hatred turned prejudice to charity and spite to benevolence.

Freedom has made us citizens of one common country. It transformed us from chattels into soldiers and sailors. Lawyers and physicians, Congressmen and Senators, Governors and Foreign Ministers and last of all, it has made us Christians and philanthropists. It has given us our schools, our churches, our academies, our colleges and universities. It has educated our children and made our homes beautiful and happy. It has enlightened our race and driven superstition from the field. It is the great corner stone loid by the immortal Lincoln cemented to its foundation by the willing hands and loving hearts of all the citizens of our now glorious country.

Yes,
Freedom came with silent tread
And whispered in our ears,
Be brave of heart, hold up your head,
Be calm and dry your tears.
The Herald shouted as he passed,
Freedom today has come,
And Africa's sons are free at last
To bid it welcome home.
The aged mother raised her head.
Says dear son, how can this be?
He whispered softly in her ears There's no slaves in the land of the free.

Yes, there are no slaves! All are free, and we thank God for it!

Knights of St. Jerome, this Temple that you have erected should always be uppermost in your mind. It should be revered as the corner stone for the advancements of the Negro in old St. Mary's, It should be reverenced as the great lever that will press you to be self-reliant, self-sustaining and self-confident. How beautiful if must be to you when you look upon this noble edifice. You can exclaim like Payne, "Be if ever so humble, there is no place like home." Yes, there is no place like home, for here under your own vine and fig free where none dare to molest or make you afraid, you have this home erected by your own hands. The land was bought, the frees were felled, the design was made, the draught was drawn, the sills were laid, the building erected everything done by the members of the Knights of St. Jerome.

Yes, here under the branches of these spreading oaks, sheltered by their leaves from the rays of a Summer sun, we stand upon free soil in our Maryland. Our Maryland. Incorporated into the grand body of progressive Americans we fall into line and march on with mother time to battle for life and the pursuit of happiness.

In after years when the veil is drawn over these scenes and those that are yet to come, our posterity will reap the benefit of the work of the Knights of St. Jerome. The bright aurora in its resplendent glory now pursuing its daily course in the Heavens, sheds its bright rays upon us. The birds carol their sweet songs through these woods; the wind with its gentle zephyrs making music among the leaves of these majestic oaks, join in the chorus in paying homage to us on this occasion.

What a beautiful picture is here represented! The aged Negro of ye olden times, the young men of the present, backed up by the law makers of our land, standing here beneath the flag of their country, speak volumes for you and your noble effort today. In after years when your locks have become hoary with age, and your frame has become feeble and old, and you have passed from life to mother earth, the children will take up the requiem and sing their praises for the good work you have left behind. Now, let us draw a veil over the scene. Let us with clasped hands and quivering lips give thanks to the Giver of all good for his assistance,

Then let the noble work go on
Let our labor never cease
Until we reach the golden shore
Of bright celestial peace.

[8] Arnold H. Taylor in Richlyn F. Goddard, "Persistence, Perseverance, and Progress" (Maryland Humanities Council in cooperation with Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum, Calvert County Board of Education, and Calvert County Government, 1995) p. 5.

[9] Goddard, p. 5.

[10] Charles A. Doub, "The History of Education in Saint Mary's County, Maryland, Prior to 1900" (unpublished thesis, University of Maryland, 1939) p. 162.

[11] "Proceedings of School Commissioners St. Mary's County: 1865-1888" in Regina Combs Hammett, *History of St. Mary's County, Maryland 1634-1990* (Regina Combs Hammett, 1991) pp. 314-315.

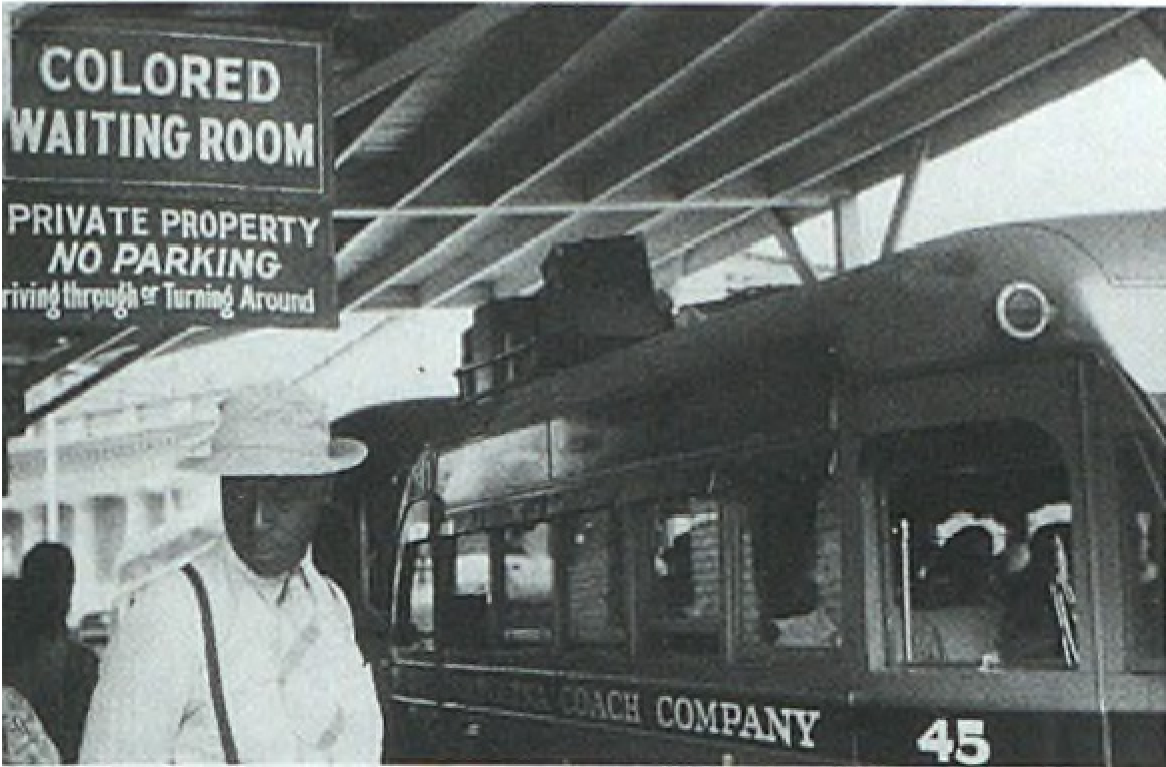
[12] Joseph L. Browne, "'The Expenses are Borne by the Parents: Freedmen's Schools in Southern Maryland, 1865-1870" *Maryland Historical Magazine*, vol. 86 no 4, (Winter 1991) p. 419.

[13] "The Unrelenting Pursuit of Education," a panel from "Strive Not to Equal, But to Excel," an exhibit funded in part by the Institute for Museum and Library Services, Jefferson Patterson Museum & Exhibit Services, and the Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions of St. Mary's County. The exhibit opened at the Lexington Park Memorial Library in November 2002.

[14] Michael Walsh, "The Story of the Knights of Saint Jerome, 1877-2002" (copyright, 2002).

[15] "The Unrelenting Pursuit of Education," "Strive Not to Equal, But to Excel."

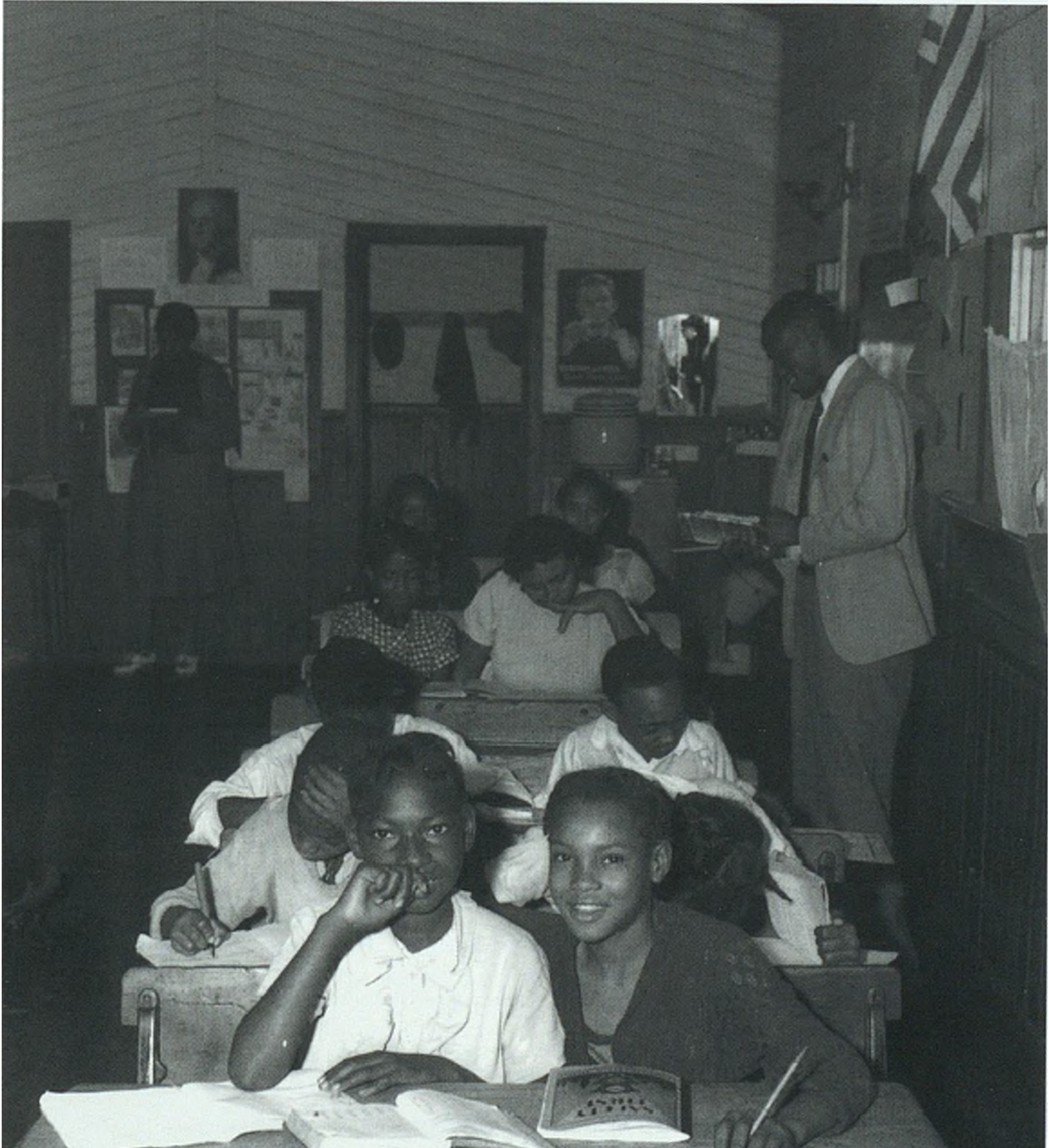
. . . we went on,
had the best we could with what we had . . .



In 1872, the Maryland legislature passed a law obligating counties to establish and maintain separate but equal public schools. "Separate" they were, and the dual, segregated system remained in place for almost a hundred years. "Equal," however, was a goal never realized.

"County commissioners spent the state money and little more on black pupils. In 1895 seven counties - Anne Arundel, Prince George's, Charles, St. Mary's, Queen Anne's, Somerset, and Worcester - made no contributions to Negro schools from county funds. Black school buildings often were the ones whites declared unfit for their own children. Teachers in black schools received lower pay than their counterparts in the white system. Black students in Frederick County attended classes until early

April, whites through the end of May. No Maryland county had a black high school, and Negro higher education received scant encouragement. . . . Maryland's official stinginess cost many black young people by scaling down their dreams. At the elementary level it produced black illiteracy figures which, if lower than in states to the south, were far higher than for Maryland whites. A state survey in 1900 disclosed that 47 percent (26,616) of all registered blacks could not read or write, as compared to 8 percent (18,307) of white voters."[16]



Interior of Scotland School, ca. 1940, Farm Security Administration, courtesy of the Library of Congress.

I'll tell you I'd rather have these times now. You always hear them say, "the good old days," but I didn't see anything that was so good about the old days. Give me these days anytime and I wouldn't want my children to come up in the old days either.

Mary Marguerite
Barnes Langley
(b. 1920)

Segregation was a system of norms that told everyone how to behave, and it clearly placed whites in a position of power over blacks. It was organized to express the principle that when "coloreds" and "whites" did the same activity, such as riding a bus or learning math in second grade, the two races must be kept rigidly separate. When blacks and whites did hierarchically arranged activities, such as the black working for the white as maid or chauffeur, the races could be in close proximity. Always the white person was in the position of authority and power, and always the black person was stigmatized by being in a position of subservience.

Segregation went far beyond the schools. Indeed, occupational segregation was more directly hurtful to African Americans than school segregation.[17]

James Loewen, Ph.D.

Inequities
Evidenced

Inequalities in School Buildings

	"Colored"		**"White"**	
	# of schools	avg. total enrollment	# of schools	avg. total enrollment
1875	15	447	35	825
1899	26	1388	48	1527
1917	32	1771	55	2380

NOTE: 38% (10 buildings) of the "colored" schools and 62% (30 buildings) of the "white" schools were built new in the last quarter of the 19th century. In 1899, almost all of the 87 buildings were one-room

schools. Sources: State Board of Education Reports (in Charles Doub, University of Maryland MA thesis, 1939) and *History of St. Mary's County, Maryland, 1634-1990*, 1991, Regina Hammett.

Same sources below.

Length of School Year

	"Colored"	**"White"**
1875	10 mos.	10 mos.
1885	9 1/2 mos.	9 1/2 mos.
1889	7 1/2 mos.	9 1/2 mos.
1892	10 mos.	10 mos.
1894	9 mos.	9 1/2 mos.
1896	8 mos.	9 1/2 mos.
1897	8 mos.	8 mos.
1899	9 mos.	9 mos.
1917	7 mos.	9 mos.
1926	7 mos.	9 mos.

NOTE: In State Board of Education reports for 1875-1899, "colored" and "white" school years were the same length except in four years (1889 and later). Other sources indicate that, in practice, many "colored" schools had closer to a seven-month year because older children had to work spring and early fall. The Knights of St. Jerome School opened the first of May 1887, at the beginning of what would have been the 4th term in a 10-month year.

In the 20th century, the unequal school years were noted in official reports.

Inequalities in Teacher Salary

Average "colored" per year	**Average "white" per year**

1875	$228.	$323
1885	$216	$269
1892	$252	$321
1899	$214	$307

NOTE: These were all years officially reported to have had equal lengths for "colored" and "white" calendars. (In 1885, lack of funds caused the school year to be shortened, and thus pay dropped.)

Inequalities in Teacher/Student Ratios

	"Colored"	**"White"**
1875	1/30	1/24
1885	1/49	1/30
1892	1/55	1/28
1899	1/53	1/31
1917	1/51	1/38

*Ratios based on total number of teachers and average yearly enrollments. Average yearly attendance figures were much lower: "white" attendance averaged about 53% and "colored," about 45% between 1875-99.

Funding Inequalities in Allocations per Student

	"Colored"	**"White"**
1875	$10.46	$13.95
1885	5.20	9.24
1892	4.42	10.90
1899	4.82	9.57

Figures are based on average total enrollments per year. Income for "colored' is from the state allotments; for "white" from state allotments, state free book funds, and county school taxes.

In their own words...

St. Mary's Countians share their stories of living the separate and unequal.

Top left: Alice Biscoe Bennett.
Top right: Pearl T. Furey; Courtesy of Pearl Furey.
Middle: St. Peter Claver School; Photo by Alice Bennett.
Bottom: Elvare Gaskin standing in front of St. Inigoes School, ca. 1990. Photo by Andrea Hammer. Reprinted by permission.

They had a one-room school there and it was back in the woods. When teachers would come from some other states to work here, see, they wouldn't want to stay. They didn't like us at all. And without a teacher they would close the school. So, the girls and I - there were about nine or ten of us in our class — all of us decided we would go to school and try and be teachers.

In the schools, they wouldn't mix white and black and the whites would have a nice school, and we'd have a terrible old school - an old shanty school. You know, no water, no toilet, and some of the people would have to go build a toilet if they wanted us to have it. So, it hadn't been so easy for us, but you may as well grin and bear it. So, we went on, had the best we could with what we had.

Pearl Thompson Furey (b. 1906)

Going to school, we would have to push the boat off the shore or else, if the tide was high, we had to bail the boat out. And when it got to the other shore, we had to put boards down to get to the shore if the tide was low...we had no overshoes or rubbers or anything, you know, to protect the feet. Most of the time, we didn't have bottoms in the shoes. We put cardboard. Lucky if you had cardboard. You put newspaper, some kind of paper and then that was that. Used to change that when you got to school. You kneel down and say a prayer. The children push pencils in the holes in your shoes. Gracious me.

Alice Rebecca Biscoe Bennett (b. 1915)

We used to get our checks once a month. When I got married, I got my check three days earlier than everybody else, and they didn't believe me. I had to bring my check to work and show it to them. My maiden name was Smith. Gaskin just had to be a white person. So they sent me my check all

year long with the white teachers. They didn't know any better. Then at the end of the year, when I went up to carry my register - we had these dam registers.
...and she said, "You're Miss Gaskin?"

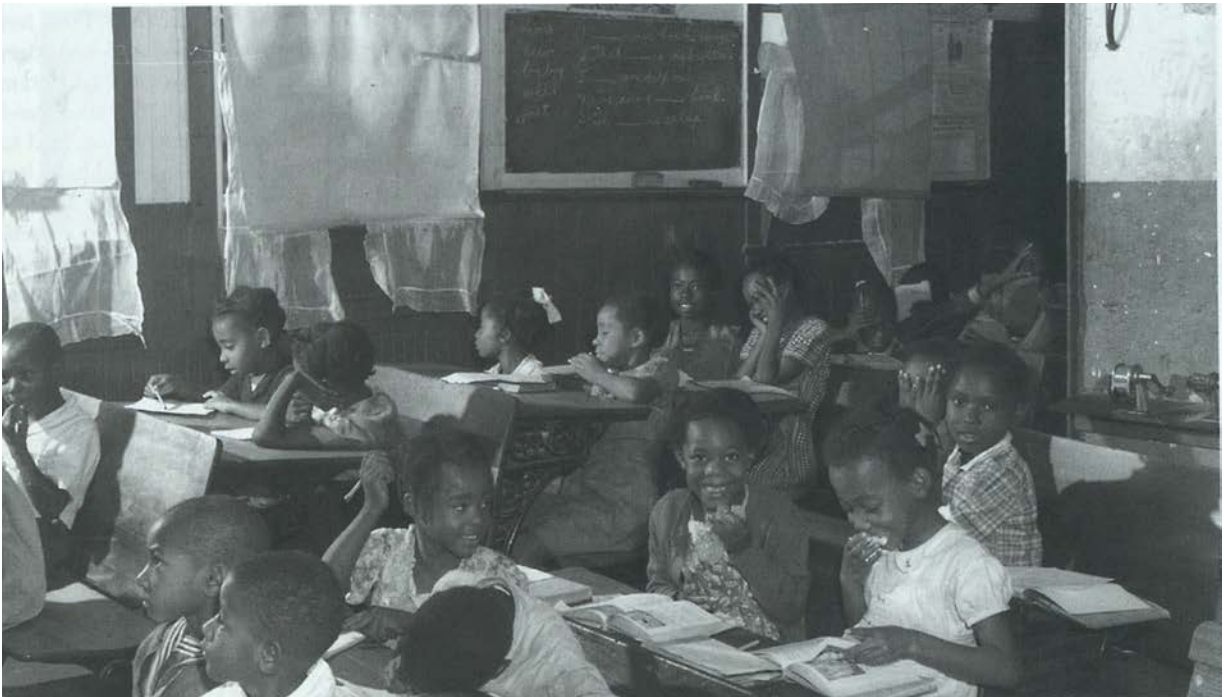
I said, "I am."

I didn't get another check early.

Elvare Smith Gaskin (b. 1919)

I remember my mother saying when she taught [at Jarboesville] in 1924, that they had separate places to meet. One of the students would take her in a horse and buggy to Leonardtown, but she never saw the white teachers. The black teachers met separately from the white.

Theresa Cassagnol (b. 1933)



Interior of St. Luke's Church, an adjunct to Scotland School, September 1940. Photo by John Vachon, Farm Security Administration, courtesy of the Library of Congress.

We hardly had a pen and a piece of paper to write on. A lot of the time, parents couldn't afford to buy composition books and pencils and stuff kids should have in school. Sometimes, some of the parents would, you know, buy pencils. I think they paid a penny or two cents for them. Course they

would buy two or three extras so a kid that didn't have any would have a pencil. Many a time I seen a child break a pencil in two and give another child part of it.

Clarence Carroll Smith (b. 1932)

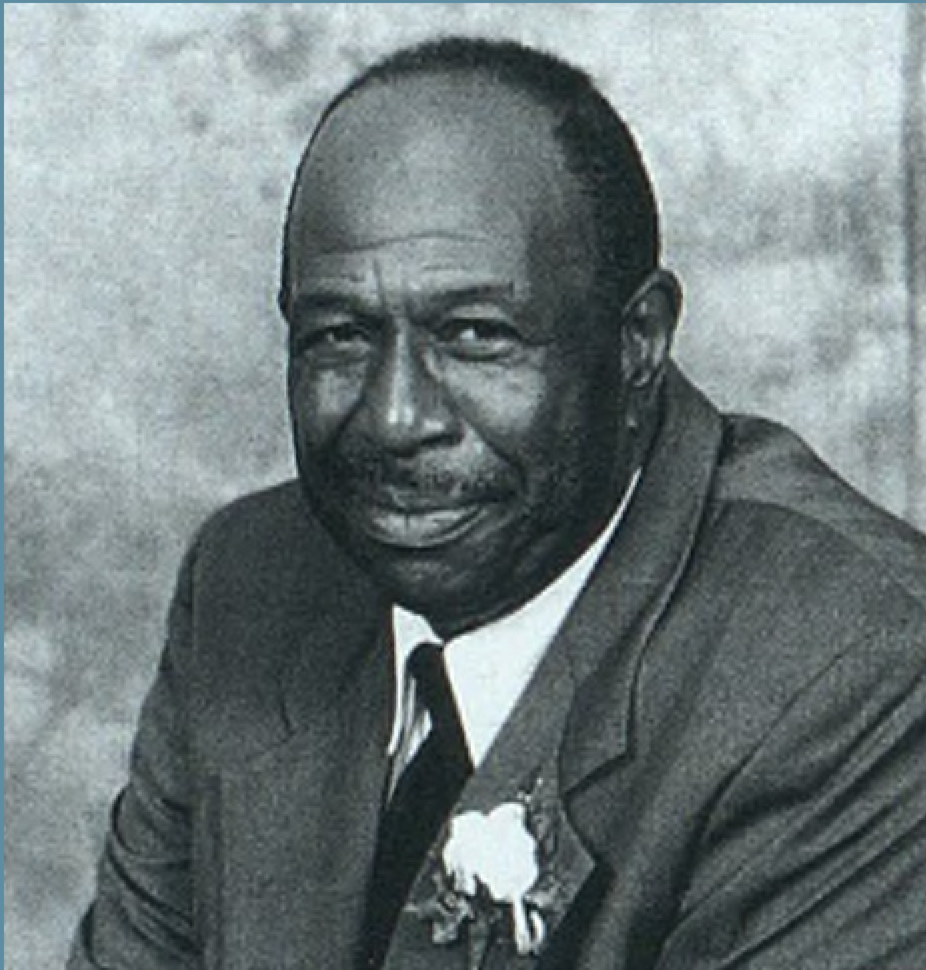
It was very cold and part of the time, we didn't have no wood to heat the school with, and we'd have to go out in the woods, pick up little twigs and anything that we thought would make a fire. There were other things we could have learned but we didn't because we was out in the woods picking up little wood to make a fire for getting warm. Some days, it take you practically all day to get warm so that you could really settle yourself down. It was very, very hard on the boys. But the girls didn't have to go out in the woods to get the wood. And when the school bought wood, the wood be green and it wouldn't burn. Very, very hard for us in the wintertime.

Then when I was going to school, I used to clean Dr. Southern's office every evening. He paid me 10£ a hour and I used to take that and buy my books to go to school with and my pencils and buy candy for the girls with the rest of it. [laughter]

I wasn't able to get the education that I wanted. Why? Because my parents didn't have the money to send me to school. I finished up my education when I got in the Army, but I didn't learn too much because the teacher in the Army was different than the teacher that was out here. I had to come out of school for my sister to go to college. Parents didn't have any money to send me. I had to work on the farm to help my daddy to make the money for my sister to go to college. Which is, nine of us, two did get to go to college.

Students inside St. Luke's Church, an adjunct to the Scotland School, September 1940, photo by John Vachon, Farm Security Administration, courtesy of the Library of Congress.

It’d be one of the main things I would change in my life is get more education because the work is much easier. If you don’t have education, you work hard to get where I’m at today.



Top: One of the children of Harry Handy working in the fields, August 1940. Photo by Jack Delano, Farm Security Administration, Courtesy of

the Library of Congress.
Middle left: Frank Leroy Dyson, courtesy of the Dyson family.
Middle right: Catherine Clay, courtesy of the Clay family.
Bottom: Clarence Smith.

My parents didn't have much education. They just could write their name, and I felt that as children, they always said they want the children to have more education than they did. And, they tried to help us all they could, and that's what they did for us. It was real hard on us. Had to come out of school some days to come home and help, but we had to do it in order to have a place to lay our head.

One year got real bad and the crop didn't do so well, and the family wasn't able to pay the mortgage. The bank jumped and next thing, they took the place and we were back renting again. I thought that was awful bad. That went on for quite a few years and then we got offered to buy this place here. And during that time clock, we just wanted to go to college. And you know how old people just say, "Well, if she didn't go to college, she wasn't going to do nothing no way!" So I continue on being out of school to help them make more money so that he could buy this place and send Clarice to college. And, that's what happened. I stayed out until I went in the Army and that's when I got my diploma. And, education is one of the things that I feel is needed today.

Lewis Clifton Whalen (b. 1927)

I probably went to school a few years, four maybe, more like five. It was poor attendance at school at that time for me because I had to stay and help my daddy. Very seldom did I get up to the school. I had to work with him when he had jobs out on the farm and stuff like that and I had to work with him down at the creek. He was a farmer, waterman, stuff like that. I had a chance to get to school now and then.

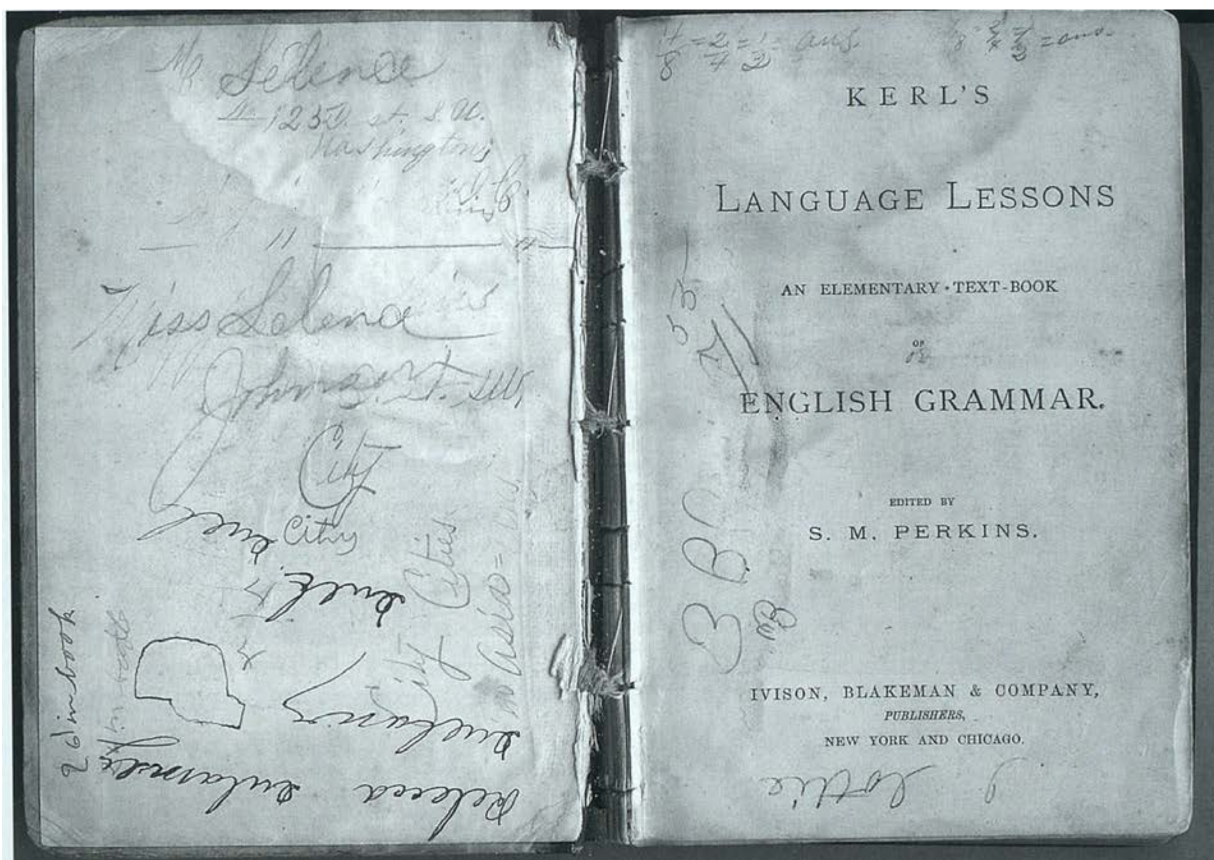
You had to buy your own paper. Very seldom you got any at school. They might have had some in there though, 'cause I remember some of the old pages, whatever it was made out of, now and then you'd find a splinter of wood in it.

Frank Leroy Dyson (b. 1926)

You bought your own. I remember asking my daddy, “I need a composition book” or “I need some pencils or I need a pencil.” Some of the kids had a little more than others, you know. Sometimes, kids would come there with three or four pencils. Some did well if they had one. But I remember I used to tell my daddy, “I need a composition book.” He’d say, “What did you do with the one it seems like I just bought?” “Loan paper out of it, tear it out and give it to some other kids that didn’t have paper.”

The books were not too good. Saying it plainly like it was, they would just take these old books from the white school that was all marked up, cut up, pages tom out of them - they would bring them down to us. They did do that.

Sarah Catherine Dyson Clay (b. 1924)


KERL'S

LANGUAGE LESSONS

AN ELEMENTARY TEXT-BOOK

OF

ENGLISH GRAMMAR.

EDITED BY

S. M. PERKINS.

IVISON, BLAKEMAN & COMPANY,

PUBLISHERS,

NEW YORK AND CHICAGO.

An English grammar textbook used in local “colored" schools. UCAC file photo.

I think it was the last year that we was there, the war started and you got a book and you brought stamps to put in this book and once you got it full, then you get a war bond. I think the stamps were like ten cents. The

best I remember, what the teacher had, they brought for the students. They share what little bit they got. The community couldn't afford it. The community, as a whole, basically, was just surviving theirselves. We didn't think it was bad because that was all we knew. So, when you're not comparing one thing against the other, you know. I realized, in later years, how much we were missing, you know, as far as books and this type of thing in school. But at the time, you made out with what you had because you didn't realize there was something better that you were supposed to have.

Clarence Carroll Smith (b. 1932)

My older brother, who went to Bowie, met a guy from the seventh district named Walter Mills. They got together and were instrumental in getting Watts down here to one of the NAACP meetings. He was an attorney in Baltimore, now I believe he's a judge. They held it at my house down Valley Lee. That's when they set the strategy for the procedures to improve the schools and see that the teachers got equal pay.

Must've been back in the 30s. I'm not sure if I was in school or not. I might've been in high school, I'm not sure. But I do remember sitting at the table and sitting in on the meetings. I just had to get in there.

Paul Bailey was attorney for the school board at the time. I think he advised [Superintendent of Schools Lettie Dent] Miss Dent to try and find somebody to help these black teachers out. Hopefully they saw the handwriting on the wall, that if they didn't do something, the county would be sued by the teachers. Bailey was trying to save the county a lot of money. So I think that year and then the next year black teachers they made a little more.

I remember so many came to the meetings. There was Ogden, and Ogden's father, the Gaskin family, Guffrie Smith, Eli Gant, he attended all the meetings. My father and my father in-law, and the Somervilles, James Bush - he was very active, very active. And Benedict Smith, and, of course, James Forrest, it was kind of late for him but anyhow he was on the bandwagon and Robinson Barnes, he was in on it. A lot of the names I'm just leaving out because I don't remember their names. Clem Dyson, he was very active; he was from around the seventh district. Bush, he was the fourth district. And the Curtises from around Mechanicsville, Curtises and the Macks, Mrs. Mack, they were very active.

Thurgood Marshall Helped Get Equal Pay for Black Teachers

By **ANN MARIE MALONEY**
Enterprise Staff Writer

When former Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall died Sunday, his name was splashed across national headlines. But nearly 60 years ago, when he came to St. Mary's County as a young civil rights lawyer, "he was just another black man," recalled Valley Lee resident Leroy Thompson.

No reporters were around when Thompson's brother, Brent, took Marshall around the county in the 1930s to show him the conditions of the black schools.

Thompson, four years younger than Marshall, never got to meet the famous justice, but knew as well as anyone the problems facing black students and teachers. Sheer numbers of available schools was one of the biggest.

In 1924, there were 54 white schools, compared to 32 black schools. Thompson stayed in seventh grade for two years before he was sent to St. Anselm's Abbey School in Washington, D.C., where he stayed with an uncle. "There was no other place for me to go."

His mother taught in a one-room schoolhouse in Great Mills on a monthly salary of $35. The white teachers were getting $65, Thompson said. "That's the way things were at the time. You bite the bullet."

Marshall's visit did have a profound effect on teachers' salaries. Paul Bailey, then the school board's attorney, recalled the

See MARSHALL, Page A-7

LEROY THOMPSON

Marshall Helped Equalize Pay

Continued from Page A-1

meeting with school superintendent Lettie Marshall Dent--"we always called her Miss Lettie"--and Del. Philip H. Dorsey Jr. that later resulted in equal pay for teachers. "It was done in a very friendly manner," Bailey said. "He never said 'you're breaking the law.' " It was simply a matter of fairness.

The school board divided $10,000 left over in its budget among the black teachers as a short-term fix. The equal pay did not begin until the Maryland General Assembly made it a law. "Of course, many

Piney Point and Valley Lee, drive south to Lexington Park and Park Hall, and circled around to Leonardtown, then drop them off at Banneker around 8 or 8:30 a.m.

He went on a second round picking up students around Hollywood. "Of course, I stayed up in Loveville all day," he said. "I couldn't go home," because it would take too long.

For all this, the drivers got paid $18 a month. "Of course, I did other things," Thompson said, "barber, tailor, musician." Because his parents were so active,

things were unfair. Fairness was something not usually thought about," Bailey reflected.

The absence of a high school in the northern end of the county was another obstacle to educating black kids. A group of black parents formed the United Parent Trustee Association to build a public high school for black students on privately donated land. They asked the school board for money to pay for the buses to take the children to what is now Banneker Elementary School. They were denied, and took up envelope donations and held fund-raisers to pay for the buses and the drivers as they did to build the school.

There were two drivers, Thompson and Bill Frederick, to take kids from all parts of the county to Loveville on routes that meant most kids did not get home before dark. Thompson would get up about 6 a.m., pick up schoolkids in

"I wanted to help out."

The schools finally began to desegregate in 1957, first at the elementary level on a voluntary basis, according to Regina Hammett's "History of St. Mary's County."

Leroy's wife, Catherine, commented that "many whites didn't like it."

"There was a little conflict, not too much," Leroy said.

Article from The Enterprise, January 29, 1 993. Reprinted by permission of The Enterprise.

I do remember an incident when Mrs. Mack, who was a first cousin of my mother, and at that time the whites called blacks, you know, “Aunt” and “Uncle.” My father was always known as Uncle Bunton. He was named Button Thompson, but he was known as Uncle Bunton. Anyway, Mrs. Mack was a teacher at the White Marsh Elementary school, one-room school. Miss Dent, who was superintendent of schools, was introducing Mrs. Mack to someone, and she started to call her Aunt Aggie. Before she got it all out, “au-au-aunt-”

“Don’t you do it, don’t you do it. If you can’t call me Mrs. Mack, don’t you call me nothing!” From then on Aunt Aggie was no longer known as

Aunt Aggie, she was known as Mrs. Mack. So then after that I think Miss Dent began to recognize the teachers as Mr. or Mrs.

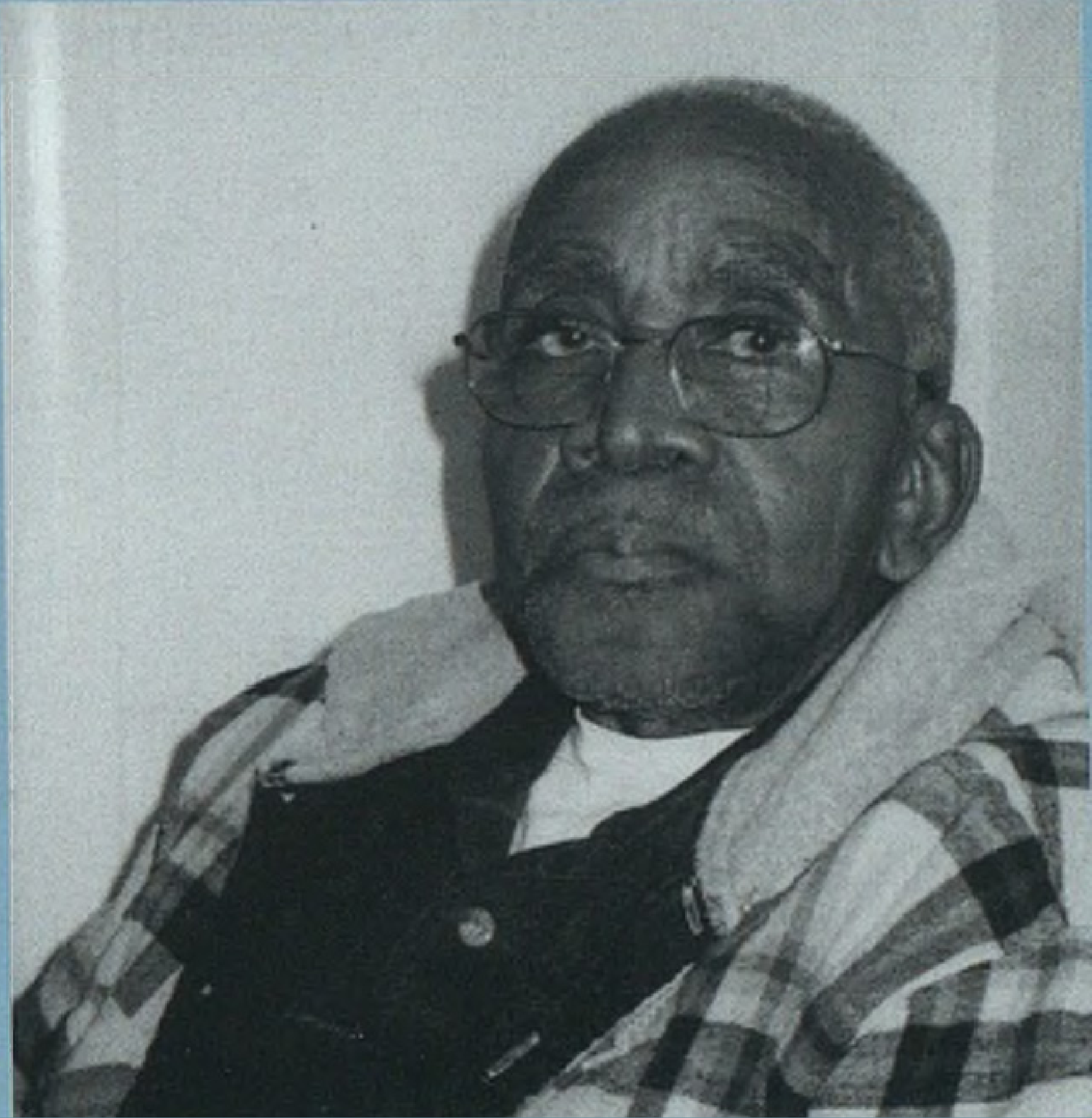
Leroy Thompson (b. 1912)

I was appointed to the school board in 1958. It was tough being on the school board. It was tough because of the things you had to go through. There was so many people who did not want me on the board and quite a few who did. The Superintendent [Lettie Dent] did not want me. Lettie Dent, so it was said by some that she would not even serve on the board if a Negro served on the board. That made me want to serve even more. Before she would serve on the board with a Negro - she would resign. She did not resign.

Clarence Leo Young, Sr. (b. 1921)

We had the first black on the school board. When they would go to Annapolis to a meeting, he couldn't go in with the board members and eat like the rest of them [white board members]. Somebody got him some crackers and sardines and cheese, and he sat out on the sidewalk and ate it.

Fred H. Talbert (b. 1910)

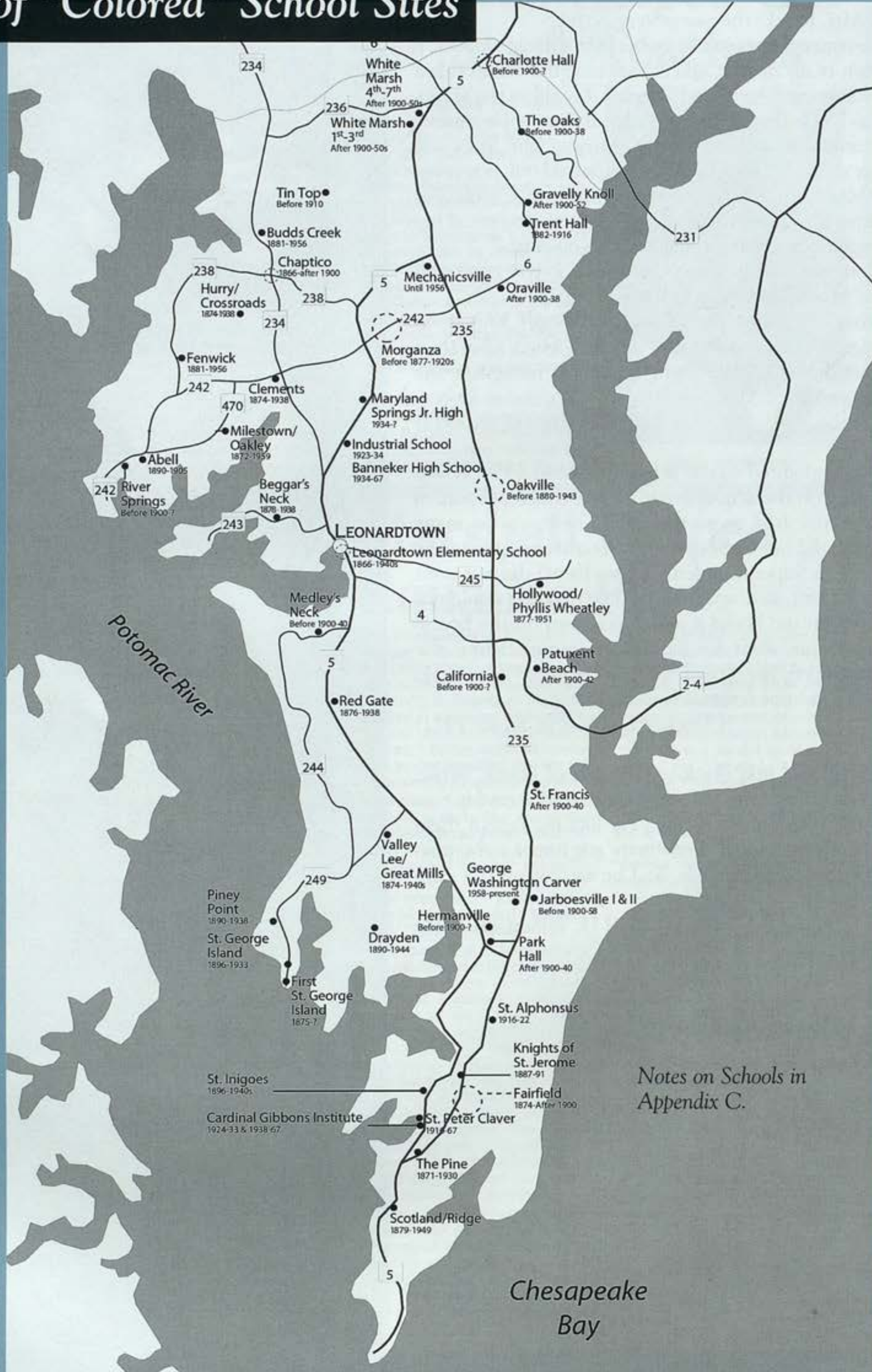


Top: Leroy Thompson, courtesy of the Thompson family.
Middle: Clarence Leo Young, Sr., 2004. UCAC file photo.
Bottom: Fred Talbert, 1998. Photo by Celia Escobar.

[16] Brugger, p. 419

[17] James Loewen, guest curator: "Strive Not to Equal, But to Excel."

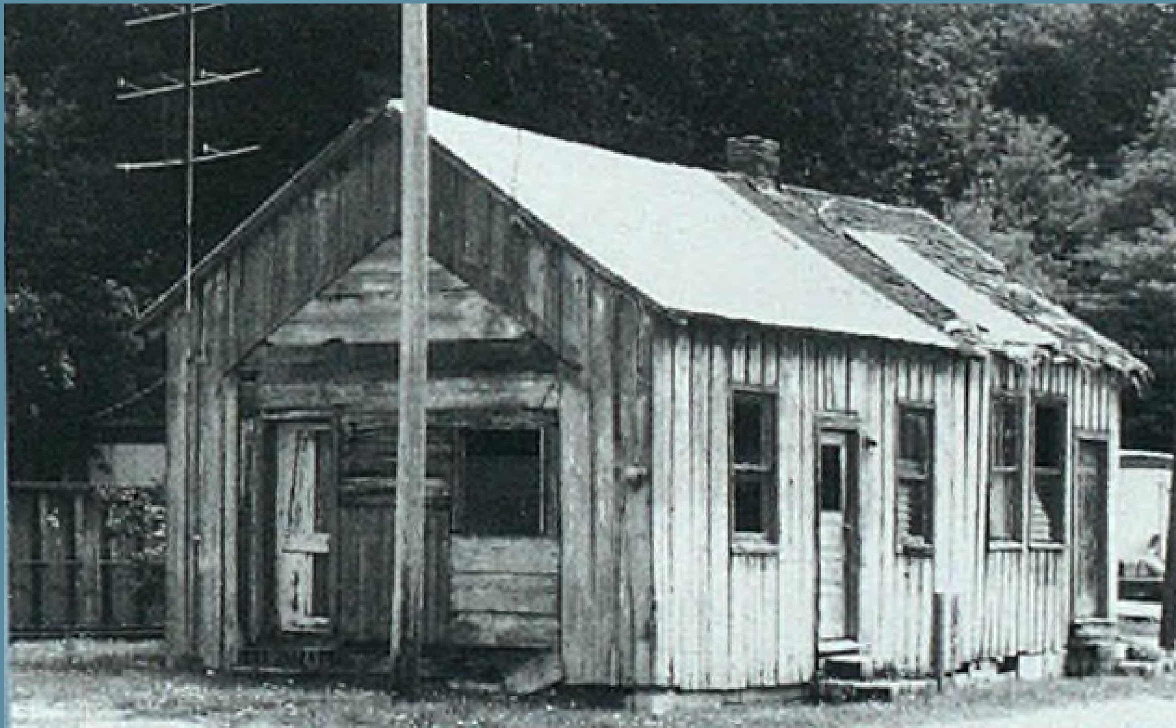
Map of "Colored" School Sites



Notes on Schools in Appendix C.

Left: Drayden Schoolhouse, ca. 1996.
Right: Drayden Schoolhouse, 2002. UCAC file photos unless noted otherwise.

Left: Fenwick School, 1954. Courtesy of the St. Mary's County Public Schools.
Right: Former Fenwick School, 2002.



Left: Scotland School, September 1940. Photo by John Vachon, Farm Security Administration, Courtesy of the Library of Congress.
Top right: Children coming out of Scotland School at noon. September

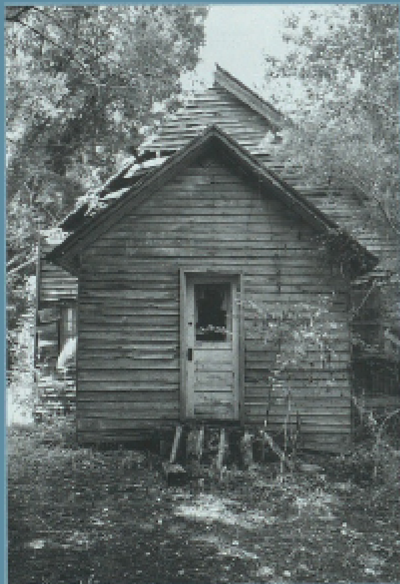
1940. Photo by John Vachon, Farm Security Administration, Courtesy of the Library of Congress.
Bottom right: Scotland Schoolhouse, 2004.

The first White Marsh School, ca. 1987. Courtesy Regina Combs Hammett, *History of St. Mary's County Maryland 1634-1990.*

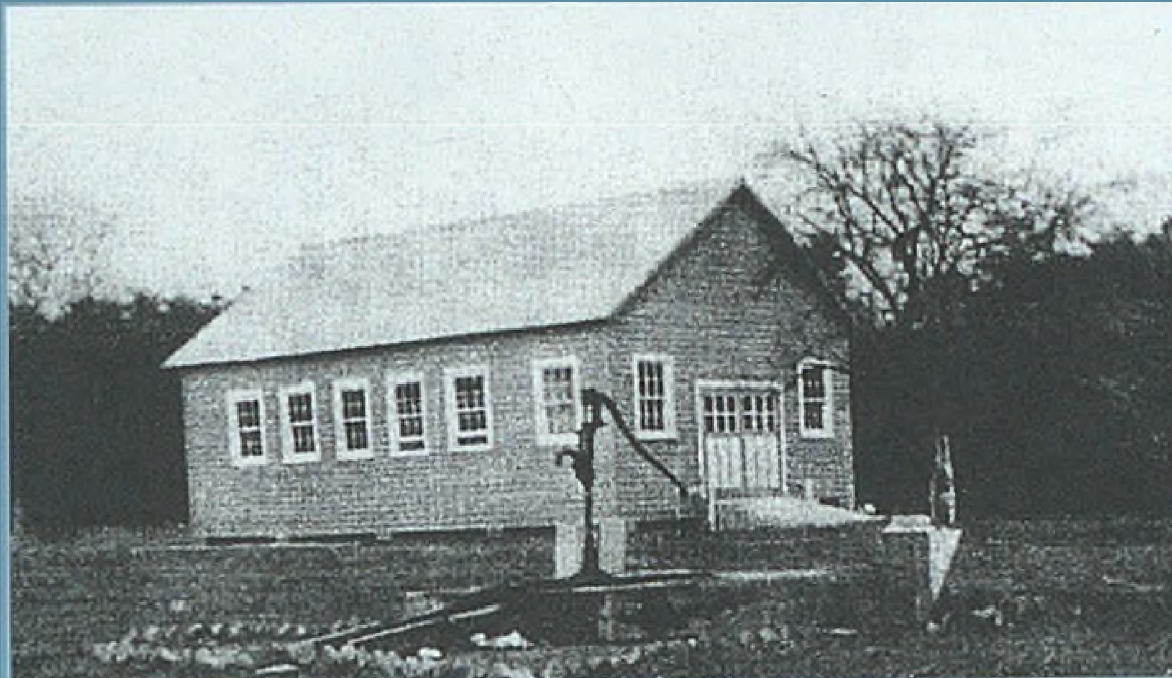
Former Milestown School, 2002.

Former Phyllis Wheatley School, ca. 1994. Courtesy St. Mary's County Department of Land Use and Growth Management.

Social hall of the Knights of St. Jerome, ca. l994. Courtesy St. Mary's County Department of Land Use and Growth Management.

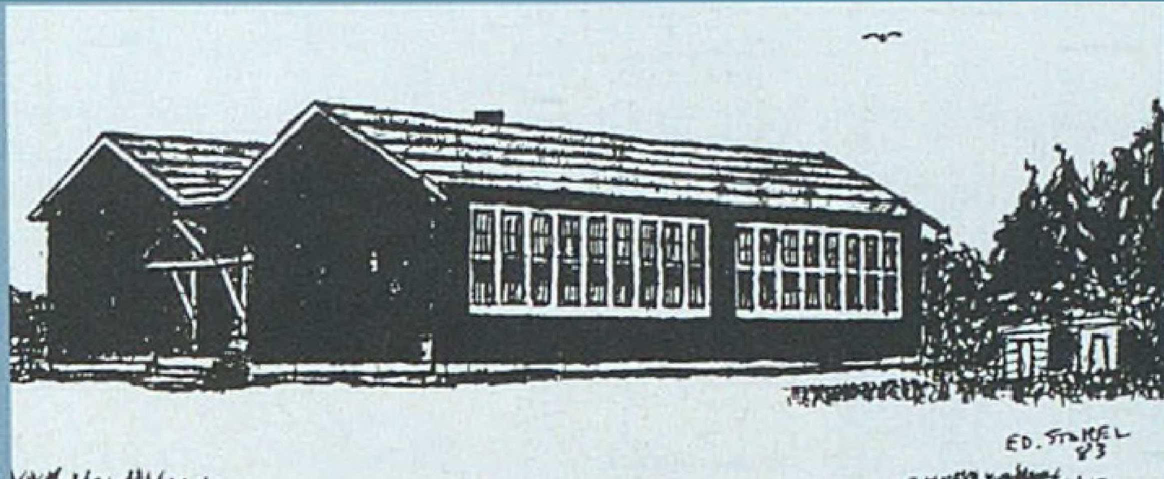


Top right: Elvare Gaskin standing in front of St. Inigoes School, ca. 1990. Photo by Andrea Hammer. Reprinted by permission.
Middle right: St. Inigoes Schoolhouse, 2005.
Bottom right: St. Inigoes Schoolhouse, 2005.



Top left: Banneker School, 1938; Courtesy Banneker Alumni Association.
Middle left: "New" Banneker Agricultural Shop, 1940.

Bottom left: Banneker Elementary and Junior- Senior High School, mid 1950s. Courtesy of the St. Mary's County Public Schools.



Top right: Second Jarboesville School, drawing by Ed Stokel. Reprinted by permission.
Middle right: Jarboesville Elementary and Junior-Senior High School, mid 1950s. Courtesy of the St. Mary's County Public Schools.
Bottom right: George Washington Carver School, 1958.

Former St. Joseph's Colored Parochial School, 2005.

St. Peter Claver School, ca. 1940. Courtesy St. Peter Clover Church.

Cardinal Gibbons Institute, 1920s. Courtesy of St. Peter Claver Church.

. . . she could really tell you something . . .

Carrie Statesman

Frances Jane Armstrong Morgan

Our teacher, Mrs. Statesman [Carrie Statesman], she was a sweet lady. I wish she was around here. She could really tell you something.

In cold weather, Mrs. Statesman, and I know she bought it out of her own pocket, which I know they weren't paying her that much, would bring this cocoa, you know, and make it so the kids would have something hot to drink.

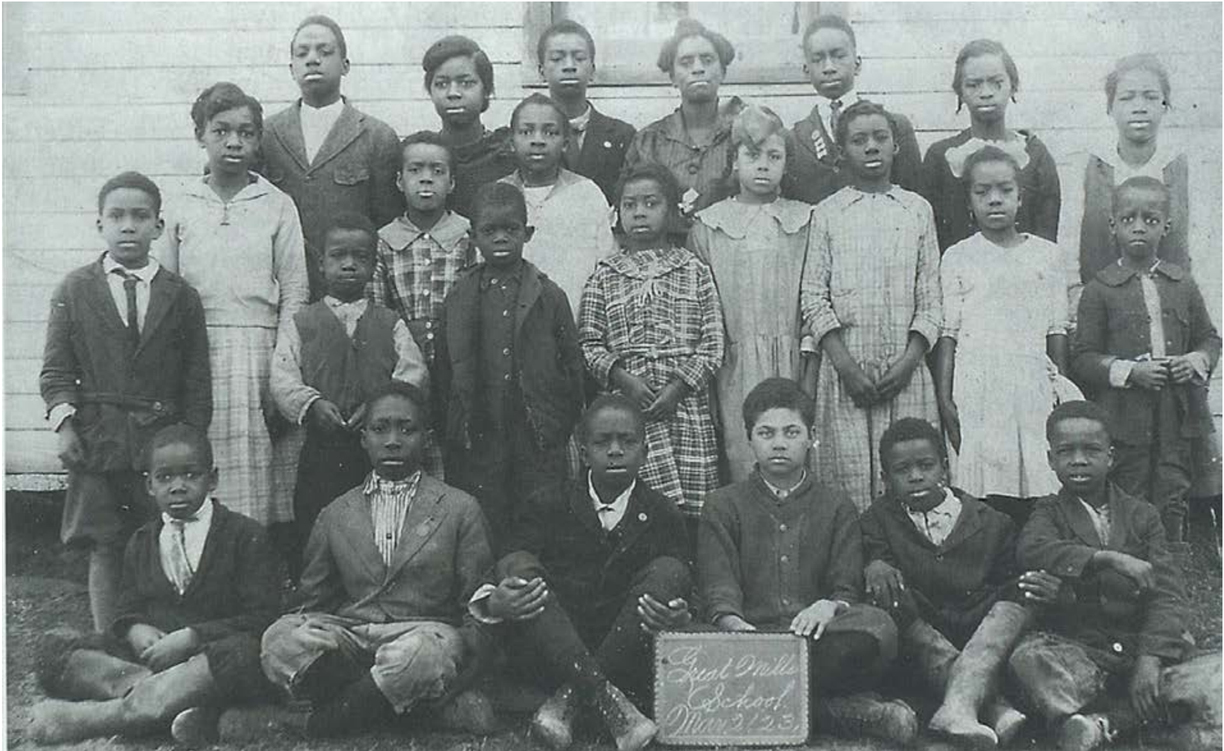
Frances Jane Armstrong Morgan

One thing that seemed sort of harsh, a lot of work at that time, we had to visit each child's home twice a year. Things are better now that the schools have breakfast for some of the children. Back then some of those children came to school with nothing to eat. So, how were they going to learn? If you can get in that home and see what's going on, get a feel for what's happening in their home, then you can better teach that child.

Elvare Smith Gaskin, Teacher (b. 1919)

We'd stop on the way to school and get some bones or some kind of meat at the store. We had a wood stove and we had to get the water from the nearest neighbor. Make some stew for the students.

Pearl Thompson Furey, Teacher (b. 1906)



Great Mills School March 21,1923. Top Row (left to right): Bernard Barker, Margie Watts, Brent Thompson, Ella Hawkins Thompson (teacher), Bunton Thompson, Ella Thompson, Lindsey Cutchember. Second from top: Alice Mason, Margaret Campbell, Mabel Milburn, Marie Thomas, Helen Campbell, Jeanette Thompson, Francis Brooks. Third from top: Francis "Buck" Cutchember, Lloyd Barnes, James Campbell, Christine Thompson. Seated on the Ground: Francis Mason, "Buck" Gladden, Leroy Thompson, Leo Thomas, Vernon Hop Barnes, Herman Barnes. Photo courtesy of Catherine Thompson.

When we were up in the 4th and 5th Grade, Miss Ella [Thompson] let us teach the 1st Grade ’cause she had seven grades every day. Can you imagine that? In a one-room school? But really and truly, it was like a review for you every day. You heard that work every day. It got so embedded in your mind ’til you never forgot. I will never forget the math that I already had when I went to nursing school, and there were kids there right out of high school that really and truly could not do fractions and decimals.

But, Miss Ella taught. She was cutting them apples in fourths and halves when we were way down there and I couldn’t - I just couldn’t understand why they didn’t know how to do fractions and decimals. But she

was a beautiful teacher, I'm telling you! She knew the work and she could impart it to the children. She was really good. And, one thing I admired her for: her children was in school too. She made no difference between her children and the others. If hers did something wrong, she'd get them, [laughter] She was a wonderful teacher. I'll never forget her. She was really something. Then, when my mother began to really get sick, you know, she came and stayed with us 'til Mama died.

Angela Marie Thomas Maddox (b. 1913)

Devora Somerville, courtesy of the Stewart family.

Well, I give a lot of credit to my first teacher, Miss Devora Corbin [Somerville], because I was a bad boy and she corrected me. And I know if

she hadn't corrected me, then I probably wouldn't have gotten as far as I did.

George Purnell Frederick Sr. (b. 1922)

But the teachers at Jarboesville were dedicated people. I mean when you finish writing something 500 times, you have to know it.

Theresa Smith Cassagnol (b. 1933)

At Banneker, you went, I think it was the first five grades. Then we went to a place called Maryland Springs which was a one-room school. Had two grades, sixth and seventh and it had wood heat. We cooked there. Our teacher, Miss Alice Young, she would bring beans and she'd bring things to cook so we had hot lunch.

Everlyn Louise Swales Holland (b. 1932)

I remember my first grade teacher, Marie Stevens. The next one was Agnes Walton. Next was Lillibeth Shackleford. Next one was Gertrude Butler. They were all from around here, except Agnes Walton. My mom used to board the teachers. She boarded Agnes Walton and she got married from our house. She met her husband right from Mechanicsville.

Banneker School, 1938; Courtesy Banneker Alumni Association.

Then there was Janie Bowie who was this tall – legs real bowed. She wasn't tall as me and the legs were like pot hooks, but she was just nice as she could be! [laughter]

I loved school. I liked all my teachers. They all seemed to like me. I was the littlest one in school, you know. Even all them big girls used to like to get around me and play with me. Nobody never fought me or acted ugly to me. They just all liked me.

I always said I want to be a teacher. Maybe because I liked to go to school and liked my teachers. I always said I want to be a teacher. I did.

Mary Agatha Coates Somerville (b. 1909)

My favorite teacher was Narissa Louise Talaferra, and she was just so outgoing and made lessons really come alive. She used a lot of art. Like, we did the layout, for a geography lesson of St. Mary's Seminary in clay and plaster-of-Paris. And, just everything she did was picturesque. You could learn by doing, and she's the one that really started me thinking about being a teacher. She inspired me that much.

Elvare Smith Gaskin (b. 1919)

The teacher would pick on me. I couldn't sing. You know, every day, you opened your class with a song and a prayer in those days, and she knew I couldn't sing. And every morning, she called on me to lead the song, [chuckles] Of course we didn't get along well.

Catherine Delores Shelton Thompson (b. 1918)

I'm sure I had a favorite teacher, but I don't remember those as well as the ones that were my unfavorite. I think some of the worst ones I ever had in my life was Mrs. Waters, Mrs. Somerville, Mrs. Thompson. And, I suppose they were the worst because they were strict.

Teacher Theresa Somerville Thompson with students, Banneker School, 1950s. Courtesy of Sylvia Thompson Brown.

They made you do it. You do it or you're going to suffer the consequences. I was afraid of the consequences so I did what they said, but I didn't like it. And as I got older, I said, "Hey, these are the good ones. These are the ones that really brought me along, did what they were supposed to be doing."

My favorite teachers when I was in school turned out later to be not my favorite teachers. The ones that let me play and have a good time, now, they didn't help me too much at all. It was the ones that I did not like that had the positive influence. And, I suppose that's with all kids.

James W. Neal (b. 1940)

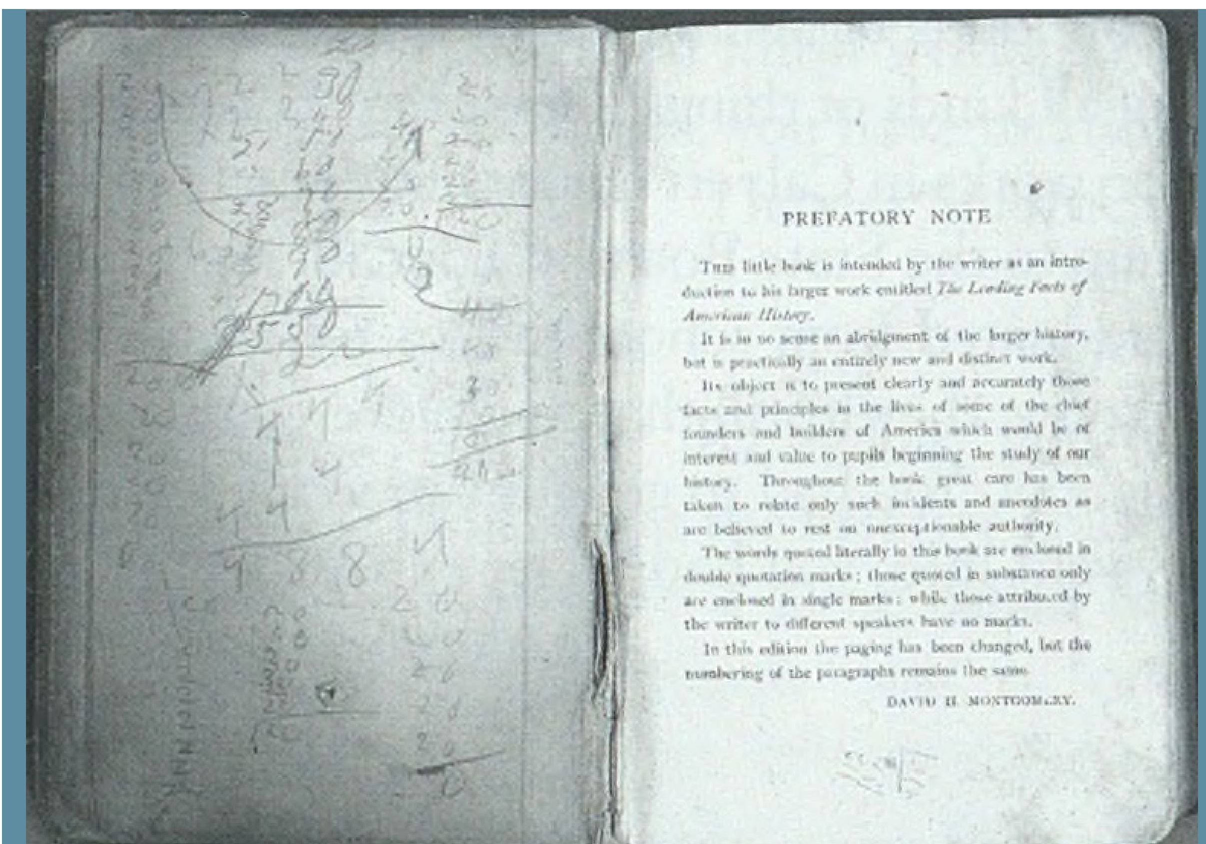
Our teachers were relentless. They did not let up on you because they knew what you had to do to make it in the world, you know. And once integration came, they were still relentless because they knew what you had to do to make it in the world, and integration didn't change their philosophy at all.

Looking back on it, the level of dedication our teachers had, it was just unparalleled. We were turning out kids who had all kinds of abilities, who were going to school and doing all kinds of things. One of my cousins, Guffrie Smith who works in Calvert County in the school system, has been up to the State Board of Education and worked, and he graduated from school five or ten years before I did. You know, they instill that in children - that you had to go to school. You had to get education no matter what field you went into, you had to get education.

Alonzo Gaskin (b. 1951)

. . . what a school day was like . . .

Children in Scotland School, September 1940, Farm Security Administration, courtesy of the Library of Congress. Photo by John Vachon, Farm Security Administration, Courtesy of the Library of Congress.



PREFATORY NOTE

This little book is intended by the writer as an introduction to his larger work entitled *The Leading Facts of American History*.

It is in no sense an abridgment of the larger history, but is practically an entirely new and distinct work.

Its object is to present clearly and accurately those facts and principles in the lives of some of the chief founders and builders of America which would be of interest and value to pupils beginning the study of our history. Throughout the book great care has been taken to relate only such incidents and anecdotes as are believed to rest on unexceptionable authority.

The words quoted literally in this book are enclosed in double quotation marks; those quoted in substance only are enclosed in single marks; while those attributed by the writer to different speakers have no marks.

In this edition the paging has been changed, but the numbering of the paragraphs remains the same.

DAVID H. MONTGOMERY.

An American history textbook from the 1920s belonging to the Douglas family of Charlotte Hall: *The Leading Facts of American History*, by David Montgomery. UCAC file photo.

In the one-room school, the first thing we did, we'd speak, and if I said "Good morning," I would write it and the children are supposed to write everything I wrote. And then, "What day is this?" They'd tell you, then we'd write, "Today is" whatever it was. Then, we'd talk about the weather and they'd be learning a few more words and to write on the line all at the same time.

In a one-room school you might have forty with a seat about two feet wide. A big one here and a big one here and a little one in the middle. There was a big old wood stove and the wood pile in the comer. Some of the boys sat on the wood pile and they worked.

Pearl Thompson Furey (b. 1906)

The blackboard was a piece of slate. It was something like, maybe, eight-foot by eight-foot. And then they had eight by eight, eight by eight,

eight by eight, you know, all the way around the room in there, you know, [gestures all around the room] The teacher'd put your grades on there, you know, first grade, second grade, third grade - all the way around. There were, I'd say, about thirty or forty kids going to that same one-room school. And they kept it clean. And, I'll tell you, the teacher would have at least three students to clean up in there every day. And you know, the boys would dump the trash can and all that. Get it straight.

We got to Jarboesville and we had these bathrooms and all that stuff. I couldn't believe it. We were going to school in a mansion.

Leon M. Briscoe (b. 1937)

The black schools were pitiful because we got all of the cast-offs, the junk, the broken-down desks, the bench I mean, the books with pages tore out. You got no sports equipment. You got blackboards that was chipped. You got erasers that was wore out. You did not get any new equipment in black schools. You know, the only thing new there was if you brought a tablet or a pencil of your own. Everything else was hand-me-downs and stuff that a lot of it should have been thrown in the dump. But here again, it was better than what we had because without that we had nothing. That, to me, is a hell of a way to have to try to get an education, but you done what you had to do.

Clarence Carroll Smith (b. 1932)

It was a one-room school and the teacher had to get there and make the fire and keep it going, and she did just that. The seats were double seats - connected - the seat of one was the back for another, something like that. We had chalkboards. The books were used when you got them and you couldn't take them home. Some of us who were older were able to help the younger ones, but we only had one book. We were all in the same book but on different pages, [chuckle] And, it worked out okay, I think. We didn't have that many books because most of the lesson is what the teacher would put on the board or would tell us. For recess, we'd go outside and play around the back side of the building. The usual games - jump rope, hopscotch. The boys made their ball out of old clothing and stockings and paper and stuff, and then they would get a piece of wood out of the woods for their bat. That's what they used.

And, I can recall a family whose last name was Cumibertie, I think. I can remember they used to make hot soup and bring it to school for us if we wanted it.

Viola T. Cutchember (b. 1932)

At recess, we played volleyball, dodge ball and baseball. We used a bushel basket for the basket. Basketball games were different at Banneker.

Joseph Spencer Scriber Sr. (b. 1930)

During recess, we played games and I'll tell you about one of them up at Maryland Springs. The place I will tell you about, the playground was in the woods. We'd play Cowboys and Indians. And sometimes this Cowboy and Indian stuff got a little rough. I remember once I was the Indian. And of course, the other guys were a little bigger. Wasn't a little bigger. They was too damn big to be fooling with me anyway. I was the Indian. I got caught. So, what did they do? Just like they did on the TV. You hang 'em, so they proceeded to hang me. Mr. Butler came out jingling his little bell and I'm tied up in the damn tree. Couldn't get away. The guys went in and left me. Eventually, somebody came back and retrieved me. But you know, the idea was, you had to fend for yourself.

And, we also played a little dodge ball and the idea, I think, was to take the ball and, you know, hit somebody. Not the people I dealt with. The idea was to take the ball and see if you could kill them. And, some of those guys - and not only the guys, the girls - they could fling that ball so if it hit you upside the face, you could be finished for the day. But you know, they were rough. It was none of these girlie games you see playing now.

And, we played a little volleyball. And of course, we played baseball, softball, whatever you want to call it, but you brought your own ball and your own bat. School wouldn't provide anything. So, your recess, your recreation, your games. You bought them.

What kind of games did we play? We played those kind of games. It was kind of rough.

James W. Neal (b. 1940)

Recess, St. Joseph's School, 1954-1955. Courtesy of Sylvia Brown.

I went to St. Francis Elementary school. I can't remember too much but I always wanted to get my homework and I always wanted to do well. I never did things real bad. 'Cause I hated to be punished. And I'd always do my homework. And I always had, 'cause I always wanted to be the head of the class, and that's about all I can remember about St. Francis.

And I went to Banneker. That was three or four years after we graduated from elementary school, because there was no high school for us so we stayed out of school three or four years before we could go to high school.

Our first high school was in Loveville, Maryland and we had to ride the bus in the morning to go to school. But it was great days. I loved it. We played volleyball. We didn't have basketball, we played dodge ball. Of course you know I had to be on the volleyball team, 'cause I was the tomboy of that house.

Agnes Geneva Chase Blackwell (b. 1918)

We had the typical, old, wooden desks that had the iron legs and it had a little slide and you slide your books in. And then, they came along later

with the chair/desk- type thing together. And over on the right-hand side of it, it had a lid that would flip up or down. Now, you didn't need your lid. You'd flip it up out of the way. That's fine. You needed the lid, you'd flip it down, and this is where you wrote whatever you needed to write. Now, the problem with that dern thing was they never considered that you have right-handed people and left-handed people. I was left-handed, so how am I supposed to write? We sit down with the thing like this, flipped up or down - I'm left-handed, so I'm hunching over here trying to write.
Now, the problem with that dern thing was they never considered that you have right-handed people and left-handed people. I was left-handed, so how am I supposed to write? We sit down with the thinking like this, flipped up or down — I'm left-handed, so I'm hunching over here trying to write.

I don't recall any incidents in public school - during my time anyway, in any of my classes - where you were coerced to switching over from right to left, but I did hear of it happening with the Catholic school. And, there was some concern about how to hold a pencil. And, I still believe there's only one way to hold a pencil and that's like that. The way I do it.

I think the resources we had were adequate. Now, I can't compare what we had to what was in the white school. But you know, common sense would lead you to believe the resources there were much better, but I have nothing to base that on other than it was my feeling.

A typical school day? At first thing, I had to get up and get ready in the morning. I remember going out and standing on the side of the road waiting for the bus. And, it seems so funny. I see a half a dozen buses go by and not one of them would stop. You know why? Because they were picking up white only. We'd arrive at school between eight thirty and nine. You'd go in. And of course, you had your bagged lunch and you'd put your bagged lunch in the locker, before anybody would steal it.

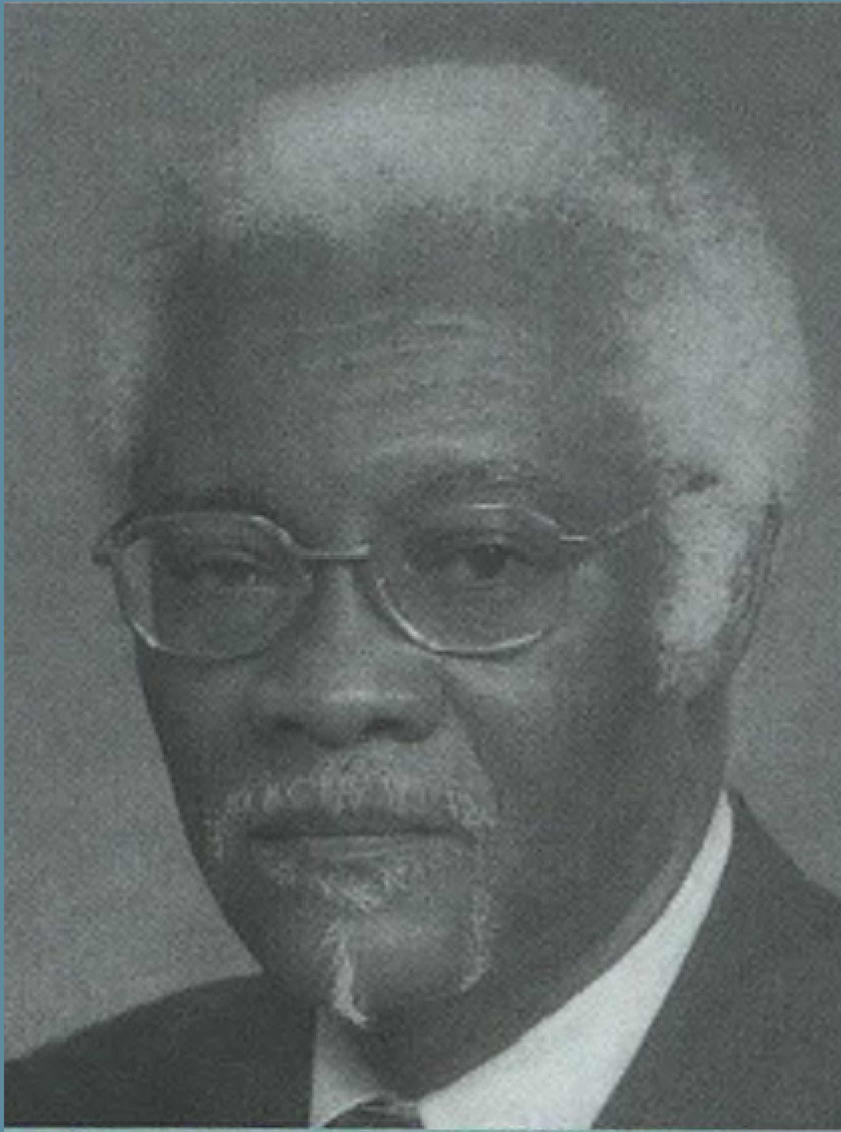
And of course, in your pocket you've got your ball with you and your friend over there's got his glove and somebody's got a bat. You don't have to be in class until about nine o'clock. So, you'd go out on the playground and get a game of ball going or if there's snow, they'd have a snowball fight.

And at nine, you'd go back in and you'd start the classes, and the classes run about fifty-five minutes. With the older Banneker, you had a time period from nine to nine fifty-five for reading and then you'd have the

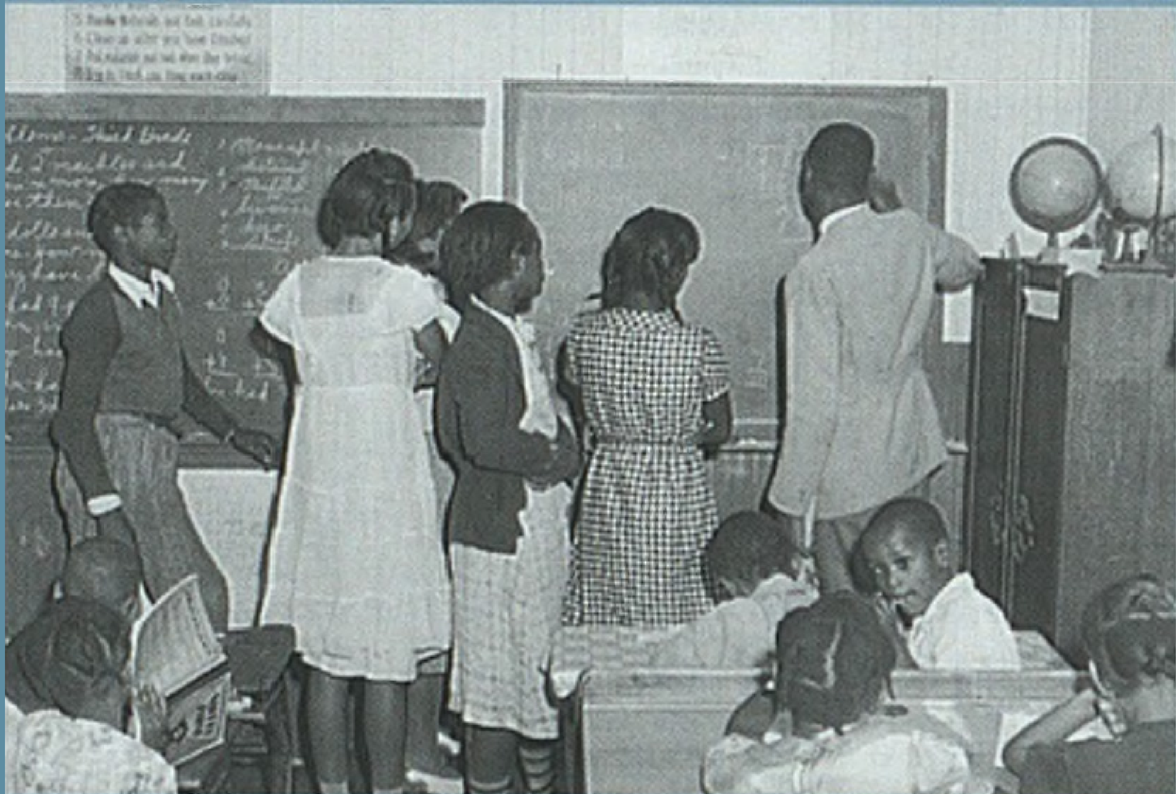
next fifty-five minutes for math, fifty-five minutes for history or whatever and then you have your lunch break.

And lunch break was an hour and that was good. And, you'd come back in after lunch and start the same routine again. But you know, you're sitting in this school and it's either one of two things. You got the wood stove sitting there smoking and burning you up on one end; the other side of the room was cold. And, what do you do? Give me something to eat and warm me up and I'm sleepy, [chuckle] How the devil can you learn that way? [laughter] That was a typical day. Then, we grabbed the bus. You'd go home.

James W. Neal (b. 1940)



James Neal, courtesy of the Neal family.



Teacher explaining decimals to seventh-grade students at St. Luke's Church, an adjunct to Scotland School, September 1940. Photo by John Vachon, Farm Security Administration, courtesy of the Library of Congress.

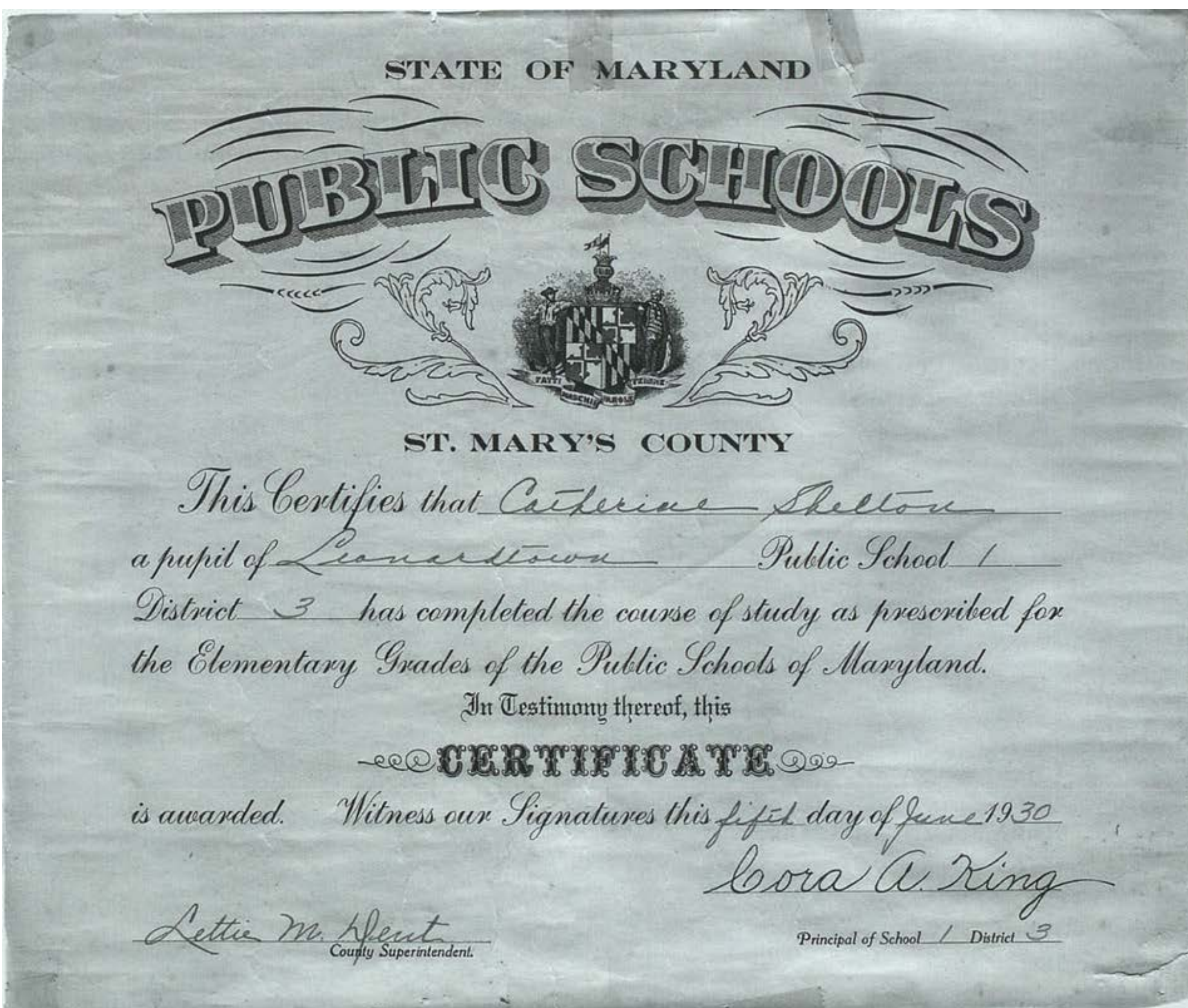
I wasn't a good student because I was always tired. I was exhausted, and I lost concentration. I couldn't think about what they were doing in school. I was just saying, "I want to go to bed!" I got up so early and, of course, being the oldest, we had to braid the children's hair, you know, and get their hair combed, [chuckle] It was hard work, and there was like six of us, each a year apart. So, it was, like, all of us in school at once, you know. We had a lot of girls' hair to comb and that was the hardest. I never really learned to like school.

Laurice M. Chase White (b. 1938)

We went to St. Joseph's school. We had to pay tuition but it was just a little slight tuition, now we paid $15 a month and maybe not that much. And when everybody else was gone home we would work for the nuns. And what we would do is go over to the nuns' chapel right there by the

church, one or the other of us would take and go clean all the pews off in the church with that old brown soap. And we wouldn't have to do it the next day, we had to do it the third day. And while my sister was doing that, I would be over at the nuns' house washing and cleaning the chapel, you know dusting and everything for the nuns, and helping the cook over there, maybe I had to peel some potatoes or maybe I had to cut some vegetables. Then when we finish that we go home, and that's how we paid our tuition.

Sarah Evelyn Mason Butler (b. 1920)



STATE OF MARYLAND

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ST. MARY'S COUNTY

This Certifies that Catherine Shelton
a pupil of Leonardtown Public School 1
District 3 has completed the course of study as prescribed for
the Elementary Grades of the Public Schools of Maryland.

In Testimony thereof, this

CERTIFICATE

is awarded. Witness our Signatures this fifth day of June 1930

Cora A. King
Principal of School 1 District 3

Lettie M. Dent
County Superintendent.

Diploma from Leonardtown School, June 5, 1930; Courtesy Catherine Shelton Thompson.

. . . a school day at Drayden, c. 1940 . . .

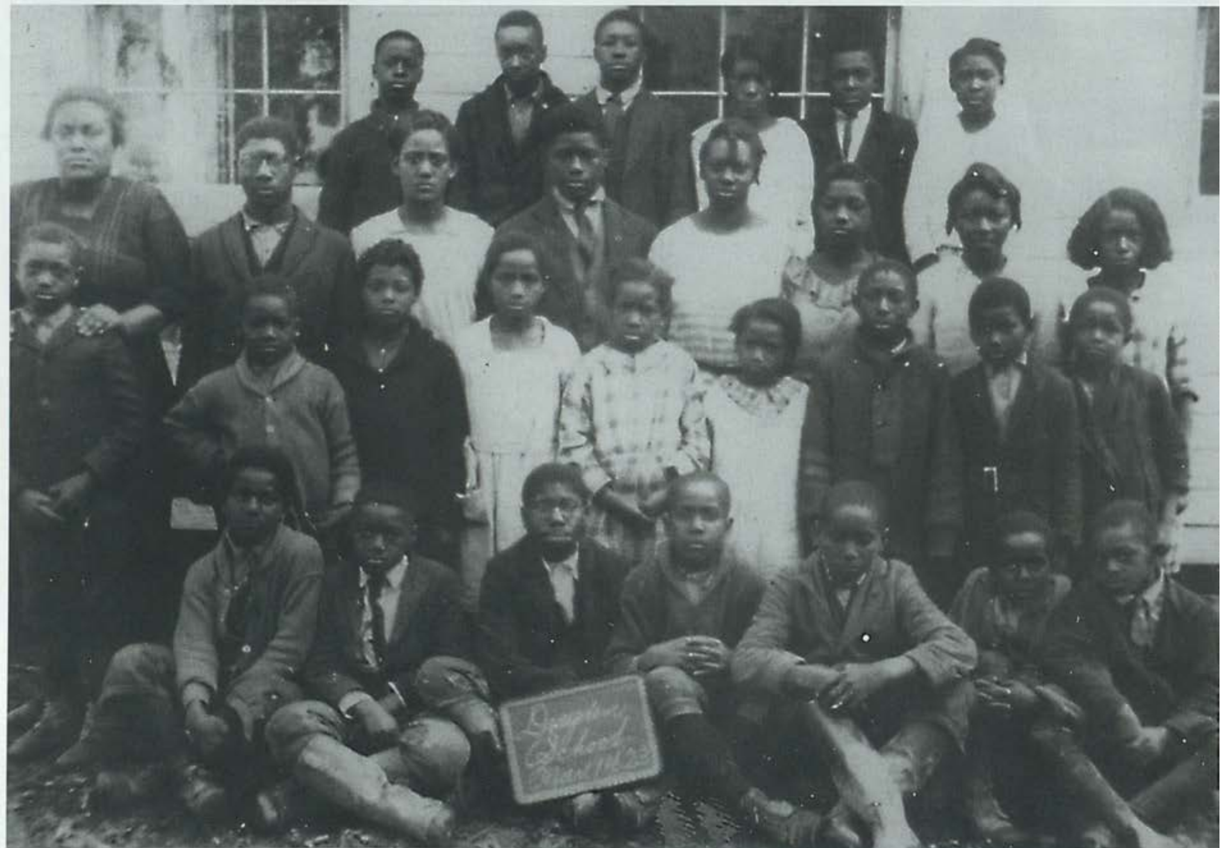
They would start in the morning. I guess we got out like other children, 4:00 in the afternoon. It started in September like other schools and ended in June. They started at six years old. I think it went as far as seventh grade. It was only one room, wasn't as big as this room, and we all was together. The smaller kids was on the left, the bigger kids over on the right of the building. I don't remember none getting sick that had to go home. Well, I guess God watched over them. I guess they didn't get sick.

Frances Jane Armstrong Morgan (b. 1929)

We always had school songs in the morning before the class began and then they had the prayer and stuff like that. Well, it was something like, "God Bless America" and stuff like that. You know, it wasn't actually prayers. We sung Christmas carols and stuff like that when they had the little programs. It wasn't many of the parents showed up. Everybody, of

course, was working so hard and so busy at the time with the children. Always waiting for them to get home to help. Mama with her chores, boys helping their daddies to make ends meet. I was told the school was used at night for some of the parents to get a little educational reading, alphabet, and stuff like that. I never ever remember or recall seeing any white people there. Colored. It was nothing else went there.

Frank Leroy Dyson (b. 1926)



Drayden School photo, 1923, courtesy of Lessie Dyson Smith.

See, we had seven classes there, from first to seventh grade. And I guess it was somewhere about six or seven kids at a time ’cause the school was small and it couldn’t hold but so many with seven different classes. I remember some of the kids that I was in class with, but the exact number I don’t know. I know it was quite a few kids ’cause when that school door would open and the bell would ring for us to come out, man, they were just rolling out - probably around thirty-some or forty. We had first grade, second grade, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh. The teacher would have to try to get around to all these classes in the same day. And we would

start off maybe with what they call math today, but we would call it arithmetic. You probably would have reading, then you would study history, geography, and spelling.

We had two kids to lead the morning devotional. We sang songs like, "Yes, Jesus Loves Me" and "Onward Christian Soldiers." They were mostly spiritual songs, you know, we would sing them. Then we would say the Lord's Prayer and then we would Pledge Allegiance.

Sarah Catherine Dyson Clay (b. 1924).

The teacher would let some of the older students help some of the younger ones. Each class had their assignment. They were all doing it at the same time. Certain classes had access to the blackboard at certain times. She used to get them to come up and, okay, explain an arithmetic problem on the board, punctuation and this type of thing, but basically, that was it. I do remember drawing maps of the United States and coloring them. You had to draw these maps and certain areas had to be certain colors and that I remember. You were there to learn the three R's, as they say, and that's basically all you did.

We had homework. We had tests. They knew then that when the kids got home from school in the evening, they had wood to chop, water to get, animals to feed and all of this. I mean, you went home and worked until dark and then you done your homework by the lamplight because there was no electric so you done it, basically, by lamplight.

Clarence Carroll Smith (b. 1932)

Sometimes they would bring us a few other books that they collected from other places and some of those were in pretty good shape. All of them weren't torn up. 'Cause I remember my history and geography book that I loved dearly. I kept them in good shape, I did. After I received it, I kept my stuff in good shape.

Eliza Isabelle Dyson Waters (b. 1929)

I believe there was three rows of desks. I don't remember any kids ever having to stand up. You had the little small desks anyway which was fine for the kids up to about the third or fourth grade, but the sixth and seventh grade kids, I mean, they were jammed in these things. And these also were broken and beat up and they were junk also. But there again, it was better than nothing. They were scratched up and names carved into

them, pieces broke off of them. And, like I said, I can't say what they gave all the black schools, but I know, what that one got and it was very little. I have no complaints with used furniture, but when you have one that a portion of the leg was broken off — you had to put something under it to make the desk level and this type of thing, this wasn't right. It wasn't right then and wouldn't be right today.

We had a wood stove. I'm not sure how they got the wood. I know it was stacked outside and the students had to bring it in. That I do remember, but I don't know how the wood got there.

Of course, when it got hot, you opened up the windows and the door and everything else to try to get some air, you know, through a building that small. Those old windows just slid up and down and you slid it up and put a stick under it or a stick, a book, or something under it, depending on how far you wanted it open. They were just old-fashion, what I call windows. They weren't windows that you shove up a certain distance and they stayed there.

Clarence Carroll Smith (b. 1932)

PARENTS OR GUARDIANS PLEASE READ

Teacher

ESPECIALLY GOOD IN

ESPECIALLY POOR IN

CERTIFICATE OF PROMOTION

I CERTIFY that Isabella C. Dyson

is eligible to ~~promotion to~~ Graduate

Teacher

C. Tilghman Principal

ST. MARY'S COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

REPORT CARD

Of Isabella C. Dyson

Grade 7 School Dryden

for the school year 1940-41

Carrie Tilghman Teacher

SIGNATURE OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN

Sept.
Oct.
Nov.
Dec.
Jan.
Feb.
March
April
May
June

METHOD OF GRADING

A – EXCELLENT	GRADE FROM 90 TO	100
B – GOOD	GRADE FROM 80 TO	90
C – FAIR	GRADE FROM 70 TO	80
D – POOR	GRADE FROM 60 TO	70
F – FAILURE	GRADE BELOW	60

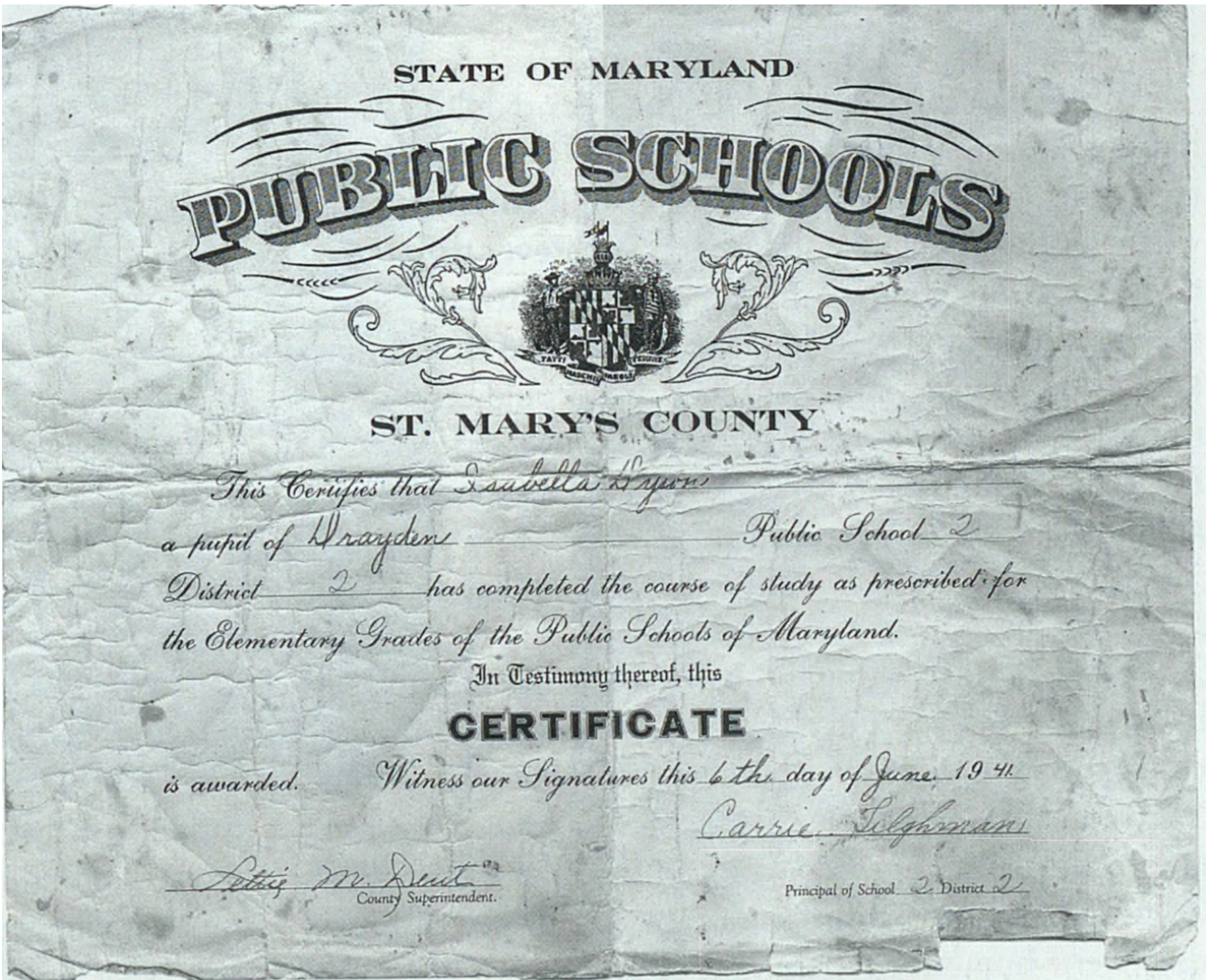
ANY GRADE LOWER THAN "C" WILL NOT BE HONORED BY PROMOTION.

ATTENDANCE DEPORTMENT STUDIES	SEPT. OCT.	NOV. DEC.	JAN. FEB.	MID YR EXAM	MAR. APR.	MAY JUNE	STATE TESTS	FINAL EXAM
TIMES TARDY	For	The	Year			6		
DAYS PRESENT						174		
DAYS ABSENT						6		
DAYS NOT BELONGING						0		
PHYSICAL EDUCATION								
READING						C+		
LANGUAGE						B		
SPELLING						A		
WRITING						B		
ARITHMETIC						C+		
SOCIAL STUDIES PRI								
GEOGRAPHY						B-		
HISTORY						C+		
SCIENCE								
MUSIC								
ART								
LITERATURE								

N.B. THIS MARK X IS PLACED OPPOSITE TO TRAIT TO WHICH ATTENTION IS CALLED.

	SEPT. OCT.	NOV DEC.	JAN. FEB.	MAR. APR.	MAY JUNE
HEALTH					
CARELESS IN PERSON & DRESS					
CLEAN IN PERSON & DRESS					
POOR POSTURE					
SITS, STANDS & WALKS CORRECTLY					
TIRES QUICKLY					
WIDE AWAKE					
INTEREST					
LACKS INTEREST					
MODERATELY INTERESTED					
VERY INTERESTED					
PREPARATION					
INSUFFICIENT PREPARATION					
WORK CARELESSLY DONE					
SATISFACTORY					
VERY SATISFACTORY					
CONDUCT					
RUDE: DISCOURTEOUS AT TIMES					
ANNOYS OTHERS					
INCLINED TO MISCHIEF					
GOOD					
VERY GOOD					
GENERAL					
CAPABLE OF DOING BETTER					
WORK OF GRADE TOO DIFFICULT					

Seventh-grade student report card from Drayden School, 1941. Courtesy Isabelle Dyson Waters.



STATE OF MARYLAND

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ST. MARY'S COUNTY

This Certifies that Isabella Dyson

a pupil of Drayden Public School 2

District 2 has completed the course of study as prescribed for the Elementary Grades of the Public Schools of Maryland.

In Testimony thereof, this

CERTIFICATE

is awarded. Witness our Signatures this 6th day of June, 1941.

Carrie Tilghman

Lettie M. Dent
County Superintendent.

Principal of School 2 District 2

Diploma from Drayden School- June 6, 1941; courtesy of Isabelle Dyson Waters.

Certificate of Promotion
THIS CERTIFIES THAT,
Catherine Shelton has completed the Course of Study prescribed for the fourth grade and having passed a satisfactory examination, is entitled to this Testimonial and Admission to the fifth grade
Given at Leonardtown State of Maryland
this 3rd day of June 1927
Cora A. King

Certificate of promotion, Leonardtown School, June 3, 1927; Courtesy Catherine Shelton Thompson.

LUNCH TIME

We had to carry our own lunch. They didn't have any lunches at school. We had to carry our own little brown bag or box, lunch box, or whatever. Peanut butter and jelly, whatever their parents put in them. Whatever they had to fix to make lunch out of, not like these kids today. Toward the last, I don't know if they ever mentioned that, I don't know who was providing that, but they would send something down there, like, I think it was oatmeal and we would have the facilities there to cook it in the morning like if a kid didn't have a hot breakfast.

Sarah Catherine Dyson Clay (b. 1924)

Some of the children brought lunch; biscuits and fat- back meat. Let me put it another way - anything you could get. Whatever was there, you brought and you ate. You didn't have a choice. I mean you know, it wasn't fancy sandwiches of today wrapped in foil or Saran Wrap. Others that lived within a distance, a closer distance, they went home for lunch, and of course, we liked that because a lot of times the parents would walk back

with the kids, and of course, the teachers and parents would get talking and we'd get an extra half hour, forty-five- minute recess. So we kind of liked that. That was more spring and summer now. In the wintertime, you know, it didn't go that way.I do remember one of the teachers and one of her favorite things. She kept a can of water on the stove, I guess to help the air, and she'd bring a couple of eggs. A certain time of morning, she'd drop those couple of eggs in that can of water and that would be part of her lunch. I do remember that.

Clarence Carroll Smith (b. 1932)

WATER

These two guys used to have a spring. The people that sold the land, Daniel Gross, they had two boys go down there and carry a water pail and bring back fresh cool water and, oh, it was so good. They would have to go down there in the morning and get that and that would have to last practically all day unless it was real hot and the kids got faint a lot and they drank a lot of water. It was a 10-quart pail with a dipper in it and you'd dip down in it and pour it into your drinking cup. We had basins. Occasionally, you'd have to wash your hands before you had your lunch, especially if you'd been out playing. That took quite a bit, you know, I wouldn't say a whole lot of water, but that consumed it where maybe they'd have to go to the spring more than once a day. Just a plain white basin with a little hole in it. When it was finished, you'd hang it on a nail.

Sarah Catherine Dyson Clay (b. 1924)

There was no water fountain or pump or anything else on the school ground. I mean, you went to the spring and got the water. We had to walk down across a field down a hill to a spring, about a quarter mile. If it was warm weather, then maybe she'd send somebody else at lunchtime or sometime later on in the day.

Clarence Carroll Smith (b. 1932)

RECESS

The boys had some kind of a thing to do muscle-up on. They had the bars laying in between the trees and they held up very well. Somehow or other, it was mounted between the trees. I don't know. Then, put you a

strong rope on that and put a board into it. The rope would cut your hip. They had to make ‘em strong so large kids and small ones never had any trouble with ’em. They had a seesaw. I guess that was mostly for the smaller kids. Somehow or another, those trees was in the right position for maintaining the seesaw. It was a tree and they were lodged in there. One of them was an old wagon axle. They never threw nothing away, you know. Somehow or other, it was mounted in those old trees. Probably some of the older folk that know how to master things seen that they were mounted in there in that position. They had a good board and put a notch here so it wouldn’t slide. After a little while, I mean, when that tree grows, that thing’s in there. It’ll never come out. I guess it was moved after they start cleaning up, up there, I would think. It was homemade ’cause you know it had to be home-manufactured. They didn’t buy anything then. And so that’s the way it was done - homemade.”

Frank Leroy Dyson (b. 1926)

Games were basically games you made up. You had dodge ball, see-saws, now swings and the teacher would come up with games. The one that I can remember was you had a twenty-four wooden Coca-Cola crate and you put twelve bottles in one end of this crate. It was a certain distance away and then two students would take off and go down and take the twelve bottles out of one end, and put them in the other end, the empty end, and then, of course, whoever got back first had won.

Clarence Carroll Smith (b. 1932)

There was a big, old, dry well, a big old hole nearby in the woods. Well, that’s where they done a lot of playing. They would leave school and go there. We loved to go there. And then we would gather mulberries off of the mulberry tree and we would eat those, over that well. We would eat mulberries as much as we wanted at recess.

We had a seesaw. The seesaws were wood. And we sure had swings. The boys always made swings. Sometimes they would use tires, but I loved to play volleyball. I played on the volleyball team. We would put this net, you know, between two trees and that’s where we played volleyball. Nothing much but volleyball and dodge ball.

Eliza Isabelle Dyson Waters (b. 1920)

We all couldn't go out and play at the same time because we didn't have no room to play. They would let the little kids out first to go to the bathroom, such as it was. Then after they played for a certain length of time, I don't know how long they stayed out, then they let the bigger kids out to play. And like playing ball, we couldn't play no ball because we didn't have no room to play no ball. Just that little ground there and that's why the teacher start, you know, putting together games that didn't require a lot of space. She made up games for us - egg in a spoon.

We actually didn't have eggs, but we had little stones. It wasn't quite that big. Girls back there, boys back there. When she'd blow the whistle for us to go, then we'd run up there and see who could pick up a stone, an egg rather, in that spoon and run back to their place. And if you dropped it, you know, you're a loser. Your side didn't win - well see, everybody didn't run at once. See now, I would run and I would beat you back and then I give my spoon to the next person, then they run up. You had to bring your own spoon from home if you wanted to play the game. You had to bring them from home. Of course, we had our little see-saw, I guess some of the parents had bought a long board and nailed it between two trees and put a thing there so one could be on one end and one on the other. We had that. We had our jump rope, just ordinary, you know, rope. And I really believe that's all we had. Just like I said, we didn't play no baseball or softball or anything because we didn't have the room. We didn't have anything. Well, we had to just enjoy it whether we like it or not, because there was nothing else for us to do.

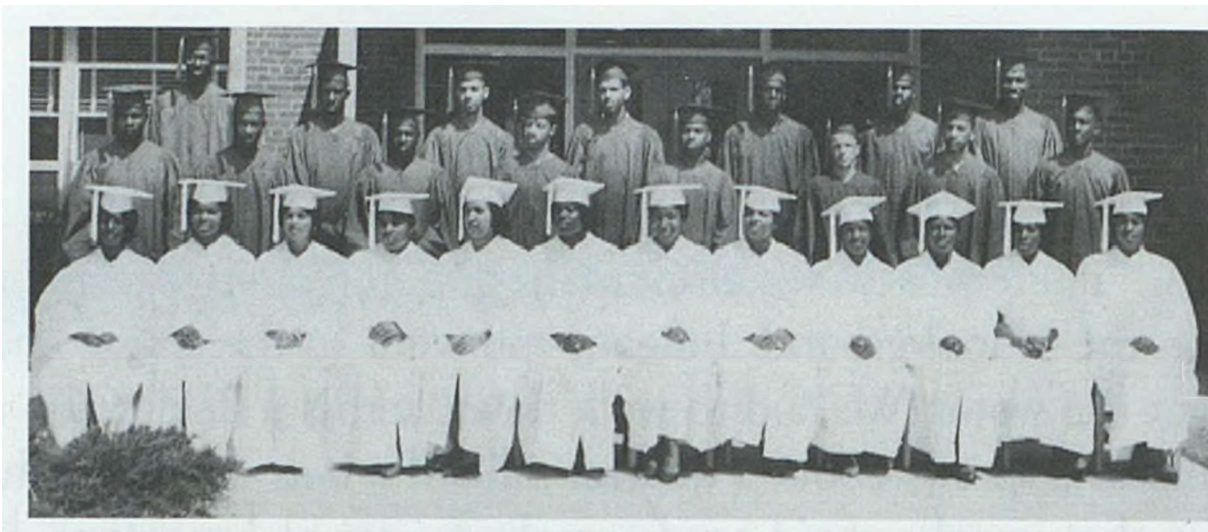
Frances Jane Armstrong Morgan (b. 1929)

School Chores

Two boys were assigned to fetch the water and two would have to burst the wood. The guy would come down and bring a load of wood and two guys would go out, young boys, in the afternoon and split the wood and cut it up you know, stove length, where that they could get it into the stove and bring it in and stack it so they would have it. Some would even get the stuff to get the fire kindled. You know, you couldn't start it with the huge pieces. So they would split it fine and have it so that you could get a fire started in the morning. We had a wood shed that stopped it from getting wet.

Sarah Catherine Dyson Clay (b. 1924)

. . . it was a big event. . .



On Field Day, all die black children would go to one location and mostly that was Banneker. And this was the whole county, and people used to come home for the field days as far away as New Jersey. It was a big event.

Elvare Smith Gaskin (b. 1919)

They would have a Field Day at Bannekei; the school in Loveville. The students participated in a lot of games that went on at Field Day. Basically, it was up to the parents to try to get the students up there. The school, basically, didn't have any way to get them up there. There was no transportation so you didn't put them on a bus like you do today and carry them there. If your kid was in it and you wanted to participate, then it was up to you to figure a way to get them there. And you played tag and hide and seek and any games that you could play without equipment, because black schools did not have equipment, you know. Dodge ball, we normally had the teacher's ball because black schools didn't get balls, they didn't get anything. You had nothing else to play. Hide and seek, tag, dodge ball, and the game with the soda bottles, that was, basically, all you had. At Banneker, they had a few more things there, but I never did get to go, so

I’m not sure what they had. I know kids that did go, but I wasn’t one of them.

Clarence Carroll Smith (b. 1932

Top left: Field Day at Banneker School, early 1950s; Courtesy Sylvia Thompson Brown.
Bottom left: St. Joseph's School children on a field trip to Banneker High School, 1954-1955. Courtesy of Sylvia Thompson Brown.
Right: Students pose with class projects; Photo by Alice Bennett.

See, we went through the woods. Passed through the woods there. Made the short-cut. [laughter] And in that school, 'course we had a wood stove. On the day before Ash Wednesday, we called it Shrove Tuesday, we brought out flour and everything and made pancakes. Oh, we had a good time at school that day. It was nice.

When it was raining, we would stay in school and we played one-ring play called, "Steal Liza Jane. This old man ain't got no wife, so steal Liza Jane." And then -I don't see Bert now, but they'd come and put their arms in one of the girl's arms and pull her around the ring with them, you know, "Steal Liza Jane." And then, they'd come back this way and steal somebody else, [laughter] "Steal Liza Jane." I remember that so well. That would be on a rainy day.

'Cause other days we would go outside and play dodge ball and everything. And, the road to the school was like, was almost like a valley. This was a hill and this was a hill, and the road was down here. So, somebody had brought some automobile tires and we would slide down those hills, [chuckle] Oh, my! Could we talk about it!

Then once a year, we would go up to Banneker to compete with the other volleyball players, relay running, and we would also win, you know,

ribbons. Yeah. We'd go up on the back of a wagon or somebody would drive a truck and take us all up on the back of the truck. This was in the early 1920s, something like that. We looked forward to that day. We did.

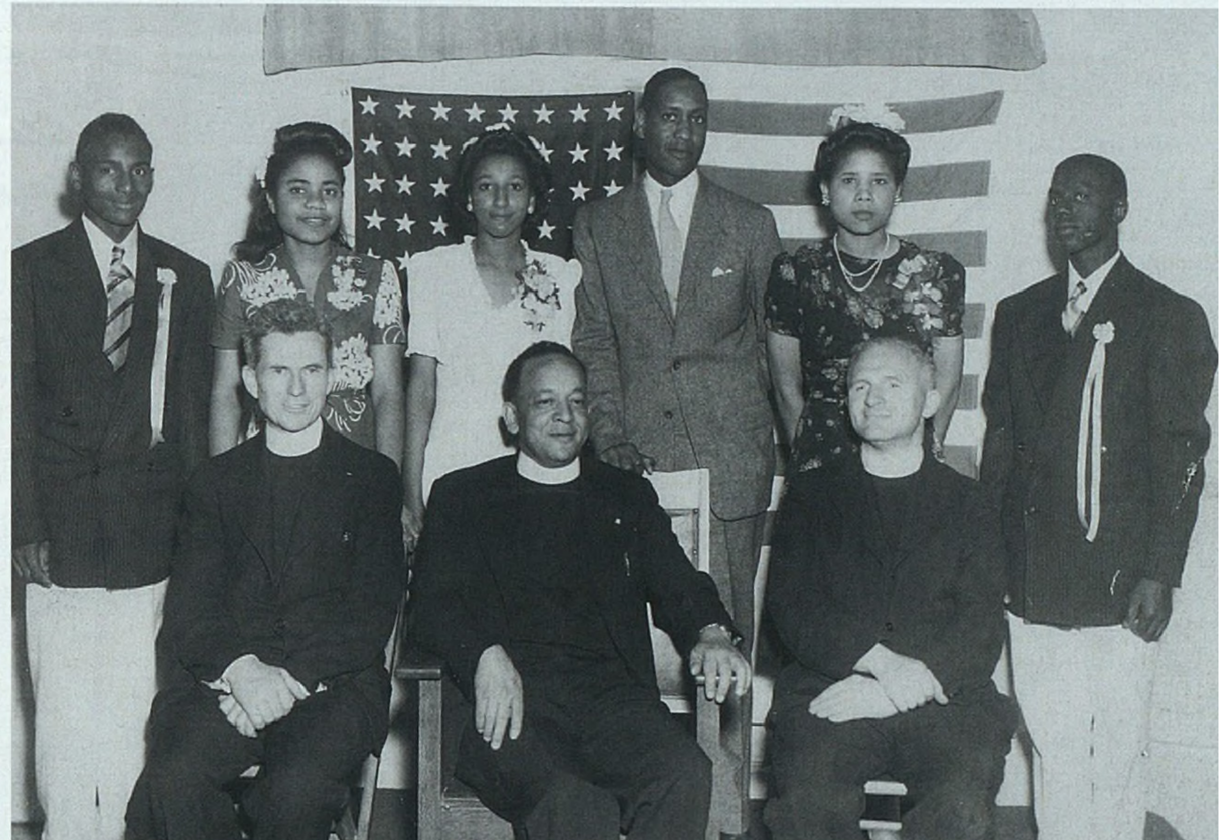
Angela Marie Thomas Maddox (b. 1913)

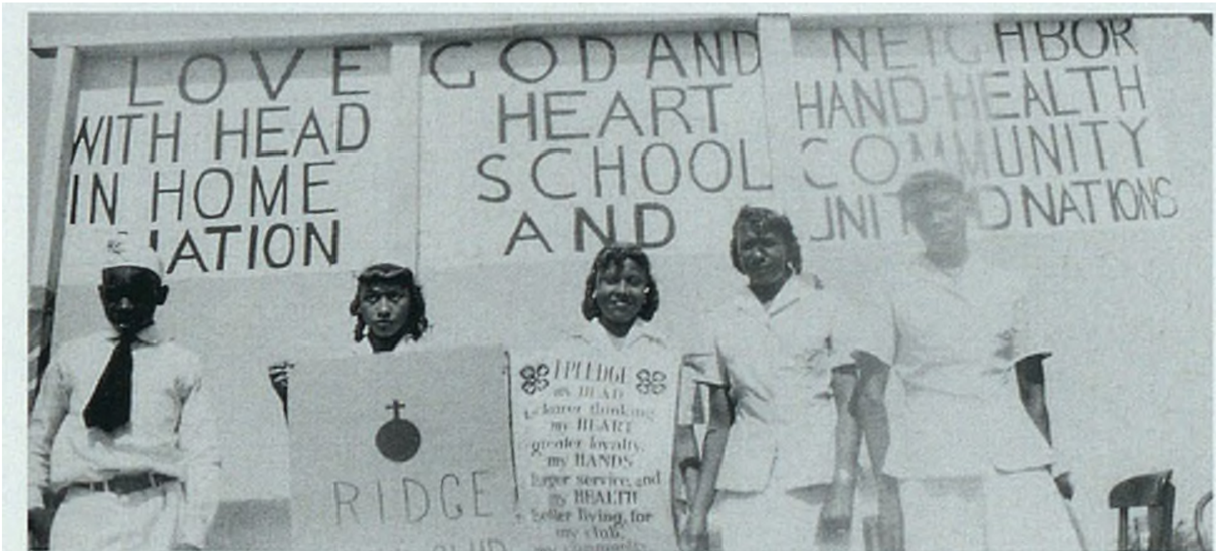
We went on quite a few field trips, but the miles were short. We'd go to Washington, D. C. to see the Smithsonian Institute, the Washington Monument, and the Aerospace Engineering. I also had a trip to the Washington Center. I think it was about my third year of high school. We went there for a whole day with Father McKenna and John Smith.

Edward Allen Smith Sr. (b. 1927)

They always used to have something for Christmas. They would have a play that would be before Christmas, you know, 'cause regular Christmas, you had to be home. It was sponsored by the kids that was able to bring stuff. The children learned how to make costumes theirselves, out of different material, large wrappings of paper, they would cut them.

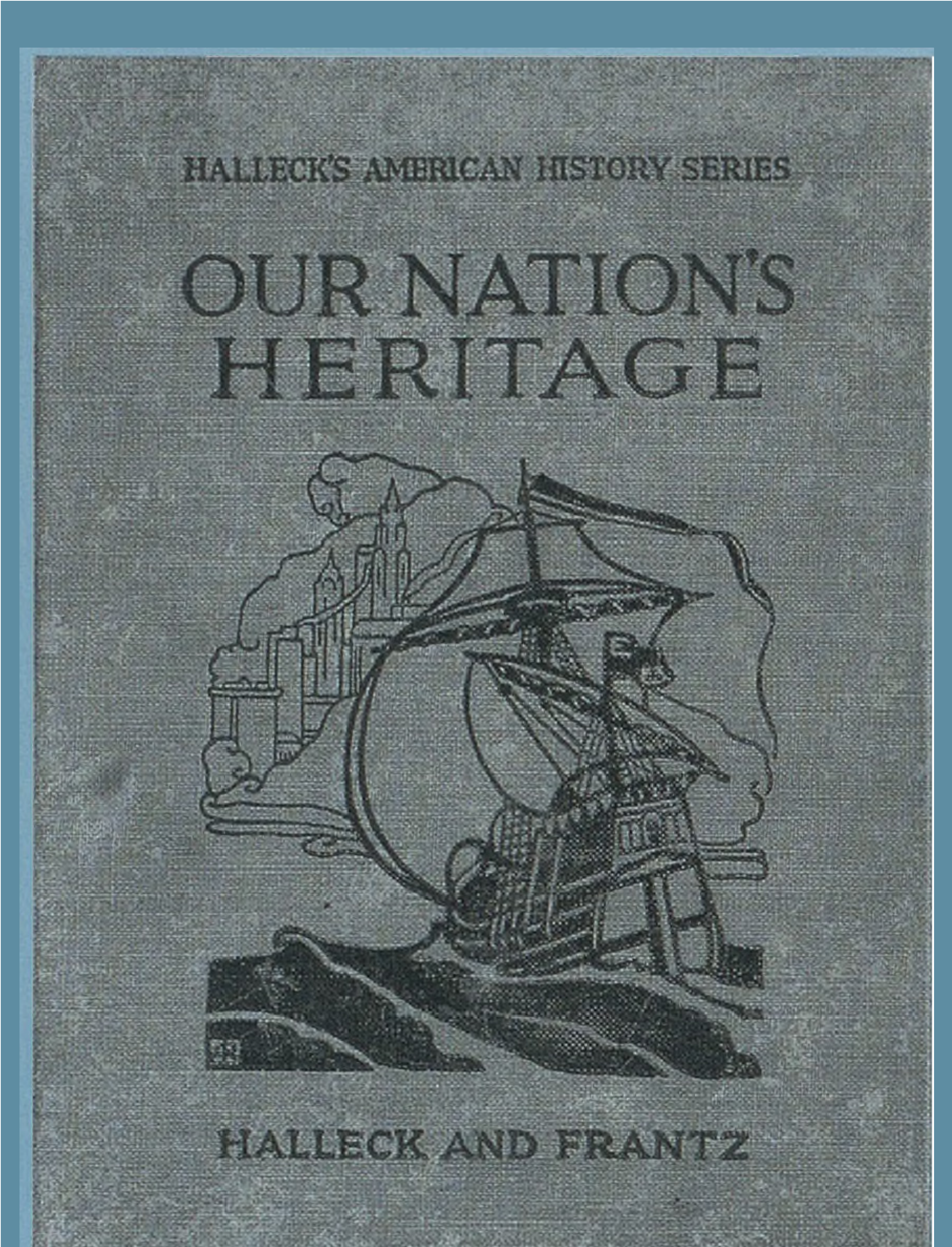
Frank Leroy Dyson (b. 1926)





Top: Drum and Bugle Corps awards; Photo by Alice Bennett.
Middle: The faculty and graduating class at Cardinal Gibbons Institute, 1944. Standing (left to right): Edward Smith, [unknown woman], Ann B. Smith, Nathan Pitts (principal), Mrs. Mary Williams Pitts, Randolph Saxon. Seated: Father Horace McKenna, Father Vincent Smith, S.V.D., Father

DeLawder (commencement speaker). Courtesy of Alice Bennett.
Bottom: 4-H Club students march in a local parade; Photo by Alice Bennett.



Annie Curtis

Presented
To

Annie V. Butler, 5th Grade

Spelling Contest

First Prize

1928

Clinton D. Collins

Supervisor

Top left and right: First Place prize given to Annie Curtis for winning the county-wide spelling bee, 1928. Courtesy of Annie Curtis

We had Halloween plays. We just had a little Halloween party and we had Coca-Cola and cookies and candy. And, well, we'd make masks. Yeah, we enjoyed making it ourselves 'cause we couldn't buy it. We'd make all these, you know, things - faces and stuff to put on and we would sing Halloween songs.

I had this speech that I went to Talbot County for the whole school and I spoke this thing standing on the platform. I don't know what it was, but I did it. It was some kind of agricultural stuff 'cause I know I had little stuff in a jar. I can't remember. It was 4-H, yes, 4-H. They picked a child from each school that year to go and they picked me. They would pick one child from each school and I represented Drayden School. I must have been about nine or ten. It was warm weather 'cause I wore a little white dress and my little socks and my shoes. I remember all that. They dressed me up so pretty.

And we used to go to Field Day too. That bus would come and pick them up. They thought they were going to New York City. Later in the years, they used to have like a little dance. Sometimes, maybe like once a year, there was an old man that used to come with a fiddle or banjo or whatever. And they would play and we would dance.

Eliza Isabelle Dyson Waters (b. 1920)

At the end of the school year, we would have what they called an exhibition. And, that's the time the students, the children would sing songs, recite poems, and things of that sort. And at the end of their speech or their song, the friends and parents would carry bunches of flowers, like wild flowers or roses - whatever was available - and just throw them to the children. That made the children so happy, they'd be so excited. They would gather up their flowers to see how much they would have at the end of the program. It was exciting.

Oh, and we used to have spelling bees — spelling contests as a part of our regular studies. And we would stand up across the end of the school in a line and a word would be called off. And if you didn't know a word, the person next to you would spell it and you would be cut down. That was a terrible feeling - being cut down. But, I enjoyed it. I enjoyed one time being in this spelling contest. I always felt like everyone knew more than I did. And to my surprise, I won first place. That was 1926. And I still have the

prize - a book. First prize. Mr. Collins, he was the supervisor and he signed it. The name of it is Our American Heritage. That's a coincidence, isn't it?

I remember going from one school to another with the spelling contests. I remember where we went, when we had that spelling contest where I won first place, I never forget that. It was Leonardtown Elementary. And I remember one remark that was made there, this teacher said "Remember, success comes in cans". And I thought, "What was she talking about? A can of success?" But she meant, in saying "I can" — "I can do things." "I can do." Success comes in cans, and not can'ts. I'll always remember that, that was a long time ago.

Annie Butler Curtis (b. 1917)

"success comes in cans"

Science project, Cardinal Gibbons Institute.

I can remember when they'd have spelling contests, and I was a good speller. I never went to the foot. I could out-spell a whole lot of them. I just loved to spell. I always like these big words. I always try to know how to pronounce them and not forget how to spell them 'cause the teachers had spelling contests. Used to take us to Laurel, Maryland. Or Bowie. If I won the contest at Gravelly Knoll. Then, we got us a certificate - a Spelling Certificate.

Mary Agatha Coates Somerville (b. 1909)

. . .we didn't rate the bus . . .

We would walk to school maybe eight or ten miles.

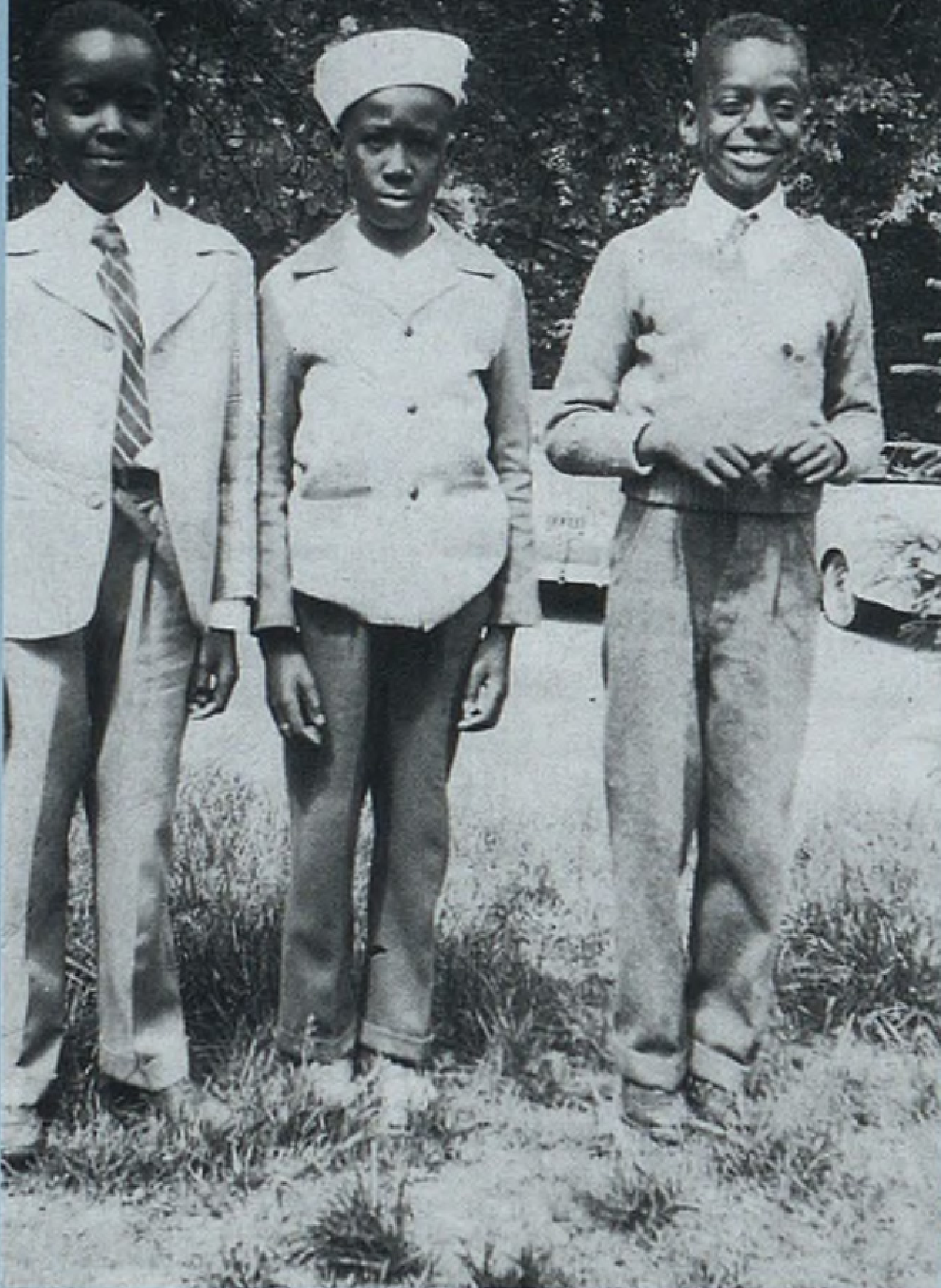
Joseph Mason Curtis (b. 1933)

I had to walk eleven miles to school .... 'Deed I did — eleven miles.

James Melvin Coates (b. 1920)

Schooling at that time was pretty rough on blacks in particular. I never rode the bus to school until I was in high school.

Edward Allen Smith Sr. (b. 1927)



Walking Home from Abell School, ca. 1940. Courtesy of Sylvia Thompson Brown.

Yeah, we didn't live far enough away to rate the bus. The children down in Beachville, they could ride the bus. But the ones from St. James and ones from Park Hall, they said we were in walking distance. They didn't even know where we lived, and they didn't know until the children got sick with the typhoid fever that they knew how far we had to go. And I told my aunt once, I said, "I don't like being late to school," because teacher always, you know, make mention of it. My aunt said, "You should tell her she should come and go home with you once and see how far you live." So, I told her that once, but she, well, she didn't go home with me, but I mean, when children got sick, Father McKenna brought the nuns around there because they were quarantined for awhile and nobody was supposed to visit. Then, they go so they could have company, you know, have visitors, the nuns came around to see the children. The teacher never said anything, I mean she never made mention anymore about that.

So, I told her that once, but she, well, she didn't go home with me, but I mean, when children got sick, Father McKenna brought the nuns around there because they were quarantined for awhile and nobody was supposed to visit. Then, they go so they could have company, you know, have visitors, the nuns came around to see the children. The teacher never said anything, I mean she never made mention anymore about that.

My uncle would go to PTA meetings and he said something about, you know, the children riding the bus. Even if they didn't ride the bus all the way home, they could ride it from school 'round to 235 and we still would have about two miles to walk before we got to St. Jerome's Creek, then we had to cross the creek which would have been a big help. But, we didn't rate the bus.

Every day we went to school. And then if the wind was blowing too hard, we had to walk all the way around, around the road. It was about seven miles before you got out of St. Jerome's Neck to Dameron, then we had to go across the woods to St. Inigoes to come out on 5 over here. One day, it was after noon when we got [chuckle] out to Dameron because the snow was so deep. So, we kept on up to St. James and to Mason and to grandmother's house up there on 5 across from Park Hall Road. I guess about two o'clock when we got up there. When we passed St. James Church, we ran in there and said a prayer that we made it that far! [chuckle]

Alice Rebecca Biscoe Bennett (b. 1915)

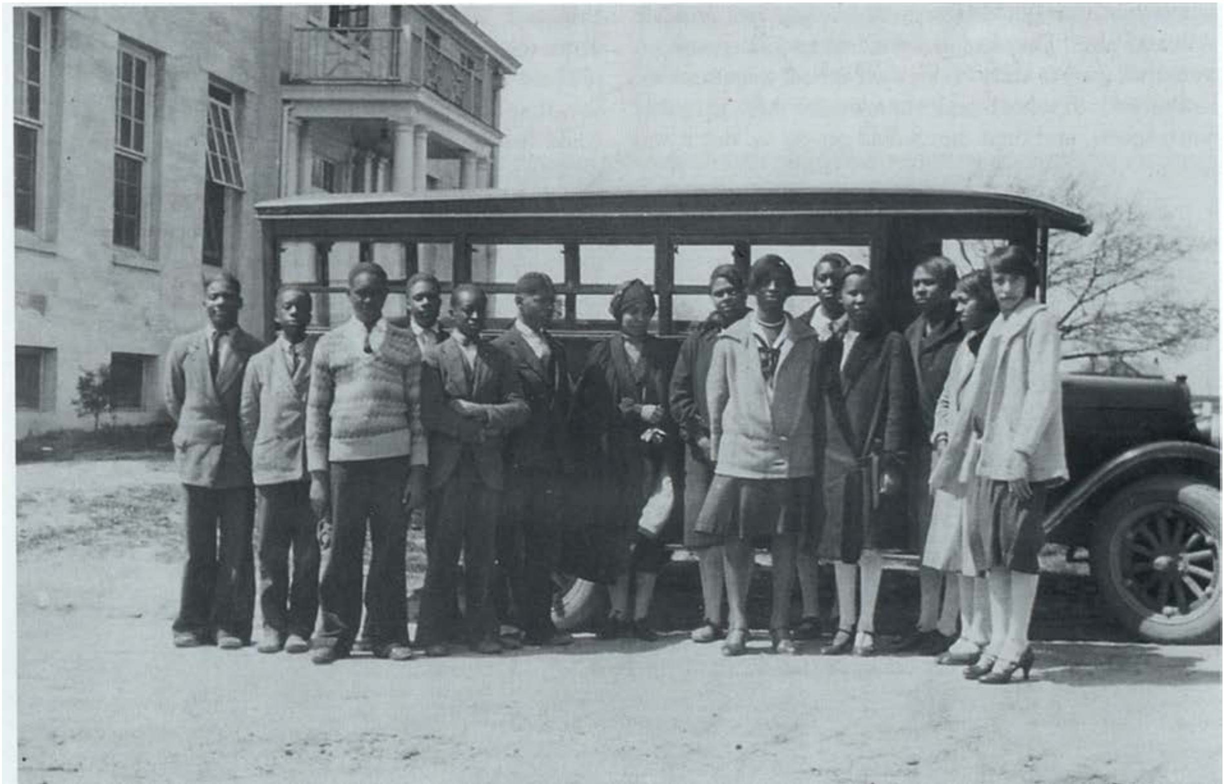
Mr. Guffrie Smith used to drive the bus and he'd carry you all on to Jarboesville School. And my gracious, the bus picked you up right there on the comer. And he would tell on you if you'd done anything. He better not tell Mr. Meares 'cause Mr. Meares would call you in his office and want to know, do you have any problems or anything.

"No sir. I don't have no problems."

And, well, "Yes you have. You're talking on the bus."

Oh my, I'm in trouble now. [laughs] We went on with that and I stopped talking on the bus. From then on I acted right and nobody had no more problems. No more problems.

Leon M. Briscoe (b. 1937)



Top: Children going home from school at noon. Scotland, Maryland, September 1940. Photo by John Vachon, Farm Security Administration; courtesy of the Library of Congress. Bottom: Cardinal Gibbons Institute school bus, late 1920s; courtesy St. Peter Claver Church.

And after I got older, I went to high school, I rode a bicycle to meet the bus. Then if I wasn't there at the time the bus pulled up, the bus driver would not open the door. You could beat on the side of the bus and he would keep right on going. And then, I'd have to go out on Route 5 and catch the principal of Banneker School. His name was Mr. Smith. That's how I got back and forth to school at Banneker.

Lewis Clifton Whalen (b. 1927)

I hated school, we had so far to go. I think that's the whole thing. I used to cry because we had a long ride to school. We had to go to Catholic school, as I said, and it was all the way down in Ridge. So, we had to get up early because my uncle drove the bus and he had to make two runs. And you'd be exhausted, but you had to get up.

Laurice M. Chase White (b. 1938)

Cardinal Gibbons Institute school bus, ca. 1960. Photo by Alice Bennett.

I used to like to go to school. And we rode the old school bus. Our bus drivers were Mr. Eli Gant and Mr. William Porter. They had an awful lot of patience with us, 'cause we used to carry on on the bus and sometimes we

had to walk to school, and when we got there they told our teachers, and then they would get on us. But it was still fun ’cause we was children, quite natural.

Ida Delores Barnes Briscoe (b. 1936)

I know I started at Drayden in the first grade, from the first ’til about the third or fourth and then my father had taken me out of that school and sent me to St. Peter Claver in Ridge. See, by me being Catholic, our pastor didn’t want us to go to Drayden. They had a bus. The bus didn’t belong to the church. It was the guy who lived up there on Flat Iron Road. He’s dead now, his wife’s living. His name was Leroy Thompson and he bought a bus of his own for black kids to have a way back and forth to school. And before he got the bus, it used to be the priest down St. Peter Claver’s used to send a bus up here to get us.

Frances Jane Armstrong Morgan (b. 1929)

There were two things I didn't like about segregation. One of them was you could see that hatred. You could feel it. And the other thing was these white people lived back in the woods. Instead of them going out the road that was their front road, they walked right through our yard to that blacktop road to catch the bus before school. And I had to walk to school.

And so, I asked Pop. I said, "What's going on? Why is it that they got the privilege to walk through here [chuckle] and catch the bus? I have to cut this grass here. They don't never have to cut no grass. Why is it they can walk through here?" And he said, "Ah, we'll discuss it later."

Edward Allen Smith Sr. (b. 1927)

. . . parents and teachers worked together . . .

Once the PTA meetings were for the parents. The teachers would tell them, “We’d like this to happen in our classrooms.” The PTAs in elementary schools used to be packed. They used to be packed in the high schools. Parents came to find out what was going on and what they could do to help. They built schools like that. The first Jarboesville School was built that way. It was done by the parents. Children brought bricks. They had a brick contest, and they said some of the students were taking bricks out of their parents’ chimneys to build this first Jarboesville High School! Parents and teachers worked together.

Elvare Smith Gaskin, Teacher (b. 1919)

The largest and oldest boys had to do the chores, cleaning up the grounds, stuff like that. The floor had to be kept clean as possible. We had to sweep the floors and oil them with some type of oil to keep the dust

down. Then you would take a brush and go over the floor. That was more in the evenings, after school hours.

Summertime, they used some stuff they call whitewash to paint and go around the buildings with. Some fellows might help to repair anything that got broke at the school. You always had somebody would come along had a little idea of how to mend things, you know. Far as I know, the old men around here, different ones, they was called carpenters and they could put stuff back together once it got tom up. It wasn't too much stuff there got damaged. There was always some kind of a handyman came along to take care of some of those things. See, they looked after the children, I guess, as far as they could.

Frank Leroy Dyson (b. 1926)

Jarboesville Parent Teachers Association Officers. Left to right: Rev. Benjamin Ball (Chaplain), John Tarpley (Treasurer), Theodore Newkirk (President), Mary S. Smith (Corresponding Secretary), Gilbert Minor (Vice President), John Lancaster (Parliamentarian). Not shown : Gloria E. Cobbs (Recording Secretary). Courtesy Jarboesville Carver Alumni Association.

Teachers didn't have to punish kids then. They would slap their hands with a ruler, but, like I said, most kids then did not get into trouble because you did not want to go home. You know if you done something wrong your parents took care of it. You never knew when your parents or grandparents,

whoever you were with, would show up at the school and find out what was going on and then you were in more trouble than you would have been in school, because they took care of it. That I'd like to see back. I'm not talking about the ruler part. I'm talking about where the parents would support the teachers and all in correcting kids. Some of the older, especially the boys, they would get to be a problem a couple days in a row, but then they would come home and then when they would come back, they wouldn't be that much of a problem anymore.

Clarence Carroll Smith (b. 1932)

When I was a child, the times was good. I worked hard all the time. They always had a chore for me to do every day before I went to school. And after I came back from school, my parents kept me busy at all times, except getting my lesson at night. My father taught me how to read before I went to school. Started school at five years old, and I could say my alphabets 'cause he taught me that off the quick oatmeal box. A, B, C and numbers. When I went to school, I know'd my alphabets, [chuckle]

Mary Agatha Coates Somerville (b. 1909)

My favorite subject when I was going to school, I used to love to read the history books. I liked the reading. I wasn't too good on arithmetic, but I worked hard at it. My father helped me with my arithmetic. When I first started going to school, my mother was teaching me how to, you know, how they teach you at home how to write your name? She was teaching my father how to write his, too. He couldn't write his name, but he knowed all his tables. He could figure better than I could, [chuckle] Oh brother! All watermen could figure - they could figure in their head.

Alice T. Carter Thomas (b. 1918)

I attended a school called Patuxent Beach Elementary School, and it was in California [Maryland] on Patuxent Beach Road. It used to belong to my grandmother, Sarah Hayden. In fact, they built the schoolhouse and they allowed the school system to have school there.

Viola T. Cutchember (b. 1932)

Fred Talbert and I were involved in Carver School. At the time I met Fred, I was president of Carver PTA and we ran a survey throughout the county. Fred Talbert was one of the members that worked on this survey. And the black community to determine, if we could determine, why so many black kids refused to complete high school. As a result of that interview, I also worked with Fred on recruiting blacks to enroll in this school, Great Mills High School. We had a segregated system even though we had the Supreme Court [*Brown v. Board of Education 1954*] to say all schools should be integrated. That didn't happen in '54 here. That happened quite some time later. As a matter of fact, I think it was about twelve years later.

Theodore Newkirk (b. 1926)

Mason E. Jenifer, courtesy of Carrie Glascoe.

I recall there was a store in Hughesville called Bowling Store. And as soon as I graduated from elementary school, an old man, George Bowling, I think it was, one of the Bowlings, because they owned everything in Hughesville back in those days, wanted my father to let me come to their house and spend the weekends - cook and clean. And, that, I give him all the credit in the world, he said, “No. My daughter’s going to school.” When I graduated from elementary school, I’d have been there ’til now if he had not spoken up. And, I always said that my father didn’t speak up to white folks. But, this was one time he did for me.

Carrie Jenifer Glascoe (b. 1923)

... Dr. Brown - he tried to start a high school...

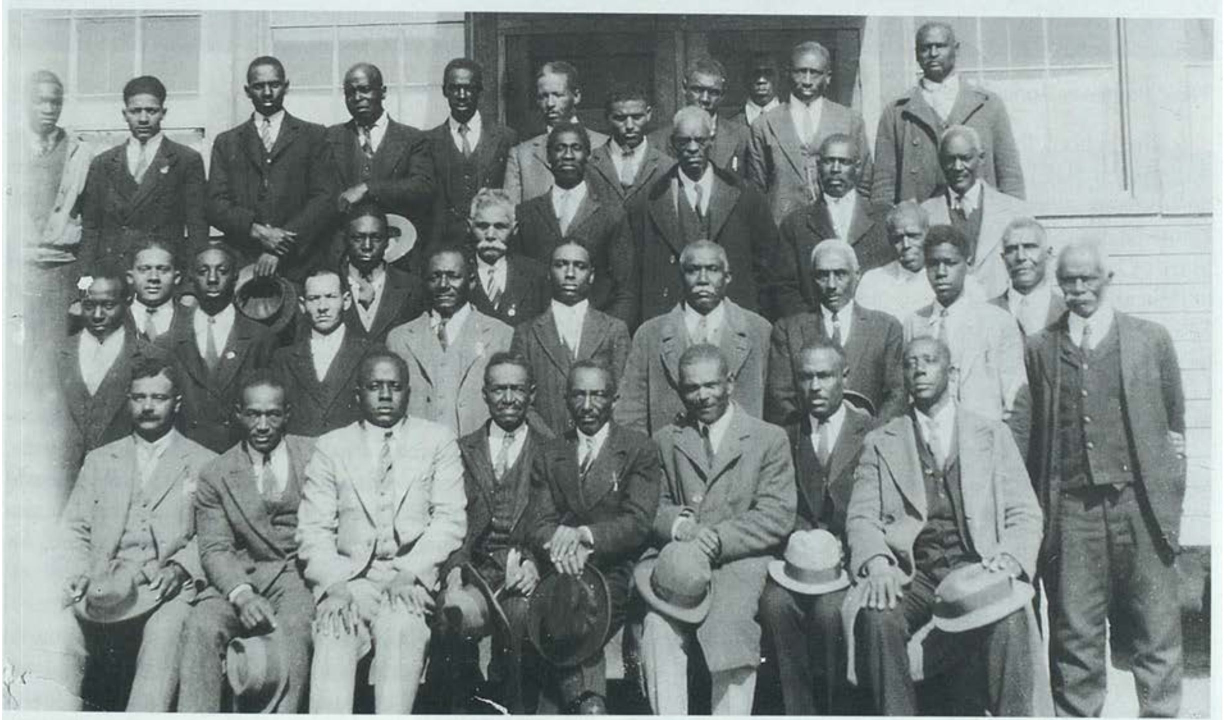
Banneker School represents the outgrowth of a long effort of the African American community to secure a school in the northern end of St. Mary's County. The first step was recorded on March 28, 1896, when a group of eight citizens formed a corporation to be known as the St. Mary's Colored High School.

Directors of the corporation for the first year:

James H. Brown, President William L. Clark, Vice
President George Green, Recording Secretary
George H. Bankins, Corresponding Secretary
William F. Hall, Treasurer

In 1923, records show the incorporation of an education institution called The Central Colored Industrial School. James H. Stewart, Thomas A. Mack, William B. Thompson, William L. Clarke, and T Herbert Blackiston comprised the board of directors of this group. The stated purpose of the corporation was the "education of Colored youths where they may be taught the usual branches of a sound English education and receive instruction and

practical training in agriculture, industrial, and mechanical pursuits."[18] The efforts of this group resulted in the founding of Banneker School.



United Parent Trustee Association, ca.1925; Courtesy of Catherine Thompson. Known members of the United Parents Trustee Association: Web Baker, Bradley Bankins, Leonard Bankins, Sam Bankins, Rhoda Barnes, Herbert Blackistone, Peter Briscoe, James Bush, Mr. & Mrs. Abraham Butler, Charles Butler, Xavier Butler, William Clarke, Mr. Curtis, Clem Dyson, James & Harriett Forrest, John Frederick, Joseph Handy, Scanalon Herbert, Forrest Holley, Lancaster Holley, Jarrard Jameson, Thomas Mack, John Milburn, Daniel Morgan, John Shelton, Benedict Smith, Dave Smith, Deli Somerville, John T. Somerville, Frank Stevens, James H. Stewart, Frances Swales, Herbert Taylor, George Thomas, William B. Thompson, Grant Turner, Paul Young, Stephen Young.

“New” Banneker Agricultural Shop, 1940. Courtesy Banneker Alumni Association.

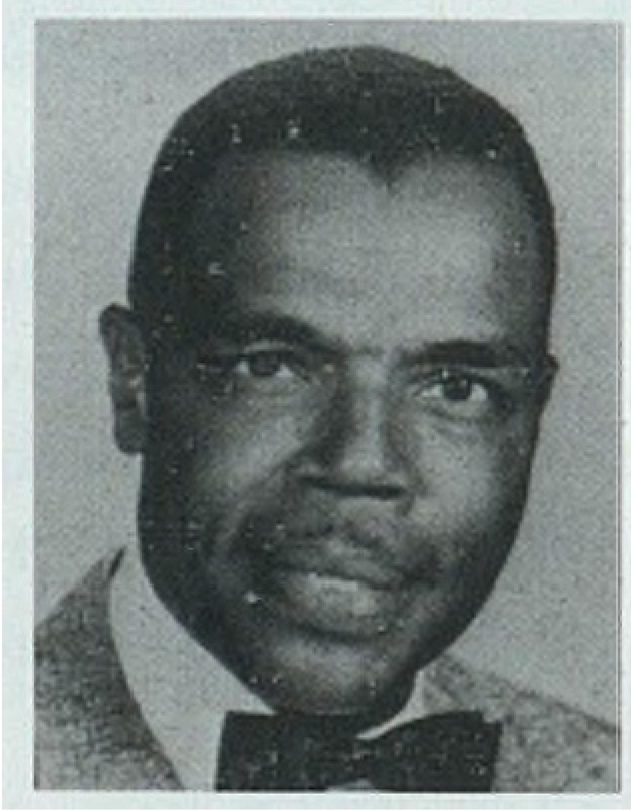
The school first operated in an old farmhouse. Parents formed a group called the United Parent Trustee Association (UPTA) and pooled their energies and resources to make the school a success. The student body was drawn from all parts of the county. Those children not within commuting distance boarded with families in the Loveville area. The UPTA bore the expense of buying and operating school buses; the group’s 1925 appeal to the St. Mary’s County Board of Education to take over the financial burden for buses was refused. In 1929, the County Board of Education agreed to receive the property on Route 5 north of Leonardtown known as Bucks Park or the Industrial School Property. On April 8, 1930, The Central Colored Industrial School, operating under the UPTA name, trans-ferred title of the 72-acre parcel to the Board of Education of St. Mary’s County for the sum of one dollar.

In 1932 two rooms were added to the school; these rooms were designed as space for a high school. However, the high school still did not materialize, and the black students of the county who desired a high school education continued to attend Pomonkey High School in Charles County, boarding in that area during the week and returning to St. Mary’s County

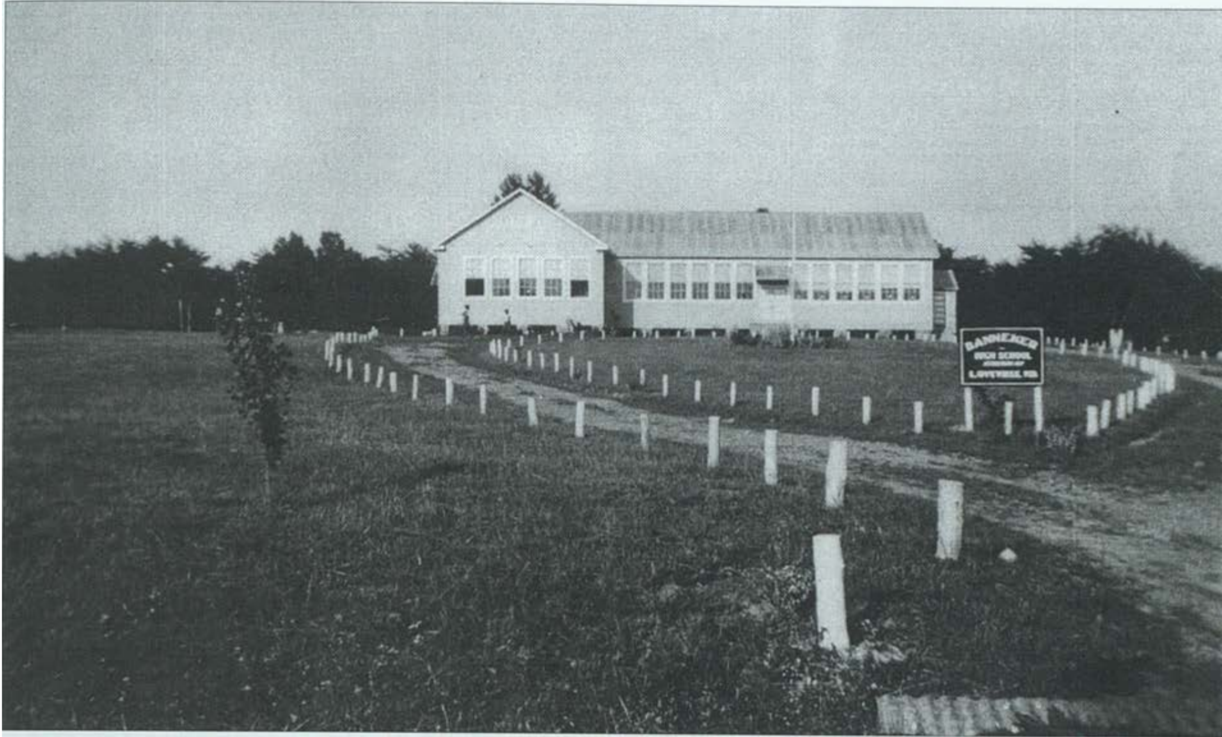
for the weekends. Finally, in 1934, Banneker High School began operation with Mr. James O. Wright and Miss Henderson as the first teachers. The first graduation took place in 1937. Dorothy Somerville Thomas and Theresa Parker Carter were the first graduates. Banneker school continued as a combination elementary and high school for African Americans until integration of St. Mary's County schools resulted in its becoming exclusively elementary.[19]

In high school, I do recall having a Miss Acey who was our homeroom teacher. She taught English. I got along with her very well. Miss Moore was the music teacher for, I think, through my whole four years of high school. I got along very, very well. Mr. Holmes was our ancient or what you call history teacher. He taught us about Macbeth, a lot of ancient history which in today's time, it's nice to know, but it really is not helping me out with the world today.

Mr. Smith, David Smith, he taught me quite a bit. And at that time, we were living on the farm, farming. He taught us about planting crops, extra things to do, how to get more yield out of what you plant. He also taught me carpentry which I attribute a lot of that to what I'm able to do today. We built furniture. We've talked about building homes. General repairs around the farmhouse which was remarkable for me. And planting a garden.



David H. Smith, Principal of Banneker School; 1965 Bluejay Yearbook.



Banneker School, 1938; Courtesy Banneker Alumni Association.

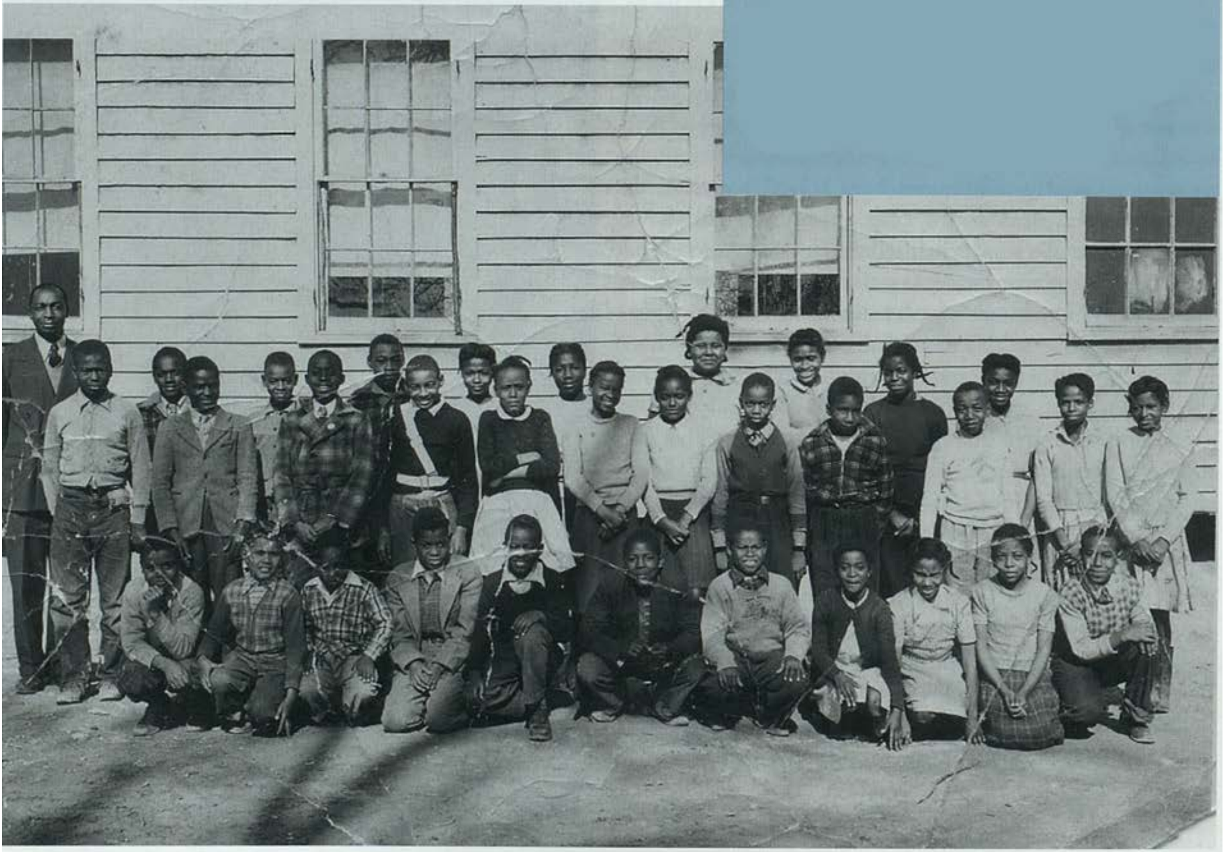
Mr. Ryan was the principal down there, and I remember him very well, especially when he got on his tangent and used to call all of us "silly boys."

My worst subject back then was Ancient History, which was not in our culture at that time. My favorite subjects or times at school was working in the agricultural shop. Over there, it allowed us to get out from behind the desk, do hands-on work, work in the carpentry shop, build chairs, lawn furniture. We would then sell the items as a project for the school. We planted sweet potato plants and were able to draw sweet potato plants to sell to the farmers and the people around. We were able to get out while we were at school to drive the school tractor around, and I would say that was exciting times for the economy and the jobs and the way everything was at that time. So at that point in time, that was the thing — being prepared to go into farming because I knew nothing about the cities, you know, desk jobs or government itself. Nowadays, the thing is computers. Kids in school today have the opportunity to go to work in the trades and work with computers, hands-on things. Back then, it was farming.

And even going back to my grammar school days, as far as the activity and so forth there, the nuns had us all out there as a group doing square dancing and the grapevine twist. I don't square dance today, but these were the things that you had to do back in those days coming along.

Joseph Lee Somerville Sr. (b. 1939)

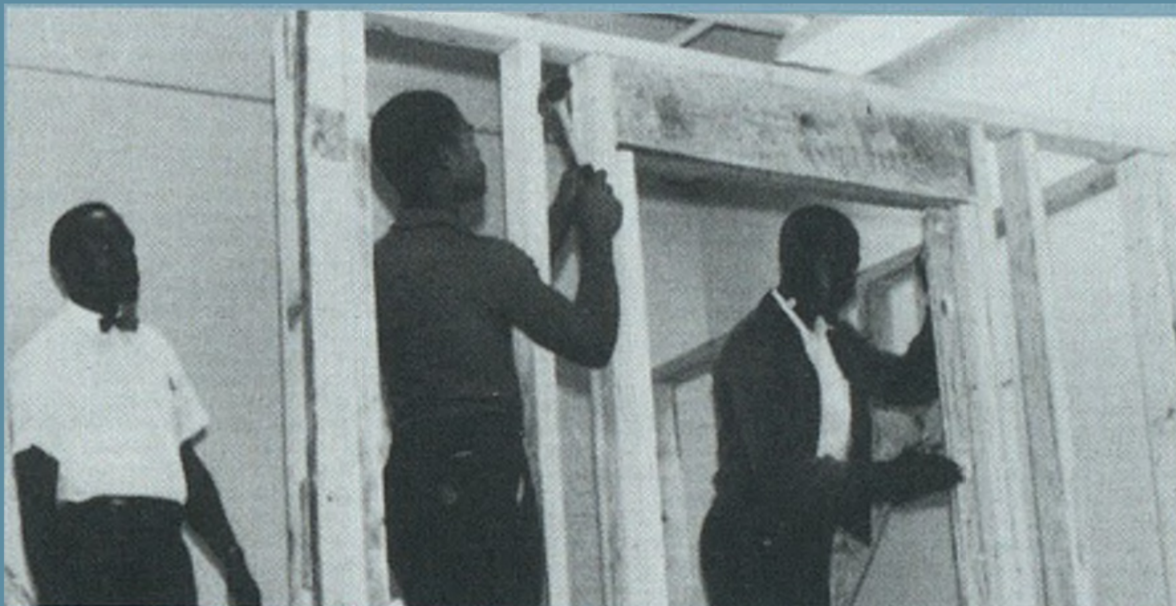
Joseph Lee Somerville, first African American sheriff in Maryland, ca. 1983. Courtesy Joseph Lee Somerville.

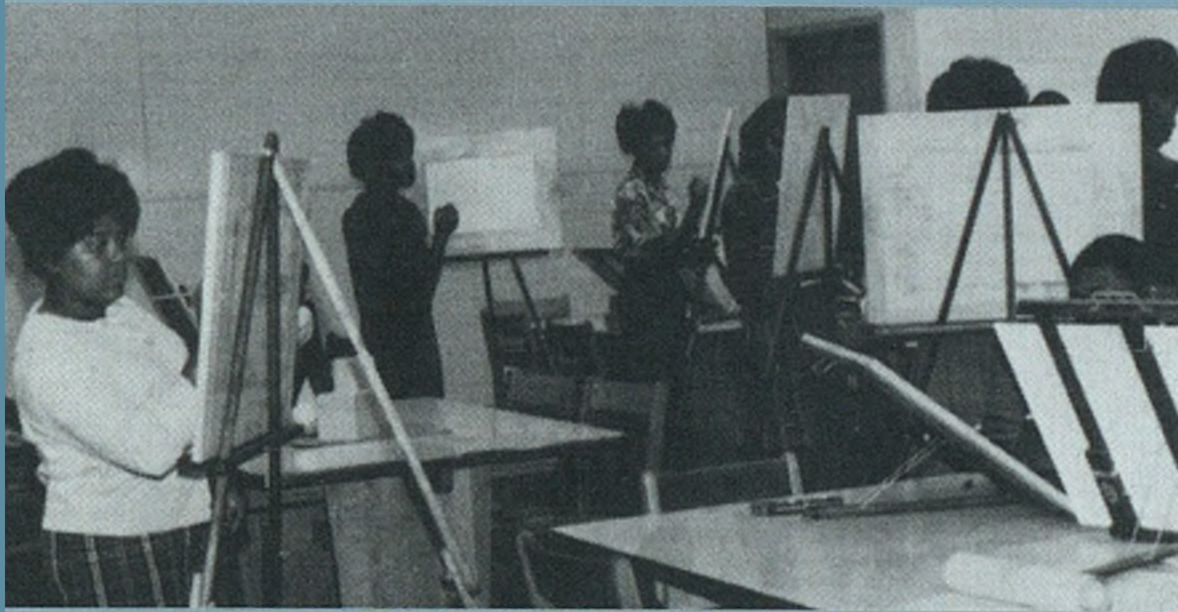


Clockwise from top left: Grace Blackwell, Banneker School Secretary; 1965 Bluejay Yearbook. Robert E. King, Jr., Superintendent of Schools; 1965 Bluejay Yearbook. Ralph Butler, Banneker Vice Principal; 1965 Bluejay Yearbook. Ralph Butler (teacher) with fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade classes, Banneker School 1949. Courtesy of the Butler family. Center: Ralph Waters, Supervisor of Instruction; 1965 Bluejay Yearbook.

Left to right: Dorothy Somerville, one of the first graduates of Banneker; Virginia Somerville Hall, who became principal of Bethune Elementary, (holding baby Carole); Theresa Somerville Thompson; Clara Foster. Courtesy of Sylvia Thompson Brown.

Typing class, Banneker School; All photos from 1965 Bluejay Yearbook unless noted otherwise..


Shop Class at Banneker School.



Art Class at Banneker School.

Shop Class at Banneker School.

Shop Class at Banneker School.

Jazz Band, Banneker School.

Senior members of the Bluejays Cheering Squad. Left to right: C. Fenwick, M. Young, G. Woodland, A. Baker.

[18] St. Mary's County Corporations Records, JAC1/42, in Hammett, p. 325.

[19] Hammett, p. 325.

. . . one lesson you could learn real fast . . .

Yes, I remember one of them, I think her name was Mrs. Spriggs. She was a little brown-skinned lady, she was really tiny and strict. Oh, my goodness, she would crack your fingers in a minute.

Today the children are harder to discipline. I even heard the teachers say that they are harder to teach since they can't hit the children these days. Those days if the teacher didn't hit you, your parents would.

Mary Marguerite Barnes Langley (b. 1920)

Miss Aggie Mack was my favorite teacher because anything you did that wasn't right, she would always whoop you for it. That way, you never forget the whooping so you [chuckle], you learn. One lesson you could learn real fast, she took your fingers and bent them back and hit you across the palm of your hand and that really hurt. So, you wouldn't forget.

Lewis Clifton Whalen (b. 1927)

One thing that I didn't like too much is that when report card time rolled around, the pastor at St. Joseph's Church would come down and hand out report cards through the whole school. And if you got a bad report card, Father Devaney would fan you with his cane. He had a white oak cane that he would really, literally bend you over in the hallway and paddle you. And you got another pad-dling when you got home for having a bad report card. A couple of times I did fall in that category, I know. I did, you know, put my head down and focus on my work and quite naturally got out of the rut that I was in.

Joseph Lee Somerville Sr. (b. 1939)

We had all the materials we needed. We had plenty of school books. We had to bring them home and do our homework. Make sure and take it back to the teachers because if we didn't she would punish us if we didn't do our homework. That was very important, doing homework. To punish you, you had to stand up to the wall with your face turned for a certain length of time. Um hum, you had to stand up.

Ida Delores Barnes Briscoe (b. 1936)

Your parents didn't have to tell you to do your chores or anything. You did them. And then of course after we came in, then our recreation was to get our homework. That was our recreation when we got inside, so we did that by lamplight.

I didn't get along too good with my brother. I'll tell you that. I can remember when we were going to school, there were some things that my mother told me not to do and I would do them. Like, she'd say, "Now, when you get to school, don't ride bicycles." And when I'd get to school, I'd jump on somebody's bicycle! [laughter] I'd jump on somebody's bicycle, and he would tell my mother. You know, most kids will sort of protect their sisters. They're not going to tell on them. But uh, uh, not him. [chuckle]

First Holy Communion at St. Joseph's Colored School, 1946. Seven-year-old Joseph Lee Somerville is standing in the center of the second row. Courtesy of Joseph Lee Somerville.

But you know, I never wanted to see him punished. I never wanted anything to happen to him. Because if he'd get into anything at school and Miss Ella [Thompson] would give me a note to take home to my mother, you know, I wouldn't give it to her. [chuckle] So consequently, in a couple of days I suppose, if she hadn't heard from my mother, then here she come. I can see her now! [chuckle]

And I thought, "Oh!" But, and of course, Leo would get punished for whatever he had done, and I'd get punished for not telling my mother, [laughter]! But, I never wanted to see him hurt. I never did.

Angela Marie Thomas Maddox (b. 1913)

Back then, people didn't argue with kids. What they aid, went. And like I said, I played hooky one day in school the whole time I was going. I went up there and I made sure I missed the bus. And I went home, and my grandfather never mentioned it, but he got the cross-cut saw out and hung me on the cross-cut saw until lunchtime. Well, we went in to eat and I'm

going to eat slow so that I can get a long break. When he got done eating, he said, “Come on , son, let’s go.”

“Well, I ain’t finished eating yet.”

“Yes, you are.”

And then, we went back out and we was on that cross- cut saw until dark. Then, I had all of my regular chores to do after that. And the next morning, I was there half-hour before the bus came. I wanted to make sure I didn’t miss the bus because that saw was still waiting. But, this is the way they got their point across. They didn’t argue. They didn’t do a lot of talking, but you knew they knew.

Clarence Carroll Smith (b. 1932)

Now, I showed off at school and they had the teacher’s meeting and the teacher would say, “Well, Sister talked-.” That’s me, Sister. “Sister talked in school today. She laughed loud.” Some of the children made me laugh loud. So the teacher makes me stand in the comer. And the teachers went and told Mama. Mama come home give me a whipping for that.

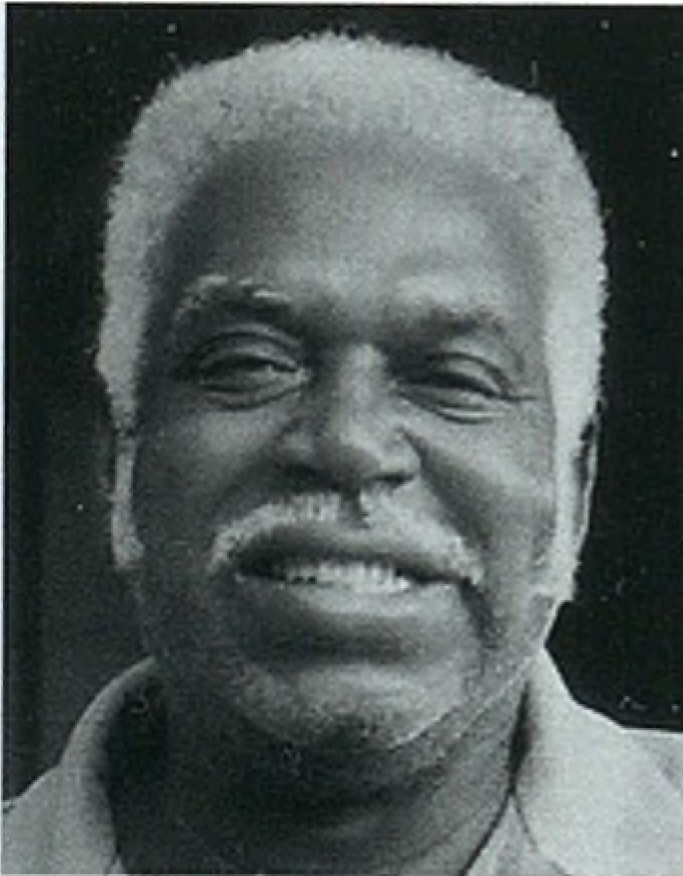
"Why you talking in school? Why you laughing loud in school?" [Three claps to indicate three hips]

The lick they gave me was worth it. It made a lady out of me, I know that, [chuckle]

Mary Agatha Coates Somerville (b. 1909)

Sister Helena used to punish me. I wouldn't even talk to her, you know. She'd keep me after school. Not knowing how or where I was going to get home or what, and I was the only child in school, you know, because she had me looking up these definitions and I didn't know which one to use, and she thought I should know which one to use. And I'd try one, and that's the wrong one. And so, she tried to get more out of me than what I [laughter] was capable of doing, I guess. Sister Helena got a lot of work out of me! [laughter] She was determined, you know, that I would get it. She was a good teacher.

Alice Rebecca Biscoe Bennett (b. 1915)



You didn’t wear your hat. None of that in school. You’d come into school with your hat on, Reverend Waters would tell you, “Come on up here," you know - go back in the back room ’cause you are going to get a beating. Any building with a roof on it, you never wore your hat. Oh my! I’ll tell you. Reverend Waters was a strict teacher, you know, everything had to be just right for him. And he didn’t play around. And I’ll tell you, he was a great experience to me ’cause I don’t even wear my hat in the house now. Broke me of the hats, [laughs] I declare.

At St. Inigoes School, the teacher, Miss Lorraine Austin [Carroll], met you at the door when you walked up to that school. And every one of the teachers that we had there would meet you at that door. She’d check you for your clothes you had on, your appearance, how you were looking. Are your shoes tied? And all that. My gracious, oh my. If your shoes wasn’t tied, stop right there. Stopped them right there. Tie your shoes up. If your shoes are not clean, they are not polished any. Polish them right there. And I’m telling you. She was hard on us. When you come in, she’d take you in the cloakroom, she’d check you up behind the ears and all, oh man, I say. When she pull on the ears, I declare, she would check you to see if you were bathed up and all that. And I’m going to tell you one thing, it worked out nice. You wasn’t going to school halfway, ’cause she’d make you get in there and wash up. I’ll tell you now.

Leon M. Briscoe (b. 1937)

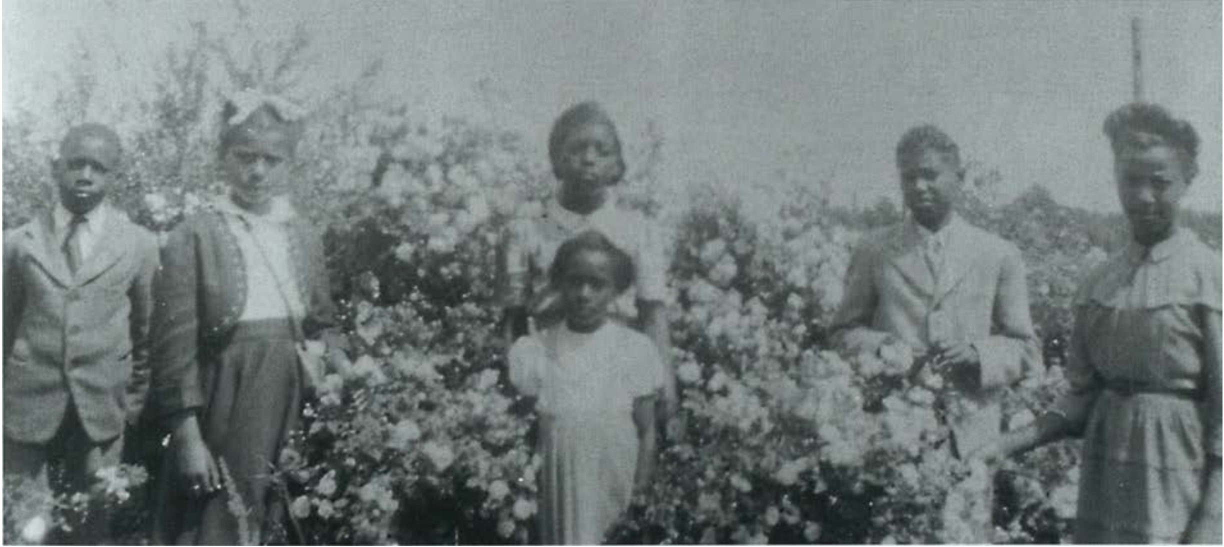
Cardinal Gibbons was very structured. He was a disciplinarian, Principal Daniel was. If you didn’t toe the line, you didn’t stay there, [laughs] He’d give you a bus ticket, go back where you came from, [laughs] Yeah, you sit and you talk to people and, of course, they can’t relive the same thing that you were living. But you think about those things and we thought as youngsters, that he was very harsh. But you look at it when you get a little older, he wasn’t all that harsh, just something that had to be done. And if you didn’t follow it, then you’d get a plane ticket or bus ticket or some kind of ticket [laughs] ’cause you left there. Yep. Yep, yep.

James Alexander Forrest Sr. (b. 1911)

After desegregation, black teachers might have been a little reluctant to discipline - to apply discipline to Caucasian students. Back then, you know, we're talking about... And, maybe some of the same thing on the other side. As a result, behaviors that previously probably would have been unacceptable in both environments - certainly in the black schools - didn't receive the attention that they needed.

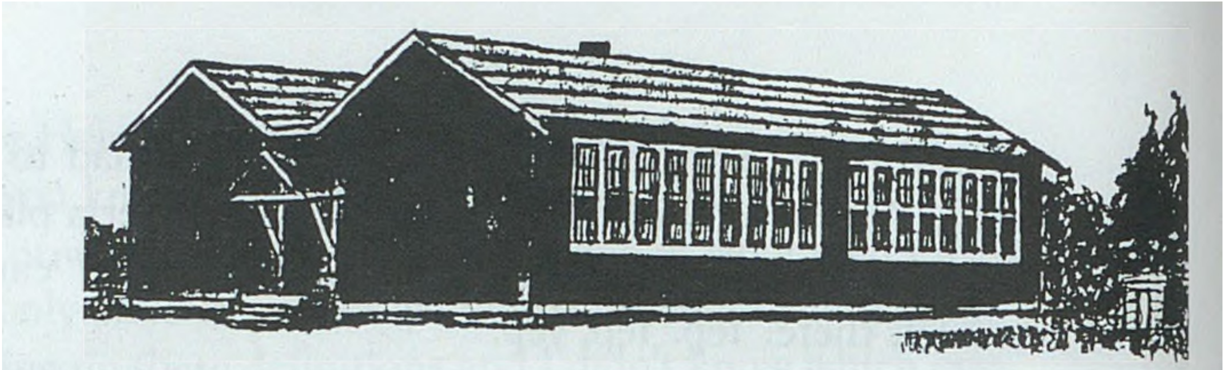
Then you also had circumstances where some of those students who tended to be behavior problems, would figure out that if they said certain things when they got home, okay? That all of a sudden the focus has shifted from their behavior to who they were having the problem with. So there were instances where students, both black and white, would take advantage of the fact that they had been disciplined by someone who was different than they, and, depending on the parent and what they had in mind as acceptable...

Harold Herndon (b. 1937)



Ida Delores Barnes [Briscoe], far right, with students from St. Peter Claver School. Courtesy Ida Barnes Briscoe.

. . . I went to Jarboesville . . .



Beginning in 1925-26, Jarboesville School is listed in school records as "School No. 1, District 8." The one-room building with outdoor toilet facilities was located on Route 235 in the area now known as Lexington Park. The first principal and teacher was Mrs. Marie Clayton Smith. The original name of the school was derived from the community of Jarboesville, which was established by the Jarboe family and located on land that is currently a part of the Patuxent River Naval Air Station and the Tulagi Square area of Lexington Park.

In 1935, River Springs School, located in the seventh district, was taken by barge to Jarboesville and placed on land donated by Mr. Thomas Harris. This second Jarboesville School, located in the vicinity of the first schoolhouse, opened its doors in 1935 and offered first- and second-year high school. There were thirty-eight students enrolled in these two classes with students in the second year having attended Banneker School's first-year high school program. Mr. Ralph S. Waters was appointed principal for that first year.

In the fall of 1936, Mr. Julian A. Meares became principal and remained in the position until 1962. With each succeeding year an additional class was added until Jarboesville School became an eleven-year program approved by the Maryland State Department of Education.

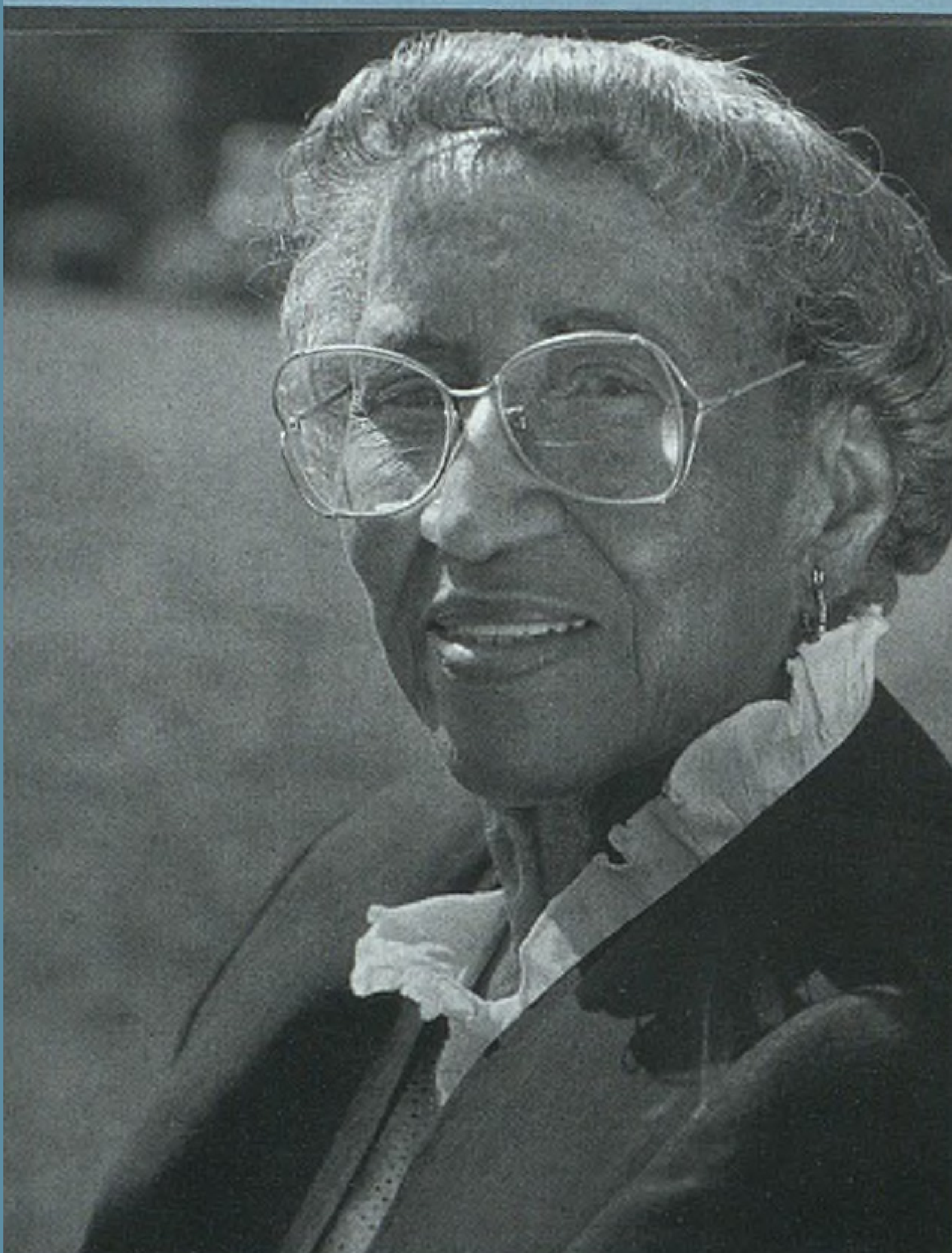
Seven students graduated in the first class in 1939. The school continued to grow from 1939 through 1947, with varying sizes of

graduating classes ranging from five to fifteen students. During the same period, two additional rooms were added and the curriculum expanded to include home economics and agriculture.

By 1947, the student body had outgrown the building. The Board of Education then secured from the Navy a dormitory building in the Carver Heights Community and converted it to Jarboesville III School. Shortly after, the school program began to change from the 7-4 system (seven elementary grades and four years of high school) to the 6-3-3 system (six elementary grades, three years of junior high school, and three years of senior high school). This transitional period was completed in 1952.

The class of 1952 was the first class to graduate from a twelve-year program of schooling. The growth of the school was evident in curriculum, facilities, staff, and many other areas during the years from 1952-61. In 1954, Ms. Marie Joe Browne became secretary and was an asset to the school.

In September 1958, the school was housed in a new modem structure and was renamed the George Washington Carver School, in honor of an outstanding African American scientist and scholar, Dr. George Washington Carver. By 1961, the school had grown to the extent that a student could pursue a course of study in any one of three curricula (academic, commercial, or general) with a full program of offerings in each curriculum. The class of 1961, which represented the largest graduating class in the history of the school, had a distribution of eight academic diplomas, two commercial diplomas, and eleven general diplomas. In addition, the school provided services of guidance counseling, library facilities, a cafeteria hot lunch program, and a rapidly developing program in athletics.



Marie Clayton Smith. Photo by Celia Escobar.

E. Jerry Williams, principal of George Washington Carver School. From the yearbook, The Eagle, 1964.

Brent Thompson, vice-principal of George Washington Carver School. Courtesy of the Thompson family.

In 1962, Mr. E. Jerry Williams became principal, and Mr. Brent A. Thompson became vice principal of George Washington Carver School. In September 1964, the school became the George Washington Carver Junior-Senior High School, no longer having the elementary school. The students in grades 1-5 were transferred to Park Hall Elementary School, under the leadership of Mr. Brent A. Thompson as principal.

Carver School graduated its last high school class in May 1966 and was then converted into an integrated junior high school. In the fall of 1966, Edward Fitzgerald was the principal.

George Washington Carver Classes of 1953, 1954, and 1955. Front Row (left to right): Ray Jordan, Joseph Smith, Rita Armstrong, Delia Jordan, Mr. Julian A. Meares (teacher), Annabelle Clyburn, Mamie White, Joseph Statesman, John Groves. Back Row: James Taylor, Bert Hawkins, Louis Purnell, Hilda Barnes, Rudolph Robinson, Virginia Johnson, Donald Moore, Marshall Brooks, Joseph Ball, Willie Taylor. Courtesy of Reunion 2000 Exhibit.

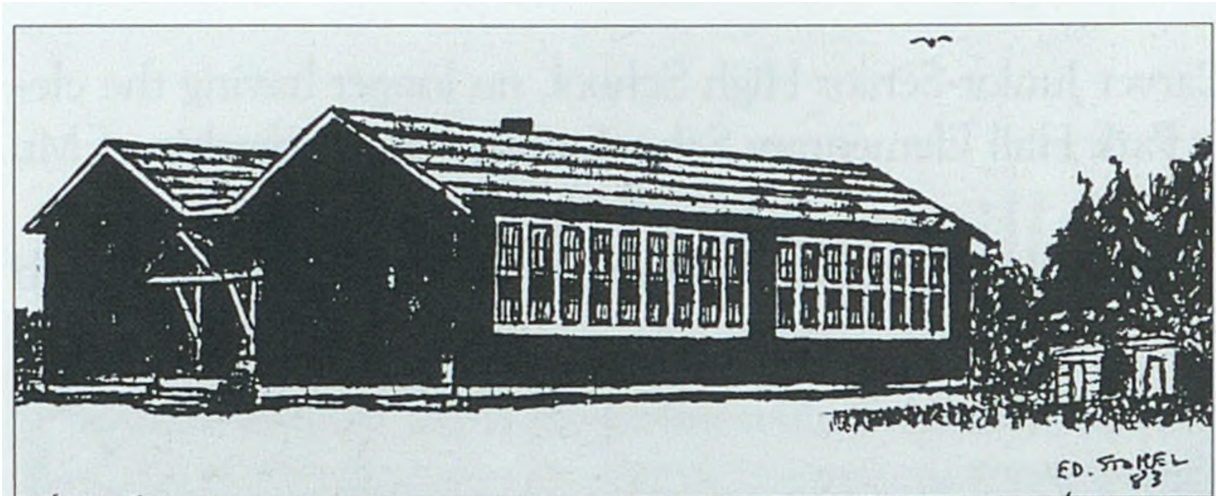
Grace Meares, from the George Washington Carver yearbook, The Eagle, 1964.

I went to Jarboesville - grades six through twelve. I graduated from Jarboesville High School, um hum, Jarboesville, in 1949.

It was located on the Base. It stayed there for a while. When they put that gate up, I'm sure they destroyed the building. So the school was moved across the street at that point.

We had two teachers for all of those grades, a husband and wife, Julian and Grace Meares. And then later he was the principal. Mr. Meares taught math and science and his wife taught language or English and social studies. I think they called it civics at that time. Those two did such a great job. They really did. I did have a home economics teacher. And there was a man who was the "ag" at that time - the agriculture teacher. I felt completely competent with two teachers.

When I graduated there were sixteen of us. When I went to college, I met up with children who had come from large schools with many teachers, and we were able to compete or hold our own, if I could use such a phrase, in spite of all of their numbers of teachers and what have you.

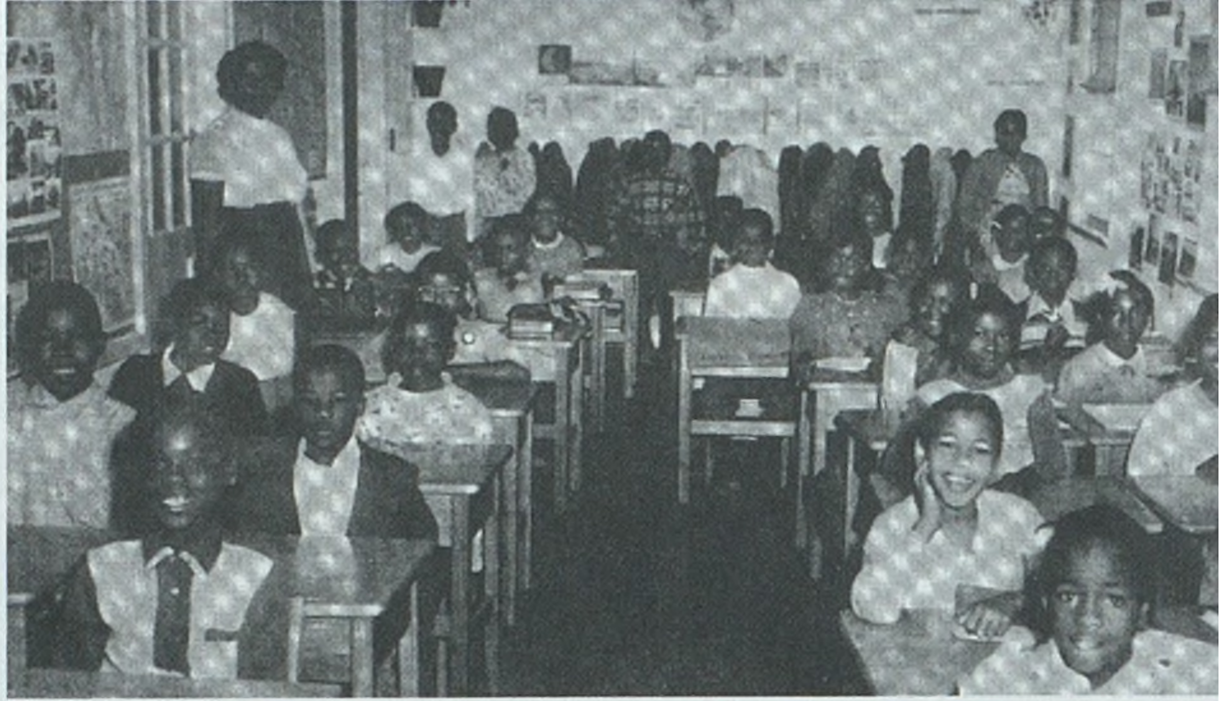


The second Jarboesville School, drawing by Ed Stokel. Reprinted by permission.

George Washington Carver School faculty. Seated (left to right): Mrs. Dolores T. Fleming, Mrs. Maryann Williams, Mrs. Ruth B. Portee, Miss Mary S. Smith, Mr. Julian A. Meares (principal), Miss Beatrice V. Wingate, Mrs. Viola T. Cutchember, Miss Mary E. Walker, Mrs. Grace F. Meares. Second Row: Mrs. Carrie T. Statesman, Mrs. Mary M. Biscoe, Mrs. Beatrice B. Jackson, Mrs. Mary B. Johnson, Miss Gladys J. Conley, Mrs. Elvare S. Gaskin, Miss Ruth E. Hendricks, Mrs. Della G. Bryant, Mrs. Mary B. Little. Third Row: Mr. E. Jerry Williams, Mr. Lawrence Pinckney,

Mr. Brent A. Thompson, Mr. John T. Bradford, Sr., Mr. Seldon Murchison, Mr. James R. Brown, Mr. Norman Moore. Not shown: Miss Ollelian Mitchell, Miss Helen L. Turner, Miss Gloria E. Cobbs, Mr. Wilford Hines. Photo courtesy of Dedication and Open House, George Washington Carver School, Lexington Park, Maryland, Sunday, March 27, 1960. Original photo of the faculty from Mrs. Dolores T. Fleming.

Jarboesville school from the yearbook, Carverette, 1957.



George Washington Carver School, grade 4 B. First Row (front to rear): Nathaniel Roach, George Awkward, Juanita Gough, Robert Gaskin, Pearline Dorsey. Second Row: Purnell Johnson, William Glenn, Joseph Taylor, Sandra Hill, Wilford Williams, Anne Awkward. Third Row: Rosemary Caple, Dorothy Holt, Helen Shorter, Evangeline Blackwell, Sandra Anderson. Fourth Row: Ellen Morgan, Shirley Gissendaner, Charlotte Reed, Henson Whalen. Sitting-First Row (right rear, left to right): Rufus Butler, Charles Purnell, Charles Russ. Sitting-Second Row (right rear, left to right): Joyce Brown, Carolyn Walker, Betty Ann Dyson. Standing- Rear: Robert Morgan, Leonard Lee, Miss Mary E. Walker (teacher), Arthur Robinson, Romaine Cutchember. Absent: Clarence Biscoe, Alfred Jordan. From the yearbook, Carverette, 1957.

George Washington Carver School sixth grade. Left (front to back): Avon Dyson, Francis Holt, Paul Holt, Joseph P Barnes, Annie Belle Moore, Margaret Dyson, Herbert Courtney, Joseph Dyson. Second row: Barbara Dove, Agnes Reed, Robert Robinson, Reno Johnson, Edward Glenn, Rosalee Taylor, Alice Greenwell, John Griffin, John Day. Third row: Odell Harris, Venzenna Thompson, Thelma Bryan, James White, Pearl Cullison, James V. Whalen, Elfreda Talbert, Shirley Briscoe, Edward Nelson. Fourth row (right): Anne Milburn, Betty Blackistone, Mary Dyson, Louise Butler, Joanne Holly, David Jackson, Catherine Kelly, Vernon Barber, Bronte Green, Allean Woodland. Standing: Miss C. J. Jameson (teacher). From the yearbook, Carverette, 1957.

George Washington Carver School, grade 5 A. Left row (front to rear): Ronald Blackwell, Lorenzo Nelson, Charles Ball, Rose Marie White, Charles Webb, JoAnne Johnson, Joyce Simmons, Vincent Cutchember. Inside row: Margaret Gladden, Thomas Biscoe, James Bryan, Mary Day, Henderson Spence, George Whalen, Janice Talbert, Louise Griffin. Right row: Leonard Johnson, LeVore Brunson, Barbara Glover, Ismae Johnson, Michael Milburn, Dwight Harris, Marion Barnes, Regina Dickens, Viola Jackson. Standing: Mrs. Della G. Bryant (teacher). From the yearbook, Carverette, 1957.

School bus in front of George Washington Carver School, ca. 1959. Bus drivers: (Standing, left to right) Guffrie Smith, Myrtle Butler, Raymond Hewlett, Robert Gough. Photo courtesy of the Dedication and Open House, George Washington Carver School, Lexington Park, Maryland, Sunday, March 27, 1960.

Top: Julian A. Meares, principal of George Washington Carver School. From the yearbook, Carverette, 1957. Middle: Dolores Fleming, from the George Washington Carver yearbook, The Eagle, 1964. Bottom: Ruth Portee, courtesy of the Portee family.

George Washington Carver School, grade 2 B. First Row (left to right): Faith Baldwin, Diana Ball, Russell Hayward, Jr. Second Row: Barbara Dyson, Charles Day, Leroy Dorsey, Mary Toon. Third Row: John Taylor, Willie E. Lennon, Clarence Simuel, Vernell Hill. Fourth Row: Stanley Langley, Gladys Glenn, Frank Dorsey, Louis Jordan. Fifth Row: Lovel Grimes, Maxine Shelton, Annie Fenwick, Marshall Fenwick. Sixth Row: Paul Dyson, Lula Mae Johnson, Robert Jones. Seventh Row: Sylvester Nolan, Leroy Swailes,. Standing (left to right): Mrs. Carrie T. Statesman (teacher), Clyde Courtney, David Creasey, Cecelia Lawrence, Joseph Kelly, Alfonso Hawkins. From the yearbook, Carverette, 1957.

Commercial Club at George Washington Carver School, from the yearbook, The Eagle, 1964.

Left: Chemistry class at George Washington Carver School, from the yearbook, The Eagle, 1964.

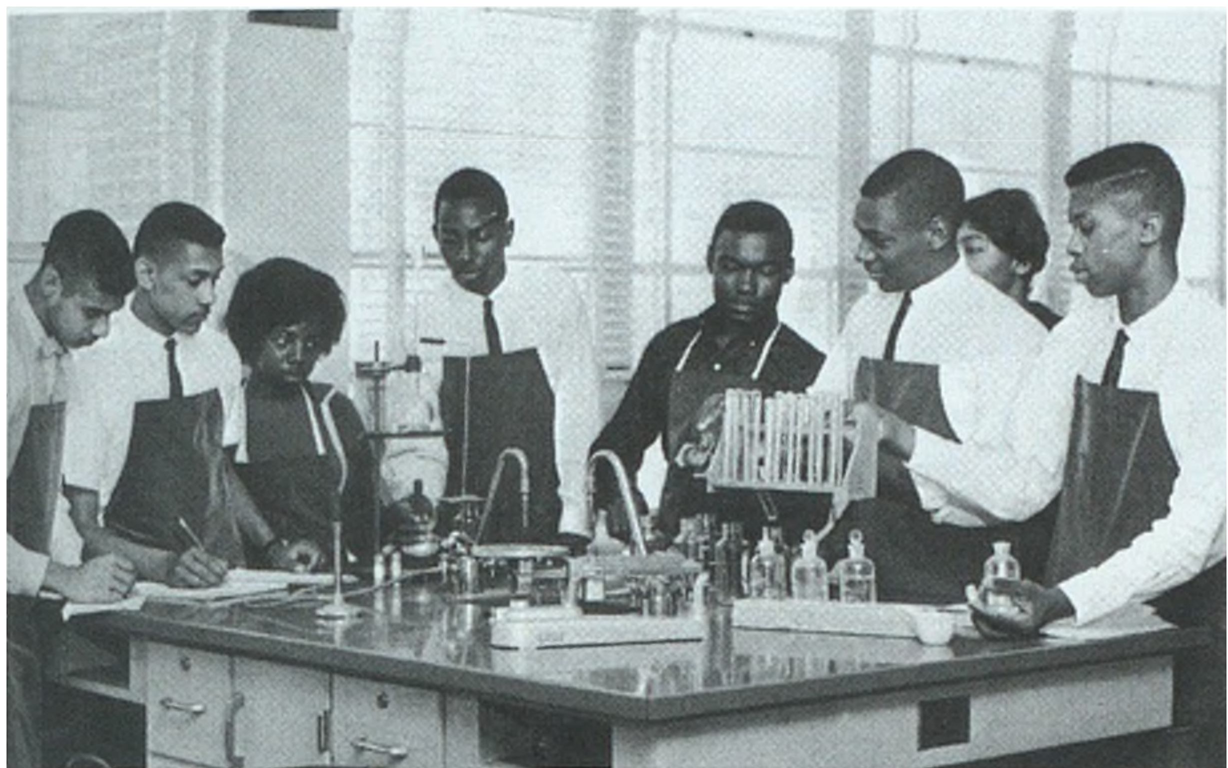
Carrie Statesman, from the George Washington Carver yearbook, The Eagle, 1964.

Miss Marie J. Brown, secretary, 1957. From the Carver School yearbook, The Carverette.

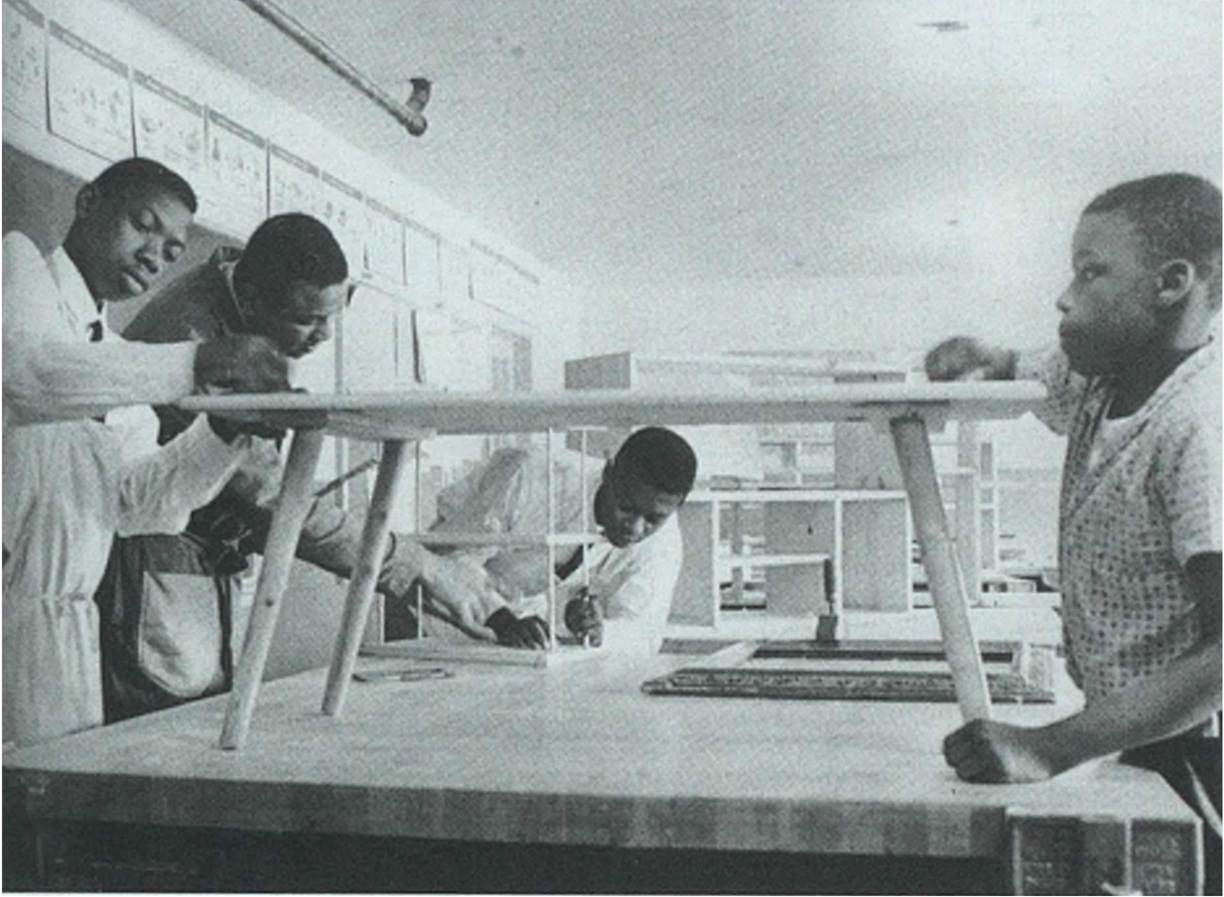
Mrs. Bernette Hewlett serves lunch to Wilton Grymes. Photo courtesy: Dedication and Open House, George Washington Carver School, Lexington Park, Maryland, Sunday, March 27, 1960.

George Washington Carver School grade 4 A. Left row (front to rear): Clement Butler, James Dove, James Dorsey, Fred Glover, Wiley Harley, Zerita Smith, Jacqueline Hargis, Vera Berry, Lewis Gilliard, Juanita Smith,

Mary Kelly, Martha Ball, Thelma Dyson, Melvin Butler. Right row (front to rear): Clarence Morgan, James Berry, June Thurman, Willie Hutcherson, Carroll Harris, Shirley Johnson, Gloria Bryan, Lessie Baldwin, Ruth Barber, Austine Dyson, Joseph Chase, Elaine Day, Leon Day. Standing: Mrs. Elvare S. Gaskin (teacher).



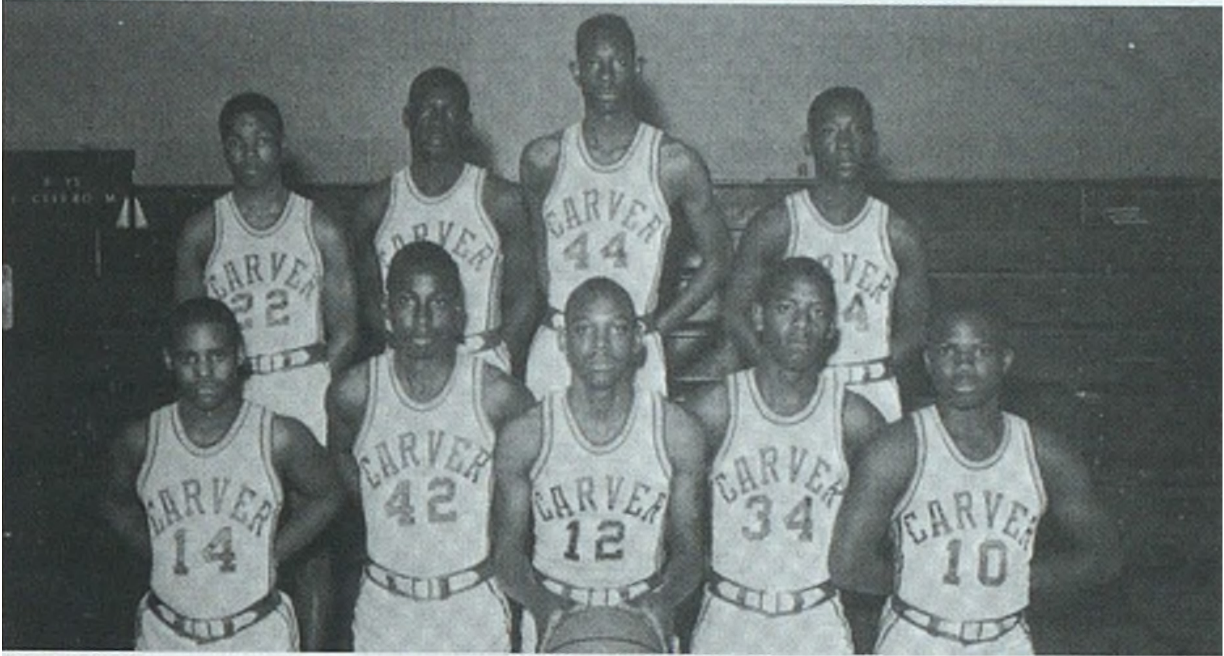
Chemistry class at George Washington Carver School, from the yearbook, The Eagle, 1964.



Industrial Arts class at George Washington Carver School, from the yearbook, The Eagle, 1964.

Cafeteria Workers, George Washington Carver School. Left to right: Mrs. Bernette Hewlett (manager), Mrs. Cora Barbara (assistant), and Miss Betty Rothwell (helper). From the yearbook, The Eagle, 1964.

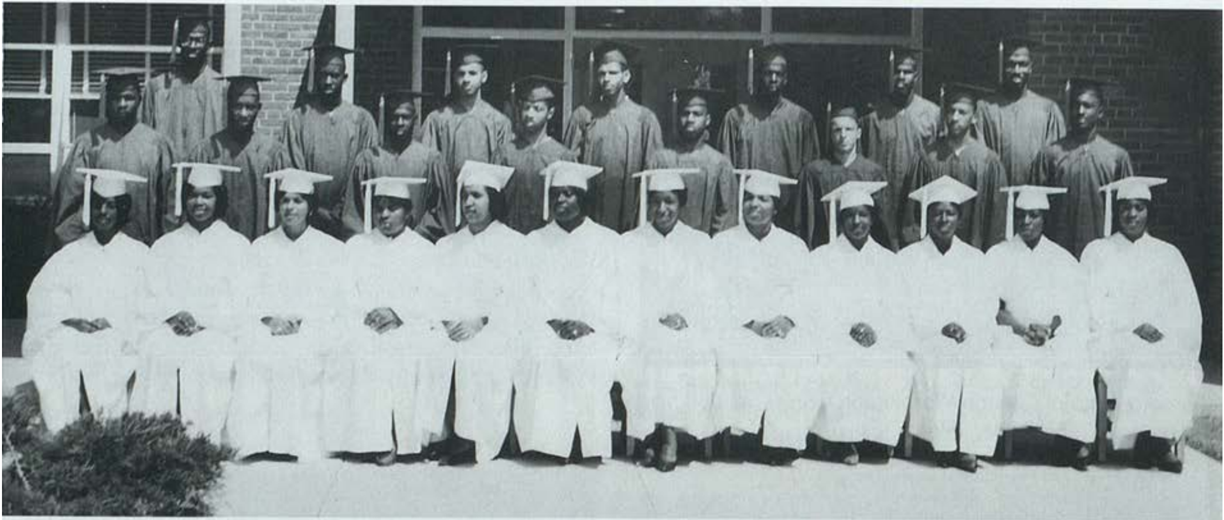
Varsity Cheerleaders. Center: Dorothy Peppers. Left to right: Annie Price, Sharon Barnes, Patricia Walker, Agnes Berry, Elaine Biscoe, Gladys Johnson, Carolyn Walker. Not pictured: Mrs. Maggie Thompson (coach). From the George Washington Carver yearbook, The Eagle, 1964.



Varsity Basketball Team. Kneeling (left to right): Robert Gaskin, Andrew Brown, Wilford Williams, Sherman Calloway (captain), Joseph Chase. Back row: John Holland, Reno Johnson, Donnie La Rue, Leonard Johnson, Not pictured: Mr. Joseph Parker (coach). From the George Washington Carver yearbook, The Eagle, 1964.

George Washington Carver School Band. First Row (left to right): Robert Thomas, Willie Lennon, Robert Gaskin, John Lancaster, John Bradford.

Second Row: Shirley Lancaster, Deanna Moore, Sharon Barnes, Annie Price, Alberta Smith, Charles Fobbs, Wilford Williams, Phyllis Bradford, Robert Moore, Calvin Thomas. Third Row: Patricia Stanley, Herman Beard, Heartic Taylor, Russell Hayward, Garry Holland, Lloyd Brothers, James Robinson, Thurman Davis, Donnie La Rue, Alfonso Hawkins, Mr. Harold Herndon (Director). From The Eagle, 1964.



1964 Graduation Class. From the George Washington Carver yearbook, The Eagle, 1964.

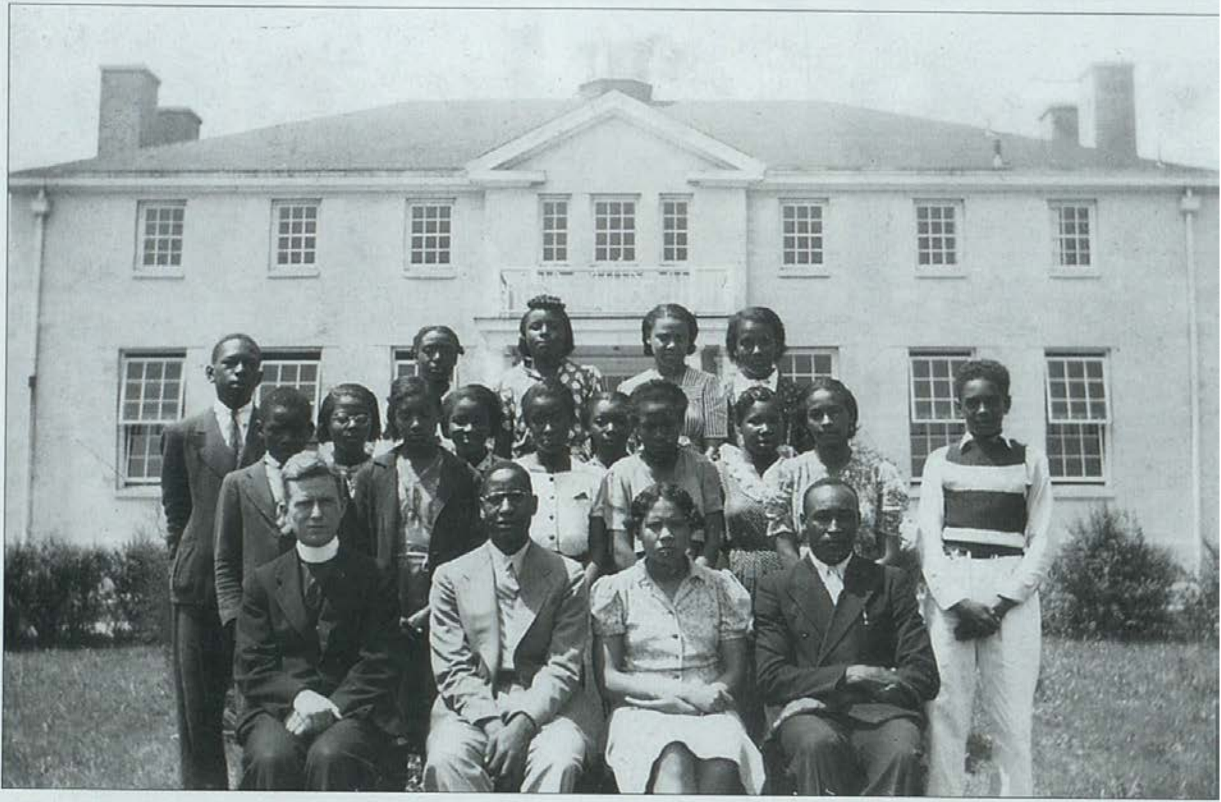
Junior Varsity Cheerleaders. Center: Patricia Price. Left to right: Ann Barber, llene Walker, Delma Johnson, Elnora Cumberlander, Diana Ball, Tomena Fisher, Beverly Watts. Not pictured: Mrs. Maggie Thompson (coach). From the George Washington Carver yearbook, The Eagle, 1964.

Modem Dance Group, George Washington Carver School. Left to right: Carolyn Hawkins, Elaine Briscoe, Shirley Lancaster. Center: John Lancaster. From The Eagle, 1964.

1960s band uniform from George Washington Carver School. UCAC file Photo.

George Washington Carver School Basketball Squad. Standing, left: Henry Barnes. First row (left to right): Cleveland Moore, Frank Smith, Matthew Harley. Second row: John D. Johnson, Charles Glover, Benjamin Fobbs. Standing, right: Mr. Emanuel Butler(coach). From the yearbook, Carverette, 1957.

. . . it began as a Catholic high school . . .



Graduating class of 1940. Photo by Alice Bennett.

In 1924, Roman Catholics embarked on a mission to provide agricultural and industrial education for African American youth in southern Maryland. Opening ceremonies dedicating Gibbons Hall on October 24, 1924 were attended by a large crowd and presided over by Father John LaFarge, Principal Victor Daniel, and Assistant Principal Constance Daniel.

Its founders defined three primary purposes for the Institute: to combine Tuskegee-style industrial and agriculture al education with Catholic education, to promote a sound understanding and love of the Catholic faith to make African American youth leaders in their communities and the church, and to serve as a "community school" for the people of southern Maryland.

When the Institute opened, there was no public high school for African Americans in St. Mary's County, and the Catholic elementary school, St. Peter Claver, had existed only since 1916. A combination of poor educational opportunity, poverty, and a lack of physicians and nurses caused St. Mary's County to have the highest death rate and most primitive agricultural methods of any county in the United States in the 1920s.

With the blossoming of the Harlem Renaissance, art education at the Institute used African American literature, history, and music as the foundation of its liberal arts curriculum. It made agricultural and health education priorities. The Daniels worked to show that the denial of civil rights and justice had direct bearing on the physical, mental, and spiritual health of African Americans.

Although lack of funding forced a temporary closure of the Institute in 1934, during the Great Depression, it was reopened in 1938, and the success of its programs was already evident in the improving standard of living in St. Mary's County. The Institute closed its doors in 1967, and the building was torn down in 1972.

St. Peter Claver

Father Abraham Emerick founded the first St. Peter Claver Church and school for African Americans in 1916. In 1928, St. Peter Claver school burned to the ground. It was rebuilt and opened the following year. In 1965, it was closed down, but the building still stands.

Cardinal Gibbons Institute was begun as a Catholic high school by the Jesuit, John LaFarge, to provide education for people in southern Maryland. The Oblate Sisters were there, I guess, about twenty years before in the grade school with Father McKenna, and it was in 1951 that Cardinal Gibbons released its lay people as principals and teachers, and we came in. Sister Charles was one with me - Sister Paul came after I left in '59. And during that time we had Cardinal Gibbons and St. Peter Claver School staffed by the Oblate Sisters. We took over from lay people, especially teachers from New Orleans who were the staff at that time.

Cardinal Gibbons at that time was accredited by the State of Maryland and also Catholic University. We had to give the children tests from both the State and Catholic University, and fortunately the children did very well. And one of the first graduates was Betty Gant who died in 1990. She kept in touch with me the whole time. And Thelma Barnes was among the first graduates.

The schools depended for support on the Jesuits and the contacts they had because Father Robb and Father McKenna and Father Rock, they had outside people they could depend on. The challenge was to keep enrollment

going. And we did that by having a bus. Mr. Eli Gant would go down to Valley Lee and to California and bring the children to Ridge every morning.

In the beginning, Cardinal Gibbons was a boarding school, and what we called the gym was their dormitory and the sisters slept up there where the Carrolls live — in those apartments up there. Changing from a boarding school to a day school meant there were rooms for activities. And one of the good activities was the athletic program. The first year Father McKenna was there, and Father Reed came and spent a year. And then Father Rock came and that's when things picked up.

Tuskegee history class photographed by Francis Benjamin Johnston, ca. 1906. The Tuskegee Institute was the model for the Cardinal Gibbons Institute. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Father Rock was actually very interested in the athletic program as well as the educational program. He made ways for teams to get to the games. Many games were played at Cardinal Gibbons, but when there was

an outside game he made a bus possible for proper access. He made a place for projects to see that children got outside activities. So there would be trips to Washington and trips to New York. And another thing was the theater program, and we got prizes for coming to Washington and presenting our plays.

Some of the students went on to college and they were sent to Washington and Georgetown. So I can say that as they graduated, they went on to better themselves. They were able to measure up to other schools, academically, athletically, physically. They became a real whole body - an interested student body and teachers.

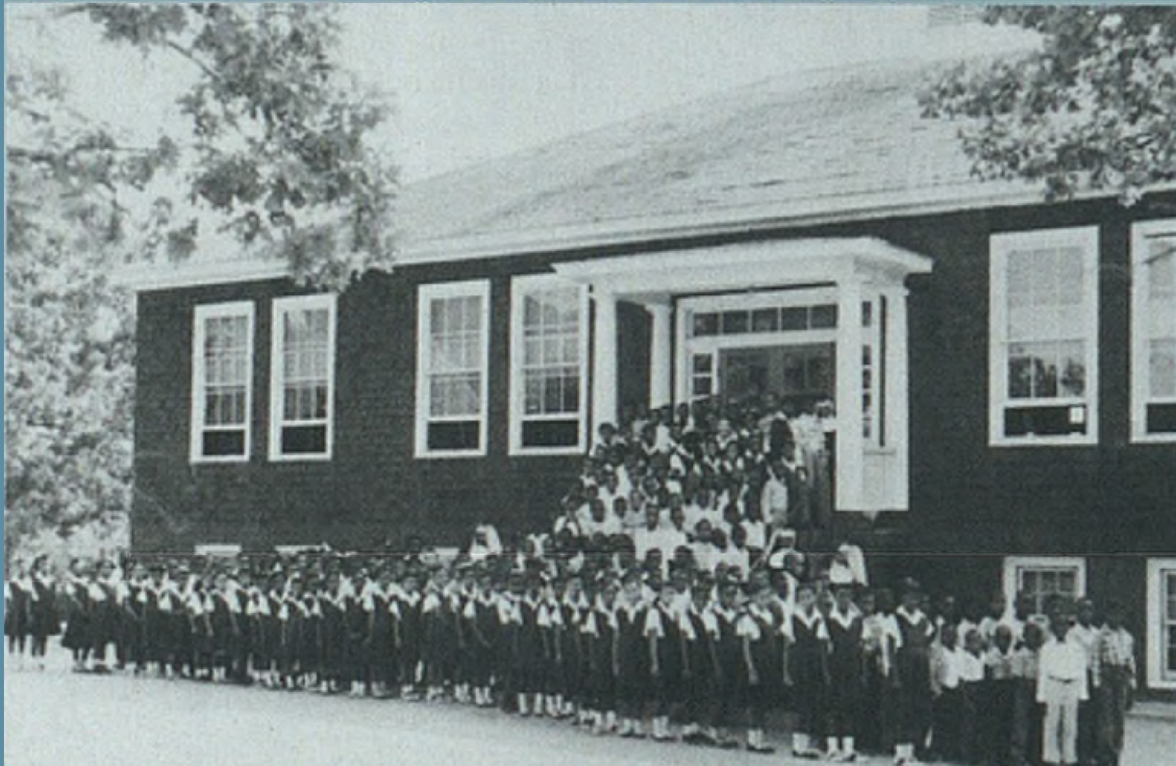
We tried not to let it be a country school. We tried to keep it on a par with any schools - Lexington Park and the like. I think we found out what their course of study was and we compared it. We really tried to have our course of study from what Catholic University required. We tried to encourage the students who wanted to succeed. And that's why we had different sessions, the secretarial work, as well as the academic. And we tried to make it so they could become worthwhile, so therefore we had to provide activities that would instill in them those desires.

I loved the people. They were very effective and very cooperative. I was supposed to have been re-assigned the year before. So when it came the next year [1959], I wasn't surprised. Because that year I was supposed to go, Father Rock had the parents praying.

Mother Mary Anselm Bentley, O. S. E (b. 1909)
First Religious Principal -
Cardinal Gibbons High School,
St. Inigoes, Maryland

Mother Mary Anselm Bentley, O. S. R (b. 1909) First Religious Principal - Cardinal Gibbons High School, St. Inigoes, Maryland.

Victor Hugo Daniel, first lay principal of Cardinal Gibbons Institute and his wife, Constance Daniel, assistant principal. Courtesy of St. Peter Claver Church.



St. Peter Claver School group photo, late 1950s. Courtesy of St. Peter Claver Church.

James Alexander Forrest Sr. (b. 1911)

Ida Barnes Briscoe (b. 1936)

I started my schooling in a Catholic setting down at St. Peter Claver. In those days they called it the primer. That was the name of the first grade then. You got your A B Cs and your time tables, basics. The teacher that I knew best was named Cecelia Biscoe. And I had another teacher named Lula Harper from up around Charlotte Hall area. I went on from that school to another scout school and was taught by the sisters. I remember one of them was named Sister Innocentia Holt.

Then when I got into eighth or ninth grade, I went to Cardinal Gibbons Institute. We didn’t think it was anything spectacular because it was the only high school in the area for black children in the early 1930s. That school was opened in 1924, I think, September 1924. There were no other high schools then for black children. We had children from New York, Boston, Chicago, all around. I think it was really an experimental school. It was basically an industrial school for farmers to be taught how to understand the land a little better, raise better crops, and be more productive. I remember some of the teachers. Most of them were from Louisiana: Duchaux, Marchan, Parnell, Ives. Those were some of the names of the teachers. It was a boarding school, so you stayed right on the campus. They had a dormitory for boys and a dormitory for girls.

We had a gentleman come in from Tuskegee, Alabama by the name of Victor Daniel who was the principal. And his system was to educate you in a different way. For example, take raising crops. Instead of planting the same thing in the same field every year, he taught us to rotate your crops. Diversification. That was his philosophy. And in those days it served a good purpose ’cause our parents had been used to raising the same crops in the same field year after year. It wore the field out. Daniel said, “Look, we’ve got to change.” And he taught us a different way of life. He had brought a new era of living in St. Mary’s County for black people. And a lot of us changed.

Daniel wanted us to look at some of the finer things in life like the arts and science. He told us about Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and all those philosophers. He wanted you to broaden your scope of knowledge. We studied quite a bit about Negro history: men who had made a mark in life, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Phyllis Wheatley, and, my gosh, a whole host of others that I recall very well. I had a lot of interest in black history. And he gave me that. He opened that little window. He said, “There is people in your race that has made progress in life. You ought to know about them and know their history.” W. E. B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington, Mordecai Johnson, president of Howard University. He wanted you to know that these people had made certain strides in life; they are not the buffoons that a lot of people thought you were. And he impressed you with that.

Daniel said, “You can do anything you want to do, if you put your mind to it. I can prove that to you by this man, black as tar as they said but he’s well informed, he’s educated; and he knows certain things - he studied

philosophy - studied the arts. And it doesn't make him any better, just broadens his knowledge to the world."

It was so important. And I don't know, I think maybe sometime we - some of us have lost that desire to be informed of certain activities that we made progress in. See, we've done a lot of things that've not been recorded - a lot of inventions. And I think we need to know that and that gives you a pride in your race. Look, there's a man just like you, same color same features and everything, and look what he's done; he's made progress in life. Instead of being a nobody, he becomes somebody.

James Alexander Forrest Sr. (b. 1911)

All my family is from St. Mary's County, right here at home, um hum. I went to school at St. Peter Claver. We had all nuns teaching us. We was rose up under the Oblate Sisters of Providence. And I used to like to get to school 'cause we always had our prayers first. After each class we'd always pray when we come back in from recess.

We wore uniforms. We would get in line and walk all the way over to the high school for lunch. Had a very large kitchen in the basement. Mrs. Laura Bennett used to cook; she was the cook there at the time.... It was just wonderful.

St. Peter Claver classroom, late 1950s. Photo by Alice Bennett.

When I got over at Cardinal Gibbons high school, we had ladies - different teachers [not nuns] from different places. So that really made a big difference in my life. I had been so used to the nuns teaching me. It just wasn't the same. They had some patience but not as much patience as our nuns did. I learned to go along with them.

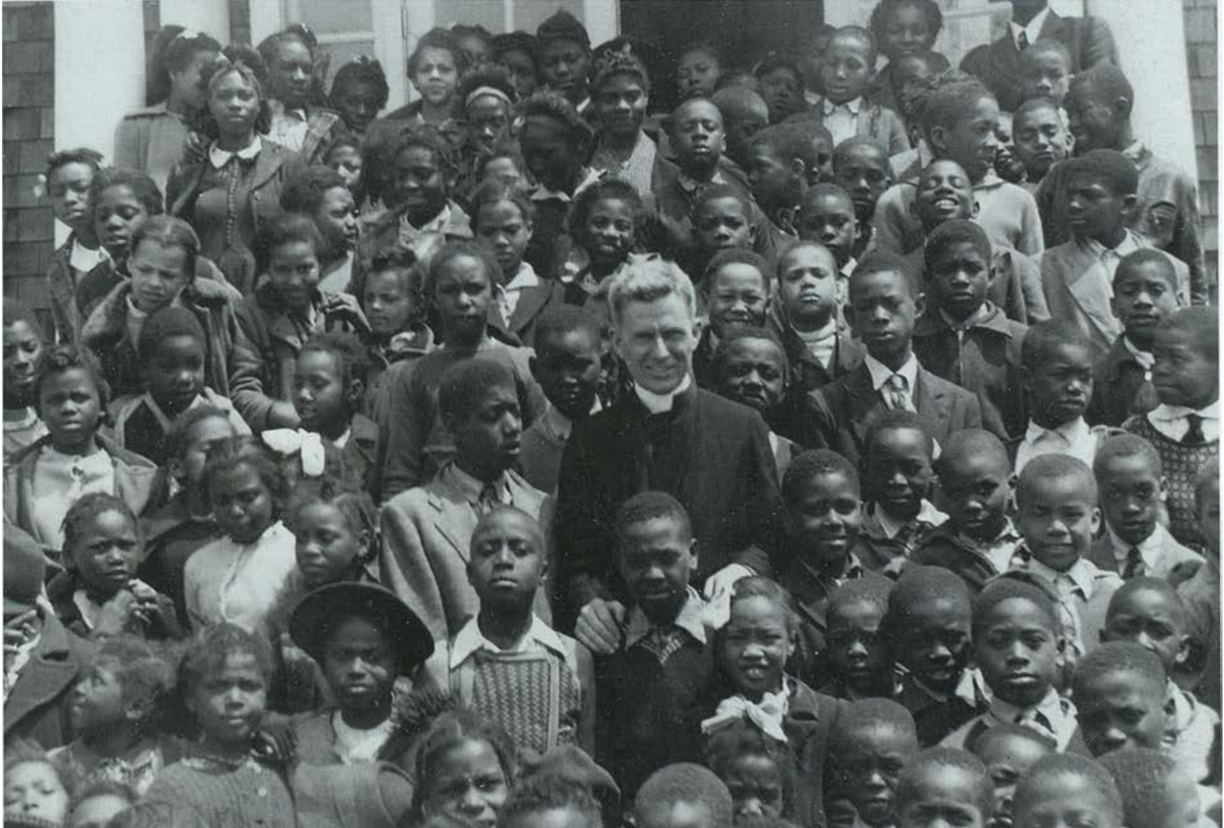
I loved sewing. We had a home economics room. We really had everything right in the school. It was a three-story building, which, you'll never see a building like that again! We had radiators. We played all kind of ball upstairs. It was cement floor. Basketball, football, we had that upstairs, and we had our sewing room. Oh, we had typewriters there at that time. But outside, I love softball. I loved softball a lot.

After I left school, they had a drum and bugle corps - that was so beautiful! Most of that was going on after I left, but I used to go back and see them perform.

Mother Cyprian, she was the highest. We used to have "Superior Teachers," but they didn't have principals when I was in school.

Then we had a pastor that stayed with us for twenty years, that was Horace B. McKenna. He was really like a father to us. And he used to teach us Bible class. He taught us all our religion, and he used to come from our school and go over across the street to a high school, which was Cardinal Gibbons. And each time I would see him coming and I was out for recess I would go and run and get his books and carry them, carry them for him. I remember that. He was so good to us. Oh, yes, I'd see him, sometimes I'd fall down, I'd get back up again, I'd be running so fast to grab his books [chuckles]. He used to go round to visit everybody. And when he would come to our house, we knew the day he was coming and we couldn't wait for him to come, to sit down and talk with us. He was really like a father to us. He was just so wonderful. Any problem we had, we could take it to him; he was willing to listen. If anybody's got a seat in heaven, I know he has one.

Ida Delores Barnes Briscoe (b. 1936)



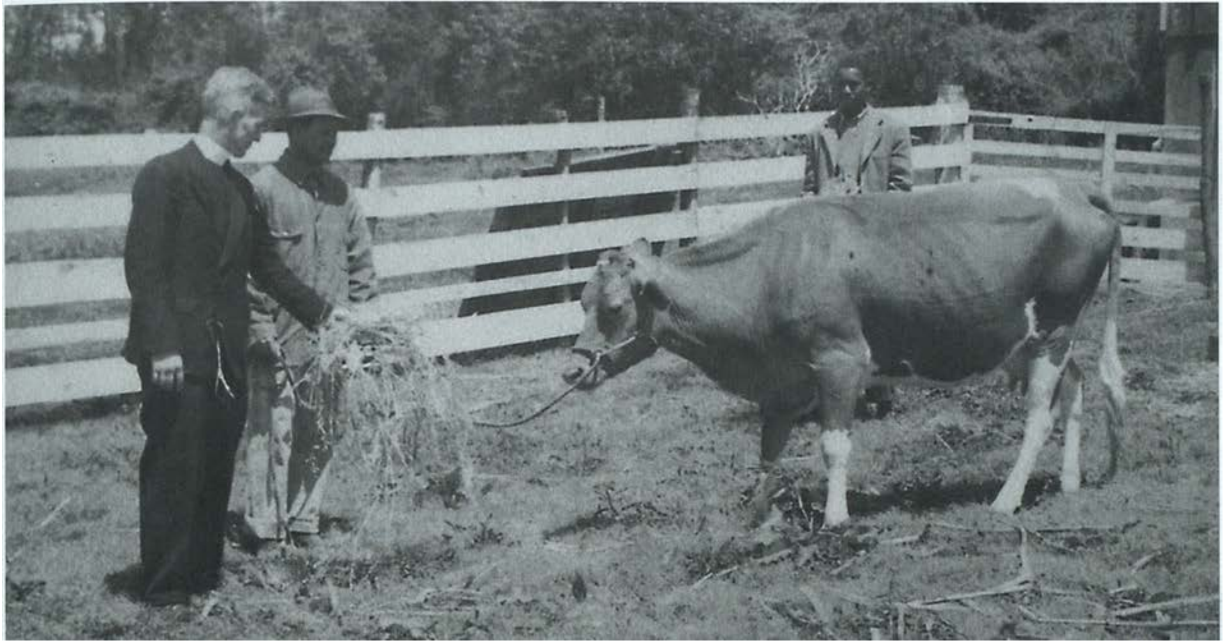
Top: Sister Mary Guadelupe and her class at Cardinal Gibbons Institute in the late 1950s. Courtesy of Alice Bennett. Bottom: Father McKenna with children on the steps of St. Peter Claver School in 1946. Courtesy of Alice Bennett.

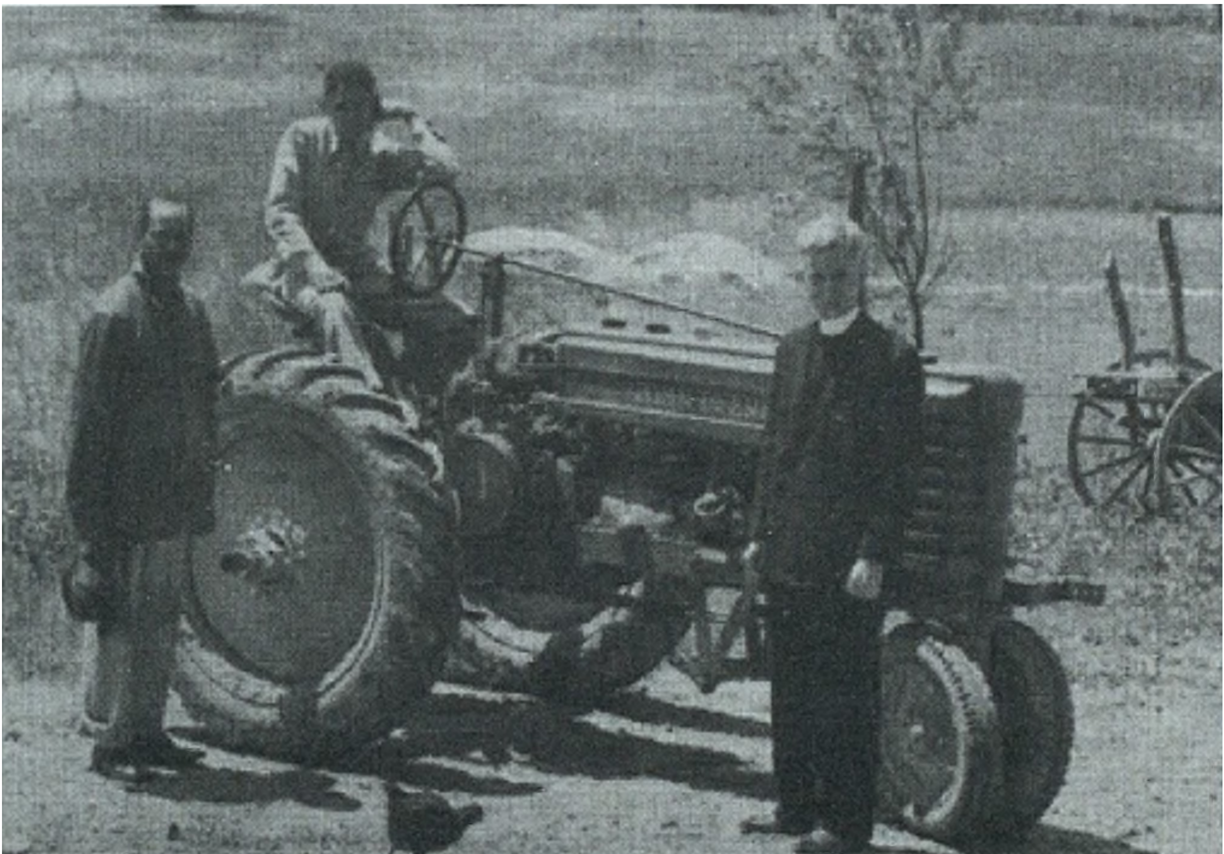
In the gym at Cardinal Gibbons Institute. Courtesy of Theresa Cassagnol.

Girl's basketball team. Courtesy of St. Peter Claver Church.

Cardinal Gibbons Institute cheerleaders, ca. 1960. Photo by Alice Bennett.

Baseball game, Cardinal Gibbons Institute. Photo courtesy of St. Peter Claver Church.





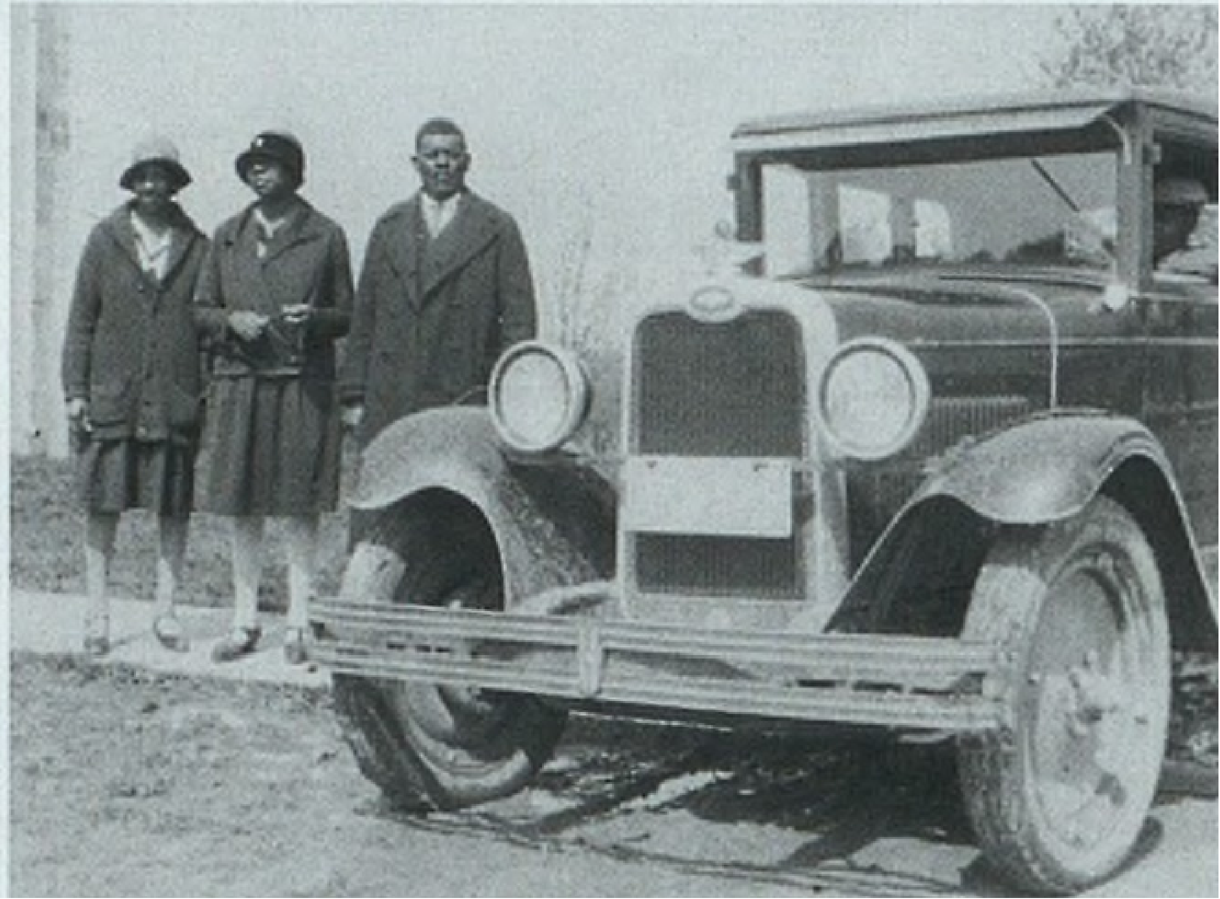
Top: Father McKenna and Robert Toye, along with a student, pose with a dairy cow. Photo by Alice Bennett. Middle left: Father McKenna with students and tractor. Courtesy of St. Peter Claver Church. Middle right: Father McKenna and chickens. Courtesy of Alice Bennett. Bottom: Mr. Robert Toye, the custodian and tenant farmer at the Institute, with some of the students in 1939. Courtesy of St. Peter Claver Church.

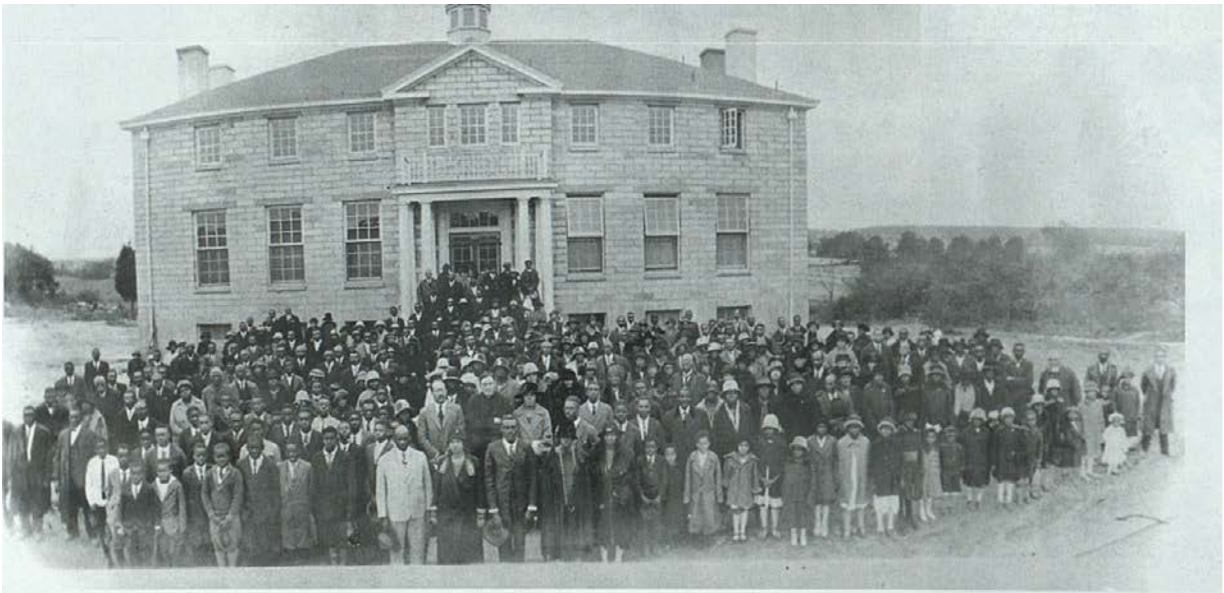
Top left: Business class, Cardinal Gibbons Institute. Photo by Alice Bennett. Middle left: Graduating class, 1940, Cardinal Gibbons Institute. Courtesy of st. Peter Claver Church. Bottom left: Typing class, Cardinal Gibbons Institute. Photo by Alice Bennett. Top right: Students work in the library at Cardinal Gibbons Institute. Photo by Alice Bennett. Middle right: Home Economics class, Cardinal Gibbons Institute, late 1950s. Courtesy of St. Peter Claver Church. Bottom right: Sewing class, Cardinal Gibbons Institute. Courtesy of St. Peter Claver Church.

SIGNS

made the

Left column, top to bottom: Eighth-grade class at St. Peter Claver School, 1952. Photo courtesy of St. Peter Claver Church.
Third grade, St. Peter Claver School, 1952. From *A Pictorial History of the Saint Inigoes Mission, 1634-1984*, by Rev. Francis Walsh, 1984.
The "Rhythm Band" pictured on the front steps of St. Peter Claver Church, ca. 1948. From *A Pictorial History of the Saint Inigoes Mission, 1634-1984*, by Rev. Francis Walsh, 1984.
Outdoor basketball, Cardinal Gibbons Institute, Photo by Alice Bennett.
Right column, top to bottom: St. Peter Claver students lined up for lunch in front of Cardinal Gibbons Institute, late 1950s. Photo by Alice Bennett.
St. Peter Claver School; Photo by Alice Bennett.
Large group of children at Cardinal Gibbons Institute. Courtesy of St. Peter Claver Church.





Top left: Cardinal Gibbons Institute, 1920s. Courtesy of St. Peter Claver Church.
Top right: Students in front of Cardinal Gibbons Institute. Courtesy of St. Peter Claver Church.
Middle: Father DeLawder and Father McKenna with students on the steps of Cardinal Gibbons Institute in 1946.
Photo by Alice Bennett.
Bottom: Dedication Day for the Cardinal Gibbons Institute, October 18, 1925. Photo courtesy of Alice Bennett.

Top: The faculty and graduating class at Cardinal Gibbons Institute, 1944. Standing (left to right): Edward Smith, [unknown woman], Ann B. Smith, Nathan Pitts (principal), Mrs. Mary Williams Pitts, Randolph Saxon. Seated: Father Horace McKenna, Father Vincent Smith, S.V.D., Father DeLawder (commencement speaker). Courtesy of Alice Bennett.
Middle left: Cardinal Gibbons Institute students. Courtesy of Theresa Cassagnol.
Middle right: 1959 graduation. Courtesy of St. Peter Claver Church.
Bottom: Cardinal Gibbons Institute, late 1950s. Photo by Alice Bennett.

. . . they knew what you had to do to make it in the world . . .

Harriett Swales Forrest, 2006. Photo by Leroy Thompson Jr.

I was six years old when I started school in Leonardtown. The school, at that time, was one-room, in the St. Aloysius Society Hall.

I went to school with two brothers and one sister. When I finished the third grade we moved to Washington, D.C. We went to St. Augustine's on Fifteenth Street. We stayed about two years there. Then we moved back to Leonardtown and we went to Leonardtown one-room school, under the hill where St. Aloysius' cemetery was. At that school, they wanted a janitor because they had nobody to sweep and go in the morning and make the fire. We lived in Leonardtown, so the Board of Education hired me to sweep the floor and come in the morning and start the fire 'til the first child got there.

Then I could go back home and change my clothes and go to school. I stayed at that school until I finished the sixth or seventh grade. I got a diploma from Leonardtown School but they had no high school that you could go to. So my mother said, "Well, we will go to St. Joseph and see if the priest will take you up there where you would learn more religion." So he took us and we had about seventeen or eighteen children in that seventh grade.

When we went to St. Joseph there wasn't any transportation. My brothers had a car. Some children that lived two miles away, they would walk from their house to Leonardtown, then we would get in the car, and the children that lived near St. Joseph, well, we would pick all them up, too. My brother would tell them, "Sit in one another's laps, just as long as you get to school on time." And we would take up a carload of children to St. Joseph and we would bring them back in the evening and put them out at their driveway.

Sister Charles, she was a nun, taught from the fifth to the seventh grade. Sister Mary Alma, she taught from the first grade to the third grade. And it was just a two-room school and the priest would come every Friday. We had confession because we were all Catholic. And we really enjoyed being with those nuns. And these nuns were very active - they played ball with us. But when we finished that seventh grade at St. Joseph, then we had no school. We either went to work or some went off to the cities to live with their kin people and they finished high school and went on to college. But that was as far as I went — the seventh grade.

We had teachers that came from the city to teach us. The teacher that I admired so much was Miss Cora King. I had an interest in her and she had an interest in me. I have learned to live with Cora King as my mentor. She was the first one that ever taught me anything about banking or trying to save money. When the Board of Education paid me, she carried me to the bank and started me a bank account. And from that day, I've always had a bank account.

And while we were at St. Joseph, they taught us how to make prayer books out of ordinary tablets. We wrote all kind of prayers. We would have concerts up at the St. Joseph's Hall on Christmas and Easter. These nuns really taught us how to manage in life. Of course now it's changed because I can't work with the computers, but I can still keep a good bank account.

I ended up doing well with math. I could do good times tables, multiplication, and division. But when it comes to fractions, I couldn't do much with the fractions. But it was enough so that when I got married and had my children, I taught my children. Some of them hadn't started school, but I was trying to teach them that multiplication. I thought that that was the best subject that they can learn because you need that with counting and everything.

So it's an advantage to children today to learn everything that you can because education is important. That's the reason why I, with my husband, made a sacrifice to educate my five through college graduation. And it was hard. But we mortgaged everything we had to educate those five children and it worked.

Harriett Ann Swales Forrest (b. 1915)

In the African American schools, teachers were relentless. They did not let up on you because they knew what you had to do to make it in the world, you know. And once integration came, they were still relentless. Integration didn't change their philosophy at all. Looking back on it, the level of dedication our teachers had, it was just unparalleled. We were turning out kids who had all kinds of abilities, who were going to school and doing all kinds of things. One of my cousins, Guffrie Smith who works in Calvert County in the school system, has been up to the State Board of Education and worked and everywhere, and he graduated from school, five to ten years before I did. You know, they instill that in children that you had to go to school. You had to get education no matter what field you went into, but you had to get education.

In '66, schools were integrated. So I went to Great Mills High School, and it was quite an experience going there. Our African American teachers were dispersed throughout a much larger system now. So, primarily, all of our teachers at Great Mills were white. We didn't have the concentration of African American teachers that we once had. Even though we had one or two or maybe three in a particular school and when you were in their classes, it was the same. They acted as mentors for us because there were a lot of nuances in the new school that weren't in the old school because the new school had everything, by comparison, to the old school. I mean, they had the equipment; they had the books; they had everything, and it was a little bit of a different setting for us.

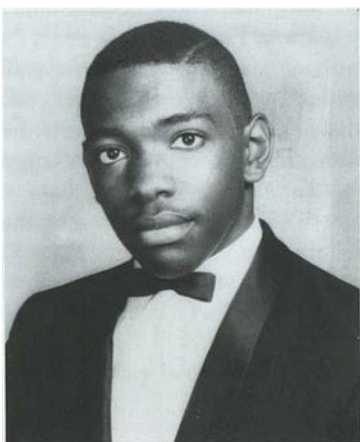
You know, you're a bit apprehensive about speaking up and asking questions because you don't want to — your continuity is all gone. We didn't have any real continuity in the school for a long time. Continuity in the sense of a classroom where you felt comfortable sitting there and being able to express your thoughts and cares and concerns. You know, it was something that you had to acquire. You had to get to know a whole new group of people all over. You had to get to know new teachers and they had

to get to know you, and the rules weren't quite the same. So, you had a lot of learning to do, a lot of catching up to do on just the nuances of the school much less the work you had to do. And, we went there and the first year was extremely difficult, you know. The level of interest that the teachers had in you was not the same, and it was clearly visible. It was not the same.

Everybody wasn't as open-minded in the process of integration, so there were a number of situations that occurred - fights within the school. They were serious, but they weren't to the level that they divided the school.

The one thing that we brought to the school right away was an athletic ability, and you know, that kind of acted as a buffer for some of the other tensions that were in the school. Even though they had an athletic ability, we enhanced their athletic ability greatly.

It took 12 years to comply with Brown v. Board. Putting a rule in place and compliance are normally separated by some amount of time. I don't know if it's always 12 years, but it's normally separated by some amount of time. And given the flavor of Maryland at the time, one can understand why it took so long to, for Maryland to fully integrate. I'm not sure about the other counties, but we're down here in Southern Maryland which is a very conservative area and making that move was extremely difficult because white parents didn't want black teachers teaching their kids.



John William Alonzo Gaskin, 1968. Courtesy of Alonzo Gaskin

Some of them didn't want the kids in the school with black kids, period. There was a lot of animosity with this move and it wasn't easy. And, the fashion in which desegregation happened, I think, was rather calm when

you compare it to other places. Even though we had the battles, they weren't of the severity and of the number that I think other places had.

In the classroom, it had an effect. Kids weren't getting the level of instruction that they might have gotten in a segregated school. These kids, you know, on either end of the spectrum - they might have been real smart and needed more attention going this way, or they could have been not quite as smart and needed more attention to come towards the center. The teacher made the difference in the classroom. If your teacher was a reasonable person and gave you the attention that she gave everybody else, or he gave everybody else, then there really wasn't an issue. But if you didn't get the attention that everybody else in the classroom received, then there was an issue.

And, a lot of parents brought those issues forward that their kids weren't getting what they thought they should have, that they needed more homework, they needed this, and they needed that. Okay, why is it the grades here are all of a sudden going down when they weren't going down before? How come I don't know that my kid is getting these bad grades until the report card comes home? And what was the responsiveness of the teacher to the parent? All of those issues played a part in how the black kid felt in school.

So, we had situations like that where teachers were called on the carpet because of the way they treated children, the way they graded children. You know, just the general interaction with children at all. So, that was a point where a lot of people had concern. And, the close-knit structure that was in the segregated system didn't exist at the integrated school. Because under the segregated system, you know, I couldn't walk down the hall and kick a door without somebody, you know, grabbing me by the collar and taking me to the principal's office. And then the next thing I know when I get home in the afternoon, my parents sitting there saying, "Well this happen."

I say, "Well-"

"Don't even try. I know Mr. So-and-So isn't going to tell me a lie." Bam. That's it.

In the segregated system, parents knew all of the teachers. They knew what they would do, what they wouldn't do and everything. So, when you go over to the integrated school and this happened, don't know the teacher. The parent was saying, no, no, no. There's something wrong here. This teacher isn't forthright with me, isn't telling me right up front what's going

on and they’re trying to hide behind something or say something that isn’t true. If they say the child did something and the parent knows full well the child wouldn’t do such a thing, you know, those types of situations occurred. And it led to a lack of continuity in the classroom.

Alonzo Gaskin (b. 1951)

. . . a passion for children and education . . .

Mother and Daughter

“...I always said if I had a girl, I hope she’d be a teacher."

Elvare Gaskin and her mother, Mary Hewlett.

I went to a little one-room school right up on the road. Man’s using it now for a barber shop. Went to the fifth grade; that was as far as I could go in that school. I then went to Division Street School in Baltimore, to high school and boarded with my aunt. But I didn’t finish high school. Steamboats were running then, and when I came back home for Christmas, the rivers and all froze over, and the boats couldn’t run. So that ended my schooling.

For the next few years I did substitute teaching in Scotland, Ridge, and St. Inigoes. There was a teacher boarding with my mother, named Ivy Fickle. We were young, like, went to dances together and things like that. I was married, and every spring I went to New Jersey to plant oysters. Ivy kept saying, “I’m not going to stay.” I know I wasn’t in New Jersey a week before I got a letter from the Board of Education asking me if I could come back and finish the school year at Scotland for the teacher who had “gotten sick.” So I did come back. First time I had to make end-of-the-year reports. There was a white teacher named Myrtle Welch that lived right across from my mother. We were friends, and I never will forget that she helped me with that report.

Anyway, at that time all you’d have to do was go past the fifth grade, and you could get a teacher’s certificate. Papa said to me, “Why don’t you

try to get one?" We went to Leonardtown to get a teaching certificate, but the year before was the last year you could get those. So I didn't get one, but I always said that if I had a girl, I hope she'd be a teacher. And I got that wish.[20]

Mary Bernadette Hewlett

My mother [Elvare Gaskin] was the first principal of the county's only school for children with disabilities. She had a passion for children and education.

After she retired from teaching, she was a Pupil Personnel Worker, which equates to a truant officer, and she would go to people's homes and get the kids and say, "You have to go to school. You have to go to school." She just had a passion for getting young people educated. And you know, there's still people around here who will tell you about the passion she had for education.

It was nothing for us to have kids around the house all the time. She'd be standing there preaching, "You've got to get an education." She was very involved in the community and she would go to people's homes and get the kids and say, "You have to go to school - you have to go to school." It was just something that she was born to do.

Alonzo Gaskin (b. 1951)

Alonzo Gaskin, Elvare Gaskin's son and Mary Bernadette Hewlett's grandson, made these comments as he reflected on the unshakable commitment that propelled his mother through forty-six years as a dedicated professional educator. Even after retirement Ms. Gaskin continued to share her gifts as a mentor in the schools, and she was active in peer organizations as well, serving as president of the Retired Teachers Association. She received many awards for her achievements and volunteer work, including an award from the Governor for achievement in working with the handicapped and awards for community service from the Masons and Eastern Stars. In 1998, one year before her too-early passing, Ms. Gaskin, who fulfilled her mother's dream, talked about her life in education, which actually started at the age of five.

I started school when I was five years old because my grandmother boarded teachers, and they would sneak me down to the school, and unless the superintendent or a visitor was coming, I went to school every day. It was a one-room classroom with the long benches where three could sit in a seat, and had a potbelly stove right in the middle of it. Now it's a barber shop - that's right up here by St. Luke's Church. That was the elementary school. That was called the Scotland School.

I loved reading, math, and geography. I skipped a grade because at that time, you could hear what was going on in the next grade. I did a lot of reading outside school. The teachers that boarded at my grandmother's house would ask me what I wanted for my birthday or what I wanted for Christmas. I'd say, "Books," and they'd give me books. And there were a lot of books in the school and I'd read those.

I always wanted to be a teacher. I wanted to go to Hampton [University] because I wanted to be a high school English teacher. And of course, at that time, my mother wasn't able to send me to Hampton. She paid for my high school from the beginning. When I went to Cardinal Gibbons, she paid for my going there. It wasn't that expensive, but she had to pay for it. I went to Cardinal Gibbons right out of elementary school because there was nowhere else for me to go. There wasn't a public facility.

I started there in September of '32. Unfortunately, the school ran out of funds, and it closed December, 1934. It was really a sad time. There were children from Prince George's County and all around the area. Some were sitting on their suitcases waiting for their parents to pick them up. I was left again with no place to go. Then Mr. Bland, the colored supervisor, told my grandmother about Pomonkey High School in Charles County and helped us investigate that. There was a house there that was used as a dorm, and students from the far south stayed there. So I went to high school in Pomonkey, and the County paid for it because they didn't have any place for me to go to high school here. Just like they do now when children transfer from another state or another county, they have to pay a tuition. But there was room and board and all that until I finished high school.

After graduating from Pomonkey, I went to Bowie [State College]. When I graduated from Bowie it was a three-year Normal School, and they were adding on the fourth year. The next year it was going to be a four-year college, but my mother - I mean, she had really worked. Even though I had a nice stepfather who helped, she felt that I was her responsibility, and I just

felt I wanted to go to work and try to help her and then go back to school after I had gone to work. And, that's what I did. I got a job the first year I came out of school [1939] and I taught in Oraville at the Gravelly Knolls School, a one-room school just like I had gone to in elementary school.

I got paid $65 a month and had $62.50 by the time they took out retirement and all that. I paid $20 to the lady I was boarding with, a month. So, it left me $42. [chuckle] It was way back on the farm, and I would have to have come out to what is now Route 235 in a car to get around to Oraville, but I didn't have a car. So, I walked about two miles and a half to school. Once it was snowing and when I got to the first bam, they couldn't see the top of my head. It took me about an hour. And then, as it became more familiar to me, I could make a little better time.

I had a one-room classroom - first to seventh grades. I wouldn't call it difficult because I loved it. Some of the students, seventh grade students, stood over top of me, especially the boys. I'm about four foot, eleven and a half, and some of the seventh grade boys were five and a half and almost six foot tall. And, some of them were kind of hard to handle.

Elvare Smith Gaskin, from 1964 *The Eagle* yearbook.

I only had to have one child expelled the whole six years I taught at that school. He had brought a knife to school and had the knife out and, you know, some child saying, “Miss Smith, Stanley has a knife.” And, he was sitting in the middle, the same long seats with three in a seat, and I asked the boy on the end to get out, to move out, and I just grabbed Stanley by his

collar and backed him out the door. And after I'd done it, I was scared to death! [laughter]

And, I called the truant officer. That's what they were called then. Now they're pupil personnel workers — and I called her and told her what had happened. And she said, "I'll be there in the morning." And, she came in the morning and expelled him.

When I think back. . .When I think about what teaching has meant to me? Oh, it has meant so very much. The fact that I loved doing what I was doing and to see children really grasp information and go on, you know, go on with it. All of it has been rewarding. I think the most rewarding has been the years I spent at Green Holly.

Green Holly School was the first all-State-funded school for Special Ed children built in the State of Maryland, and that took the children out of the buildings that had been discarded. They had a full program there at Green Holly. To see those children that were limited be able to grasp enough information to be able to work on their own, to get a job and to work. And, also what's gratifying is that several of my students taught in the same building with me while I was still teaching there. I had several of the children that had graduated, had gone to Bowie, graduated, and came back to the county and taught. I just was so happy that I had had a part in their lives.

I don't know what I would have done without having the opportunity to teach and to work with people. I'm a people person, and I just like being with people and I like working with people. You know, regardless of what I'm doing. Nothing's too small, too low for me to do as long as I'm with people and helping people.

Elvare Smith Gaskin (b. 1919)

Alice Freeman Young: 46 Years in Education

Alice Freeman Young, courtesy of Dolores Fleming.

Nineteen-twenty-eight proved to be a momentous year for Alice Freeman. She was all of twenty years of age, just graduated from Minors Teachers College in the District of Columbia and had received her certification to teach in the state of Maryland. The certificate indicated

qualification to instruct grades 1-7, plus act as a teacher-principal in a school not to exceed three teachers as faculty.

Teaching positions were not readily available in the District Public School System. Her mother encouraged her to seek employment in the rural Southern Maryland areas as fully certificated teachers were in short supply there at that time. Mrs. Freeman, a native of Benedict, Maryland, was cognizant of this acute need. Miss Freeman was encouraged by her priest at St. Augustine's to try St. Mary's County. He was sure she could find a position there. Only her father, a carpenter by trade, who had left Caroline County in Virginia to seek his fortune in Washington, D.C., questioned the wisdom and possibilities of Miss Freeman's happiness and success.

Miss Freeman was hired by school superintendent Lettie M. Dent to teach upper-level grades at Medley's Neck Elementary just outside of Leonardtown, Maryland. This area is located near marshland and woods. Having spent most of her life on Corcoran Street in the heart of the city, she was emotionally ill-prepared for the rigors of survival in a teaching facility that had an outdoor privy, a well, a blackboard, two erasers, six small boxes of chalk, and not enough books for students of which all were second-hand, written-in, pages torn out with covers hanging.

Officially, the school year extended from September to June; however, in actuality most students attended regularly from October to May to accommodate the tobacco season. Eventually, the State Board of Education mandated that the school year be enforced from September to June, but the older students that could work were seldom there.

Miss Freeman was told she would receive a load of wood to be stacked and stored in a side shed. It was to last the school year. As the months grew cooler, she would prepare a noon meal on the wood stove for herself and the students. Usually this would be beans or a soup. Something that could be prepared in a pot on the wood stove. Miss Freeman did not know how to make a fire. She did not like to go to the privy because she was afraid of snakes. She also had second thoughts about the other creatures that seemed to abound in this locale.

During the first year, students set on benches rather than regular desks. Ms. Dent promised her this would change and it did. Her second year there, students were seated on used "Soper" seats and desks. She and her students kept the building clean and took care of the fire. The two years she spent at

Medley's Neck were physically difficult, but provided important learning experiences. Her bright spots were:

1. She was prepared academically to do her job;
2. The children wanted to learn;
3. The parents were supportive and augmented supplies of wood. They taught her how to make a fire;
4. The noon meal gave her the opportunity to get to know her students well. She learned about their families and rural living. This is a habit she would continue throughout her next two teaching assignments.
5. The Neals, her boarder family, helped her with the kind of information which enabled her to develop survival techniques.

In 1930, Alice Freeman was transferred to Phyllis Wheatley Elementary School in Hollywood on Sotterley Road. The building was shared with Miss Parris, who taught grades 1-3. Miss Freeman had grades 4-7. There was no high school facility for African American students at that time. Those who could afford it went to Pomonkey High School in Charles County or to Dunbar, Banneker, or Armstrong Tech in Washington, D.C.

Miss Freeman realized that for the majority of her students, she represented the end of the line in their academic lives. She approached her job with seriousness and pushed for good speech, accuracy in mathematics, excellence in written expression and spelling. The texts provided for social studies and science were abominable in content and physical condition. She spent long hours in preparation, trying as best she could to bridge the gaps she perceived in what was not provided by the county system. Social studies texts were biased, and science was poorly presented and edited. How many times did she say, "Thank God for Minors Teacher's College and the District of Columbia Public School System."

Meanwhile, secondary education for African American students crept at a snail's pace. Parents in 1896 had begun organizing for St. Mary's Colored High School. By 1923, the United Parent Trustee Association had tried to establish the Central Colored Industrial School. By now, they knew if education opportunities for their children would ever improve, it would be the result of their own initiative. They purchased land, donated materials and labor to produce Banneker School. Still, the Board of Education refused

to accept the land and the building. In 1929, the property was finally deeded to the Board.

Meanwhile, Miss Freeman was transferred to Maryland Springs School, located near the Banneker site on Route 5. The building was the oldest elementary school in St. Mary's County, having been built in 1848 for white students. It had two advantages: dust did not readily come in cracks in the walls and windows, and in the winter Bernard Somerville made sure that fires were made before the students arrived so the building would be warm. The water, which had frozen from the night before, would be melted in buckets. Thus, they would have water. When the children arrived, education could begin immediately. Mr. Somerville saw to it that fire was "banked" at night and water was drawn for the next day. He made sure there was enough wood to last the winter. (Miss Freeman said that at Maryland Springs the wood did not run out before spring.)

When Banneker School was finally opened as a public school, Miss Freeman was transferred there to teach upper elementary grades. It was almost heaven. In 1941, she married Joseph Elmer Young. By now, she had become firmly committed to the children of St. Mary's County.

Miss Freeman was never a complainer. She continued to find ways to educate children to do their best. She deplored the book situation, but used her training and intellect to make up the deficiencies. She expressed the desire that once in her life she would be able to choose the texts the children would use. Her goal continued to be to train young people as if she would be their last teacher. She fully realized the impact of economics on these students' education. She planned trips out of the county to Washington, Baltimore, and New York to help students expand their horizons. She talked to parents about continuing their children's education. Because of her innate abilities, training, and experience, frequently she was given students who were having difficulties within the school structure. She believed that every student could learn. It was up to the teacher to find the best method of instruction.

She served as a mentor for new teachers, showing them techniques that were never taught in any education class. Wise principals usually instructed new teachers to observe her classes for techniques in instruction and positive discipline. She was an example for everything from lesson planning to opening and closing school. When schools were finally

desegregated, she was assigned to Carver Middle School, then Leonardtown, and finally Hollywood Elementary.

After 46 years as an educator, Miss Freeman retired in 1974. She had taught in a system that had gone from a perfunctory rudimentary operation with minimal commitment on the part of the county to an organism that began to function in a more normal responsive manner.

Alice Freeman Young had succeeded in taking whatever was given to her and making it work for the good of the children in St. Mary's County.[21]

Dolores Fleming

RALPH BUTLER

The late Ralph Ignatius Butler was bom on April 11, 1915 in Charlotte Hall, Maryland. He was the youngest of eight children born to Charles William Butler of Charlotte Hall and Theresa Toye Butler of Benedict, Maryland. Mr. Butler was a teacher and administrator who worked in both segregated and desegregated schools in the county. He was a master grant writer who, as supervisor of Title One Programs, secured the county millions of dollars in federal and state grant funds. Mr. Butler retired after 46 years of service to the St. Mary's County Schools.

My two older sisters became teachers. Back in that time, that was quite an accomplishment. There was one brother older than the two of them. So, that left four children in between the two of them and me. Now, Mother seemingly could not impress upon any of them to become teachers.

So, she turned her attention to me. "You are going to be a teacher because your older sisters became teachers. And your second older sister, when she became a teacher, she was fortunate enough to be the valedictorian of her class. So, you can do the same thing." No, she didn't say, "You can. You *are* going to do the same thing." There was a little break in there. See, I didn't have quite the ability that my sisters had. I had to be pushed a little harder.

So, I guess that her determination is one of the things that pushed me through. If I made accomplishments in my lifetime, I owe that to her determination. She said, "This is what you're going to do." I had no say in it.

All the way through junior high school and high school, I always said that I wanted to be an electrician until Mother changed my mind [chuckle]. When I was growing up in the county some people had electric lights in their houses, but they had what you call a Delco motor generator. They were expensive. Only the very well-to-do people could do that. Back in the early 30's, the Rural Electrification Administration was created, and this county begun to share into the electric lines and string these electric lines throughout the county. I could see these men stringing these lines down Route 5, and I was just in the fourth or fifth grade. I dreamed of becoming an electrician.

That's what I wanted to do, and ironically, in my senior year in high school, late in the spring, Mother passed and Father said to me [chuckle], "Your mother said you're going to be a teacher, and that's what you're going to do. Just no arguments about it."

My schooling was at the old White Marsh School. I feel I got the best I could because I went to school to my aunt, my father's sister. And though we were her nieces and nephews, she didn't give us any break at all. In fact, my first year in the school, I went to school to my older sister. First and second grades, my sister taught me. And then third and fourth grades, she was transferred to another school. My third and fourth grades were with another teacher, then my aunt finished me up in the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades.

“Yes.” I guess I'm a person who seldom says “No” when somebody asks me to do something that I feel that I can do.

Ralph Butler

Our classrooms, compared to today, they were [chuckle] very uncomfortable, but we didn’t know. When we went in our classroom, you could sit around that big pot-belly stove. After it got warm in there, you liked it. That was very good to us. All my elementary education was in either a one- or two-room school. The first three years was in a one-room

school, and then I went to fifth, sixth and seventh grades in a two-room school.

When I finished elementary school, my brother and I went to Washington, because there was no high school here in the county. He had learned to play saxophone, and he would come from work some afternoons and find me there fooling with his horn. So, he said to me, “Boy, you want to learn to play?” and I said, “Sure.” So from that time on, he started me. I think I was in the ninth grade. Then the next year I went in the tenth grade at Dunbar High School, and I started taking music in school. So from the tenth grade I was in the band at Dunbar. At that time, Dunbar had a junior orchestra and a senior orchestra. I started in the junior orchestra and my last year, I was in the senior orchestra, and followed it through when I went to Bowie. I stayed in the orchestra in Bowie.

My favorite subject in school, believe it or not - well, I’m saying this to myself, was history. I used to love history. I guess that’s why when I went to college, I chose history as my minor subject.

My least favorite subject was what you call penmanship, writing. I never learned to write. My handwriting today reflects that, for I’m a poor writer today. And I guess, my second least-liked subject was reading. I don’t know why I never could adapt myself to reading. I did not learn to read or really take to reading until I got to college. Hopefully, I didn’t wait too late.

When I finished school at Bowie, I came home to teach to stay with my father. Mother had passed, and the other children had left home, so there was no one there for the first three [years] but my father and I. And, [chuckle] the teacher’s salary at that time, the beginning salary down in St. Mary’s was $65 per month, and you weren’t paid every two weeks like we are now. You were paid once a month and your first check didn’t come until, oh, late in October, and your last check was sometimes around the first of June.

Money was very tight. No question, it was very tight. I was fortunate in that I would go out and do other little jobs that I did around at that time when I was a teenager. Also, I was fortunate that I played music. I played a horn. And so I teamed with some of the fellas, men a little older around the community. You could make a few extra dollars that way. But, seemingly, I was fortunate enough that I could always have a dollar or two. I was in a position to make money even though teaching didn’t pay very much. I

played [saxophone] with the fellas, anybody wanted me to come with them, I'd come along with them.

Yes, and that was something new because, at that time, all the musicians had were violins, string music, and it was sort of a novelty to see [chuckle] a horn come in with that. It was a break that I got.

Teaching, when I started, was very hard because I started at the old Benedict School. Forty-eight children in grades one through seven, my first two years and I think the third year I was there the enrollment was something like 38 children. Two-thirds of those children were my relatives, cousins. Because my mother was from here, so two-thirds of the children were some relation. So, I wasn't Mr. Butler; I was Cousin Ralph [laughter] most of the time.

And, one of the things that it didn't take me long to realize, a lot of the things that we stomped at and made fun of when we were at Bowie were the very things that we carried through [as teachers]. We used to give the teachers a hard time, some of us did. When we got out there and got teaching we found that those of us that could remember what they told us, were the fortunate ones. We were the ones who lasted.

My first big responsibility was when they asked me to take on the position as assistant principal of Banneker. It shouldn't have been strange to me because I had been acting as assistant principal in charge of the elementary department. But when it became official, that meant I had to assist with the high school also and the junior high school. I was a little skeptical at first, but I really enjoyed it! I found out that you could work with larger children and older children as well as you could young children, and the children I had there were the same ages of my children at home.

My second big responsibility was the Title I program. I had to do a lot of grant writing. I had to learn to do writing because as I said, reading was something I didn't get until I got into college. And of course, writing was another thing that I was really spirited on to do when I went to Catholic University for my master's degree.

The first year I was out there, the major professor told a group of us, "Now, you're here. This is not your undergraduate college. This is graduate work and there are two things that you will do. You will read, and you will write." [chuckle] So I guess that was one of the things that helped me to carry on the Title I program.

I did not apply for the Title I position. The superintendent called me in one day and said, "This is coming down the road. We need someone to take care of this program." His words to me were, "We've been accused of not promoting our black people. This is a position that I want you to take, and I want you to do well with it and show that you can do it, and I believe you can." Because he buttered me up there pretty good, [chuckle] I said, "Yes." I guess I'm a person who seldom says "No" when somebody asks me to do something that I feel that I can do.

Ralph Ignatius Butler (b. 1915)

Ralph Butler (teacher) with fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade classes, Banneker School 1949. Courtesy of the Butler family.

[20] Andrea Hammer, ed., In My Time When I Was Coming Along (St. Mary's County Documentation Project, 1988). Reprinted by permission.

[21] Reprinted by permission of Dolores Fleming. Original document is signed by Dolores Fleming and dated November 16, 2002.

. . .we stuck it out, we had each other . . .

> *I certainly didn't want to start any trouble. I'm no flag waver. I just wanted my kids to get a good education and learn to get along among the white people like they'll have to do in business later.*
>
> William Groves (b. 1910)

In 1954 the United States Supreme Court, in *Brown et. al. v. Board of Education*, ruled that segregation in the schools must end. The NAACP lawyers who argued the case in front of the Court made two interrelated points: First, they argued that the disparities in facilities and funding between white and "Negro" schools provided overwhelming evidence that black children were denied equal educational opportunities. Second, the lawyers demonstrated that the children experienced psychological damage as a result of the segregated "Jim Crow" system. In reversing Plessy v. Ferguson, the 1896 Supreme Court ruling that established the doctrine of "separate but equal," the Court found that segregation, as a system, was inherently unequal.

Theodore Newkirk, reprinted permission of The Enterprise.

In the 1950s, Mr. Larcy R. Henderson was the president of the local branch of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). The NAACP and our two attorneys from Baltimore met with the Board of Education to determine why nothing was being done to integrate the local schools.

Some of the things that we heard from the Board of Education at that meeting were disappointing. The chairman of the Board, May Russell, who was the president of St. Mary's [Junior] College, could not understand why blacks were trying to integrate the schools because they were paying such little county taxes. Her statement was that at Carver School we had the cutest little toilets of anybody in the county.

What she was referring to was the former enlisted men's dormitory over in Carver Heights. Sometime after the war, the Navy turned the club over to St. Mary's County Public Schools. When the Navy constructed the building, which was a recreation facility for black enlisted personnel, they had installed small toilets for the younger children. Okay? That was an excuse that Miss Russell had given to us at that time as to why we should not integrate the schools. Because of the toilets!

Our attorneys weren't accepting of this reasoning. It was something that we never thought we would hear at that level. And I was really surprised professionals would suggest that was the reason for not wanting to integrate the schools.

Theodore Newkirk (b. 1926)

> *The victory in the Brown case raised the fundamental question of segregation in a way that would affect almost every Southern family. The case also fundamentally challenged the bedrock assumptions of white supremacy that had governed social relations between the races since the Civil War. Few cases in American history had such potential for altering the American way of life. Indeed, Brown set in motion the nation's most significant social transformation since the Civil War.*[22]

When the schools finally desegregated, African Americans had gained many opportunities, but families and communities often felt that they had lost their connections to their local schools.

In St. Mary's County, change came slowly. In 1956, the county school board adopted a plan, to be implemented in the fall of 1957, for gradual integration on a voluntary basis in the elementary grades, where administratively feasible. (See Appendix A)

However, the movement towards desegregating the public schools had already begun to inch forward in 1955. A class action lawsuit was filed in late 1955 or early 1956 in U. S. District Court by Ms. Fannie Robinson, on behalf of her daughter Rose Marie, and others (sixty-six in all), requesting the desegregation of the St. Mary's County schools and admission to the schools of their choice. The suit alleged that the plaintiffs had petitioned for admission for "Negro" students to white schools on September 23,1955 and had been denied. (The original petition, signed by ninety-one people, was presented to the Board of Education by the NAACP on September 27, 1955.)

On July 9, 1956 the judge ruled on the suit filed by Ms. Robinson. Attorneys for the Board of Education had moved for dismissal on the grounds that the Federal District Court wasn't the appropriate arbiter for

such an action. The judge concurred, and the case was dismissed. The following excerpt from the judge's opinion is a telling description of the county at that time:

> *St. Mary's County is the southernmost county in Southern Maryland, agricultural, slow to change. Its traditional pattern has been disturbed during the past 15 years by the establishment of the Patuxent River Naval Base. Serious problems exist with respect to school facilities and transportation.*[23]

During the year 1957, applications were made on behalf of four "Negro" children to be transferred to elementary grades in white schools and on behalf of three "Negro" children to be transferred to high school grades. Although the requests of the elementary school children were granted, none actually entered the white schools. The three high school applicants were denied.[24]

According to a March 30, 1983 article in The Enterprise, a commission appointed by the Board of Education to study integration in St. Mary's County issued their recommendation in June 1956. In it, they stated that, "It would be dishonest to ignore the fact that the overwhelming majority of the white people in our county are not ready to accept even limited or partial integration at this time."

Finally, another family, determined to make a difference and again willing to go to court to defend their right to an equal and integrated education, succeeded. After their appeal to the State Board of Education was dismissed in 1957, William Groves, on behalf of his children Joan and Thomas Conrad Groves, took their case to the United States District Court. The Groves family, with support from NAACP lawyers, was able to win that case and the subsequent appeal by the Board of Education.

So it was that, on September 4, 1958 under a court order, Joan and Conrad Groves entered Great Mills High School in Great Mills, Maryland, the first African American children to attend white public schools in St. Mary's County.

According to the same Enterprise article cited above, a year later Joan had graduated and Conrad had transferred to Ryken (a parochial high school in Leonardtown, Maryland) and there were, once again, no African

American children in the white public schools. In fact, during that year there were three requests for transfers by black children and all three were denied.[25]

In the following years, African American students did gradually desegregate the "white" schools, but the county retained a segregated "dual" public school system until the fall of 1967. Except for the Father Andrew White School, which was reportedly integrated from its inception in 1954, the parochial schools in the county desegregated in the sixties as well. One hundred years of segregated education finally ended.

Thomas Conrad and Joan Elaine wave good bye to their parents, Rebecca and William Groves, as they depart for their first day of school at Great Mills High School, September 1958. Reprinted by permission of The Enterprise.

Joan Elaine Groves Briscoe, 2004. UCAC file photo.

See, at that time, nobody was happy about integration. What the white people had wanted to happen was for integration to take place slowly - start at kindergarten and start working the way up. That way, you wouldn't have any black person graduating from a white school for at least twelve years. And in twelve years, by that time, you were finished - your children were grown and they were out of the way. [giggle] Somebody else's kids could deal with it.

But my father and my mother understood that a whole generation of kids were going to be lost like that. And that was not necessary at all. You know, if you were going to do something you could at least try. And my father knew that we weren't going to bite anybody's head off. [laughs] So that all they needed to do was just give us a try.

While I was going to Cardinal Gibbons, my mother and father were trying to get things straight in the courts - so that children went to school according to where they lived, not according to where somebody else wanted to send them. Also, the black schools never got all the books and the teaching materials that the white schools did. We always got last year's book that had been used. We always got the worst of everything that anybody had to give us. My father could see that the education system was definitely different than the one we had left in New York. So he agreed to meet with the NAACP their lawyers and whatnot, and at least try to get us into integrated schools. So he put in for us to go to Great Mills, my brother and myself, and we waited. You know how it takes a while for things to come to court and whatnot and for them to hear the case. The NAACP attorneys did a very good job. Next thing I knew, instead of going back to Cardinal Gibbons, I was going to go to Great Mills for my senior year. And I enjoyed Great Mills. I did.

Joan E. Groves Briscoe (b. 1942)

Beverly Watts Dyson, 2003. UCAC file photo.

From what I heard back in the day, Joan and Conrad were treated badly. Students would open the windows when they came into the room -

and it was cold! They wouldn't shut them and some of the teachers went along with it. They would walk down the hall and people would call them names. They had to stick together. It was hard. You weren't supposed to be there. You're not supposed to come over that line. You're supposed to go to your own school, not the white school. They were called the "N—" word all the time and it was written on their lockers. They had it hard."

Beverly Watts Dyson (b. 1950)

For Joan and Conrad, what it was like was being on a foreign soil where someone else is speaking one language and they were speaking another. And even if they communicated, it wasn't a friendly welcome atmosphere at all. It was a scorn, a resentful attitude as if you had taken something from me. It was disgusting how they were treated here. It was disgusting.

Let's not think for one moment that the Board of Education wanted to integrate the schools. After the Groves children forced the integration of Great Mills per se, we had to go back to our attorneys. They made preparations to take this county to court again.

In the early '60s, the Board of Education decided that we would integrate the schools, but it was a volunteer situation. I withdrew my children from Carver School because I wanted them to have an integrated education. It wasn't that the teachers were inferior, but I wanted them to know what black and white was all about - an integrated education. I entered them in Lexington Park Elementary School. However, the Board of Education did not integrate the transportation and the school system at the same time. Transportation was still a segregated system. Really, the overall school system was still a segregated system.

And let's not forget now, we had a problem getting black folks to attend this so-called volunteer integrated system. Blacks were not climbing the fence to integrate, by no means. If you want to say whites wanted to go to Carver and blacks wanted to come to Great Mills, forget it. [chuckles] It wasn't like that. No one was climbing the fence to go one way or the other. People were completely satisfied, status quo. That's what we lived with in St. Mary's County for some time well into the '60s.

Theodore Newkirk (b. 1926)

Before we integrated schools, Lexington Park itself was extremely segregated. We couldn't go into stores. We had one movie theatre and all the blacks had to go in the side door and sit in the balcony. So when my father forced my brother and I to come to Great Mills, we already had a mind set that we were going to be treated different because every day of our lives we were treated different. So a lot of it wasn't a surprise.

The biggest thing that sticks in my mind is that my older brother and I had to meet to go to the bathroom. I mean that's something that I used to take for granted. You know, to go to the bathroom, you just raise your hand and go. But here I had to control when I had to go to the bathroom. I had to coordinate with him. So something as simple as going to the bathroom became a major event in my life.

NAACP Projection '73 Rally. From left to right: Carl Robinson, Helen R Howard, Theodore Newkirk, Gloria Morgan, Theresa Cassagnol, Jean Mason, Connie Brown, and Frank Williams. Reprinted by permission of The Enterprise.

Rebecca Groves, Conrad Groves, William Groves, and Joan Groves Briscoe are honored as pioneers of integration at the first annual human relations awareness day in 1986. Reprinted by permission of The Enterprise.

I would say most, just about all of the students, were extremely hostile towards us. We'd sit in class and people would throw things at the back of our heads. To walk down the hall you could expect to be a called a "nigger" at least three or four times a day. I don't remember any teachers intervening and stopping it.

I didn't participate in any extracurricular activities because of the hostility. To me, I viewed them as another opportunity for someone to mistreat me. So I just stayed to myself and [long pause] I was very cautious with exposing myself to any more abuse.

We used to talk to my father about it every day and he'd give us some tips on how to get through it and assure us that it would get better. I wish I could have gone back to the black school, [nervous laughter] but my father wasn't going to budge on that.

In thinking back, I know I got a much better education. I went to the black school from first to eighth grade and never heard about black history. My first year here [Great Mills High School], Martha Mattingly, my U. S. history teacher, she talked about black history.

By the time the state integrated schools, my brother and I had more or less been accepted. You know, you see someone for two years, you kind of just take them for granted. But after they integrated schools, all hell broke loose. We were really in the middle. We had been accepted by most of the white students here, and when they brought all the other blacks that weren't accepted, we were kind of in the middle. They called us "Toms" because we got along with some of the white kids and they didn't. It really made it worse. Even blacks had become just as racist as whites used to be. And that's sad.

Stuart Wayne Newkirk (b. 1951)

The teachers at Great Mills, well, it was like, "This is a change." You had some teachers who accepted the fact that integration is beginning, and they were very, very good to us. Then we had some that really weren't ready for the change. And you could tell that when you entered the classroom. Most were really great. They talked to us. They took the time to talk to us. If something went down and they heard about it, they'd take us aside and say, "This is occurring, and a lot of people are not accepting of the fact that you're here."

They were very supportive. The principal and vice-principals, they were great. And the teachers who didn't seem ready... Well, you could always tell by the way they were. Like if you asked them a question, they didn't want to take the time to answer. I had one teacher, and I'm not going to say her name, who actually called me the "N—" word! Yes. Uh huh. In class.

It seems strange now when I look back and think, well, huh, we were part of a big change that happened in the county. It wasn't easy, but we stayed there. We were determined that nobody was going to stop us from getting what we wanted. We wanted our education; we wanted to better ourselves. And we stuck it out no matter how it was. Because we could have pulled out too, but there were more of us now. It wasn't just two. Joan and Conrad didn't have anybody else to help defend them, but we had the support of the teachers, and we made a lot of supportive friends, too. And they would tell us, "We know it's hard on you, but just don't pay any attention. They're just ignorant. You're here now. And just because your skin is a little darker, that doesn't make any difference. You're human just like anybody else and you want to learn, so you stay here." We got a lot of

support from those that were determined to have us stay. And that's why we stuck it out. We stuck it out. We had each other.

Beverly Watts Dyson (b. 1950)

You know, I never really had a whole lot of problems with discrimination. There was some, I'm not saying there wasn't, but it really didn't bother me. It caused fights with other students but with me, uh, I was out of my element. You don't want to start a fight away from "home." I didn't totally feel at home, but that didn't matter. With my parents, you were going to school. . .no matter what. No matter what, you were going.

Thomas Saxon (b. 1948)

When the county desegregated in 1967, they employed Dr. Robert King as superintendent. That was an improvement. He had the ingenuity and the intelligence to maneuver the Board of Education as well as the community, and most specifically, the black community. I would give him credit for giving us a way out.

At that time, I was president of the local NAACP and I wasn't exactly, what you could say, an easy guy to get along with, [chuckles] I was mean. And I was dissatisfied with what we were confronted with in St. Mary's County, a civilized county, civilized people, intelligent people. But when time came for integration, we acted something terrible.

In 1971 at Great Mills, we had what you call a confrontation, some people even called it a race riot. I never considered it that. It was just frustration on the sides of whites as well as blacks. My educational chairman was Mr. Melvin Holland. We wanted to find out more about the attitudes. I had instructed Melvin to interview black students and their parents during and after that confrontation. We asked, "How did the teachers treat you? What were their attitudes as far as you were concerned?" And better than 90% said that they felt that they were not wanted at school at all. And this really pointed out to me - have we really improved anything? Why were these kids so frustrated? Or so anti-this or anti-that? And most of our problem was at Great Mills High School where staff did not know how to conduct themselves as educators.

We went on for at least six months doing these interviews. And we went from home to home. People were talking on their own behind closed doors. But when we compiled all this information we could only conclude

that it was still a segregated system even though the federal government is saying it is not. We weren't doing any real integrating. The stigma was there. The conduct of the people that were running the schools was unchanged. They hadn't done anything to their heads at all. They were just as prejudiced as before so-called integration.

The surveys were quite useful in our endeavor to keep the NAACP alive and for not making hasty decisions. We tried to get rid of the chip on the shoulder. You don't have anything to fight one another physically.

I worked throughout Maryland during that time, and one thing that I was told at the NAACP convention: St. Mary's County Board of Education and NAACP were able to at least talk to one another. Most of the other counties didn't even talk with the NAACP St. Mary's County never once closed the door. The door was always open. We didn't agree, but we managed to accomplish something. We did communicate throughout the situation.

Theodore Newkirk (b. 1926)

Some things happened with my son and my daughter that didn't happen to me maybe because I went to all-black schools. I remember one day that my daughter came home crying. She was so upset. They had showed the film Roots in class...she was devastated at the reaction of the white students. She was so deeply hurt. And seeing that, I was hurt. "Mom, I can not believe the way the white students acted. They laughed, they chuckled - 'You have not beaten him enough. Oh, go on, he loves it.' 'Man, they got bodies like...a gorilla!' and these were students who a couple of days before we would sit in the library together, or have lunch together." These were people who she thought were her friends. It wasn't the movie; in fact we all looked at it together at home. It was how they reacted to her pain, to our pain.

Jeannette Taylor Price (b. 1947)

It was hard. We were supposed to go on a tour. They took us by bus to Esperanza. When we walked in, there were these stares at us. I felt as if I could have just...vanished. It was awful; it was just awful! During that time when we finally started going to school mixing, all sorts of fights, you know between the races. But I never had any problems. I stayed with my group of people, my black friends. I had a hard time dealing with all that.

High school was even worse. There were a lot of fights. My last year was when they started bomb threats. That was bad. The first bomb threat caused such a panic. People were running out of the school. After a while you got used to it. It was pranks. At that time it was pranks.

Most of the teachers tried hard to make it work. But we never heard the word "college." It was not expected of us. Only the people who were making straight A's were ever talked to about it and encouraged to go.

A lot of us missed out on that.

Vivian Rose Hanson Jordan (b. 1952)

I began school in 1963 at Banneker Elementary School in Loveville. I went there for two years, and I was in the class of Mrs. Estelle Lee both of those years. Then when I was in the third grade they were doing a sort of semi-integration and gave you a choice of whether you went to your regular segregated schools or if you wanted to go to the school that was close to your neighborhood. My parents decided that I would go to the nearest school, Hollywood Elementary. Actually I'm a product of whatever St. Mary's County had to offer. I went to Banneker, I went to Hollywood, I went to Leonardtown for middle school, and I went to Chopticon for high school and then I went to St. Mary's College.

Beginning my education in the segregated school system, the material resources were limited. I never had a textbook in the first grade, but what I did have was an amazing amount of support from the teachers. One of the most vivid memories I have, is my first day of school at Banneker. My sister Phyllis had graduated in the spring before I started, and a bunch of the high school teachers came down to see me in the first-grade class. They introduced themselves and talked about what a good student my sister was and that, basically, if I paid attention and did what I was supposed to do, I could do just as well. It was a family kind of feeling. I can't describe it any other way.

Then in 1965, I went to Hollywood Elementary and I had an experience that was the other end of the spectrum. You weren't really welcome. I think the teachers were on the leading edge of a social experiment, and they really didn't have proper preparation to handle the things that were going on. I think they were told that we weren't going to be as smart as the whites were. I guess they knew, I'm speculating here, that we didn't have any books or materials or anything, but what they didn't

realize was that the social support system we had made up for the material things we were missing. So I think they had lower expectations of our performance.

When I was at Banneker, Mrs. Lee noticed that I was ahead of where I was supposed to be for my class, and she went and got some books somewhere, I think they were samples or something, from some older grades just to see if I could do the work, and I could do it pretty easily up to about the fourth grade level. So I had fourth-grade books when I was in the second grade. By the time I got to Hollywood School, they were expecting me to lag behind, and the work was a piece of cake.

Estelle Lee, 1965 Bluejay Yearbook.

I remember I was in the third grade at Hollywood. It was early in the year and the teacher had given us a page of really basic math problems to work out for homework. The work was so incredibly far behind what I had been doing at Banneker that I just blew right through it. I went back over my answers to make sure they were correct and turned it in. Well, no one could ever accuse me of having a long attention span, so my attention

wasn't what it should have been at the end of the paper. Somehow, I had skipped one problem about three-quarters of the way through.

Well, the teacher went over that paper and found the problem I skipped. At that point the other problems I had done that were all correct didn't matter. She called me up to her desk in the front of the room and berated me at length about how I wasn't going to get any special treatment, how the students at Hollywood School were all "smart," and that I would be lucky if I could keep up. Her response to a simple mistake was so angry and out of proportion to the incident that I had to wonder if Mrs. Lee had put something in my record to indicate that I was a good student. I know it's likely that's what happened because I know Mrs. Lee would do anything in her power to support a student.

When my mother had a stroke we had to go in and clean up a lot of things she had stored. My mother was, I guess you would call it, functionally illiterate. I mean she could read and write but she was a product of the system and her job was cleaning houses. She could read well enough to distinguish furniture polish from floor polish or something like that, but in terms of reading a book or magazine, that was a very big struggle for her. I noticed on the first report card from Hollywood the teacher had put that I was working at grade level and my mother had struggled to write something back like, "I know he's ahead of that," and then the teacher wrote back and said that "No, he's where he belongs."

Donald M. Barber (b. 1957)

Through desegregation, we gained opportunities for people to understand how they needed to relate with each other and opportunities for the students who had previously had to make do with less. And they got to experience things that they probably would not have gotten to experience had they continued to be segregated - exposed to opportunities that would not have existed probably.

For instance, some of the lab spaces were better supplied. And the other thing, of course, is, since we all live together, we need to learn to live together, and you can't learn to live together if you don't live together. And I know that many of the folks at that time developed some life-long friendships that crossed over all kinds of ethnic, religious boundaries and previously didn't exist - at least for most people here. There were people

that came from outside the county and had had other experiences. So I think those were some real pluses.

There was a certain pride, I guess you might say, in those students at Carver who were able to excel in the segregated system - being exceptional in terms of performance when the fact that the, some of the materials especially, were substandard. So, you took things that were, I guess, a little substandard and you were able to take that and compete and excel against some folks, who, at least perception-wise, had things that were of a much better quality than yours, what you had. And all that wasn't perception, by the way. That goes back to that business about separate but equal and that's never been the case.

I had done what I needed to do and I was qualified to be a principal. Now, I applied and I got the run-around; and of course, somebody else ended up being principal who was not as qualified as I was. Then they got ready to open the new high school and I, of course, was interested in being the principal. Well, I couldn't get to be the principal, but they told me that—I say that the establishment said, "You will go there."

And I said, "I'm not going."

"Well, yes you are. You're going there as an assistant principal."

"Okay." Of course, that bothered me, too. You know?

So anyway, the only relevance that has is to kind of underscore some of the things I'm sure you already heard from some other people about the way things were back then.

Harold Herndon (b. 1937)

Personally, I think that we should live in an integrated world. I think about the black schools that we went to and how much of the leadership roles and the independence that we had in those schools. When integration came around, African American children took a backseat. A lot of the leadership qualities were not developed because black schools really did a lot to develop the potential of students, and so the black church, of course.

I go to church, we had to go to church. In the Catholic church, there was not a whole lot of leadership for anyone because the priests basically were the leaders. At that time, black children did not take active roles in church. There's a lot of change now in the Catholic church. All are encouraged to participate. In black Protestant churches you have now and have always had leadership roles for children. They take part in being on

programs and ushering and other church programs. This was something that was lacking for black children in schools after integration. I do think that some of the problems that we face in schools today are still from the aftermath of moving from segregation to integration.

In integrated schools, we still have a lot of work to do to encourage participation and self-motivation. We can say, If you want to own that house on a hill, you can." Because education can take anyone out of poverty. But once you're out, you still have to have the mind-set that, "I belong here."

Janice Talbert Walthour (b. 1946)

You've got too many on both sides - black and white - suffering from tunnel vision.

It's when you get out of the community, you start to look around. "Hey. This is different. I don't have to go in the back door. Why, when I go back home, I'm going to have to go in the back door? Why can't I sit down at the restaurant and have a cup of coffee? I mean, Mr. Charlie's sitting here having a cup. Why can't I have a cup, too? And you know, you don't start to think until you get out of the community, get out of the situation. You're introduced to something different, and that's what happened with the colleges. You know, you see another aspect. You see another side. "This is not what we do back at home. Well, if I can do it here, I go home I want to do it, too. Not only do I want to do it, I want my kids to be able to do it. I want my parents to be able to do it." And so, that's where the change comes from.

We talk about the segregation. You know, before we said that when you go to college, you get your eyes open. Now, suppose you stay in the community. How do you fight it then? I mean, I'm in the community, I've got to depend on Mr. Charlie for the job. I want to go to the store to get something to eat. Where do I go? Do we have any black stores? No. I mean, you know, the resource just wasn't there. You fight it and it's kind of like cutting your nose off to spite your face. What do you gain? So, you've got to realize, you know, get your priorities in order. Which is more important?

James W. Neal (b. 1940)

Janice E. Talbert [Walthour], from the George Washington Carver yearbook, *The Eagle*, 1964.

You've got too many on both sides - black and white - suffering from tunnel vision.

DREAMING OF COLLEGE

I started to think about college when I was starting 12th grade. I thought about it, dreamed about it, but had no idea how I'd go. Mrs. Fleming, my French teacher at Carver, discovered that I did want to go to school but we didn't have any money for it, and she went home and did some homework about places I could attend. She found out that St. Mary's Junior College was a state-supported school. Up until 1962, we all in the community thought that it was a private school.

Mrs. Fleming came to me and said, "Why don't you go to St. Mary's?" and she procured an application. Some of the information we left off.. .the race part. When I got the acceptance letter we had to go down to the College for an initial meeting. We walked in, Mrs. Fleming and Mrs. Gaskin with me, and there were people sitting around a table. ... It was a surprise.

Once it became known that I was accepted there was support from the black community. Mrs. Gaskin was a big support to my family and me. Mrs. Fleming used to check my assignments and papers to be sure I was doing them well. I was being watched, I was in a fishbowl. "Is she going to make it?" "Will there be a riot?"

Mrs. Fleming told me later that my parents were threatened. "You just don't know! We couldn't let you know that."

I didn't sleep one bit the night before that first day. My dad drove me there in his pick-up. He was scared for me. I knew no one. I had a "Big Sister" though. Of course she didn't have any trouble finding me. At least I had that one contact. Walking the campus, no one comes up to speak to you, it's kind of tough. And it's lonely.

Will there be a riot?

Some of the professors were kind to me. But there were incidents. Once, when the professor stepped out of the class, some paper was thrown,

a few books were thrown past me. And once my books were knocked out of my hands.

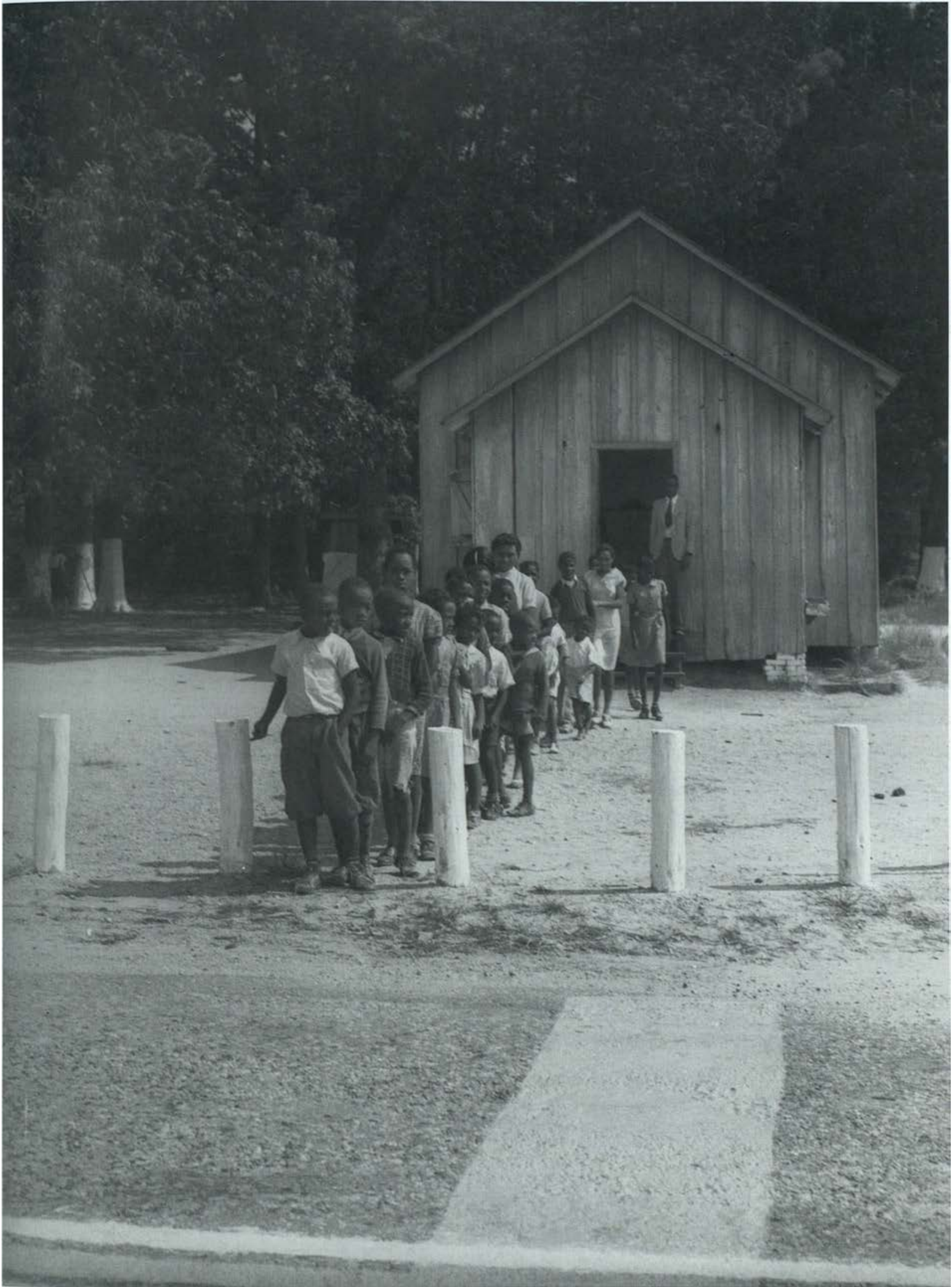
At graduation, we were sitting on stage, and when I walked up to get my diploma, someone removed my chair. Maybe several people had helped remove it. Perhaps they were trying to tell me that I had worn out my welcome. I remained standing as everyone took their seats until finally someone found a chair and several students helped pass it up to me.

I will say that the exposure I got there was very good. I got to participate in activities that I had never had access to - field hockey, cultural arts, concerts. It made me want to have more. It also made me realize that I had a right to have more and should have had it all along. It made me decide that, hey, I'm going to get more, and I'm going to tell what I know and I'm going to share what I learned.

I had opened a door, cracked the ice. And if other minorities were going to come here, I had to see that that door stayed open.

Elizabeth Barber Walker (b. 1943)

I had opened a door, cracked the ice.



Scotland School, September 1940. Photo by John Vachon, Farm Security Administration, Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

[22] "The History of Jim Crow: Teacher Resources" (An Educator's Site Made Possible by the Support of New York Life) Encyclopedia, entry: *Brown et. al. v. Board of Education* (Home Page) www.jimcrowhistory.org.

[23] United States District Court, D. Maryland, *Rose Marie Robinson et. al. v. Board of Education of St. Mary's County et. al.,* 143 F.Supp.481.

[24] United States Court of Appeals Fourth District, *Board of Education of St. Mary's County et. al. v. Joan Elaine Groves, Minor, by her parent, William Groves,* 261 F.2d 527.

[25] The Enterprise, Centennial Issue, March 30, 1983, p. 42.

Appendix A

All four policy statements are courtesy of the St. Mary's County Public Schools.

Board of Education
St. Mary's County
Leonardtown, Maryland

Statement of Integration Policy

On November 3, 1955, the Board of Education of St. Mary's County, publicly announced its acceptance of the Supreme Court's decision with reference to the desegregation of public schools.

Since then, the Board of Education, assisted by the Citizens' Advisory Committee on Integration, has made an exhaustive study of the many problems involved in the transition from a segregated to a non-segregated school system.

The Citizens' Advisory Committee was appointed June 20, 1955, by joint action of the Board of Education and the Commissioners of St. Mary's County. This committee of twenty-three white and colored citizens spent practically a year in studying the problem assigned it. They took into consideration the traditions of the county, the opinions of their fellow-citizens, the procedures and reactions of other communities and the administrative problems pertinent to the local school system.

As a result of its studies, the Committee, on June 11, 1956, unanimously adopted certain recommendations for the consideration of the Board of Education. These recommendations emphasized that desegregation should be on a voluntary and gradual basis.

Recent events in St. Mary's County and further study of the results of desegregation in other communities have convinced the Board of Education

of the wisdom and soundness of the Committee's recommendations. The Board believes that these recommendations reflect the opinion of the great majority of the citizens of the county.

The Board of Education of St. Mary's County, therefore, accepts the recommendations of the Citizens' Advisory Committee and hereby declares that integration in the public schools shall begin in the school year 1957 - 1958, on a voluntary basis, in the elementary grades, where it is administratively feasible.

However, the Board of Education reserves the right to consider the specific needs of any child, and to accept or reject any application J for transfer, as and when presented, giving due consideration to the individual facts of each case.

The Board of Education hereby expresses appreciation for the splendid and conscientious services rendered by the Members of the Committee - and earnestly solicits the confidence and cooperation of all St. Mary's County Citizens in implementing the Supreme Court's decision.

Board of Education St. Mary's County Leonardtown, Maryland	G. EDWARD THOMAS, PRESIDENT ROBERT E. WIGGINTON, VICE-PRESIDENT MAY RUSSELL MRS. GRACE KNIGHT LEO YOUNG

July 31, 1956

Excerpt from Board Minutes Dated April 3, 1958

"Board Members discussed the integration policy which might be put into effect for the 1958 - 1959 school year. After hearing comments from all members present. Miss Russell made the motion that Mr. Wigginton and Mr. King get together to formulate our integration, policy. Mr. King and Mr. Wigginton, by Miss Russel's motion, were to make up a formal resolution extending the policy through grades 7, 8, and 9. Miss Russell's motion was seconded by Mrs. Grace Knight. Motion carried. The resolution reads as follows:

> "BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Education for St. Mary's County, Maryland, at its regular meeting on Tuesday, April 8, 1958, in furtherance of the Mandate of the United States Court which requires the integration of Public Schools on a voluntary basis to be accomplished with deliberate speed, and in furtherance of what it considers to be the expressed recommendations of the Committee on Integration, that for the school year 1958 - 1959, integration of the Public Schools of St. Mary's County, Maryland, will be extended, on a voluntary basis, through Grades Seven, Eight, and Nine and that transfers will be processed in accordance with the same procedures as heretofore established. The Board of Education reserves the right to refuse or reject any application for transfer if improperly made or for Administrative reasons."

Board of Education
St. Mary's County
Leonardtown, Maryland

Excerpt from Board Minutes Dated March 10, 1959

"The Board discussed integration plans for the 1959 - 1960 school year and adopted the following policy:

> "BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Education for St. Mary's County, Maryland, at its regular meeting on Tuesday, March 10, 1959, in furtherance of the Mandate of the United States Supreme Court which requires the integration of Public Schools on a voluntary basis to be accomplished with deliberate speed, and in furtherance of what it considers to be the expressed recommendations of the Committee on Integration, that for the school year 1959 - 1960, integration of the Public Schools of St. Mary's County, Maryland, will be in effect in Grades One through Twelve, on a voluntary basis, and that transfers will be processed in accordance with the same procedures as heretofore established. The Board of Education reserves the right to refuse or reject any application for transfer if improperly made or for Administrative reasons."

Board of Education
St. Mary's County
Leonardtown, Maryland

FOURTH POLICY STATEMENT ON INTEGRATION

"BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Education for St. Mary's County, Maryland, at its regular meeting on Friday, November 8, 1963, in furtherance of the Mandate of the United States Supreme Court which requires the integration of public schools on a voluntary basis to be accomplished with deliberate speed, and in furtherance of what it considers to be the expressed recommendations of its Committee on Integration, that for the school year 1963-1964 all pupils who have not previously done so may attend the school which; normally serves the area in which they live without having to apply for transfers through the Board of Education. Be it further resolved that transportation will be provided for these youngsters without regard to race, creed, or color. The Board of Education reserves the right to refuse or reject these enrollments if not feasible nor practical because of administrative reasons."

Board of Education
St. Mary's County
Leonardtown, Maryland

REE:CM
12/2/63

Appendix B

Courtesy of the St. Mary's County Historical Society.

Assembly of Maryland. This petition read as follows:

Whereas, The number of colored schools for Saint Mary's County is inadequate for the colored public education interest of the county, and whereas, there are but 19 colored schools, the superficial area of St. Mary's being, in round numbers, 300 square miles, with numerous tributaries from the Patuxent and Potomac Rivers and the Chesapeake Bay, and whereas, the proportion of the present appropriation allotted to St. Mary's for the support of colored schools will hardly maintain the present number, and whereas, we believe this state of affairs to exist in many counties of Maryland, and whereas, the county allowances are only to the white schools, and whereas, any transfer of any portion of the county allowances from the white schools to the colored schools would be to the detriment of the white schools, and greatly impair their usefulness and success, and whereas, by the census of 1880 the colored population is to the white as 2 is to 7, while the appropriation to the colored schools is to the appropriation to the white schools as 1 is to IS, and whereas, as is shown by financial exhibits, the financial standing of the state is good, and the increased appropriation herein asked, would not be felt; we the undersigned citizens of St. Mary's County, and other portions of Maryland do respectfully petition you the Honorable General Assembly of Maryland of 1888, and His Excellency, the Governor of Maryland, to increase the appropriation for the colored schools to $150,000 (now $100,000) because of the great need for more and better schools, the ability of the State to afford relief asked, and the justice, and the great good to result to the entire people, and we shall ever petition,

Signed:

Zack R. Morgan, President of the Board of School Commissioners of St. Mary's County

Lewis H. Leigh, School/Commissioner of St. Mary's County

Randolph Hones, School Commissioner of St. Mary's County

Frank IT. Holmes, Secretary and Treasurer of the Board of School Commissioners of St. Mary's County.[1]

Letter from Mother Katherine Drexel,
benefactor of Oblate Sisters of Providence.
Courtesy of St. Peter Clavel Church.

Reverend Horace B. McKenna, S.J.,
Saint Peter Claver's Church
Ridge, Maryland

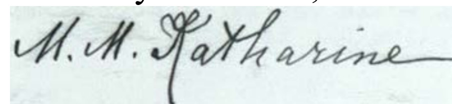
Reverend and dear Fathers

Your letter to Mother M. Mercedes, who is not home at present, has been received. I am indeed sorry, dear Reverend Father, that you have been obliged to write again concerning the salary of the teacher for the coining year. Your previous letter was received and I felt sure that it had been acknowledged. I trust you will pardon the delay which must have been due to the absence and illness of Sisters who usually look after such matters for me.

With regard to the salary of the teacher, dear Reverend Father, we have made provision to pay $100.00 per month until the end of December, 1934. Our annual budget is made up at the beginning of the year, and if I live, and nothing unforeseen occurs, I trust we shall be able to continue the allowance for 1935.

With all good wishes, dear Reverend Father, and trusting that the coming school year will be a very successful one, I am

Very sincerely in Dmno.,



Letter from Horace McKenna,
Courtesy of St. Peter Clavel Church.

July 13, 1935.

Reverend Mother Mary Katharine, R.B.S.,
St. Elizabeth's,
Cornwells Heights, Pa.

Dear Reverend Mother Katharine,

P.C.

You understand far better than I the sternal value of the benefaction which you do us by supporting the four colored Sisters, Oblates of Providence, who teach the 142 colored children in our It. Peter Claver's School at Ridge. This coming year is the twentieth year of our school, and I believe that your great benefactions go back these twenty years to Father Emerick’s time. (God rest him). What Gath lie teaching, what holy inspiration, what refreshment and life from holy Mass and the Sacraments has not your royal generosity fostered and produced here in Southern Maryland?

Our children and Negro people appreciate your aid, Reverend Mother. Under the guidance of the Sisters, the children heartily take part in the regular prayers which we offer for your 4000 intentions. Our whole parish knows that without your help, as before so now, we would be unable to have a school. The economic independence of our people has been greatly retarded during five past lean years. But in building up the skill, courage and thrift needed to develope home and farm life our school and Church are everybody's reliance and rallying point. And. without your aid, Reverend Mother, this would be impossible for us.

So in hoping to open school for the following year, Reverend Mother, in the Nana of Jesus in blessed Sacrament and of his Immaculate Mother Mary, I must ask you if, during the coming year of September 1935 to June 1936, should God in His Goodness prolong your sojourn of merit, would you be able to continue your charity to us in supporting our teaching Sisters?

May our little school be not the least of those many works of yours from which God derives great glory, and you, Reverend Mother Katharine, and your generous Sisters, reap many prayers and blessings.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

1930 graduation program courtesy of Catherine Thompson.

COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES
COLORED ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
ST. MARY'S COUNTY, MARYLAND.

St. Aloysius Hall,
Leonardtown, Md.

Thursday, June 5th, 1930,
7:30 o'clock, P.M.

****

PROGRAM

Music ...."America" ....Audience

Welcome Address .... Lola Barnes

Music......."Send Out Thy Light"- Gounod,...Clements School

Awarding of Certificates............... Miss Lettie M. Dent,
Superintendent.

Music....."In the Time of Roses"-Reichardt, Clements School

Declamation ...."Today is Yours" ....Henry Brown

Duet ...."Santa Lucia" - Neapolitan Boat Song -
Agnes Wilson & Alberta Johnson

Reading ....."Seven Ages of Man" ....Joseph Somerville

Address to Graduates ....Prof. P. L. Henry

Music ....."Fairest Lord Jesus" - Crusader's Hymn,
Clements School

Reading ....Alice Marshall

Remarks ....Wm. Q. Bland,
Supervisor.

Music......."Vesper Hymn" - Thomas Moore,...Clements School.

Graduated from 7th grade

7th Grade Graduation
Thursday June 6, 1930
St. Aloysius Hall

GRADUATES

Fenwick
Margarette Thomas
Zora Carter
Alfred Dyson
Mitchell Hill

Hollywood
Mary Addester Clarke
Gladys E. Somerville
Thomas Richley Clarke
Grace E. Stevens
Ruth Alice Somerville

Clements
Catherine Thomas
James Branson
John Edward Price

The Oaks
Florine Jackson
John Ford

Hermanville
Nannie M. Jackson

Milestown
Joseph Butler

Piney Point
Theresa Blackwell
Regetta Dickens
Minnette Briscoe
Constell Rich

White Marsh
Alice Marshall
Julia Willis
Louisa Stewart

Jarboesville
Marnett Anderson
Joseph Somerville
Margaret Somerville
Catherine Coates

Leonardtown
Marie Turner
Eleanor Swales
Catherine Shelton
Frances Taney
Elsie Holly

Medley's Neck
Joseph Milburn
Walter Milburn
Joseph Young

Mechanicsville
Ethel Butler
Florence Smith

Oakville
Gertrude Wood

Redgate
Agnes Wilson

Compton
Jane C. Armstrong

Oraville
Lola M. Bond
Beatrice Thomas
Hazel G. Yorkshire
Floyd J. Young
James Young
Paul Lawrence Yorkshire

Appendix C

These notes provide some information about the schools located on the map printed earlier in this book, but both the map and the notes are "works-in-progress." Although many folks named the schoolhouses after geographical locations, public schools were officially referred to by their district and school number until consolidation of the schools took place in the mid-1940s and 1950s. The sites of most of the eleven Freedmen's Bureau schools purported to be built between 1865 and 1968 are not included. Some may never have been built; others were probably absorbed into the county system after 1872. Other schools are waiting to be remembered and relocated in this history, and, of course, corrections and additions to what follows are encouraged.

Freedmen's Bureau Schools (1865-1872)

The first Freedmen's Bureau-financed school in St. Mary's County was built near Charlotte Hall in 1865 with additional funding and teacher's salary supplied by the New York Society of Friends (Quakers). Another Freedmen's school was built in Chaptico in 1866. The Freedmen's Bureau claims to have financed the building of eleven schools in the county by 1868. Outside support for the schools waned with the decline of the Baltimore Association (a religious philanthropy) and the disbanding of the federal Freedmen's Bureau in 1872. When state funding and local control of separate "colored" and "white" schools began in Maryland after 1872, trustees of Freedmen's Bureau schools were contacted and invited to turn their schools over to the county. (Sources: Joseph L. Browne, "The Expenses are Born by Parents," Maryland Historical Magazine, Winter 1991; James H. Whyte, "The Activities of the Freedmen's Bureau in Southern Maryland," Chronicles of St. Mary's, February 1959)

District No. 1, St. Inigoes

School No. 1: Fairfield (1871 or earlier; closed after 1900) was located in the area around the former St. James Church (Mattapany Road

and Route 235) and is referred to as Fairfield in Father Walsh's book (*Saint Inigoes Mission: 1634-1984*). The 1874 surrender of the Freedmen's Bureau school in District No. 1 to the county may have referred to this school.

School No. 2: The Pine (1871 —ca. 1930; probably in two locations). Alice Bennett referred to this as Tall Pines, and described it as being on the north side of Bennett Drive, near Route 5. She also said that the first of the "colored" schools was located about where Anne and Tony's Store (now called Ben's) stands — across from St. Michael's Church. Also referenced in Father Walsh's book, which mentions an event at the school and refers to the area near the present church as "the Pine" or "tall pines." No longer standing.

School No. 3: Scotland (1879-1949; still standing) located on the northeast corner of Fresh Pond Neck Road and Route 5, south of Ridge. The original interior walls had a wainscoting below and 1 by 3 diagonal bead-board siding above. The ceiling was cathedral in design. There were two exterior doors at the front and it appears both were used. An addition was added prior to 1940 at which time the St.
Luke's Church (across the road) was used as an adjunct.

County Planning and Zoning Historical Survey (1994) records note:

> Scotland School is located on land that was donated by the Quaker family of Boardley for the establishment of a Public School for blacks. This land was donated to the St. Mary's Board of Education in 1878. The building that stands on the property today was originally a white elementary school that was moved from another site (Carriage Lane Road) and placed there in 1879. The school was sold by the Board of Education to private ownership in 1949.

Scotland schoolhouse was used as a barbershop for many years by Mr. Guffrie Smith.

School No. 4: St. Inigoes (1896-1940s; still standing) is located on the west side of Mt. Zion Church Road, off of Beachville Road, from Route 5. The schoolhouse is currently owned by St. Mary's County. The school closed in the mid- 1940s as schools were consolidated. It was converted into a residence in the 1940s, but much of the original structural design remains. The schoolhouse is currently abandoned and falling down.

Roman Catholic - Knights of St. Jerome Hall (1887-1891; still standing) is located on the northwest corner of Trappe Road and Route 235. The elementary school occupied the full first floor of the original building, built in 1887, which is still in use by the same organization. An original teacher's desk (handmade) and two student desks (from Philadelphia) normally stored on the second floor are currently on loan to the Reginald F. Lewis Museum in Baltimore. The first class enrolled for the fourth term in May, 1887.

Roman Catholic - St. Peter Claver Elementary (1916-1965; still standing) is located near the church on St. Peter Claver Church Road (off Route 5, south of St. Inigoes). The school opened soon after African American members of St. Michael's church left to establish St. Peter's Church. The school closed with the desegregation of county schools in 1967; many students transferred to St. Michael's School in Ridge. (Elementary closed in 1965, and seventh and eighth grades closed in 1967.)

Roman Catholic - Cardinal Gibbons Institute, a high school, (1924-33; 1938-1967) was located a little ways northwest of the church between St. Peter Claver Church Road and Sea Side View Road. Between 1933 and 1938, academic classes were suspended due to lack of funds, but agricultural and county extension programs continued to operate from the school. The Institute closed in 1967 with the mandatory desegregation of county high schools in that year, and the building was torn down in 1972.

Roman Catholic - St. Alphonsus (1916-1922) was located on Route 235 six miles north of Ridge near the intersection with Mattapany Road. A part of the Parish of St. James, the school was built with contributions from Mother Katherine Drexel. The building is no longer standing. (Source: Regina Combs Hammett, *History of St. Mary's County, Maryland 1634-1990,* 1991, p. 368)

District No. 2, Valley Lee

School No. 1 - Valley Lee or Great Mills (1874-1940s) was located on the east side of Route 249 and south of Smith's Lawnmower Repair Shop. Set back from the road and near a ravine, the site was near to the old Route 249 dump. Records note a new school was built in District No. 2 in 1920. This was probably the Great Mills School replacing the old Valley Lee School on the same site. The building is no longer standing. (Source: Hammett, p. 319)

School No. 2 - Drayden (1890-1944; still standing). Located about a mile south of Drayden Road on Cherryfield Road, Drayden schoolhouse is currently owned by St. Mary's County and is under the watchful eye of the Department of Recreation and Parks - Museum Division. After many years in the hands of a private citizen, the building and one acre were gifted to the county in 1 999. Funding is being sought to support plans for interpretation.

Badly needed maintenance on the property was administered in 2000, funded by DynCorp Range Technical Services Inc. (now Computer Sciences Corporation), Christmas in April, and the county. Although exterior paint was not found on early schoolhouses, the building was painted in order to preserve the original siding planks and because the building had already been painted in years past. UCAC informants and oral histories gathered by local resident, Ruth Dillener, indicate that the school yard was entirely dirt (mud on rainy days).

The Planning and Zoning Historic Survey (1994) states: "The Drayden Schoolhouse stands on a one-acre lot . . . purchased by Mary Ellen Gross and Daniel A. Gross in 1889. This simple frame one-room schoolhouse appears to have been built on the property soon after their purchase. The Gross family owned the property until 1 944, suggesting that the Board of Education rented the school building from them. ... In 1944 the Drayden Schoolhouse was closed and students were bused to Jarboesville. . . . Once the building ceased to serve as a schoolhouse, it was occupied as a residence."

School No. 3 - Piney Point (1890-1938) is located near where St. Luke's Church now stands off Route 249 at Steuart Petroleum Road. Children from St. George Island School transferred here after the Hurricane of 1 933. The building is no longer standing.

**There were other early schools in this district referenced as early as 1 876, but not by name or location.

District No. 9, Island District

(may have been included with District No. 2 in early records)

School No. 1 - St. George Island (1875-1933). There were at least two "colored" schools on the island. The first, built in 1875, was near the middle of the island and the second, near the northern end of the island, was abandoned after the Hurricane of 1933. The building is no longer standing.

District No. 3, Leonardtown

**According to the St. Mary's Beacon, a Freedmen's Bureau school was built on land donated by H. G. S. Key in this district (1867-?).

School No. 1 - Leonardtown (1900 or earlier-closed after 1930). In the early decades of the twentieth century, grades one through three were held in a room in the back of the old St. Aloysius Society Building, and grades four through seven were held in a building down the hill on the south side of Fenwick Street by the cemetery. The building is no longer standing.

School No. 2 - St. Clement's Bay or Clements (1874-1938) was located south of the intersection of Route 234 (Budd's Creek Road) and Route 242 (Colton's Point Road). The school is referred to as the "Dirt Bridge School" in a 1924-1925 "Teachers of Colored Schools" list and, according to the St. Mary's County Historical Society, is referred to as "Claments" on a list of "Colored Schools" for the same year. The building is no longer standing.

School No. 3 - Red Gate (1876 deed-1938) was located on the northeast side of Route 5 about midway between Whirlwind Road and Moll Dyer Road. The building is no longer standing.

School No. 4 - Beggar's Neck (1878-1938), also known as Newtown Neck, was located on the north side of Route 243 near the intersection with Rosebank Road. The building is no longer standing.

School No. 5 - Medley's Neck (1900 or earlier-ca. 1940) was located on the west side of Route 244 (Medley's Neck Rd.), probably south of George Beverly Road. It is no longer standing.

Industrial School (1923-1934) was located in an old farmhouse on land owned by the Banneker trustees and deeded to the County Board of Education in 1929. The farmhouse is no longer standing.

Banneker School (1934-1967) finally opened as a public high school thirty-eight years after eight African Americans formed a corporation to "establish a colored high school in the county." It served as an elementary through senior high school until desegregation in 1967.

Maryland Springs School was located north of Banneker on the west side of Route 5, near the intersection with Pincushion Road. Formerly a white school built in 1842 and in use as a white school until 1924, Maryland Springs housed the junior high for Banneker, probably beginning in 1934. The building is no longer standing.

District No. 4, Chaptico

School No. 1 - Chaptico (1866-?). A Freedmen's Bureau School was built in Chaptico in 1866. The Chaptico School probably burned in the early 1870s. In 1875, the "John Wesley Chapel" offered use of its buildings and land to the county for a "colored school" five days a week.

School No. 1 - Called Hurry, then Crossroads (before 1873-?) was located on Crop Road. Historical Society records indicate that repairs were made in 1873 and again in 1876 " to a school located on Crop Road." Some time after 1 876, the Hurry school closed and students went to the Crossroads school (?-1938) located on the northeast corner at the intersection of Hurry Chaptico Road and Manor Road. The building is no longer standing.

School No. 2 - Budd's Creek (1881-1956). Many "colored" schools were used buildings donated to the county and moved to county property. But in 1 881, a brand new two-room building was built on Budd's Creek Road, just west of the intersection with Chaptico Mechanicsville Road. The schoolhouse is no longer standing.

School No. 3 - Mechanicsville (?-1956) was located on Flora Corner Road and old Route 5 in Mechanicsville in the old Benevolent Society Building formerly used as the Volunteer Rescue Squad Building. The building is no longer standing.

[No. unknown] - Tin Top School (some time after 1900-1910) was located on Tin Top School Road. Abraham Butler taught in this school prior to 1911. The building is no longer standing.

District No. 5, Charlotte Hall

School No. 1 - The Oaks (1900 or earlier-1938) was located on the east side of All Faith Church Road near the intersection with Golden Beach Road. The building is no longer standing.

School No. 2 - Trent Hall (1882 or earlier-closed by 1916) was located on the south side of Route 6 across from the intersection with Trent Hall Road. The building is no longer standing.

School No. 2 - Gravelly Knoll (some time after 1900-1952) was located on north side of Route 6 just west of the intersection with Hill and Dale Drive. The building is no longer standing.

School No. 3 - Charlotte Hall (1865-1900 or later) was located somewhere near the county line. The building probably burned shortly after

1900 and students were sent to White Marsh.

School No. 3 - White Marsh (some time after 1900-1956) was housed in two buildings near the Ebenezer A. M. E. Church just off old Route 5. Grades one through three met in the old log cabin (taken down in 2004) that was the original church, dating at least from the 1 870s. Grades four through seven met in a building about 500 feet away. A new White Marsh school was built in 1956.

School No. 4 - Oraville (some time after 1900-1938) was located on the east side of Route 6 just south of Della Brooke Road. The building is no longer standing.

District No. 6, Hillsville

School No. 1 - Oakville (1880-1943). Located along Route 235, the first schoolhouse burned and was replaced with a new building on the same site. It closed in 1943 and is no longer standing.

School No. 2 - Called Hollywood, then Phyllis Wheatley (1877-1951; still standing). Located on the south side of Sotterley Road about midway between Pinto Drive and Peregrine Way, Phyllis Wheatley was built in 1921 with a Rosenwald grant and Rosenwald school design on the site of the old Hollywood School. (Source: Fisk University archives of Rosenwald grant schools)

From the County Planning and Zoning Historical Survey (1994):

"John F. Magill transferred this quarter acre lot to the Board of County School Commissioners in 1877 'for the purpose of erecting...a school house for the use, benefit, and education of the colored people of St. Mary's County.' The property ceased to be used for school purposes around 1951, and in 1954, both the property and the school building were sold to private owners. In 1979, the building was converted for use as a residence."

"Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784), the school's namesake, is nationally recognized as the first published African American poet. Born in Africa, she was sold as a slave to the family of a tailor in Boston. The first bound volume of her poetry was published in 1773."

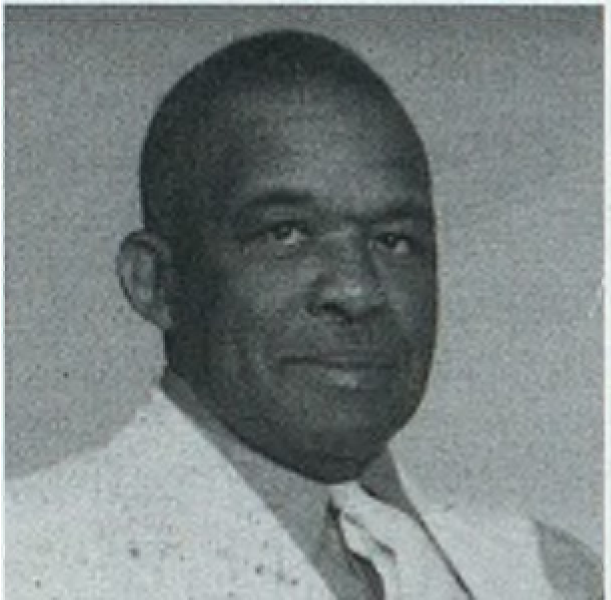
School No. 3 - Morganza (some time before 1877-1920s). Historical Society records show that repairs were made in 1877. The building is no longer standing.

Roman Catholic - St. Joseph's Colored Parochial School (1927-1964) is located on Route 5 in Morganza, about a quarter of a mile south of

the church. During the first year of operation, it was taught by two lay teachers. The following year, Sister Charles and Sister Elsie staffed the school. Enrollment had reached 67. In 1944, Father Alphonsus R. Thomas, S. J. bought a station wagon, which was used to transport the children to school. The following year, a bus was purchased. In 1 946, two rooms and a library were added and, in 1 949, two army barracks were purchased and made into a cafeteria and kindergarten. By about 1950, the school had six classrooms and served seven parishes: St. Joseph's, Morganza; St. John's, Hollywood; St. Aloysius, Leonardtown; Sacred Heart, Bushwood; Holy Angels, Avenue; Immaculate Conception, Mechanicsville; and Our Lady of the Wayside, Chaptico. There was also a St. Joseph's Parochial School for white children. The building was converted into apartments after it closed in 1964. (Source: Hammett, p. 360)

Appendix D

African Americans who served on the St. Mary's County School Board of Education



1953 - Robinson Barnes (appointed by Governor Thomas R. McKeldin)

1955 - Clarence Leo Young (appointed by Governor Thomas R. McKeldin)

1963 - Harry C. Graves (appointed by Governor J. Millard Tawes)

1966 - William M. Groves (appointed by Governor J. Millard Tawes)

1967 - William T. Hewlett (appointed by Governor Spiro T. Agnew)

1973 - James A. Forrest (appointed by Governor Marvin Mandel)

1983 - John Graham Lancaster (appointed by Governor Harry R. Hughes)

1986 - Jonathan C. Nelson (appointed by Governor Harry R. Hughes)

1996 - Mary M. Washington (elected 11/05/1996; re-elected 11/07/2000 and 11/09/2004)

African Americans who served on the Maryland State Board of Education

1976 - Albertine T. Lancaster (appointed by Governor Marvin Mandel)

Appendix E

Jim Crow Laws: Maryland

Like other border states, Maryland fully supported segregation, passing 15 such laws between 1870 and 1957. Persons found guilty of violating the 1884 miscegenation law were subject to imprisonment in the penitentiary from 18 months to 1 0 years. The state also paid close attention to segregating its steamboat trade. The miscegenation statute was not repealed until 1967.

1870: Education (Statute) "Taxes paid by colored people shall be set aside for maintaining schools for colored children."

1872: Education (Statute) "Schools to be established for colored children. No colored school shall be established in a district unless the colored population warrants."

1884: Miscegenation (Statute) Prohibited all marriages between white persons and Negroes and persons of Negro descent to third generation inclusive. Penalty: Person guilty of infamous crime and subject to a sentence of imprisonment in the penitentiary between 1 8 months to ten years. Ministers who performed such ceremonies were to be fined $100.

1904: Railroads (Statute) All railroad companies required to provide separate cars or coaches for white and colored passengers. Signage in plain letters to be displayed in a conspicuous place. Penalty: Companies that failed to comply could be fined between $300 and $1,000. Passengers who refused to take their assigned seat could be charged with a misdemeanor and fined between $5 and $50, or imprisoned in jail for 30 days, or both. Conductors who failed to carry out the law could be charged with a misdemeanor and fined between $25 and $50.

1904: Steamboats (Statute) White and colored passengers to be assigned to separate areas of a steamboat. Penalty: Company officers who failed to enforce the law could be charged with a misdemeanor and fined between $25 and $50. Passengers who refused to sit where assigned were liable for misdemeanor and could be fined between $5 and $50.

1908: Steamboats (Statute) Steamboats operating on the Chesapeake Bay required to provide separate toilet or retiring rooms, and separate sleeping cabins for white and black passengers. Penalty: $50 for each day's violation.

1908: Streetcars (Statute) Streetcars required to designate separate seats for white and colored passengers. Penalty: Passengers who refused to comply with law guilty of a misdemeanor, and could be fined up to $50, or imprisoned in jail for 30 days, or both. Conductors who refused to enforce the act were guilty of a misdemeanor, and could be fined up to $20.

1924: Miscegenation (State Code) Miscegenation declared a felony.

1924: Education (State Code) Required racially segregated schools.

1935: Miscegenation (Statute) Miscegenation between persons of the Caucasian and Malay races prohibited.

1951: Education (State Code) Duty of County Board of Education to establish free public schools for all colored children between the ages of six and twenty years.

1951: Barred public accommodation segregation (Statute) Repealed public accommodation segregation laws.

1955: Miscegenation (Statute) Any white woman who delivered a child conceived with a Negro or mulatto would be sentenced to the penitentiary for 1 8 months to five years.

1957: Miscegenation (State Code) Crime for white woman to bear a black man's child. Law held unconstitutional later that year in *State v. Howard.*

1957: Miscegenation (State Code) Prohibited marriage between whites and Negroes or Asians. Penalty: 18 months to 10 years imprisonment.

1957: Adoption (State Code) Required race to be disclosed on petition for adoption.

1967: Barred anti-miscegenation (Statute) Repealed anti-miscegenation law.

Source: "The History of Jim Crow," An Educator's Site Made Possible by the Support of New York Life (Home Page), www.jimcrowhistory.org.

Appendix F

2006 Board of Directors

Unified. Committee for Afro-American Contributions of St. Mary's County, Incorporated

Donald Barber
Elmer Brown
ohnie Brown
Robin Burt
Kelsey Bush
Francine Dove Hawkins
Bonnie Elward
Robert Gant, Sr.
Steve Hawkins
Jeoffrey Jackson
Alma Jordon
Bob Lewis
Anna Moseley
Merideth Taylor
Janice Talbert Walthour

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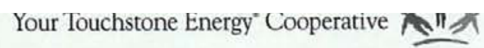

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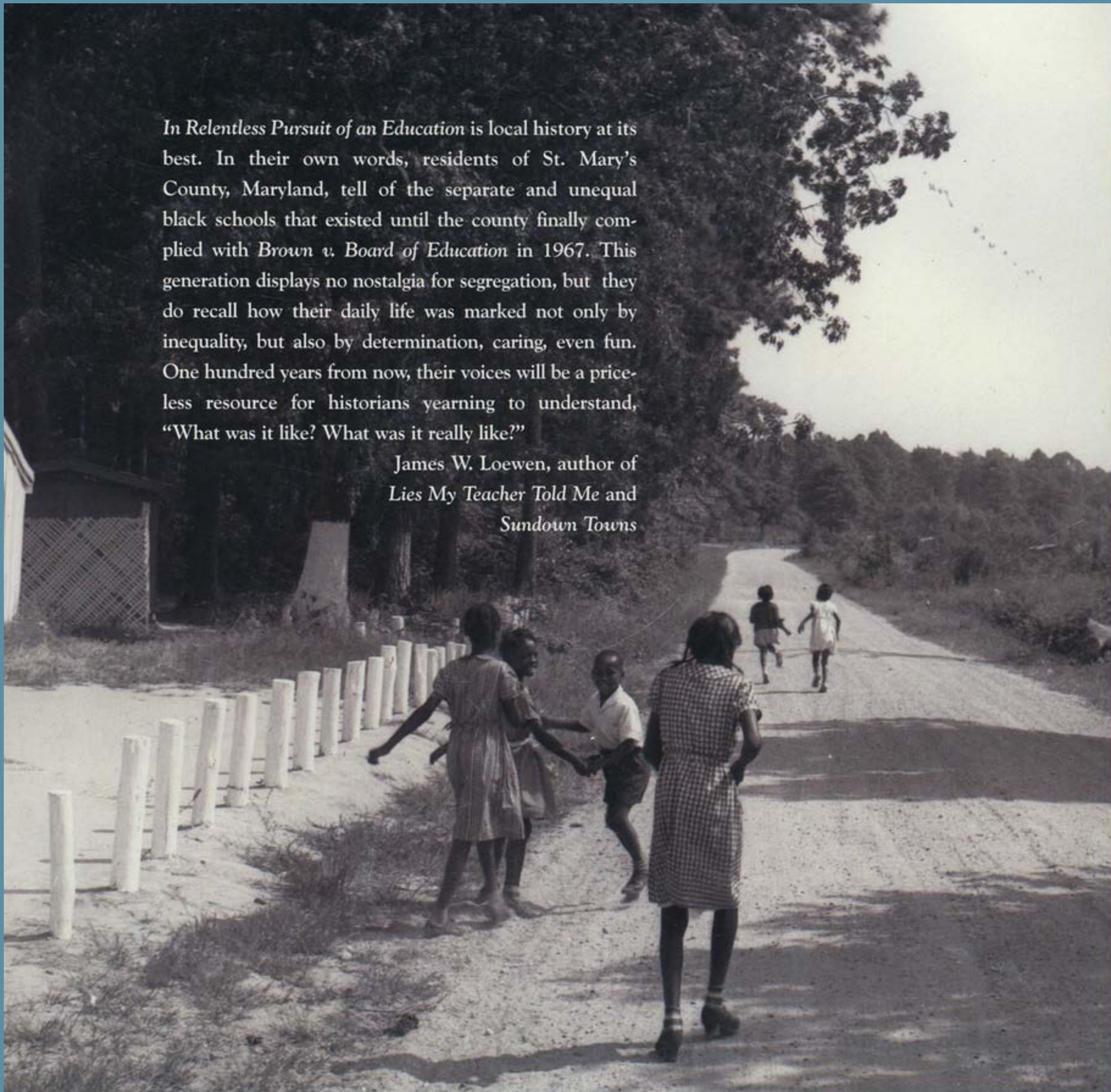

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