

Jefferson School Oral History Project



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I would like to make a plea to the community not to tear the school down. I mean we ought to have the creativity, the know-how to make it a viable part of the community. We've done it all these years that it's been used for something interesting, to just sit there now and rot. The young children of today don't know about the school, and that's tragic.

—Helen Sanders, Jefferson School graduate



This publication is dedicated to Priscilla Whiting whose vision, energy, and humor infused life into the community's efforts to find value in preserving the Jefferson School and all it stood for.

Cover Image:

Rendering of the Commerce Street facade of Jefferson School, 2002.
Graphic by Sandy Rivkin.

Right:

Priscilla Whiting describing her memories of the Jefferson School.
Photograph by Alexandria Searis.

Jefferson School Oral History Project



September 2004

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Introduction to the Jefferson School Oral History Project

The Architecture of the Jefferson School

Architectural Description of the Jefferson School

by Dr. Clifton Ellis, Jacky Taylor, Liz Sargent

Education of the Jefferson School

The Establishment of the Jefferson School

and Jefferson-Madison Regional Library

by Liz Sargent, Jacky Taylor

The Great Depression and the Jefferson School

National History Day Project

by Jacky Taylor

The Great Depression and the Jefferson School

by Jacky Taylor

Jefferson School's Support of Collecting

by Amy Hill

Interviewees

- Charles Alexander (Alex-zan)
- Hank Allen
- Rosemary Baleister
- Florence Bryant
- Braxton Coles
- Coles Sisters
 - Bernadine Gines
 - Ruth Harris
 - Frances Wood
- Marian Dukes
- Bruce Edmonds
- Nancy Gercke
- William Gilmore
- Rudolph Goffney
- Lyria Hailstork
- Mary Inge
- Theodore Inge, Jr.
- DuBois Johnson
- Clarence Jones
- Ida Lewis
- Kenneth Martin
- Elizabeth Minor
- Barbara Myer
- Teresa Price, Jane & Gene Foster
- Laura Robinson
- Charles and Janice Rogers
- Helen Sanders
- David Saunier
- Susan Cone Scott
- Grace Tinsley
- George Tramontin
- Priscilla Whiting
- Eugene Williams

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In addition to those who graciously offered to be interviewed (see list, left), numerous individuals have donated their time in support of this project. They include:

- Mary Anderson
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- Ted Corcoran
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- Lois McKenzie
- Lindsay Nolting
- Nancy O'Brien
- Teresa Price
- Lois Sandy
- Alexandria Searls
- Ashlin Smith
- Corey Walker
- Matt Whitaker
- Priscilla Whiting

This project would not have been possible without the contributions of each of these individuals. Many thanks to all!

Jacky Taylor and Liz Sargent, project coordinators

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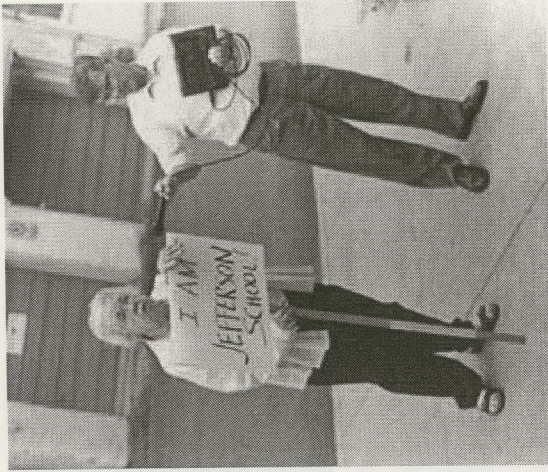
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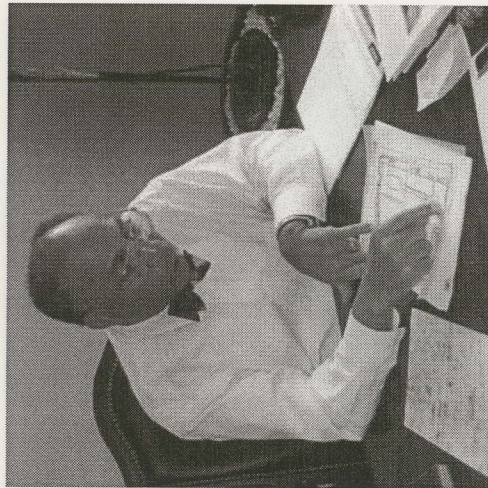
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 Photographs by Liz Sargent, and
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 under the direction of Professor Daniel Bluestone

Introduction

This Oral History publication is the culmination of two years' work collecting stories associated with the history of the Jefferson School in Charlottesville, Virginia. The project was begun in 2002 to support the grassroots efforts of various advocacy groups interested in saving the historic school building from development. These groups, including the Jefferson School Alumni, Preservation Piedmont, Citizens for Jefferson School, and Preservation Jefferson, sought tools for imparting the significance of the building to the public as well as the city officials charged with determining its fate.

The Oral History Project was designed to expand upon the historical information available about the school—to make known the human and personal element of its role in Charlottesville community history. The project was also intended to inform the wider public about the school's legacy while empowering the community by allowing the participants themselves to help determine their history.

The Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the American Architecture Foundation's Accent on Architecture Program provided grant funding to support the project, which focused on conducting interviews with thirty individuals. The project would not have been possible without the commitment of the interviewees who offered their time, opinions, and memories, for which we are forever grateful. In addition, a group of dedicated volunteers, many of whom juggled full-time jobs, families with small children, and other volunteer commitments, gave generously of their time. They worked tirelessly to conduct interviews, suggest individuals to be interviewed, provide introductions, and supply ideas for questions.

Since the late 1920s, the Jefferson School has been an important anchor in the city of Charlottesville, serving first as a place of African-American education, community, and recreation, and later a variety of other important educational and social service roles, most notably



Commerce Street entrance, Jefferson School, 2002.
Photograph by Preservation Piedmont

You know segregation was in Charlottesville at that time. And there's still segregation. Segregation will never be over until people find within their hearts that it's not right. That's the only time it will actually be over.

Because I know it, I've lived it.

—Laura Robinson, Jefferson School graduate



Jefferson School teachers Mr. Augustus Paige, Mrs. Nannie Cox Jackson, and Mr. Patterson, front, with students Mary Alice Brooks, Bertha Brown, and Jacklyn Saunders behind. Photograph provided by Teresa Price.

the city's centralized public preschool. When it opened in 1927, Jefferson School was one of only a handful of African-American high schools in the state of Virginia. Before this date, Blacks had to send their teenage children out of town to receive a full secondary school education. Through Jefferson, the Charlottesville African-American community gained knowledge, skills, and most importantly confidence through the support of its dedicated teachers. As the interviews attest, Jefferson School teachers, many of whom were community members themselves, worked diligently to encourage the students to go on to college and careers.

The interviewees portray the Charlottesville African-American community of the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s as dispersed, yet close, with parents and teachers throughout the community remaining watchful and caring. There is positive feeling of community that emerges from the alumni, one characterized by nurturing discipline, a sense of connection, and shared aspirations. Teachers and parents worked together within a constrained and poorly supplied education system to provide support for students, encouraging them to study and work hard, to attend college, and to seek a better life.

As the interviewees repeatedly made clear, the school operated in a society that was separate and not equal. Opportunity for professional careers—other than teaching in the Black schools—was not available to Charlottesville Blacks who went on to higher education. Black schools were not up to the same standards as White schools, and many doors remained closed. In time, students of Jefferson School and their parents became the foot soldiers who fought the legal battles for equal rights in education.

During the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, the students of the Jefferson School were on the forefront of the legal battles that consumed this country to effect Civil Rights. Jefferson School welcomed the first fully integrated classes within the city school system in the mid-1960s when all sixth graders attended the school. When political turmoil closed the school as a public institution in the 1960s, the school building served other local groups, organizations, and as an centralized city pre-school.

As these interview attest, the outcome of integration has been a mixed blessing. Integration was a slow and often painful, process. Although certain gains were made, Black students of the 1960s also suffered great losses in the process of integration. They often suffered humiliation and worse in the process of integrating into a White-dominated public school system that did not always open their doors graciously. Their advocates were not welcomed into the new system; no Black coaches, no Black college counselors, and, for many, not even a Black teacher after 1958. The years of integration and beyond have been fraught with emotion, as both Blacks and Whites continue attempts to come together in one place, to get to know each other, and to learn respect for each other's differences and similarities. To this day, race relations remain strained. The years of integration have produced both success and failure; the hard-fought battles remain to be won.

In identifying individuals to interview, we have sought to capture the broadest possible range of stories that consider this long span of time. Here you will find people who have been involved in every aspect of the school's history, ranging from a 1933 graduate of Jefferson High School to the former Director of the City's preschool program that left the building when it was closed in 2002. The process of collecting the stories of those whose lives were touched by the Jefferson School has been long and complex. At times it has felt unmanageable. We have attempted to make this an inclusive process, following up on suggestions for whom to interview wherever possible. Although every attempt has been made to conduct interviews with individuals who have an important story to tell, there remain, of course, many gaps in our understanding and many stories to be heard. This document is by no means comprehensive. Rather, we offer it as a work in progress that may be added to over time. We hope that there will be others who will recognize its value and carry on with the oral histories.

In the long run, it is hoped, these stories will help the Charlottesville community understand and appreciate the hardships and struggles endured by African Americans after Emancipation and into the twentieth century. They record what made the school so special and dear to its students, perhaps offering lessons that may make a difference as our community continues to struggle with issues of growth, cohesiveness, and race.

It is very heartwarming to me to know that someone wants to take the time and energy to try to preserve Jefferson High School. I think it should be a historical pillar for this town. And of all the things that we've done, the people who are basically pillars of this town would not have been had it not been for a school like Jefferson. Jefferson has produced some people who have contributed a lot not only to Charlottesville but to many places around the world. I think that it would be almost a catastrophe if they were to do away with that kind of history. I also think that Jefferson High School should be somewhere high up on an historical list and made, if not a museum, something in which people can come and see what in one school was available to the Black citizens of this town. To destroy that I think is absolutely insane. We had only one school that we could go to. To take that out is almost like saying, we are going to wipe out this history.

—William Gilmore, Jefferson School graduate

There's a certain amount of warmth. Love can do a lot of things. We were loved. We didn't have a whole lot, but the people who worked with us, the teachers, and the atmosphere was of love.

You grow automatically.

—Mary Inge, Jefferson School graduate

The pages that follow include a series of essays and historical studies, as well as excerpts from the interviews conducted on behalf of the project. Essays were provided by numerous individuals who have participated in activities and programs aimed at raising public awareness about the importance of the building. The invitation to provide essays has been an open process, and we have included all those received at the time of printing. The essays occupy the central portions of the pages; the interview excerpts are organized into a series of themes presented along the outer margins.

—Liz and Jacky



The "Miss Homecoming" festival was a culminating activity of the football season; it is an annual affair to which the entire school family looks with great anticipation and anxiety. Therefore, when a student succeeds in donning the "Miss Homecoming" Crown, one can be sure that it is a well-deserved honor. The honor is given to the student representative of the homeroom turning in the largest amount of money during the football season.

This year, Elizabeth Jefferson, Senior representative from Mr. Harry A. Johnson's homeroom was crowned "Miss Homecoming of 1948." With the wholehearted support of the members of her homeroom, Elizabeth turned in a total of more than three hundred dollars.

The runner-ups of the contest were Johnella Henry, Junior representative from Miss Bursaline Washington's homeroom, who took second place, and Josephine Morrison, Junior representative from Mrs. Rosemary J. Deane's homeroom. Mrs. Deane presented the runner-ups served as attendants to the "Miss Homecoming Queen."

"Miss Homecoming" reigned over the festivities which included the game between Jefferson and Bluefield, the final game of the season, and the annual pep assembly. On the following day, the pep assembly was celebrated at the Washington Park Mr. Owen J. Duccus Jr., the high school principal, had the honor of crowning Elizabeth as the "Homecoming Queen" at the half time of the football game. Mr. Duccus made a brief speech, thus ending the impressive ceremony.

Along with "Miss Homecoming," each of her attendants were presented with beautiful Floral Sprays. All-in-all the occasion was indeed worthy of praise.

Right:

Jefferson School 1948 Miss Homecoming festival.
Provided by Elizabeth Minor

The Architecture of the Jefferson School and its Social and Historic Context

Architectural Description of the Jefferson School

by Dr. Clifton Ellis, Jacky Taylor, Liz Sargent



Figure 1. Downtown Charlottesville, Virginia, showing the location of Jefferson School

Jefferson School is arranged so that you're kind of close together. You've got a big auditorium here, and the classrooms are around the side. At the end, there's the library, with four rooms here, two in front, four over there, and I think over here was a shop or something. The rooms were arranged so that you didn't have to go too far from one to the other.

—Dr. Braxton Coles, Jefferson School graduate

Dr. Clifton Ellis is an architectural historian and an assistant professor at Texas Tech University.

Jacky Taylor is also an architectural historian who works for John Milner Associates in Charlottesville.

Liz Sargent is a landscape architect specializing in historic preservation, and a member of Preservation Piedmont and Citizens for Jefferson School.

Jefferson School nestles in the crest of the hillside at the corner of Commerce and Fourth Streets, on the edge of the downtown area and a block away from West Main.

Wide ribbons of double sash windows punctuate a simple block of red brick. A concrete-capped broad castellated façade conceals a flat roof, and encapsulates a central mass that is lit by a clerestory. Metal downspouts, a water table, and a stringcourse function as architectural details that section the block into modules, articulating the interior space.

Wide concrete steps lead up into the main double door entrance indicated by a recessed central bay in the principal elevation facing south onto Commerce Street. The south elevation of the original building is a full two stories, with decorative elements reflecting those on the north elevation.

From its earliest construction, the Jefferson School building sat across from the Vinegar Hill neighborhood; a neighborhood that on aerial maps appears green and wooded and is dotted with commercial as well as residential property. The narrow surrounding streets formed the nexus of a community that included religious institutions, vital services, and both modest and substantial private residences. In the 1960s, the commercial sector and private residences of Vinegar Hill were razed, leaving the Jefferson School building and site as the sole surviving remnant of an African-American community and its testimony to the struggle for equality through higher education.

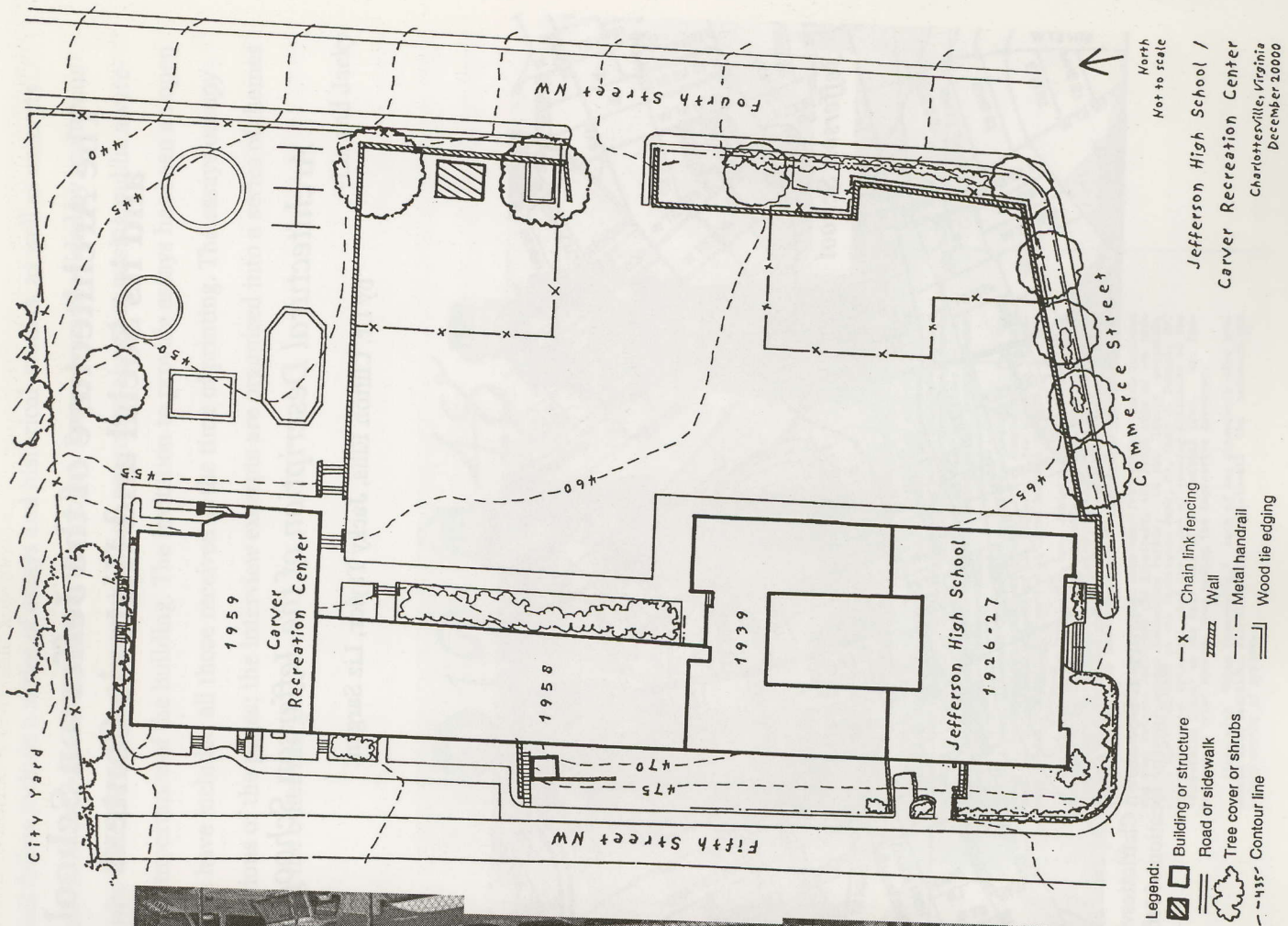
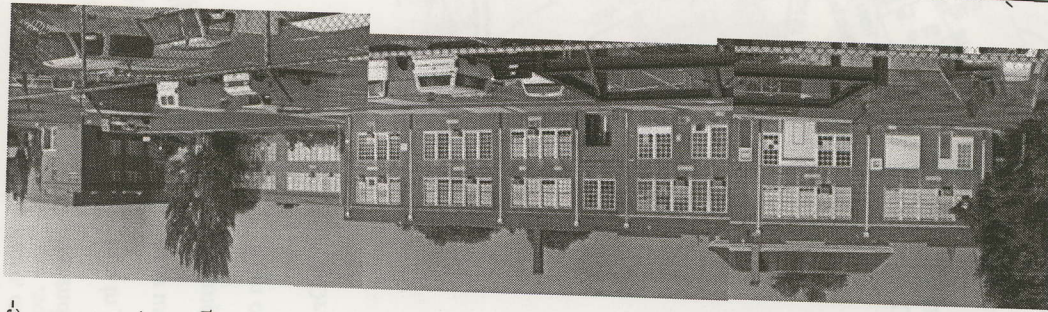


Figure 2. Jefferson School Sketch Plan, with corresponding photographic view of the building.

The Jefferson School is a large, brick educational complex built over a period of thirty-three years, in three distinct phases. (see sketch plan, previous page, for building chronology) The first phase of construction, which began in 1925, encompassed the U-shaped portion of the building that sits at the corner of Commerce and Fourth Streets in Charlottesville, Virginia. This original portion of the building was built in response to a citizen petition to provide Charlottesville's Black population with a high school. Jefferson was one of the earliest Black high schools to be established in the state of Virginia.

The 1925 structure is brick with distinctive detailing, including brick and cast-concrete detailing and door and fenestration treatment. Stylistically, the original building's details are Classical Revival, modest in scale and execution. The original building is brick laid in common bond. It is rectangular in form with a flat roof surrounded by a parapet wall. Rising from the center of this heavy rectangular form is another, smaller rectangular form with a clerestory and mansard tile roof. (see *figure 5*) Interior space is clearly articulated on the exterior; the rectangular mass rising from the center is the auditorium (*figure 6*), around which six classrooms are arranged, each articulated on the exterior by a set of five double-hung sash windows flanked by downspouts.

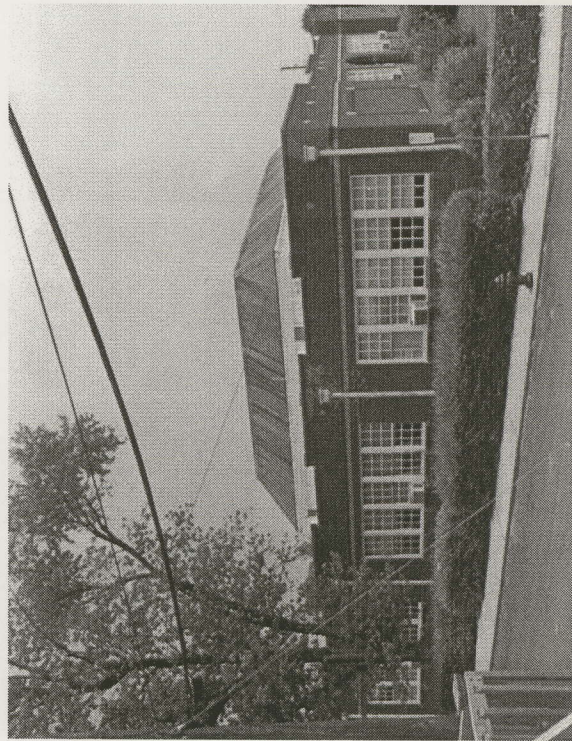


Figure 5. View of the auditorium roof. (Preservation Piedmont)

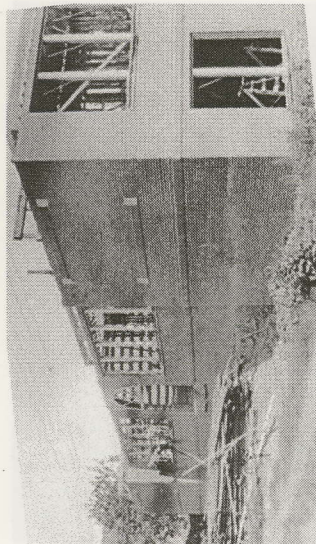


Figure 3. Jefferson School under construction, ca. 1925. (Library of Virginia)

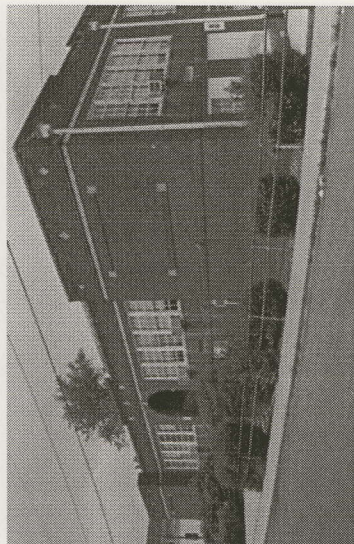


Figure 4. Jefferson School, 2003. (Preservation Piedmont)

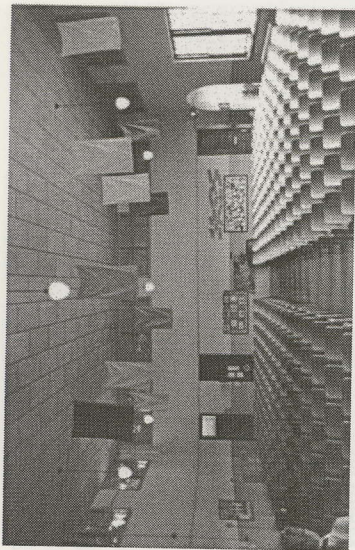


Figure 6. Interior view, auditorium.
(Preservation Piedmont)



Figure 7. View of the principal entrance
on Commerce Street.
(Preservation Piedmont)

The principal elevation faces south onto Commerce Street and has five bays. (see *figure 4*) This long elevation is divided by its massing, but unified by decorative elements. The mass is broken by the end bays, which project forward, and by the central bay, which is articulated by an entrance arch and a vertical projection of the parapet wall above it. (see *figure 7*)

Three elements unify this composition of varying mass: two belt courses and a parapet wall divide the composition horizontally, both distinguishing between levels while simultaneously lending a visual unity to the building. A belt course of soldier brick topped by header brick distinguishes the basement level from the first floor; another belt course, of lighter colored soldier brick topped by header brick, above the first-floor windows articulates the attic level; and a parapet wall with cast-concrete coping creates a crisp terminating horizontal line.

The end bays and central bay are further distinguished by decorative treatment. The projecting end bays have no windows. (*figure 8*) In place of the windows is a large rectangle inscribed with soldier bricks with cast-concrete squares at each corner of the rectangle. The central bay is the main entrance and is distinguished by a large, rectangular, double-door entryway with a transom and sidelights. (*figure 9*) This door is recessed behind a full arch.

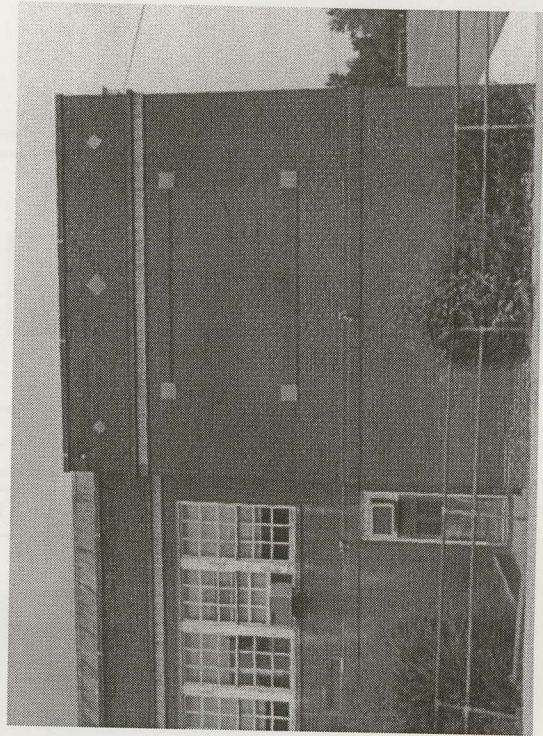


Figure 8. Projecting end bay,
Jefferson School, 1925
construction.
(Preservation Piedmont)

This arch is made of brick and is visually unified, with the first belt course of soldier brick topped by headers that turn at right angles to form stylized pilasters, topped by cast concrete impostes from which the arch springs. The end bays and central bay are further articulated by three cast-concrete squares set on diagonal within the attic level. The two bays flanking the central bay have five double-hung wood sash windows with nine-over-nine lights.

The south elevation of the original building is a full two stories. It is two bays wide, with each bay articulated by downspouts. (see *figure 10*) Each bay has five double-hung wood sash windows with nine-over-nine lights. The windows of the basement level have been modified to accommodate new door openings. (*figure 9*) The belt courses continue around the building and the only variation in formal articulation is the parapet wall, which is battlemented on both the north and south elevations. The north elevation is identical to the south with the exception that the basement level is fully submerged.

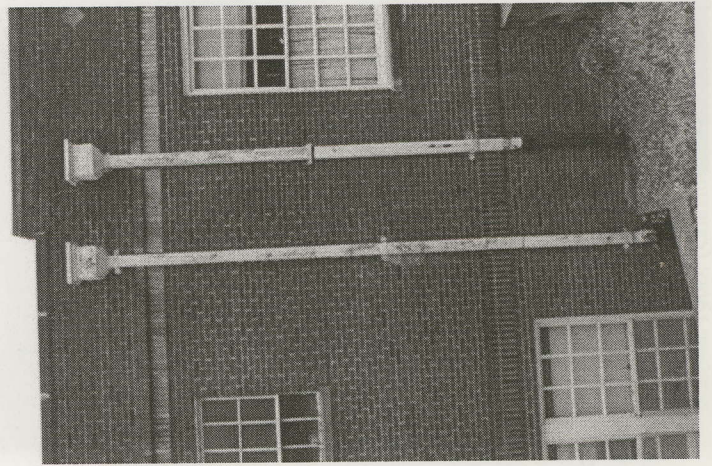


Figure 10. Downspouts near the juncture between the 1925 building and the 1938 addition. (Preservation Piedmont)



Figure 9. Two views of modified windows on the Fourth Street facade, lower level. (Preservation Piedmont)



Figure 11. The rusticated door surround of the 1938 addition. (Preservation Piedmont)

The first addition, built in 1938, follows the form of the original building and closely matches such details as the belt course between the principal and basement levels, the belt course between the first-floor windows and the parapet wall, and the nine-over-nine, double-hung, wood sash windows. (figure 10) The continuation of the Classical Revival is most evident in the rusticated door surround on the east elevation. (figure 11) This entrance has brick quoining, a tall jack arch over the door with clipped points, and a denticulated cornice, all of brick.

Two additions were constructed for the building ca. 1958–1959. The first was a long, narrow wing, added to the north of the 1938 addition; the second was a square block added to the north end of the linear wing, which was to house a gymnasium.

Details such as the entrances illustrate the application of Modern style principles in the design of the additions that was relatively compatible with the classical detailing of the original building. The classroom windows are six-over-six steel, double-hung over a three-paned horizontal casement. (see figure 12) At the doorways, notable details include transoms and metal railings (see figure 13).

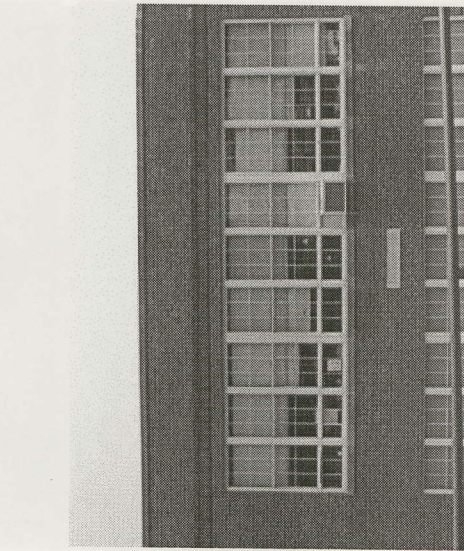


Figure 12. Details of the 1958–59 addition windows. (Preservation Piedmont)

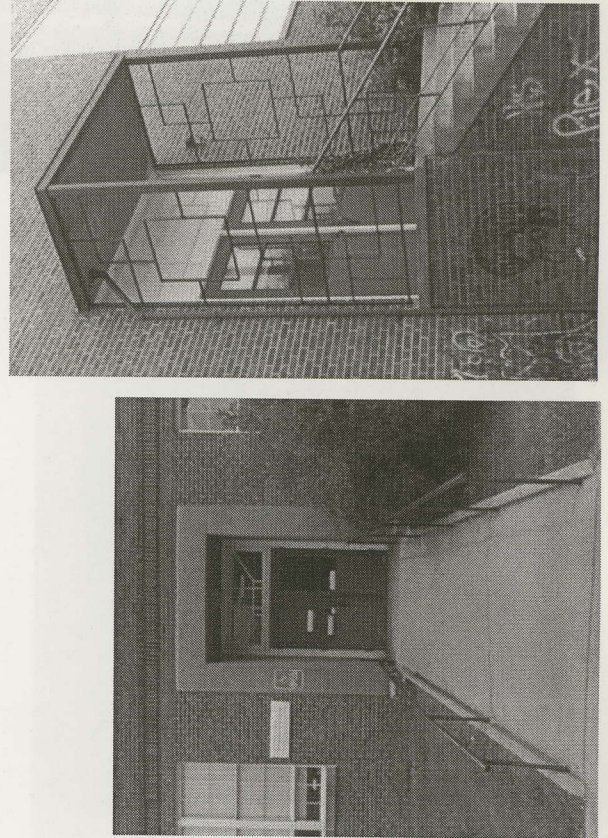


Figure 13. Details of the 1958–59 addition doorways. (Preservation Piedmont)

Although the two subsequent additions were planned and constructed to complement the original building in both form and detailing, the last addition particularly shows the influence of Modernism, both in style and materials. (see figure 14)

At the time of its construction, the Jefferson School edged Charlottesville's Vinegar Hill neighborhood. The high school shared a lot with the elementary school that served the city's African-American residents. (figure 15) Both the Jefferson Graded School, as it was called, and the Vinegar Hill neighborhood have since been razed.



Figure 15. View across the Jefferson School toward the Jefferson Graded School and Vinegar Hill beyond, ca. 1960. (Charlottesville Housing Authority)

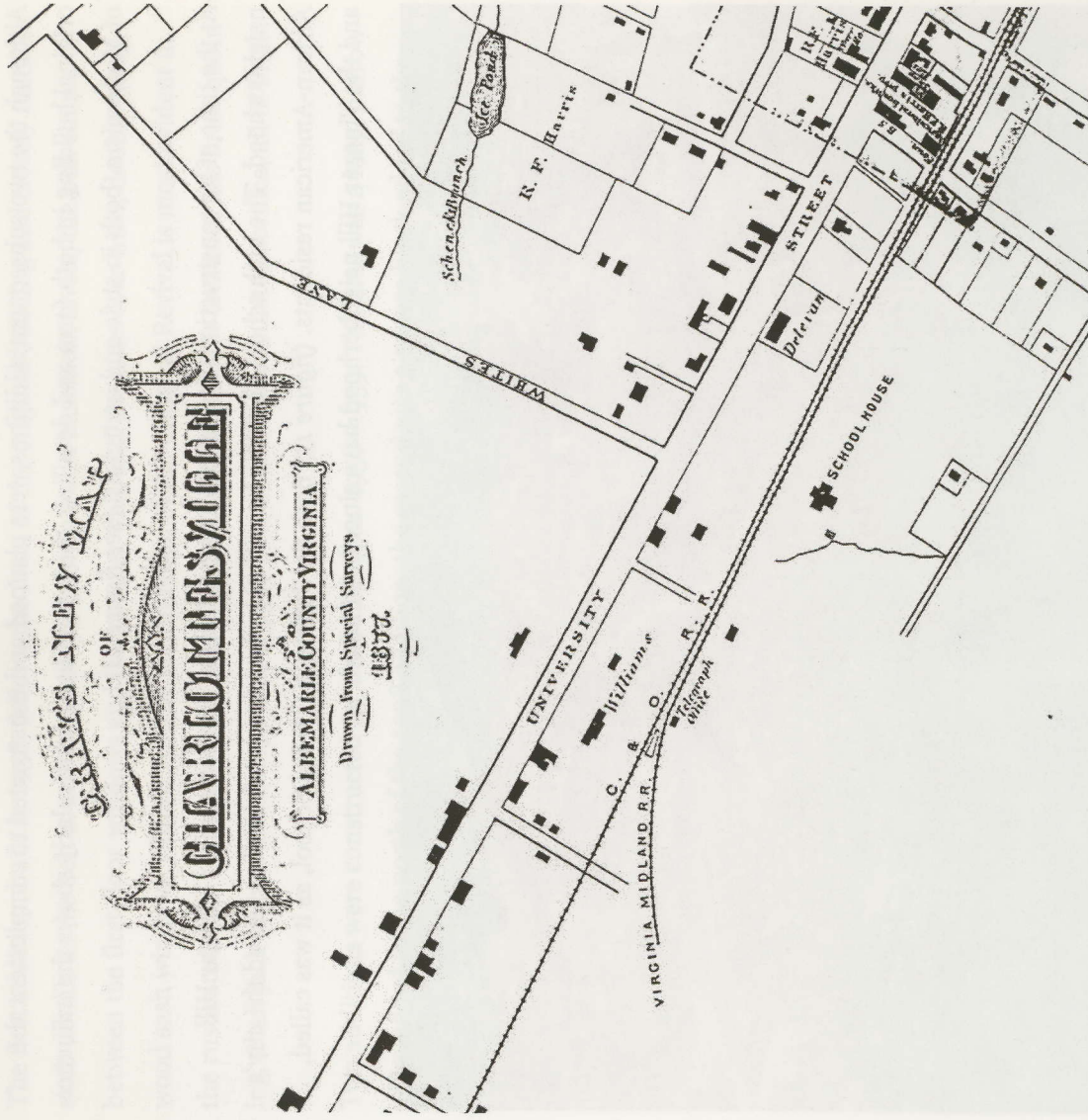


Figure 14. The last addition to the building, now known as Carver Recreation Center. (Preservation Piedmont)

Throughout her five-year sojourn in Charlottesville, she doubted the good intentions of most local Whites toward Blacks and, once her school was established at 'Mudwall,' she feared 'those subtle, slippery Virginians' would resort to some legal chicanery to close it down.

—John Hammond Moore
writing about Anna Gardner.
From *Albemarle: Jefferson's County, 1727–1976*.

1877 map of Charlottesville. School House shown is thought to be the first Jefferson School run by Miss Anna Gardner. University Street shown is today's West Main Street.
Map provided by Charlottesville/Albemarle County Historical Society (ACHS).



Charlottesville, Virginia, and its African-American Educational History

*Educational Opportunities for African Americans in Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Virginia (1831-1892)*¹

by Benjamin Ford

Despite the lack of accurate literacy rates for most Virginians, Black or White, it can safely be assumed that during the first half of the nineteenth century, educational opportunities were extremely limited for both Blacks and Whites. The State Literary Fund was established only in 1810 to assist in the education of poor White children. However, only those Whites that could afford to attend one of numerous regional private schools received a basic education. Fewer still went on to receive a higher education.

The result of Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion was a tightening of the restrictive laws governing slaves and free Blacks in Virginia. As Frederick Douglass wrote, "It is perfectly well understood at the South that to educate a slave is to make him discontented with slavery, and to invest him with power which shall open to him the treasures of freedom." Whites, too, recognized the potential threat to Southern society posed by literate slaves and free Blacks.

Between 1831 and 1832, the Virginia General Assembly passed a number of laws prohibiting slaves and free Blacks from assembling in public, forbidding them from preaching at, attending, or holding religious meetings, and prohibiting the teaching of reading and writing to free Blacks. Slaves receiving the consent of their master could attend churches supervised by a

¹ Charlottesville became incorporated as a City in 1888. The City's school system, however, was administered by Albemarle County through 1892. See Anonymous, "Development of Public Schools in Albemarle County," 3. A Bicentennial project of the Retired Teachers' Association of the County of Albemarle, 1976.

Benjamin Ford is an archaeologist by profession and is a board member of Preservation Piedmont. He has been interested in the history of Charlottesville and Albemarle County since moving to the area in 1990.

On living in a segregated society...

My grandmother began a boarding house because there were no Black restaurants or eateries of any sort. She generally catered to people, men particularly, who came in town to work and who needed somewhere to have their meals. What I remember is making lunches. It seemed like we got up at 5:00 a.m. and made ten or fifteen lunches because that was the way my family made their living.

—Lyria Hailstork, Jefferson School graduate

There were a lot of places that you couldn't go. Like the public library. The books that we read were housed in the Jefferson building. In the summertime, you couldn't go to a public swimming pool to swim, you couldn't go to the public library to draw out a book to read, so we went to Jefferson and read every book they had to read.

—Ruth Coles Harris, Jefferson School graduate

White minister only during the daytime. In addition, free Blacks had no right to a jury trial, they could not vote, hold political office, sit on a jury, or testify against a White citizen. Perhaps most importantly, the education of slaves and free Blacks was strictly prohibited. While the new laws may initially have been rigorously enforced, it was generally up to the individual master or local White community to determine the long-term impact and enforcement of such legislation.²

It is under these circumstances that enslaved and free Blacks sought and obtained literacy. Generally, slaves received an education one of two ways: instruction provided through their master's household, or by other slaves or free Blacks, generally considered an illegal activity. House servants in particular frequently received some level of education due to their position and responsibility in the household. Several regional slave owners including Thomas Jefferson are known to have taught or actively encouraged some of their slaves to read and write.³ Peter Fossett, a slave of John R. Jones, had been taught to read and write by Thomas Jefferson's grandson, Meriwether Lewis Randolph, and later, against the wishes of Jones, by his own sons and daughter. Fossett in turn used his illicit skills to teach others he knew. "I was teaching all the people around me to read and write, and even venturing to write free passes and sending slaves away from their masters." Other accounts detail the value that antebellum Blacks, both slave and free, placed on literacy, the lengths to which slaves went to become literate, and the elaborate means used to conceal their efforts. In 1842, an English visitor to Charlottesville noted that his slave carriage driver "would give half of his earnings to learn to read and write, but that his master was not willing to go against the prohibition against Black education." Because the education of slaves was illegal, many faced harsh penalties if caught. Charles H. Bullock recounted that "Peter Fossett taught my father

² Joshua D. Rothman, "Notorious In the Neighborhood: Nancy West, David Isaacs, and Free Blacks in the Antebellum South," 2. Ms. in possession of author; Samuel L. Horst, *Education for Manhood: The Education of Blacks in Virginia During the Civil War* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1981), 52, 57-59, 60-62.

³ Horst, *Education for Manhood*, 54; Lucia Stanton, "Monticello to Main Street: The Hemings Family and Charlottesville" *Magazine of Albemarle County History* 55 (1997): 117; Laurant L. Lee, "Crucible in the Classroom: The Freedpeople and their Teachers, Charlottesville, Virginia 1861-1876" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia, 2002), 22.

[Berkeley Bullock] to read and write by lightwood knots in the late hours of night when everyone was supposed to be asleep. They would steal away to a deserted cabin, over the hill from the big house, out of sight."⁴

Because there were no formal educational opportunities available to free Blacks, many were forced to learn how to read and write from other relatives or associates who had varying levels of experience. In an unusual situation, the Scott brothers, Robert, James and Thomas, and two of the sons of David Isaacs and Nancy West, Tucker and Frederick, all free Blacks, were reportedly "educated with the Whites in this town."⁵

While the number of Albemarle County's slaves and free Blacks who were literate during the antebellum period were statistically few, many of them were to become important civic and religious leaders in the post-Emancipation African-American community. These individuals, whether ministers, merchants, or teachers, recognized the value of literacy and the social and economic independence and hope for the future that it provided.

In March 1865, General Sheridan captured and occupied Charlottesville. Shortly after the surrender at Appomattox in April, government troops were stationed in the Charlottesville area. By June of the same year, the New England Freedmen's Aid Society had paid to send a teacher—Anna Gardner—to Charlottesville to open a school for former slaves. The New England Freedmen's Aid Society was one of many Northern benevolent societies that raised private funds for the assistance of freedmen. They worked independently of, but cooperated with, the Federal Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands. The Freedmen's Bureau, as it was called, was established by the War Department in March 1865 and extended twice until

⁴ Stanton, "Monticello to Main Street," 117; Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, "Getting Word: The Monticello African American Oral History Project," (<http://www.monticello.org/gettingword/GWties2.html>); Horst, *Education for Manhood*, 51, 62.

⁵ James Alexander, *Early Charlottesville: Recollections of James Alexander, 1828-1874*. Mary Rawlings, ed. (Charlottesville: The Michie Co., 1942), 73, 77, 79, 84-85; Rothman, "Notorious in the Neighborhood," 10. Nancy West described herself as of 'light complexion' and it is likely that she and her children passed as white.

My mother didn't like to talk about segregation. We just knew things were the way things were. Like when we would go downtown and see people sitting at a soda fountain, I, being a kid, would say I want to have a soda. She would just pull me away. For a long time we didn't know about segregation. They tried to keep it from us. I never rode a city bus, you know, because we had to ride in the back of the bus. That was why we walked everywhere.

—Helen Sanders



Helen Sanders, Jefferson School Alumni Reunion, 2002.
Photograph by Alexandria Searls

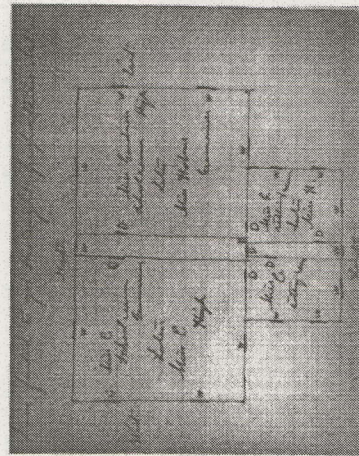
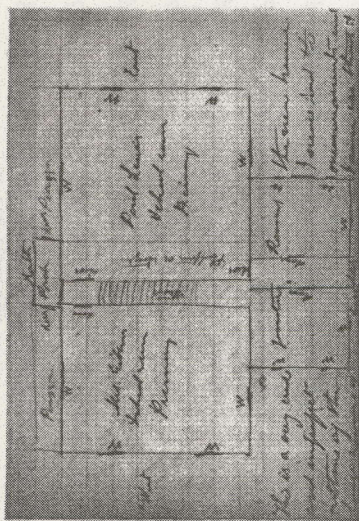
its termination in June 1872. Although lacking sufficient funding, the Freedmen's Bureau did support the activities of Northern benevolent societies and assisted in the maintenance and construction of schools. The Freedmen's Bureau began operation in Virginia in June 1865. As W.E.B. Du Bois noted in a 1901 article, "the greatest success of the Freedmen's Bureau lay in the planting of the free school among Negroes, and the idea of free elementary education among all classes in the South."⁶

The Freedmen's School of Charlottesville was given space in an aging brick building on West Main Street called the Delevan building, a former dormitory, hotel, and Civil War Hospital that also held space for the new Charlottesville First Colored Baptist congregation. The first session opened that year and Gardner, the only teacher, recalled that she had approximately eighty students or 'scholars.' "Some of them had learned the alphabet, others could read a little, and a few were ready readers." Additional teachers were hired by the Freedmen's Aid Society in subsequent years. In 1866, Philena Carkin, another White teacher from New England was sponsored by the New England Freedmen's Aid Society. Isabella Gibbons, a local Black teacher and promising student of Gardner's was hired in the fall of 1866; R.A. Musgrove, a local White teacher, and Paul Lewis, a local Black teacher, were hired the following Spring, and a Robert Morris, also a Black teacher, was hired in 1868. For the 1866-67 school year, the new freedmen's institution was transformed into a graded school with each grade having its own name. Isabella Gibbons' 'Major Savage' school and Paul Lewis' 'John Brown' school taught students at the primary level, Philena Carkin's 'Lincoln' school taught students at the intermediate level, and Anna Gardner's 'Jefferson' school taught students at the advanced or secondary level.⁸ In addition to the day classes, by 1866 the Freedmen's School also offered night classes three times a week. "I have planned to open a night school

⁶ W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Freedmen's Bureau" *The Atlantic Monthly* 87 (No. 519, March 1901): 361.

⁷ It is not known who 'Major Savage' was. However Savage was the first black mayor of Charlottesville in the immediate post-Emancipation period.

⁸ Anna Gardner, *Harvest Gleanings in Prose and Verse* (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1881), 40-41; Lee, "Crucible in the Classroom," 77-78; Gayle M. Schulman, "The Gibbons Family: Freedmen," *Magazine of Albemarle County History* 55 (1997): 63-64, 80; William Webb, "Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Virginia 1865-1900" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1955), 119.



Plan of the Freedmen's School located between the rail line and West Main Street prepared by Philena Carkin. Drawings provided by ACHS.

for such men and women as cannot study during the day on account of their occupations." All of this activity took place in the Delevan building. "All of our scholars are taught in one building." A new, larger frame school house was constructed for the freedmen in the summer of 1869.⁹

The progress of the Charlottesville Freedmen's School appears to have made significant strides during its first few months of operation. Between December 1865 and April 1866, the school's population of scholars increased from 150 to 241. In a June 1866 letter William Tidball, the Freedmen's Bureau representative for Charlottesville from early 1866 on, noted that "the schools, since I entered your duty in this County, have been well conducted. Order and discipline have done much to improve the deportment of the scholars. Rapid advancement in the branch taught has been made in every department. The Normal class, so called, has made great progress taking into consideration the short time the scholars have been under instruction." Of the 280 students enrolled in March 1867, 250 were former slaves and 30 had been free Blacks. The Charlottesville Freedmen's School was successful in many ways but perhaps the most telling demonstration of its success was that by 1870 Anna Gardner could report that seven of her former students had gone on to teach in other regional free schools.¹⁰

While the New England Freedmen's Aid Society and the Freedmen's Bureau had a large degree of control over the direction and offerings of the Charlottesville Freedmen's School, local Blacks worked within the institutional administration to obtain what they wanted, supporting the institution financially, attempting to direct the use of their contributions, finding

⁹ Lee, "Crucible in the Classroom," 41, 66; Schulman, "The Gibbons Family," 63; Joseph C. Vance, "The Negro in the Reconstruction of Albemarle County, Virginia" (Masters Thesis, University of Virginia, 1953), 87.

¹⁰ U.S. Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1870 [Freedmen's Bureau Records]. Records of the War Department, Vol. 128. Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, Charlottesville, Virginia. Microfilm #4443, Vol. 128: 128; U.S. Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1870. Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Virginia. Microfilm #1680, Roll 11; Schulman, "The Gibbons Family," 80; Vance, "The Negro in the Reconstruction of Albemarle County, Virginia," 87.

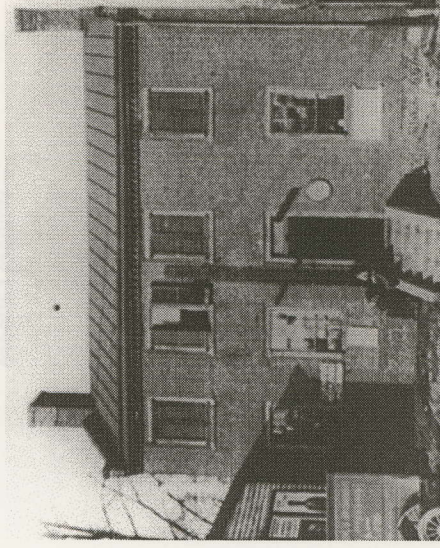
I was born at home.

We didn't get into the hospitals.

—Mary Inge

Charlottesville is a very pleasant place. At that time it was a close-knit community. All the African Americans knew one another, they all attended the same school. People knew each other, families knew each other, and they interacted together very, very well. There were several churches, and the churches were basically the center of the community, the heart of the community. That's where you saw people, that's where you did things, and you interacted.

—Rudolph Goffney



An early view of Inge's Store along West Main Street. Provided by Elizabeth Howard.

Charlottesville was segregated during my school days. Our friends lived in segregated parts of the town. Dice Street, Sixth Street, Seventh Street, Oak Street, Diggs Street, First Street South, lower end of Ridge Street, Hartman Mill Road, Garrett Street, and South Sixth Street. There was only one school that Black or Afro-American residents could attend and it was Jefferson.

—Marian Dukes, Jefferson School graduate

I have been a lucky person all my life. Most of the people in Charlottesville back at that time were of that type. They saw you trying to help yourself, and they would help you any way they could.

—William Gilmore

teachers when necessary, and offering land and labor to house and construct public schools at no cost. First and foremost, nearly all of the students supported the Freedmen's School by paying for their necessary books and supplies each year. "The scholars here pay very promptly for all their books, and have from the first with only a few exceptions." When larger funds for the construction of a new school were sought, students planned for and put on an exhibition to raise money. "Miss C. anticipates no difficulty in raising the money, as the people there [Charlottesville] give liberally toward the support of schools." While the Black community in Charlottesville supported the construction of a new school, they also requested curriculum input, insisting that the school not be limited to a 'normal' or teacher training curriculum, but that all students regardless of age be taught. Some members of the Charlottesville Black community were also members of the local chapter of the Freedmen's Aid Society, contributing their annual subscriptions, presumably used to support the school. Lastly, during the process of inquiring into the acquisition of land for a new school building in 1866, William Tidball noted that he had numerous offers from both institutions and individuals. "I have conferred with a number of prominent freedmen of this place and different ones have expressed their willingness to allow school houses to be erected on their lands free of rent. There are two colored Christian denominations in this place, a Baptist and a Methodist, each of which offers space for a school house on its church grounds. ...[Also] one on a private lot of Fairfax Taylor, and on a private lot of P.A. Cross."¹¹

In addition to the Charlottesville Freedmen's School, Blacks in Charlottesville and Albemarle County also sought and obtained education through their local churches. Prior to Emancipation, Blacks and Whites attended religious services together but usually in segregated spaces. Many churches had mixed memberships although most were led by White ministers. Sabbath Schools, although initiated in the late eighteenth century, took on a more organized evangelical approach to education during the second quarter of the nineteenth century.¹² While very

¹¹ Lee, "Crucible in the Classroom," 73, 95, 99. Freedman's Bureau Records, Records of the War Department, Microfilm # 4443, Vol. 128: 319-321. Both Taylor and Cross were members of the First Colored Baptist Church in Charlottesville.

¹² Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School: The Formation of An American Institution, 1790-1880* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 6-7.

few records of antebellum Sabbath Schools in the central Virginia Piedmont exist,¹³ it is clear that they taught a basic level of literacy through instruction in reading and writing that focused on the Bible and Protestant values. Many Sabbath Schools also contained small libraries where students who excelled could borrow religious-focused books.¹⁴ Sabbath Schools' audiences were those children who for a variety of reasons did not or could not receive an education. As the Fork Union Sabbath School Society stated in their 1827 constitution,

Sabbath schools are calculated to do much good not only among that class of people who from the ignorance or negligence of their parents or guardians are deprived of the means of instruction but that the influence of such schools will be extended to their neighbor community in general.¹⁵

As institutions of White controlled churches, and particularly in the post-Nat Turner contexts, Sabbath Schools educated a predominantly White population. Where they were evangelized, much of the instruction was done orally. By the beginning of the post-Emancipation period, Sunday Schools began to be a popular topic of discussion in local churches. By the late 1860s, the presence and work of the Albemarle Church and Sunday School Society, a local convention based interdenominational organization,¹⁶ had begun to sway local White opinions on the value of separate Sabbath Schools for Blacks. They argued that Black Sabbath Schools not only taught those who were uneducated, they also provided necessary moral

¹³ Papers regarding Fluvanna County, Virginia, 1779-1925. Mss. 8386. Microfilm. Constitution of the Fork Union Sabbath School Society, John H. Cocke, Superintendent, May 6, 1827 including list of subscribers to the Society. Special Collections, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia; Records of New Providence Church, 1759-1935. Constitution of the New Providence Sabbath School, 1823, Mss 38-117, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia; Papers regarding Virginia History, 1858-1968. Two Sunday School teacher's attendance books, 1865 and 1870 and a Sunday School librarian's charge-out book, Mss 8474-ak, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁴ Boylan, *Sunday School*, 48-49. The Sunday School based in the Charlottesville First Baptist Church (white) had a 500 volume library in 1865. See *Charlottesville Chronicle*, September 14, 1865.

¹⁵ Papers regarding Fluvanna County, Virginia, 1779-1925.

¹⁶ Boylan, *Sunday School*, 85-87.

Blacks insisted upon education and Whites weren't interested in them being educated.

—Kenneth Martin, one of the first twelve Black students to attend the city's formerly White public schools

At that time, Blacks were at the bottom of the economic pole. If you wanted to move up, you had to get a job. You had to find a way to beat the odds.

—Rudolph Goffney

We couldn't go to the University of Virginia to do our college work, and we were right here within minutes of the school.

—Frances Coles Wood, Jefferson School graduate

It was two different worlds. There was the White world and the Black world. But one thing you have to realize, the city was fairly well integrated as far as living goes. People lived, White and Black, in the same neighborhood.

—Rudolph Goffney

guidance. In their 1867 annual meeting, the Society supported “the religious instruction of our colored population, as called for as well by the general peace and good order of society, as by the obligation of Christian duty,” and recommended the establishment and maintenance of “Sunday Schools wherever it is practicable for the benefit of this class of our people.” “It be respectfully recommended to the General Agent Rev. C.R. Ross to do all that he properly can to facilitate the general introduction of colored Sunday Schools in the County in addition to his efforts to promote White Sunday Schools.” Over the next several years, the Society attempted to effect the establishment of Black Sunday Schools in both White and Black churches.¹⁷

The acceptance of Black Sabbath Schools in Albemarle County was not immediate. Particularly following Emancipation, several Albemarle County churches were initially opposed to forming Sabbath Schools for freedmen. In June 1866, “certain members” of the Chestnut Grove Baptist Church petitioned the congregation to support the organization of “a Sabbath School at this place for the benefit of the colored population in the neighborhood.” The proposal was voted upon and rejected by the White church leaders because of “strong opposition on the part of some of the silent brethren, and not wishing to create a disturbance in the church.” The idea of establishing a colored Sabbath School was subsequently dropped. As a result of the vote, the majority of the Black church members left the Chestnut Grove Baptist Church “without letters of dismission [sic],” a serious violation according to Baptist church law. Due to their desire for religious freedom, and a lack of support from White churches on issues such as Sabbath Schools, many Black churchgoers formed their own congregations. This assertion of independence, most likely repeated in a number of Albemarle County churches during this period, underlay a strong desire for Blacks to operate their own

¹⁷ Cummings Family Papers, 1777-1984. C.R. Ross scrapbook of Albemarle County, Virginia Sunday School Conventions, 1867-1875. Accession #6922-W. Box 22. Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁸ Minute Book 1773-1811, Chestnut Grove Baptist Church (Earlysville, Virginia). Accession #7403-a, Microfilm-1569. Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia. Note: The Charlottesville African [Baptist] Church was founded in 1863 had a Sunday School that taught 520 scholars.

Sabbath Schools.¹⁸

While their role in the education of students was prominent, it is difficult to accurately assess the number and location of Black Sabbath Schools in Albemarle County due to the fact that the primary record keepers for the period, the Freedmen's Bureau and later the County public school system, largely ignored their presence. Anna Gardner of the Charlottesville Freedmen's School even perceived their organization as a threat. In an 1868 letter to the Freedmen's Aid Society headquarters, Gardner noted that "we learn indirectly that some movements are in progress to establish denominational schools at Charlottesville, and the aid of the Bureau will be solicited." She pleaded for the "continued interest in the school of our Society, which we recognize no distinctions of caste or creed." Scattered records document that several rural Black Sabbath Schools including Cedar Grove or Ragged Mountain No. 1, Glendower, Hillsboro, Milton, Midway, Mt. Pleasant, New Hope or Ragged Mountain No. 2, and University schools were in operation during the late 1860s. One of the earliest Black Sunday Schools to open in Charlottesville was that of the Delevan Baptist Church, founded in 1863 and led by White pastor James Fife, which in 1865 reported a total of 520 scholars. A.P. Abell was the teacher of the Delevan Baptist Church's Sabbath School. E. Calvin Williams, a University of Virginia student, also taught another Sabbath School. Sabbath Schools were also popular with the Charlottesville Black population. As William Tidball noted, "Mr. Abell has 200 scholars and could increase it to 500 had he books enough. Books suitable for these scholars should be furnished these gentlemen who are doing a most praiseworthy work." By 1871, the Albemarle Church and Sunday School Society reported that a total of twenty Black Sunday Schools taught by Black teachers were in operation in Albemarle County.¹⁹

¹⁸ Lee, "Crucible in the Classroom," 94-95; *The Chronicle* (Charlottesville, Virginia), September 14, 1865; Vance, "The Negro in Reconstruction in Albemarle County, Virginia," 88; Cummings Family Papers, 1777-1984. C.R. Ross scrapbook of Albemarle County, Virginia Sunday School Conventions, 1867-1875. Accession #6922-W. Box 22. Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia. Note: The Delevan Baptist Church became known as the First Colored Baptist Church of Charlottesville. See Richard I. McKinney, "Keeping the Faith, A History of the First Baptist Church, West Main and Seventh Streets, Charlottesville, Virginia" *Magazine of Albemarle County History* 39 (1981).

...And I do know too that whenever they did establish football at Jefferson High School they had hand-me-downs from Lane High School, or it may have been from UVA, but I know that they didn't have first-hand equipment. It was hand-me-downs. They made the most of what they had. O.K.? You do with what you have. But I don't think it was fair. You know. I think that you are limited in scope in terms of your ability to want to perform. I would think it would build up hostility. If it were me, I would have been very hostile. And I know I told a high school teacher of mine, I said "You know I think I want to go down South because I'm really not living up to my potential here." He said, "Now, Teddy Inge, you can't go down South. There's no way in the world because you don't have the attitude for that."

—Theodore Inge, Jr., grandson of George Inge, founder of Inge's Grocery

At the University Theater, everything was on one level, so they couldn't segregate us, and they said no Blacks, period. Very few Blacks went there later, after desegregation. The integration of the schools didn't mean that the restaurants and the movie theaters were integrated. They fought it for as long as they could. Black customers could buy a hat, but not try it on. Some places wouldn't let the customers try on shoes. So Blacks would go up to New Jersey and buy lots of clothes and shoes where they could try them on.

—Kenneth Martin

I saw the inside of Lane High School once when it was being built. I went in there and looked. And that was it.

—Bernadine Coles Gines,
Jefferson School graduate

Independent of the Freedmen's Aid Society, the Freedmen's Bureau, or White churches, local Blacks continuously sought to take the initiative on education. Both before the arrival of Anna Gardner in 1865, during the presence of the Freedmen's Bureau between 1865 and 1872, and into the last quarter of the nineteenth century, local Blacks actively established and supported a variety of tuition or 'pay' schools of their own, sent their children there, and continuously sought to start new schools throughout Albemarle County. Several small, independent private schools for Black children existed in the Charlottesville area in 1865 including the school of R.A. Musgrove, a White teacher who had thirty-two Black students enrolled; the school of Isabella Gibbons, a former slave who taught her own pay school prior to attending the Freedmen's School; and a tuition school taught by James A. Munday that enrolled forty students. Beyond Charlottesville, several rural free schools also may have been established in the late 1860s. After the Freedmen's Bureau found that it could not fund the operation of any more schools in 1866, William Tidball noted that in an effort to establish additional schools, local Blacks had found three teachers who would start them up, but could not afford to pay them: Lindsay Smith, a freedman, who taught thirty-three students in the African Church near Carter's Bridge; Mrs. J.W. Pleasants, a White lady also near Carter's Bridge, who offered to open a room in her residence; and William Lowerson, a White man who did not have a school house, but for whom local Blacks had offered to build a log school. Although they applied to the Freedmen's Bureau to have their salaries paid, no funds were forwarded. Even if school houses could not be constructed and salaries could not be paid by local Blacks, many rural Black communities confirmed that "if there were houses they might furnish the seats, desks, and Black boards, ...[and] might board such as we sent from abroad. They could in every instance furnish the fuel and lights for day and evening schools and take care of the school rooms." By 1867, it appears that several rural classrooms were already established and supported solely by freedmen.²⁰

²⁰ John H. Moore, *Albemarle: Jefferson's County 1727-1976*, 232-233 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976); Joseph C. Vance, "Freedmen's Schools in Albemarle County During Reconstruction," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 61 (No. 4, Oct. 1953): 435, 437; Vance, "Negro in the Reconstruction of Albemarle County," 87.

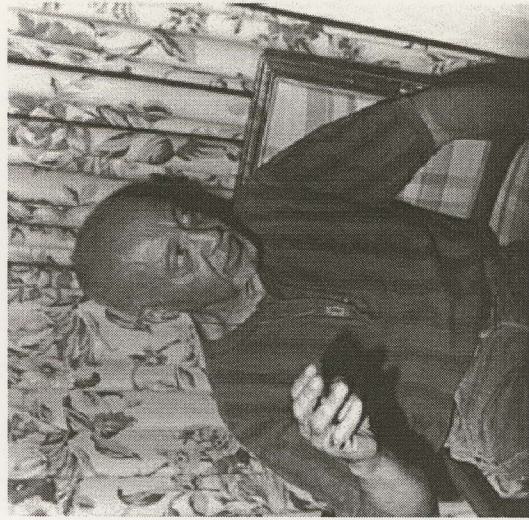
With the ratification of the new Virginia constitution in 1869, a system of free public schools was established for the Commonwealth. The first Superintendent of Public Instruction for Albemarle County, D.P. Powers, took office in 1870 and organized the area's first free public schools, which were in operation by late in the year. Records from the Annual Reports of the State Superintendent of Schools note that in 1871 Albemarle County had a total of 38 public schools in operation, 19 of which were listed as colored. A total of 7 Black teachers taught in the 19 colored schools. Of the total 980 Black scholars enrolled, the average attendance was approximately 618. Five White and five Black schools were noted for the Charlottesville district with a total of 351 colored scholars taught by four colored teachers. Over the years, Powers and his successors L.A. Michie, Isaac R. Barcsdale, and P.W. Nelson were able to expand the number of White and Black schools in Albemarle County. By 1875 there were 90 schools, 33 of which were Black; in 1880 there were 101 schools, 39 of which were Black; and in 1885 there were 124 schools, 47 of which were Black. Only 4 graded schools were in existence in Albemarle County by 1885, 2 in Charlottesville and 2 in Scottsville, "one for each race."²¹

Several local Black citizens had prominent roles in shaping the educational opportunities for Charlottesville area freedmen throughout the late nineteenth century. Fairfax Taylor, a member of the Charlottesville First Colored Baptist Church, could read and write and had "some knowledge of grammar, which none of the others had.He is respected in the community." As an eloquent and forceful speaker, Taylor was chosen to author the petition for the Black congregation to separate from the White Charlottesville First Baptist Church in 1862. After the 15th Amendment allowing Black men to vote was passed, Taylor was also a strong advo-

²¹ Webb, "Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Virginia 1865-1900," 122-124; Superintendent of Public Instruction, Virginia School Report. First Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the year ending 8/31/1871, 23. (Richmond: C.A. Schaffter, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1871); Paul H. Cale, "Albemarle Now Backs School System its Early Settlers Rejected." *The Daily Progress* (Charlottesville), October 14, 1950; Moore, *Albemarle*, 235; Superintendent of Public Instruction of Virginia, Virginia School Report, 1885. Fifteenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the year ending July 31, 1885. (Richmond: Rush U. Derr, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1885).

The parents were more protective plus the people in the school system were very protective. They wanted these kids to perform because they realized that that was their way of achieving and getting out of certain cycles, you know? Because I've always said "Think about the potential some of these people would have had if they had had the opportunity of a secondary education. Up to 1930 what kind of livelihood could they earn? What could they achieve in life? If you don't have a secondary education what are you going to do? The feeling was that it wasn't necessary to educate people of color. You know I'd be hot. I'd be upset about the whole thing.

—Theodore Inge, Jr.



Theodore Inge, Jr., 2002.
Photograph by Alexandria Searls

When I was at Jefferson we used the word 'Negro.' When I went to college I started using 'Black.' I feel comfortable with Black.

—Kenneth Martin

We went to Virginia State University in Petersburg for college. It was named the Virginia State College for Negroes when we were there.

They dropped the Negroes just before I (Bernadine) graduated. We were sitting there praying, "Just let them get rid of that before they print our diplomas! They will know when they see us; we don't need it on our diplomas."

—the Coles sisters

cate for electing Black representatives to the Virginia General Assembly, becoming an active member of the Radical political party. He also demanded that Blacks have the right to serve on a jury and to attend the University of Virginia. He even offered his own private property as the future potential site for a school for Black scholars.²²

Many slaves and free Blacks who learned how to read and write during and immediately after slavery went on to become influential local teachers and advocates for education. Robert Scott, who became literate as a free Black, later went on to become an Albemarle County teacher. His nephew Jesse Scott Sammons, ultimately became the teacher and first principle of the Ivy Creek/Union Ridge School, a small late-nineteenth-century schoolhouse in northwest Albemarle County. After the Union Ridge School burned in 1893, the Albemarle Training School was constructed.²³ Bella Gibbons, the daughter of Isabella Gibbons, was also a graduate of the Charlottesville Freedmen's School and later became a local teacher as well. She commented on her youthful experience of slavery and the temptation of literacy.

Though only little of my life was spent in slavery, yet I know enough of it to know, unless my mother taught me secretly, I could never learn to read and write. ...I used to go into the house to play with the little girl I belonged to and she would show me the books with pictures in them, but I was scared to touch one. Then I thought it was a great blessing to be White. I don't think so now, for I can go to school every day.²⁴

Through his own experience as a teacher, Frederick Douglass, like many other nineteenth century Black social leaders, recognized that literacy was a powerful weapon that had the potential to undermine dominant White society and ultimately provide freedom. Many Whites clearly felt threatened by sanctioned education for slaves or free Blacks and fought to

²² Vance, "The Negro in the Reconstruction of Albemarle County" 19, 21, 26; Joseph C. Vance, "Race Relations in Albemarle County during Reconstruction" *Magazine of Albemarle County History* 13 (1953): 37-38; Lee, "Crucible in the Classroom," 7-8.

²³ Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, "Getting Word: The Monticello African American Oral History Project," (<http://www.monticello.org/gettingword/GWties2.html>); Anonymous, "Development of Public Schools," 35; Anderson, *Education of Blacks*, 17.

²⁴ Schulman, "The Gibbons Family," 85.

deny it wherever possible through a variety of social and legal means. Because of the socio-economic and political potential that education offered both before and after Emancipation, Black communities in Charlottesville and Albemarle County were quick to seize the initiative and establish learning opportunities wherever they could. Particularly after 1865, this initiative had broad based participation and was actively organized and directed by individuals and through local communities and Black religious institutions. Educational self-sufficiency, a social philosophy bred out of slavery, was their common goal.²⁵

Businesses, such as eating places, opened up on a segregated basis. When it was convenient, they would have a segregated eat-in or take-out place for Blacks.

—Rudolph Goffney

I think just about every Black family in the world has talked about segregation, in a negative way and a positive way.

—William Gilmore

²⁵ Boylan, *Sunday School*, 28-29; James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 15-17.

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1877 map of Charlottesville illustrating the future location of the Jefferson School as well as downtown and Vinegar Hill. Map provided by ACHS.

The Establishment of the Jefferson Graded School, ca. 1894, and Jefferson High School, ca. 1925

by Liz Sargent and Jacky Taylor

In the post-Emancipation period in Charlottesville, as in most Southern cities, public education for African Americans was made possible through the Freedmen's Bureau. The school, which opened its doors to children and adults alike, was housed in a wood frame building constructed originally as a Confederate hospital behind West Main Street along the railroad tracks. Eventually, around 1868 or 1869, land was acquired on which a small schoolhouse was constructed. The school provided five grades of elementary education, presided over by head teachers Anna Gardner and Philena Carkin, who came from the North. Philena Carkin's recollections, along with a hand-drawn plan of the school building, are archived in the University of Virginia Special Collections.

In 1889, however, City School Board Minutes indicate that the school property was being sold because the owners were no longer resident in the state of Virginia and thus could not be contacted. Some accounts suggest that ownership of the land was being contested in the courts, but it is unclear who the original 'donors' of the property were. (See also Corey Walker's essay "Absence and Presence" later in this document)

The City School Board Minutes read as follows:

Whereas the Trustees of the Jefferson School Home property, which has heretofore been owned is now rented for the use of the colored graded school have either died or removed from the state, so that there is now no party present in this state legally authorized to control and protect this property. Therefore be it ordered that the clerk of this board... is hereby authorized to employ counsel to move the courts of this city to appoint the trustees of the public free schools of this city to take charge of and

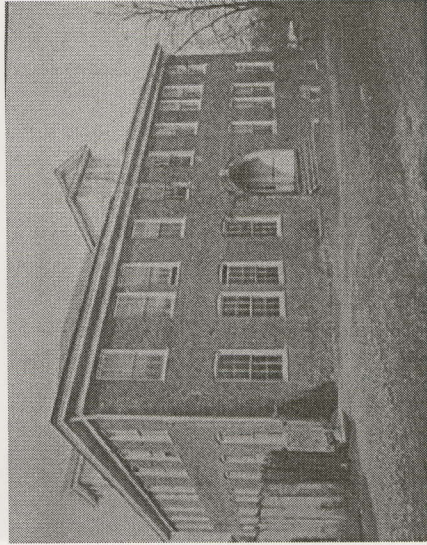
On the importance of education...

I think it is really significant that the Black citizens of Charlottesville got a petition together and asked the city to build a high school.

—Priscilla Whiting, Jefferson School graduate

Both of our parents, and in fact grandparents, were well educated, and they made a point of telling us how important it was to get an education.

—DuBois Johnson, Jefferson School graduate



The Jefferson Graded School.
Photograph provided by ACHS.

manage this property with a view to carrying out the purpose and intention of the donors.

The wood frame building known as the Delevan house, that had housed a Confederate hospital and provided the first space for a public African-American graded school, was razed and the land became the site of the First "Colored" Baptist Church. In the 1890s, the need for greater educational opportunities became more pressing, and a discussion to provide co-educational opportunities coincided with efforts to provide school facilities for African Americans. On December 19, 1891, the Richmond *Planet* reported that the African-American community was already working to develop a high school: "The Ministers of the Piedmont Baptist Association together with all the teachers are called January 1, 1892, to meet at the First Baptist church, for the consideration of beginning a high school in this District." School Board minutes from the Spring of 1893 note plans to "wait for a while until the bids [are] submitted on [the Midway] building before entering into the co-ed school building, in the hope of having sufficient surplus left to enable the building of a brick schoolhouse for the colored, instead of a frame as heretofore contemplated." On April 26, the School Board began to seek clear title to a site for the proposed new school: "Resolved that the Superintendent be empowered to employ counsel in Washington to investigate the title of the Jefferson School grounds." As with the Delevan property, the Jefferson School land was secured and transferred by a group of trustees.

By 1894, various documents suggest that a new school building was in the process of being constructed by the Belmont Building and Construction Company at the corner of Fourth and Commerce Streets. Use of the building on the Delevan property appears to have continued through Spring 1894, as Virginia Superintendent's Reports list the "colored" school in Charlottesville as located near Union Depot. By Fall 1895, the new Jefferson Graded School was ready to open. The first principal of the new school was Benjamin E. Tonsler, who remained in the position until 1917. In its first year, the school housed six grades, and maintained six teachers. Later, it would be expanded to include seventh and eighth grades. The school was popular and quickly became overcrowded.

Jefferson School Oral History Publication • Educational Opportunities, 1894-1925



Jefferson Graded School
graduate Marie Gordon, 1915.
Photograph from the
Holsinger Studio Collection

By 1920, the city's black residents, tired of sending their children elsewhere to complete their secondary education, if means were available, determined to petition the city for a high school. Although undated, the resulting petition indicates the support of numerous community members for construction of a black high school:

To the Honorable Supt. and Members of the City School Board of Charlottesville, Va.,

Gentlemen:-

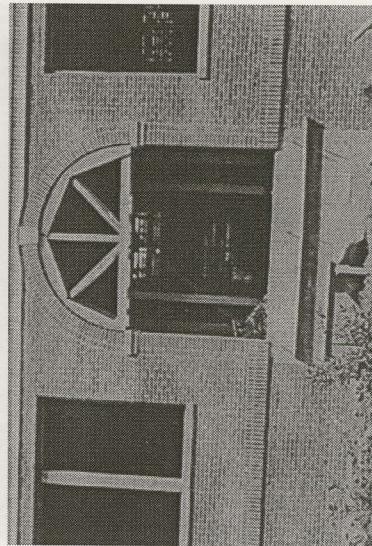
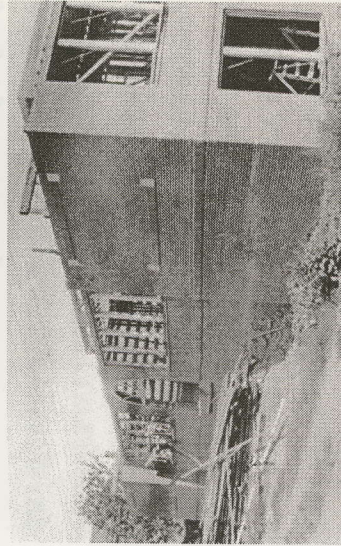
Whereas, since the City of Charlottesville offers nothing higher to the Negro Youth than the Eighth Grade at the Jefferson School, and whereas, each year we have large classes to graduate who must go home at such an early age to pursue higher courses, and since sending our children away at the age of fourteen years, which is the average age at which they graduate, we incur great expenses besides depriving them of the home training and influence.

Therefore, we the undersigned petitioners—citizens of Charlottesville, Va., do ask that you grant us a High School for the Colored Youth of said City.

We are deeply grateful for the educational advantages which we have and pray that the time is ripe for giving us a High School.

By September 1922, the graded school was severely overcrowded, housing 694 children in grades one through eight, with only grades six, seven, and eight going a full day. The balance of students went half days, with separate shifts occurring in the morning and afternoon.

James G. Johnson, Superintendent, suggested various possibilities for an expansion of the graded school building. One option included purchasing the church adjoining the graded school site on the south as well as the one residence located to the rear of the church, thus enabling the addition of an eight-room unit to the south. Another possibility included adding a four-room extension on the southern end of the building and another four-room extension on the northern end, thus avoiding the need to purchase more land. This second alternative, the superintendent argued, would not deprive the children of play space owing to the fact that the basement of the four-room units could be utilized for play room space and would indeed be preferable to the outdoor space which was only usable at certain times owing to its propensity to become wet and muddy for more than half the days in the year. The Superintendent also argued that the addition of two four-room units would enable the instal-



Venable School, built ca. 1925. (above)
Photograph by Adriane Fowler

Ca. 1924-25 construction of the
Jefferson School. (middle and bottom)
Photographs provided by Library of Virginia.

I walked here from about five miles out in the country to go to school at Jefferson. I didn't like the county school. All my sisters and brothers that went to high school went to Albemarle Training School. I had no social life connected with high school because I worked after I moved to a boarding house in town to facilitate going to Jefferson. I knew it was the only way I was going to get to school. I felt that this school was good enough for me to sacrifice other things. My mother was so proud of me, and I just hoped that I would never do anything to make her unhappy because she was proud of me. I think were it not for Jefferson I wouldn't be where I am now.

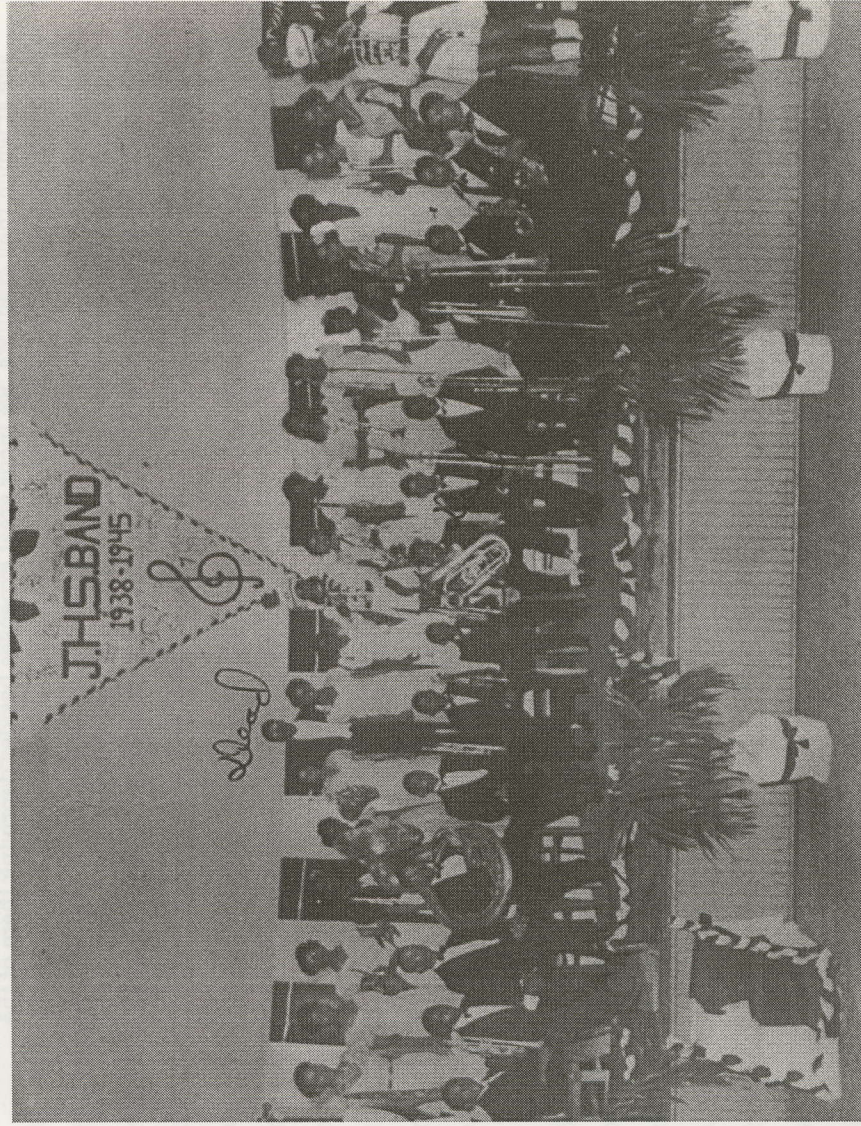
—Dr. Braxton Coles



Dr. Braxton Coles (right) and Rudolph Goffney (left) at the Jefferson School alumni reunion, 2002. Photograph by Alexandria Searls.

lation of a steam heating plant to take the place of an existing worn hot air plant; and the replacement of existing outside restroom facilities with inside single sex facilities leaving the ground in front of the building free to be 'improved.' By 1924, however, these plans had clearly been superseded by the need to purchase more land and construct a larger building, no doubt in response to the need for a high school facility.

For the design of the building, the city chose Charles Calrow, an architect who had learned his trade as an apprentice to various firms in Norfolk. Calrow also designed the city's Venable (1925) and Clark (1930) Elementary Schools. Venable was constructed at a cost of \$175,000,



The Jefferson High School Band, 1945. Yearbook photograph provided by Ida Lewis.

while Jefferson cost the city less than \$50,000. Jefferson High School opened in 1926, and celebrated its first graduating class in 1930. The first principal of Jefferson was Ms. Maude Gamble, followed by Ms. Cora Duke. The third and final principal of the school was Mr. Owen Duncan.

Jefferson High School qualified for accreditation in 1929-1930, receiving the honor as part of the 1930-1931 school year. At the time, there were 63 boys and 102 girls enrolled. In 1930, 10 boys and 14 girls graduated. During the same year, the elementary school enrollment was 778, with 16 teachers overseeing grades one through six. The high school maintained 8 teachers, all of whom were women. The library was listed as including 904 volumes. Jefferson, like the other urban Black high schools in the state, offered a college preparatory curricula. Other urban Black high schools within the Commonwealth of Virginia at the time included: Dunbar in Lynchburg; Huntington in Newport News; Booker T. Washington in Norfolk; Peabody in Petersburg; Norcom in Portsmouth; Armstrong in Richmond; Lucy Addison in Roanoke;

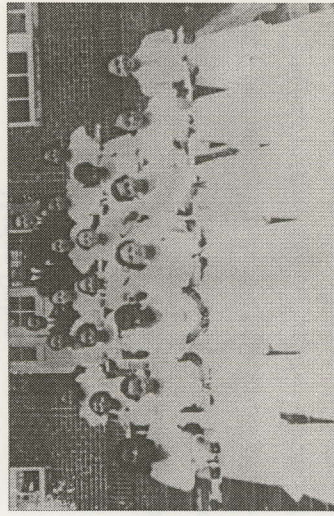


GRADUATING CLASS OF 1935 FROM JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL. The young ladies were by white dresses, which they made themselves. Jefferson High, at this time, included only eight grades. (Courtesy: Eleanor Sampson)

The graduating class of 1935 and (above); the Jefferson School football team. (left) Photographs from school yearbooks.

...they made sure that these kids were aware of the necessity of a high school education, whereas in New Jersey, we took it for granted that we were going to achieve, you know? But the thing is they weren't necessarily interested in counseling towards college prep courses in New Jersey, whereas here they said this is one way out. This is one way of achieving your aims and your goals and aspirations and what have you. Up there in many ways there was denial. They did not want you to matriculate in college prep courses and things of that sort. They certainly wanted you on the football field, on the track, and what have you. But when it came to associating with people other than your kind, that just didn't happen. I almost felt like when I was in Mississippi up north.

—Theodore Inge, Jr.



On the value of Jefferson to the Charlottesville community...

Any school means a lot to an individual and Jefferson Elementary School and Jefferson High School mean a lot to me. That's where I received my public school education. My mother attended Jefferson School in the early 1900s—graduated in 1910. Her school days were happy, and she often talked about walking from "Birdwood" which was the property of Warner Wood. The Slaughter family lived there, and her grandfather had a blacksmith shop there. She spoke of her teachers, especially Professor B.E. Tonsler. She spoke so highly of him. The students remained in his classes two years where they received advanced subjects, which gave them a better start in life.

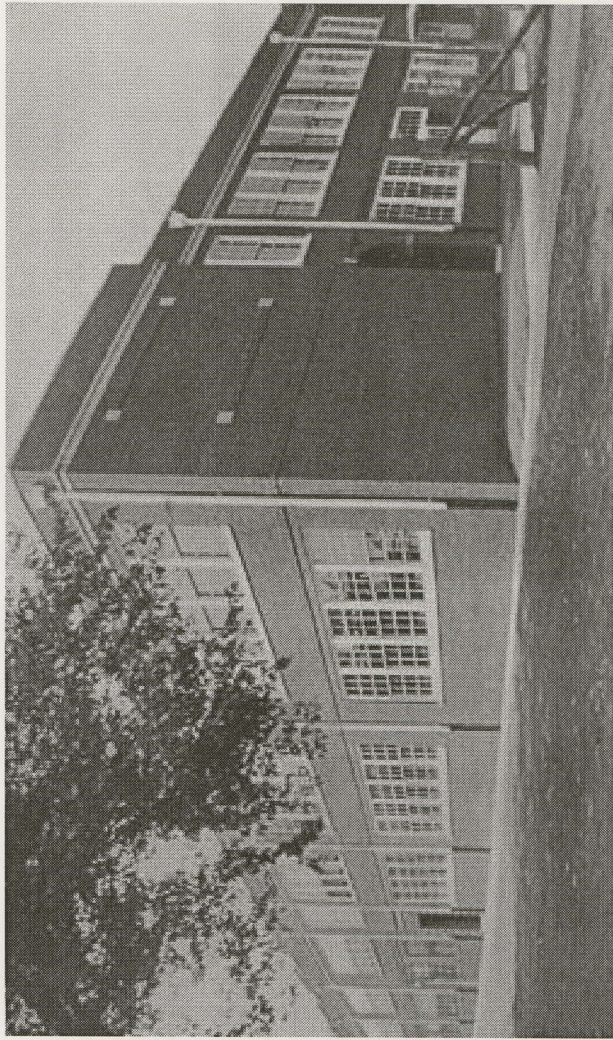
—Marian Dukes

In spite of the city's neglect, Jefferson provided a wonderful education for Blacks in the city. At one time, if you wanted to have a high school education, you had to leave and go north or northwest.

—Kenneth Martin

Booker T. Washington in Staunton; Westmoreland in Danville; and an unnamed school in Williamsburg/James City. The state's rural or county schools, by contrast, offered vocational and agricultural training. Funding for these rural schools was often provided through benevolent societies and foundations, such as the Rosenwald Foundation.

State records regarding education statistics from this period indicate that the per capita expenditures for instruction, maintenance and operation of facilities at "colored" schools were half of those expended on white schools.



Ca. 1938 addition to the Jefferson School.
Photographs provided by ACHS.

The Great Depression and Public Works, the WPA-era addition, and National Racial and Civil Unrest (1938-1941)

by Julie Gronlund

The 1920s witnessed the beginning of an educational reform movement whose philosophies would permeate the nation's educational context into the twenty-first century. Child-centered, experiential learning was emphasized. Teachers were to employ a hands-on approach to instruction, and teacher training was modified to reflect this new pedagogy. In contrast to the customary local control over education, individual states began developing standardized curriculums to ensure all children were receiving the fundamentals of education. Virginia was no exception as state politicians legislated comprehensive changes that would effect the public school system.

Known as the progressive movement, this reform was designed to modernize public education and expand the schools' role to include the teaching of national values in the classroom. Rather than focusing on pure academics, critical thinking skills were to be honed, democratic values reinforced, and a "whole-child" approach applied. The movement simultaneously highlighted the United States' moral strengths and reinforced a number of its glaring inequities. Racial segregation was the most obvious of the inequities that was bolstered, rather than weakened, by these reformers. Dissenters calling for integration in education were largely ignored, with reformers arguing that integration was unnecessary. They maintained that the progressive approach would bring equity to a segregated system by requiring that all schools, Black and White, rural and urban, be required to meet the same high standards. Consistency, they continued, was the real issue, not integration; economics, not racism, drove the existing disparate system; given the same tools, Blacks and Whites could achieve the same ends. They did not or refused to recognize that under the existing social order, the tools given were not and would not be the same.

I remember our Dad enjoyed it very much. See in the home where we were, in the dining room, we had this big round table, and when we came in from high school our parents expected us to sit at this table and do our homework. If our Dad was there, he enjoyed it because if we had hard questions he could answer them.

—DuBois Johnson

Black history was taught every day.

—William Gilmore

Julie Gronlund is a historian who lives in Charlottesville. She is Vice Chair of the Charlottesville School Board. Julie is the mother of two children who attend Charlottesville city schools.

That's one thing I can definitely say about Jefferson. They turned out some good students.

There's no question about that.

—William Gilmore

The Jefferson School curriculum helped me to believe in myself. The instructors at Jefferson School would say, "There's nothing you can't do if you put your mind to it." It inspired me to do things that I probably would never have done. Because I was taught that not only in school but at home, it helped me to respect people. You don't have to agree with them but at least you respect them.

—William Gilmore

It was demanding because the teachers were trying to prepare you, they were telling you what the situation was and preparing you for a better life. So they were demanding. They asked you to take advantage of what you had. To prepare yourself for the future. If you wanted to aspire for more.

—Rudolph Goffney

Progressive reform continued into the 1930s as the Great Depression placed unprecedented pressures on public education. Already inadequate funding became even scarcer. Enrollment swelled as individuals, jobless and overwhelmed by poverty, turned to education with hopes to increase their employability. State governments responded by increasing control over local school budgets in an effort to increase fiscal efficiencies. This approach to finance mimicked the approach to curriculum reform in the previous decade. The Depression's financial impact was not wholly negative. The Public Works Administration (PWA), one of President Roosevelt's New Deal programs, became instrumental during this period in providing localities with funds for building projects. Seventy percent of school construction in this era was funded through the agency, including a much-needed addition to Jefferson High School in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Virginia topped neighboring Southern states in terms of social and educational equality and economic prosperity, but at the national level it lagged behind. A study of Virginia high schools in 1943 portrayed a dismal picture of public education in the state for both Whites and Blacks. High drop-out rates accompanied low test scores and in only one sub-group did Virginia's students surpass the national average—White urban children taking the mechanics exam. The picture for Blacks and rural Whites was even bleaker. On the eleventh-grade English exam, Virginia's urban White students scored in the forty-ninth percentile. Their rural White peers scored in the twenty-fifth percentile, and eleventh grade African Americans scored in the seventh percentile nationwide. Test scores reflected Virginia's apathy toward public education and illustrated that a caste system established in the antebellum period persisted, with urban Whites offered the greatest opportunities, poor Whites in the middle, and African Americans relegated to the bottom. African Americans recognized their opportunities were limited in the South, and over 1.5 million moved north to more urban areas in the first decades of the twentieth century.

The picture in Charlottesville reflected a moderate version of the regional trend. Needless to say, inequities existed between the all-Black Jefferson and all-White Lane High Schools.

Insurance records from 1939 showed a dramatic difference between the replacement value of the two buildings. Indeed, all of Charlottesville's White schools were insured for \$100,000 or more, while both Jefferson High and Old Jefferson could allegedly be rebuilt and their contents replaced for \$35,000. Built within a year of each other, Jefferson's PWA addition cost just over \$80,000 while close to \$400,000 was spent on the new Lane High School. Jefferson had a smaller library and no gymnasium. Jefferson students could participate in band, but not orchestra. They could study French, but not Latin. And cultural biases within an instructional program that depicted a Eurocentric world undoubtedly existed. Teacher salaries said as much about the disparity between the schools as anything. Teachers at Jefferson earned \$855 annually while Lane High teachers received \$1,500 for doing the same job.

Despite the fact that government officials gave Jefferson secondary consideration, it appears to have offered its students a rigorous academic program. Classes included advanced math and science, literature, writing, foreign language, and a number of professional courses. Based on the quality of writing in student yearbooks, newspapers, and other publications, Charlottesville's African-American students demonstrated high intellectual prowess.

Jefferson High's influence extended beyond its student body and the school served the entire African-American community. Programs held by the Glee Club included dance and theatrical performances that usually attracted large audiences. The school sponsored a Folk Dance and Stunt Night, a Fashion Revue, a Junior-Senior Promenade, and an Oratorical Contest. Annual festivals sponsored at the school were open to the entire community including the Senior Class Carnival and Health Day, May Day, and Patrons Day programs. The school library, with just over 100 volumes in 1936, was expanded during the 1939 addition and could be entered from outside the building, making it accessible to the entire African-American community. Support was avid, and its volumes had increased to 2,558 by 1941. And as more than one million Blacks sought freedom in urban areas to the north, Charlottesville's Black population remained constant. Between 1930 and 1940, the city's population increased from 15,000 to 19,000, but the Black population increased by only fifty-two individuals.

On the teachers at Jefferson School...

What do I remember about the teachers? They were interested in us. And they knew what we needed to know to get out into the world. They knew that we needed to be prepared, and they were trying their best to prepare us to do whatever we wanted or thought we could do. I remember the band teacher—Mr. Paige—giving me the feeling that hey, the sky's the limit. Just try. We knew we didn't have to stay here in Charlottesville and just go work for somebody. That there were other things, higher grounds.

—Mary Inge

My teachers were a great inspiration to me. I think that's why I went into education. I've been in it for fifty years and haven't set a retirement date yet. I remember Mrs. Rosemary Byers, who was my French teacher. We used to have the French Club and meet at her house. That was one good opportunity to be able to go somewhere away from home. Mrs. Florence Bryant is another one of my favorites.

—Frances Coles Wood

I had Mrs. McGinness as my teacher. I always kept in touch with her. Whenever the reunions would come around, she looked forward to seeing all of her former students, and her mind was just as clear as anything. She could tell you the names of all your brothers and sisters. And your parents. And where you lived. And all that.

—Ruth Coles Harris

Leon Armstead was my chemistry teacher, and I was crazy about that class, when I went to college I said I was going to major in chemistry but then when I got ready to register, I realized it was not chemistry I liked, it was my chemistry teacher.

—Ruth Coles Harris

My favorite teacher was Mrs. Sellers, Elnora Brown Sellers. She was a very fine person.

—Rudolph Goffney

The Jeffersonian.
Provided by Ruth Coles Harris.

The number of students attending Jefferson High School, however, more than doubled in the decade following its 1926 opening. With 236 children sharing seven classrooms, the original building could no longer satisfy the student body's needs. "Please! Please! More breathing space," wrote student Charles Lee in the paper's April 1939 edition. The PWA addition built that year included ten classrooms, a shop, an office, and a library. Its U-shaped design attached to the original building, creating a courtyard accessible only from the building's interior. *The Jeffersonian* reported how pleasant the additional space was:

Our school has improved in form, curriculum, and atmosphere. Spacious, wide corridors have replaced the little platforms that formerly led to only "out-of-doors." Now one has a chance to reflect, freedom and space in which to think as he passes to and from class.

While Jefferson High School grew in size, enrollment, and stature, and education reformers worked within the existing system to try and make it more equitable, activists throughout the country, particularly in the South, were working to completely dismantle segregation in the United States. Led by Charles Hamilton Houston, these reformers focused on education, where glaring inequities plagued most communities. Eventually Charlottesville would become one of Virginia's test cases where staunch segregationists would lose the battle to maintain America's system of apartheid.

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Vol. 8

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA, MAY 25, 1944

No. 7-8

The Jeffersonian

JUNIORS MAKE PREPARATIONS FOR PROM

One of the most colorful and gala affairs of the commencement season is the Junior-Senior "Prom." This is an annual affair given by the Juniors of the Jefferson High School. In the last two years, the Junior Classes have been confronted with a problem uncommon to those of Junior Classes of former years. This problem is the "Prom." This problem is one of a serious nature this year, in that many boys who were in these two classes have been called into service. With a total of 9 girls and 10 boys, there are only 19 couples available. This something turns up on the outside. The Junior Girls aren't going to be so kind as to wait until the last minute to send out their invitations. We hope to send out our invitations some, first serve. Some say that if the "Prom" will have an escort even if she doesn't send out an invitation. We'll see.

WOMEN NAMED SALUTATORIAN

For four years I have been striving to live up to my ability to do my best. I first entered high school in September 1940. I was bewildered and perhaps a little afraid. But due to the friendliness and kindness of my teachers, I was able to overcome my fears. I am proud of what I have accomplished and what I hope to do in the future. I have witnessed the fall of our nation and the rise of a new one. I have seen the progress of our country and the success of my comrades. I have seen the progress of our country and the success of my comrades. I have seen the progress of our country and the success of my comrades.



DANIEL PAYNE
NAMED SALUTATORIAN



RUTH COLES VALEIDIC
PROM QUEEN OF '44

Earns 178 Honor Points

Miss Ruth H. Coles entered Jefferson High School in September 1940. After having tied for first honors as a graduate of Jefferson Elementary School. For the past four years, she has maintained the highest scholastic average of her class, thirty-one numbers. This time she has taken an active part in the Girl Scouts and has been a member of the Girls' Glee Chorus, Mixed Chorus, Dramatic Club, Math Club, and Physical Education Club. She has also been a member of the positions of Associate Editor of the school paper, THE JEFFERSONIAN, and the Assistant Production Editor of the Annual. At the end of her career she has acquired one hundred and seventy-eight honor points. After having successfully completed a high school career, Miss Coles plans to matriculate in the College of Arts and Sciences, Virginia, in the fall.

Wish to Thank the Students

I wish to thank the students in the faculty and the City Teachers' Association for their kindness to me during my illness. Sincerely yours,
M. K. GIBBOLA

What do I remember most about my teachers?
That they were interested in us.

—Mary Inge

I guess Mr. Paige was my favorite teacher, because he was the band instructor. He did a marvelous job with the band, but he also taught biology. He was different from the other teachers. He could stand in a room and it was just like all of it would be in his head. He didn't need any books.

—Priscilla Whiting

One day, Mr. Paige caught me coming home with no books. I had left all of my books at school in the locker. The next day, every question that came up, he asked me.

—Priscilla Whiting

Mrs. Byers was a favorite teacher, she was at the reunions for so many years and she always played the alma mater. And the first year she died we didn't play the alma mater because there was no one to play it.

—Ruth Coles Harris

The Civil Rights Movement, Judicial Desegregation, and their Effects on Virginia Public Education, 1954–1964

by Julie Gronlund and Gennie Keller

In the 1950s, Jefferson and Burley, along with their White counterparts Venable Elementary and Lane High School, would become the backdrop for an intense struggle over school integration in Virginia. The debate began nationally when the Linda Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas case reached the U.S. Supreme Court. Represented by National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) leader and civil rights attorney Thurgood Marshall, the Brown family was one of many to challenge the “separate but equal” doctrine that had been declared law in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Marshall argued that schools in general were not equal. He also challenged the law’s constitutional legitimacy according to the fourteenth amendment.

On May 17, 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed equal protection for education regardless of race as law in the United States by unanimously declaring, “We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘Separate but Equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.” Chief Justice Earl Warren, who wrote the opinion, continued, “School segregation by state law causes a feeling of inferiority in Black children that inflicts damage to their heart and minds that may never be undone. Public school segregation by state law, therefore, violates the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.” This decision initiated mandatory public school desegregation in the United States and has been recognized as one of the major decisions of the twentieth century. The decision was eagerly anticipated and well publicized as one that would bring major change to American schools. Virginia lawmakers responded quickly. Legislators first enacted the Gray Plan, a compromise piece of legislation that would allow students to avoid attending integrated schools either by attending private schools using tuition grants, through redistricting, or by avoiding school

My teachers were a great inspiration to me. I think that's why I went into education. I've been in it for fifty years and haven't set a retirement date yet!

—Frances Coles Wood

I applied to the Superintendent. Jefferson was the only school if you were African American. The Superintendent called me for an interview. My letter was handwritten. You can learn more from something written longhand than from an application blank. Mr. Duncan, the principal of Jefferson School, gave me the interview. He said, "See that stack of letters over there? They're all applications for the job you're applying for, but I was impressed by the quality of your letter."

—Florence Bryant, Jefferson School teacher



Miss Laura Wyatt, Jefferson School teacher. Yearbook photograph provided by Ida Lewis

altogether by the repeal of compulsory education statutes. Next came the “interposition” strategy whereby the Commonwealth of Virginia would “interpose” its authority between the federal and local governments to allow for local rule. Eventually Virginia abandoned the interposition strategy and called for statewide, mandatory continuation of segregated schools.

The Charlottesville chapter of the NAACP, supported by the organization’s state and national leadership, chose twelve students from Jefferson and Burley to test the desegregation ruling in Charlottesville. The students were chosen carefully based on their and their parents’ ability to withstand what would inevitably be an arduous process. Their strength of conviction and ability to tolerate the spotlight, perhaps even their financial well-being and ability to educate their children, would come under scrutiny. It would be a period of survival for these children and their families.

As the NAACP prepared its case, White politicians in Richmond were passing legislation aimed at outlawing racially integrated schools. The thirteen-bill package known as the “massive resistance” legislation came out of a September 1956 special session of the Virginia State Legislature. After much wrangling between “local option” and “massive resistance” supporters, the final bill stated that schools attempting to integrate would have their doors closed and funding terminated. Other legislation passed during this session discouraged African Americans from seeking to integrate the public schools and provided compensation for school employees in the event of a closure. At least seven of the twenty-three acts passed during this session were aimed at curbing the NAACP’s activities through embarrassment or harassment. In addition to Charlottesville, four other school districts in Virginia—Arlington, Norfolk, Prince Edward, and Warren—would become test cases for the legality of this massive resistance legislation.

On July 12, 1956, Federal District Court Judge John Paul ruled in *Allen vs. Charlottesville School Board* that the twelve African-American students seeking admission to Charlottesville’s all-White schools were to be admitted to Venable Elementary and Lane High School no later than September 1958. With all appeals exhausted, the state had no further

judicial recourse. Instead it would enforce massive resistance legislation and require both all-White schools to close their doors rather than integrate.

Caught between federal orders to integrate and state court injunctions restraining them from making school assignments, Charlottesville leaders delayed opening schools altogether in September 1958. On September 12th, Warren County schools opened, and were immediately closed by massive resistance legislation. One week later, on September 19th, a similar scenario would play out in Charlottesville and Norfolk. Arlington schools avoided closure when a federal judge allowed implementation of his ruling to be postponed until the fall of 1959.

Jefferson and Burley remained open, but the twelve students involved in the court ruling did not return to the segregated schools. Rather than jeopardize their legal status, parents and educators privately tutored these children in their homes and at the School Board office. Whites set up private schools in churches, the Elk's Lodge, and residences to continue their children's education. In the midst of this tumultuous period, Jefferson School received two new additions, one with additional classrooms in 1958 and the Carver Recreation Center in 1959. It was soon thereafter that the Jefferson Graded School was demolished.

Massive Resistance in Virginia ended on January 19, 1959, when the Virginia Supreme Court struck down its legislation in a ruling that determined the closing of public schools and/or cutting off of their funding violated the Virginia Constitution. Closed schools in three Virginia localities—Charlottesville, Norfolk, and Warren—were ordered to reopen immediately. Arlington, Norfolk, and Warren County schools were integrated by February 2. In Charlottesville, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals granted a stay of the district court's integration order until the following September. Schools reopened on a segregated basis for the remainder of the school year.

On September 8, 1959, twelve African-American children in Charlottesville, nine former Jefferson and three former Burley students, entered Venable and Lane as students and ended segregation in Charlottesville city schools. The local paper, *The Daily Progress*, reported that

All the teachers at Jefferson were personable. They didn't just teach you and go home. They taught you every day.

—William Gilmore

My chemistry teacher was dynamic, just dynamic. I mean he grabbed you. And he did all kinds of experiments, you know? We always thought he was a magician when he would do things and make colors change and smoke come out of the test tubes. He really made it fun.

—Helen Sanders

We were very well educated at Jefferson. At Jefferson I could see how hard the teachers worked. They were always prepared, always knowledgeable. They all seemed coordinated with each other.

—Kenneth Martin

We were always told that we could do, and shown how we could do, and encouraged to do. So you went off thinking you could do. If you think you can, it's like that little story about the train...I think I can.

—Mary Inge

By the time Mr. Duncan came along, this was beginning to be modern times. So her (Nanny Cox Jackson) techniques didn't jibe with his new educational standards. She retired soon after that. Jackson Via is named after her because she really was a power-house.

—Teresa Jackson Price, Jefferson School graduate

Janet Scott and I were the first Black teachers to go to Lane. Donna Reaves was already a secretary in the Guidance office. Florence Bryant went the next year to Walker, I think. Lorraine Williams came the next year and it was comforting to have her.

—Teresa Jackson Price



*Teresa Price with Jane Foster, 2003.
Photograph by Liz Sargent*

the new students “walked into two previously all-White schools here this morning for the first time in history. There were no disturbances.” The peaceful exchange, after five years of legislative battles, came as a relief to most and was treated with no fanfare.

For five years, four Virginia localities—Arlington, Charlottesville, Norfolk, and Warren—had stood at the forefront of this national battle for civil rights. And while Prince Edward County was also in the spotlight, it stood alone in its defiant approach to integration. Many throughout the South viewed Virginia’s efforts to keep these school districts segregated as a noble attempt to curb federal powers and put decisions into the hands of the states and localities. Others saw massive resistance as a costly and disturbing effort to camouflage racist attitudes under a cloak of legalism. With all eyes turned toward Virginia, the striking down of massive resistance legislation marked the beginning of a gradual and, for the most part, peaceful move toward integrated schools throughout the South.

Integration moved slowly in the following years. In 1962-1963, only sixty African-American children attended three previously all-White schools in Charlottesville. This number doubled to 112 in the 1963-64 school session and included one more school. Jefferson and Burley remained Black-only schools for the remaining eligible 1,211 African-American children. Known as “token” integration, this pattern was broken when the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled invalid a provision of the desegregation plan that allowed any child to transfer from his/her school in which their race was a minority.

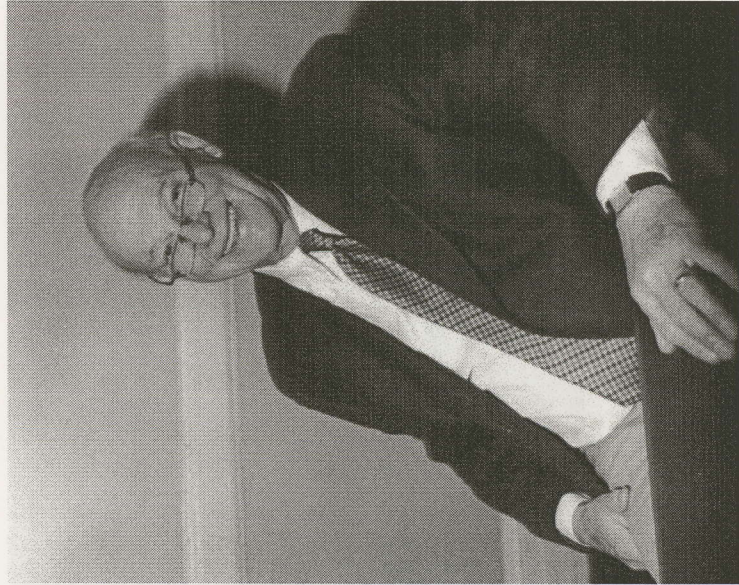
In the fall of 1964, Jefferson for the first time did not open as an African-American school. The decision not to use Jefferson as a permanent facility was undoubtedly complex. City of Charlottesville School Superintendent George Tramontin brought the city’s two parallel school systems together for the first time by forming an integrated sixth grade class facility at Jefferson in 1965 while the city’s new middle schools—Buford and Walker—were being built.

In his own words,

Shortly before the start of the 1965-66 school year, the federal government, disgusted with the Virginia approach: "with all deliberate speed" that never came to pass declared that all Black schools would be closed and their students and faculty be assigned to former White schools immediately. For parents who barely tolerated their kids sitting next to a Black child, they were not about to accept them taking direction from a Black person.

At the school board meeting held at Venable School to explain the new federal directive and how we planned to implement it, the audience was so huge some had to stand in the aisles. When I explained what the federal government was forcing us to do and that we had to reassign all the students and staff from Jefferson School to all formerly White schools, there was a loud, noisy dissent. One man stood and in a loud and belligerent voice said "I'll tell you one thing, Mr. Smart-aleck Superintendent, the day a White student is going to be told what to do by a Black teacher, this town will explode." When I announced that we already had had a Black speech teacher in several elementary schools the previous year without any instructional problems, there was a stunned and sullen silence. This explanation did not satisfy them but it certainly deflated their dire prediction... The resentment was now even greater and more evident and directed against the board, but mainly towards me.

Now that the staff were going to have to integrate, I needed to assign White teachers to McGuffey where Booker Reaves was going to be the principal. The one advantage that we had was that Booker Reaves was an outstanding person and one of the very best administrators we had. Since some of the White staff had criticized me for not doing more for integration than I had to, I naturally went to them to have them form the nucleus of the White staff at McGuffey. To a person, they not only absolutely refused, but were angry and hostile that I would put them on the spot by asking them. And then something even stranger happened. A group of about six White teachers (elderly) came to me and offered to remain at McGuffey. They said they had spent most of their teaching careers there and were only going to teach for a few more years and they would like to remain there for the rest of their tenure. They said they knew and respected Booker Reaves over the years and would be happy to work for him.



Left: George Tramontin, 2003
Photograph by Alexandria Searls

My family taught in the city for a combined 225 years. Those who made those 225 years possible were: Booker T. Reaves, my brother; Willard A. Robinson, my husband; John Gaines, my nephew; Laureen Bennet-Moore, my daughter; and myself. My brother, Booker T. Reaves, was a student at Hampton Institute. He completed his work there. And then he was the first Black from the city of Charlottesville to go to the University of Virginia to get his masters degree. He went on to teach here in Charlottesville, and he became Principal of Jefferson School.

—Laura Robinson



Booker Reaves, Jefferson School teacher and Principal. (above) Yearbook photograph provided by Ida Lewis.

Superintendent of City Schools (1965-67) George Tramontin...

Regarding Eugene (Williams), we worked together extremely well, he trusted me and I trusted him. I'm sure he was under great pressure to push me to work faster, make me move more, and do more things. But I kept him informed of everything I did and why. I asked him to help me and to give me ideas, which he did. Had I not had his support, because he obviously had relationships with these people that I never could have or anything and they didn't know me and rightly so... they would not have said "This guy comes in, he sounds good but there's no saying in what he's going to do." So I credit Eugene as much as anybody in the whole city with making integration of the schools work.

—George Tramontin, former Superintendent
Charlottesville City Schools

Booker Reaves was one of the best principals in town. Really, as able or more than anybody else. So at least we had the basis of saying if you don't want to work for him, it's not because he is a lousy principal, and he did have respect.

—George Tramontin

Just prior to this new and unprecedented use of a city school building, dramatic changes were occurring in the adjacent Vinegar Hill neighborhood. Nationwide, a trend toward "urban revitalization" was taking place, and Charlottesville was no exception. Considered a slum by some, the City Council moved to rehabilitate the neighborhood. Between 1960 and 1965, twenty-nine businesses were demolished. Restaurants, grocery stores, furniture stores, barber shops, an insurance agency, a clothing store, a drugstore, and a hat-cleaning establishment, many owned and operated by African Americans, suddenly disappeared from the landscape outside of Jefferson School. A number of residences—both dilapidated, run-down buildings with no plumbing or electricity and well-maintained homes with modern amenities—became victims of urban renewal. In the thirty-five years since the demolition of Vinegar Hill, a large hotel, grocery store, several restaurants, a federal courthouse, and other small business establishments have been constructed in the neighborhood. Yet much of this property east of Jefferson School, formerly the Vinegar Hill neighborhood, remains open as a parking lot.



Bird's eye view of Vinegar Hill outlined, Jefferson Graded School behind, ca. 1962.
Photograph provided by ACHS

Desegregation in Charlottesville Public Schools, a 15-year Odyssey

by Jacky Taylor

The road to desegregation in Charlottesville, Virginia, was long and contentious. Many decisions were made both publicly and covertly that attempted to stall a process that many whites feared and many African Americans hoped was inevitable. In 1951, Virginia State legislation passed a special enabling act providing funds for a new school for African Americans that would combine the county and city's high school student population. This was an attempt to improve facilities for African Americans. Burley, as the new school was called, was physically located in the African American community, and farther from the growing downtown area on the edge of which Jefferson School had been constructed. The curriculum was not oriented towards a college preparatory education as Jefferson had purportedly been, but offered more vocational training. Fewer English and foreign language classes made way for a focus that was increasingly directed toward commercial subjects. Burley was the City School Board's solution to overcrowding at the Jefferson School, but it was not the acceptable solution for African American parents who desired a better and more equal educational opportunity for their children.

How Charlottesville's African-American community moved from a perceived contentment with a segregated system to the courtrooms of desegregation is a story that is not expressed well in the statistics of legislative warfare. It is only in the stories of those who fought for what they knew was right and sacrificed whatever it took to achieve equal educational opportunities for African-American children as was offered to Whites that a true understanding of desegregation can be found. This essay is an attempt to reveal the human story that ferments beneath the statistics of legislative combat and emotional struggles to transcend a segregated education system to one in which all children were given the right to compete on an equal footing.

In 1954, when Eugene Williams returned from a stint away from home attending college, serving

On litigating to integrate the schools...

I was part of the court case that was brought on by Hill, Tucker, and Marsh out of Richmond to desegregate the Virginia school system and the Byrd machine—the Virginia Massive Resistance. We had to go to court. In 1958-59, although it was declared that our schools must desegregate, we had to wait. My first grade was spent in the Superintendent's office, in a little building next to Venable. Then in second grade I moved into Venable Elementary School in 1959-60.

—Charles 'Alex-zan' Alexander, one of the first Black children to attend Venable Elementary.

They just shut down Lane and Venable because those were the ones Judge Paul had ordered desegregated.

—Kenneth Martin

I just thought it was something that should happen. I knew we were part of a cause—a civil rights cause. But we children pretty much adopted our parents' viewpoints over the issues. They thought it was ridiculous that my brother Alfred would have to go past Lane to go to Burley. I think he was part of the first lawsuit. The first lawsuit was to integrate the schools, the second to reopen the schools.

—Kenneth Martin

On the local response to desegregation...

I cannot see how any Black person could ever be happy knowing that he or she was being segregated because of race. When education is not equal, there is nothing in the future that is going to make life equal.

Well, the interesting thing about Virginia is even after the court ruling went down, we still didn't integrate, and there was still a lot of work to be done after 1958. We could easily understand that Charlottesville was not going to move affirmatively toward integration of the schools, so we knew that we would have to use the court system to get the School Board to integrate the schools.

Ray Bell, one of my very dearest friends, and the late Charles Fowler and I, went to a NAACP meeting and there were maybe less than ten people present, and it looked like they were disorganized, so we just decided there was something for us to do. We went to another NAACP meeting around election time and got ourselves in such a position that we could be in leadership. So I got appointed to be the chairman of the NAACP membership committee. The first year, I believe that was in 1955, we increased our membership from 65 to 900. That gave the signal that there was power in Charlottesville. The big thing to

in the army, and experiencing the world of work, he found that Charlottesville lacked a strong political voice. He and two friends, Charles Flower and Raymond Bell, took it upon themselves to change that. Between 1955 and 1956, they assumed the leadership of the local NAACP and increased its membership from 65 to 900 and then to 1,500. Having once secured a forum in which to gather strength and support, the African-American community began to reveal what political strength and savvy they had mustered during generations of oppression.

In May 1954, the United States Supreme Court in the case of *Brown vs. Board*, overturned the 'separate but equal' doctrine of an 1896 ruling known as *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, and segregationists declared they would never allow their children to "mingle in the same classrooms with Negro children." But the state legislative system responded weakly by encouraging "desegregation with all deliberate speed"—vague language which provided loopholes manipulated by segregationists to delay the court's earlier decision. "The absence of specific guidelines not only afforded southern politicians the opportunity to delay indefinitely actual implementation but more importantly gave them extra time to formulate a strategy that would evade the Court's ruling altogether."

Governor Thomas Stanley then proclaimed: "I contemplate no precipitate action, but I shall call together as quickly as practicable representatives of both state and local governments to consider the matter and work toward a plan which will be acceptable to our citizens and in keeping with the edict of the court. Five weeks later he had changed his conciliatory tones completely and proclaimed to "use every legal means at his command to continue segregated schools in Virginia." Senator Harry Byrd then proclaim "massive resistance as Virginia's official response to *Brown vs. Board of Education*."

Despite opposition, local African Americans moved to secure their rights and forty-three families in Charlottesville petitioned the City School Board to desegregate the schools. A failed response caused these same parents to turn to the NAACP for assistance. A suit was prepared, requesting a court order to compel desegregation and so began a long and drawn out process, shaking the lives of both African Americans and whites. Charles Alexander (Alex-Zan) remembers going to court with his mother, accompanied by Eugene Williams. Despite the publicity and strained atmosphere,

he was happy to go. After all, he said, he was only six and was really quite excited by the whole event.

Those who opposed desegregation were determined, however, to hold onto a way of life that excluded African Americans from their circles. In November 1955, a group known as The Gray Commission, proposed the possibility of a system of tuition grants from public funds that would allow children to attend private schools if they wished. Alternatively, they proposed a locally administered pupil assignment plan, which, though based on criteria other than race, was calculated to keep to a minimum the enrollment of African Americans in White schools; another possibility suggested an amendment to the compulsory attendance law to provide that no child be required to attend an integrated school. More radical conservatives, however, wanted more stringent measures. They cleverly manipulated moderates into focusing on the issue as one not just of race but as the notion of corrupt national government interfering in local affairs. With such support in March 1956 during a special session of the General Assembly, the Virginia Constitution was amended.

The ruling of the courts presided, however, and on July 12, 1956, Federal Judge John Paul ordered desegregation of the Charlottesville schools, refusing to allow that "that this court be a knowing and willing accessory to a policy which has as its purpose delay and evasion [of Brown]." In this way he restrained the Charlottesville City School Board from any action that would deny admission of any child to any public school on the basis of race or color. In response, Governor Lindsay Almond actively supported the closing of Charlottesville's schools.

African Americans such as Eugene Williams fought the system with their own tools, when NAACP lawyers filed a suit against the city to pay them the same per diem they were paying the White lawyers who were defending their citizens. White lawyers went to court saying they were defending the citizens. Well, what about the Black citizens? So, as Eugene explained, "the NAACP lawyers came up with the idea that they were defending the citizens of the city that were not getting legal help. And the court ruled in their favor that they were to be paid the same and that's what began

accomplish then was to get the city to comply with the May 17, 1954 decision. The second year of our membership drive, we moved our membership from 900 to 1,500. It was a bigger membership than the Chamber of Commerce. The NAACP stayed extremely influential in the community on up until the mid-1990s.

It was necessary to use court action to make a difference. A good example is the city was talking about building two junior high schools, and it came out in the paper that they had land for one at the Burley High School campus, and they had to find the land for the second. If they built the one at Burley, that was going to be the junior high school for Blacks only. Well it was a matter of letting the School Board know that if they built that one at Burley that we were going to be in court. So that never happened. That's why you have one on the north side of the city and the other one on the south side of the city. Buford and Walker respectively.

School integration would be able to show more progress throughout the South if there were more people like George Tramonitin. George Tramonitin chose to have all the sixth graders of the city, White and Black, go to Jefferson. And they did not like it, but they had to accept it because that's how the new superintendent did it.

—Eugene Williams, Jefferson School graduate

Jefferson School Class Song

(Tune: "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind")

The years have brought a sad refrain

Of sorrow, toil, and pain;

War Lords have garnered our fair youth,

Their dreams, their hopes, the way of truth

Now Future trust seems vain.

We whom they've left behind now pray

When this conflict shall cease;

That fate may lead them ever on

Unto a bright and fairer morn

Of Liberty and peace.

We, too, must part from Jefferson

And know the way of Life.

Dear God, may we do well our part,

And pledge with ever fervent heart,

Help end this awful strife.

Farewell our school, all lessons taught

Shall not have been in vain;

In years to come when memory leads

To bygone days, heroic deeds,

We'll sing of thee again.

Farewell and may we do our part

In life 'til victory's won.

Triumphant, overcome all fears,

Know more of sunshine, less of tears

Farewell, Dear Jefferson!

—Blondell G. Fairfax

to make things move because cities could not afford to pay top dollar to two groups of lawyers." Charlottesville's "massive resistance" was not easily overcome. Local practices such as tokenism—allowing only a few African American students to be admitted at one time—and freedom of choice, which allowed Whites to attend private schools with state funds, perpetuated the segregated system. In 1959, Lane High School and Venable Elementary opened their doors and between 1959 and 1963 the only schools to admit African American students were Venable Elementary with 9 students in 1959, 13 in 1960, 20 in 1961, 31 in 1962, and 58 in 1963; and Johnson Elementary, with 4 students in 1962, and 12 in 1963. Lane High School admitted 12 students in 1959, 20 students in 1960, 36 students in 1961, 61 students in 1962, and 112 students in 1963.

In the desegregation process, many African-American teachers were 'phased out' of the system; although not openly dismissed, their contracts were not renewed. African-American students found they had become a number, a token that was used to appease school officials. African Americans received entry into a White system, a system that often made little attempt to accommodate cultural differences, different ways of doing and seeing things. The tangible reality was clearly felt in a loss of African-American teachers, student leaders, and identity through common space and sense of place in the community. The support network African-American students and teachers had known was suddenly dispersed and in the vital process of learning to interact with Whites, a sense of the African-American community had been lost.

How the African-American community came to terms with their losses in order to gain equality in the classroom perhaps we shall never know. We can only begin to understand the depth of the struggle by listening to stories such as those told by Eugene Williams who tirelessly rallied to encourage and support those willing to take the risks, to spend hours in the court rooms and persevere through the humility of their children having to sit in the Superintendent's office because no-one else wanted them in their classroom. To hear the pain of stories told by Hank Allen who, in his capacity as a counselor, struggled to help African Americans and Whites talk to each other and begin to understand and respect each others ways, is a means for understanding the value of an education.

Chronology of the Jefferson Pre-School, 1995–2002

In 1988–89, the City of Charlottesville initiated its first preschool classes at Jackson Via School. The Title 1 program served educationally needy four-year-olds from the Jackson Via and Johnson School districts. The following year, the program was expanded to include three classes, one in each of three schools—Jackson Via, Johnson, and Clark. Between 1991 and 1995, the number of classes again increased to four, and the program was again relocated to Jackson Via where it served educationally needy children city-wide.

In 1995–96, the single-facility program was moved to the Jefferson School building. Concurrent with the move, the program once again expanded to include four classes of educationally needy children and one class of “at risk” children. Overwhelmingly popular, the program grew again to seven preschool classrooms between 1996 and 1998; in addition, the



Rebecca McGinness visits the Jefferson School Preschool while celebrating her 105th birthday. (above)
Photograph provided by Nancy Gercke.

View of hallway the last year Jefferson School was used as a preschool center, 2002. (right)
Photograph by Amy Hill.

Lessons learned by me, and perhaps you, while at Jefferson...

that understanding others is based on learning about each other's backgrounds, interests and beliefs, not just who we are in the classroom;

that we can respect, like, and sometimes even love people who are seemingly different;

that new experiences must be shared with one another so that the relationship will not stagnate;

that relationships deepen by working through conflicts with the individual rather than complaining to others;

that faults or annoying behaviors of a person can be overlooked if we know the individual has her heart in the right place;

that we are models for children in everything we do—if we want children to be problem solvers and reflective thinkers then we must be;

if we do not continue to practice these lessons in different contexts then the legacy of our time together at Jefferson will be lost.

—Nancy Gercke, given to the preschool faculty during their first year back in the schools, February 2003.

I learned numbers and letters.

I learned to write "Denzel." I learned to be good at school.

I love school. I love planning time and worktime, going outside and riding bikes and playing football with my best friends Troy, Syndi, Michael, Joshua, Kimani, David, Lamira, and Clinton. I love watching the butterflies fly away. I loved the movie "The Red Balloon."

—Denzel, student of the Jefferson Preschool Whale Class, 2002

I learned how to write letters, how to paint and draw an apple tree, build a castle with blocks, read funny books like "Mouse Tales" and scary books like "Do Not Open" and "Abiyoyo." I learned how to write my name, my last name, and read rhymes. I like to write poems.

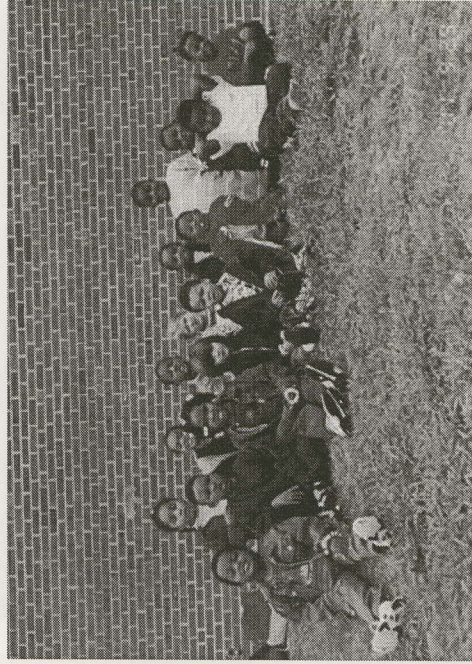
—Joshua, student of the Jefferson Preschool Whale Class, 2002

building began to house separate infant, toddler, three- to four-year-old children, and adult education and parent education classes for the Even Start Family Literature program.

Although the program at Jefferson was thriving, concerns about the building's condition led to a series of studies by the city School Board to determine the facility options open to them and the costs associated with maintaining the preschool program. In 2000, the School Board reviewed five scenarios. One of the scenarios explored renovating the Jefferson School, others looked at constructing new facilities, and retrofitting existing schools to house the preschool program. Renovating Jefferson was thought to be more expensive than building a new center. Later that year, the School Board asked the Superintendent of City Schools to appoint a committee to continue to study the options for providing preschool education.

In December 2000, the School Board, after engaging in much discussion and debate, and holding a retreat on the issue, voted to support the building of a new preschool center. In June 2001, the School Board voted to transfer the Jefferson School property to the City, which was at that time reviewing proposals for developing the area around the school as an economic development corridor.

Despite a series of public forums on the issue, the School Board moved forward with their original decision to turn the deed for the Jefferson School over to the City. In January 2002, the School Board voted to temporarily relocate the preschool education program to small classrooms placed in each of the city's six elementary schools. The Jefferson Preschool program completed the 2002 school year before being dispersed.



The Whale Class, Jefferson Preschool, 2002 .
Photograph provided by Nancy Gercke.

Jefferson School's Supporters Coalescing: The Founding and Sustaining of Citizens for Jefferson School

by Amy Hill

In January 2002, a meeting was called by former mayor Nancy O'Brien and City Council candidate Alexandria Searls on the eve of the School Board's decision to discontinue educational programs at Jefferson School. Approximately 100 people attended. The meeting drew diverse elements of the community; the majority of the meeting's participants were from Charlottesville's African-American community. The group resolved to work towards a common goal of maintaining Jefferson School's historical and cultural integrity, and keeping it an education institution. A petition was also started.

The meeting marked the beginning of a coalescence of efforts that had been going on within several interest groups in Charlottesville—from graduates of Jefferson High School, to former teachers and administrators of the school; politicians; historians; historic preservationists; activists; and education advocates. It marked the moment when groups who may have felt small, insignificant, and unable to influence the public decision-making process about the future of Jefferson School found that they were not alone. It was a moment of urgency, when people from many walks of life and diverse interests realized if they combined their efforts, they would be great in number, and possibly more influential in determining the future of Jefferson School and its site.

This diverse group of activists organized into Citizens for Jefferson School (CFJS), and began a campaign to communicate effectively, through E-mail, the Internet, telephone, and correspondence with all individuals who wanted to receive news and notices about meetings and City government actions involving the future of Jefferson School. This communication network resulted in more people concerned about the future use of Jefferson School and its site, attending meetings, and discussing issues with members of City government.

Jefferson School's Supporters Coalescing: The Founding and Sustaining of Citizens for Jefferson School

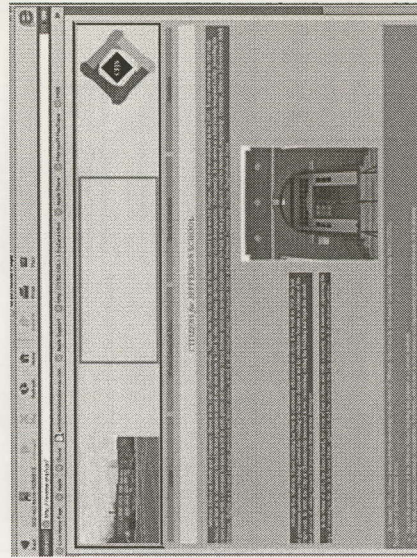


An early logo developed for Citizens for Jefferson School used to show the union of many diverse groups (alumni, preservationists, preschool advocates, adult education advocates). Graphic provided by Amy Hill.

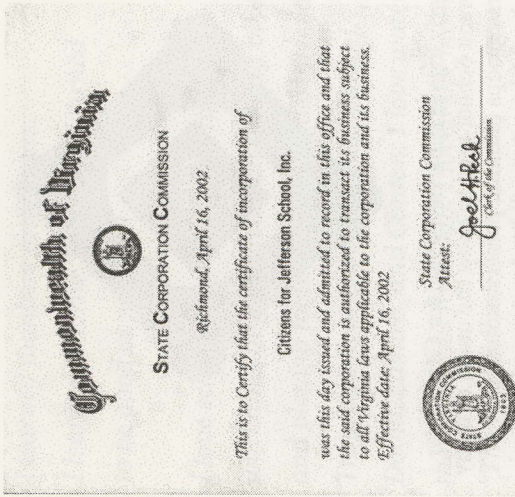


CITIZENS for JEFFERSON SCHOOL INC.

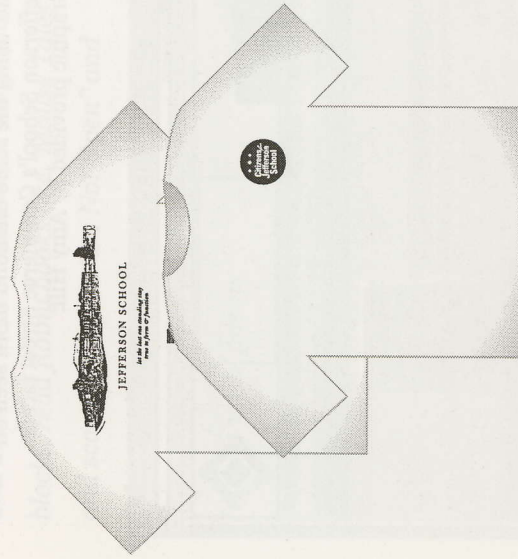
Logo developed for Citizens for Jefferson School Inc. using the same diamond motif seen on Jefferson School's Commerce Street facade. Graphic provided by Amy Hill.



Citizens for Jefferson school's web site (www.avenue.org/cjs) created by Kenneth Martin.



In April 2002, Citizens for Jefferson School is incorporated, and then applies for non-profit status from the IRS. Certificate provided by Amy Hill.



Citizens for Jefferson School tee shirts, sold to fundraise for the group. Graphic by Amy Hill.

CFJS's efforts to communicate with those in the community most passionate about the future of Jefferson School helped to influence the City of Charlottesville to stop the Request for Proposals (RFP) process for redevelopment of Jefferson School. A series of meetings with a representative Steering Committee from Citizens for Jefferson School, the Mayor and Vice Mayor, and the City Manager brought forth the idea to create a Task Force/Study Group to conduct an in-depth study of possible future options for Jefferson School and its site. The first draft of a proposal to form a Jefferson School Task Force was presented to City Council on March 13, 2001, by CFJS members.

At the same time, CFJS members supported Preservation Piedmont's efforts to get an already-prepared application (PIF) for official state and National Register listing for Jefferson School to go forward (which required City Council's signature to proceed). In addition to being an excellent way to highlight the history and significance of Jefferson School, historic designation would bring the possibility of tax credits, which could be harnessed to renovate the building.

CFJS quickly applied for incorporation, and then 501(C) (3) non-profit status so that the organization could begin to apply for grant monies to support activism for the conscientious rehabilitation of Jefferson School, and later, for renovation and re-use of Jefferson School. In July 2002, CFJS received its tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service, making it officially a non-profit organization.

Throughout the next few years, CFJS's ability to communicate with its extensive membership helped to shape the decision-making process surrounding Jefferson School. CFJS walked the line between confronting City government and joining forces with them to bring about a public process to decide the future of Jefferson School through the Jefferson School Task Force.

At the same time, CFJS continued to organize public service events (like a spruce-up/garden-ing day at the school in September 2002), and demonstrations to draw attention the precarious situation of Jefferson's future, like "Back to School Day" on the steps of Jefferson, to

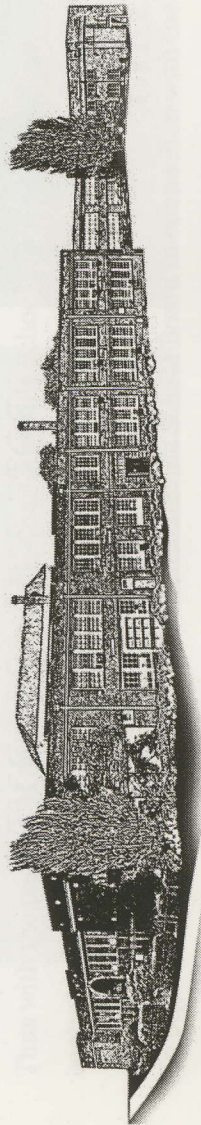
mark the fact that education was not being administered in the building for the first time in many years.

Jefferson School Alumni Reunion typically takes place over Labor Day Weekend every other year. In August 2002, CFJS members helped kick off the Jefferson School Oral History Project, and inform many visiting alumni of CFJS's existence and their goals.

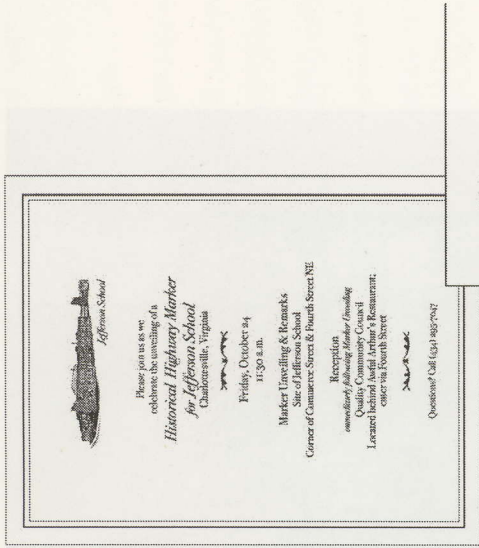
Over the past two years, CFJS has focused on observing and, where possible, participating in the Jefferson School Task Force process (which ended in 2003), and supporting the progress of efforts to get Jefferson School on the National and State Registers of Historic Places.

The outcome of the Jefferson School Task Force deliberations brought forth proposals that included several ideas for educational use of the existing buildings, and called for the development of some type of "cultural component" to discuss the location's historic significance to our community. It remains to be seen how extensively these proposals will be implemented.

It will also remain to be seen if, in the long run, CFJS's abilities and influence as an activist group will result in the actualization some or any of its founding members' desires for the hallowed old building and site. History will certainly show whether CFJS's influence, exercised almost entirely through grassroots communication networks getting bodies to meetings, helped to shape a future for Jefferson School that better ensured its stories would be conscientiously preserved and retold to future generations.



Composite illustration of Jefferson School used by CFJS for stationary items and fundraising merchandise. Graphic provided by Amy Hill.



Invitation postcards for unveiling of Jefferson High School Historical Highway Marker, October 2003. Graphic provided by Amy Hill.

JEFFERSON SCHOOL TASK FORCE

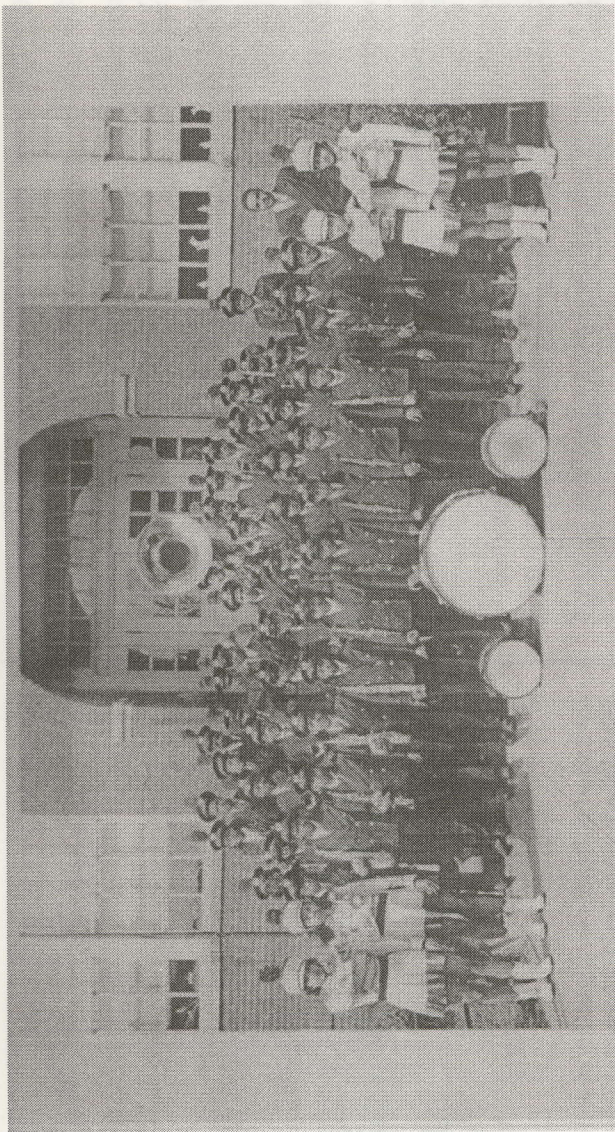
The Charlottesville City Council is accepting applications for the Jefferson School Task Force which will consider the future of the Jefferson School building and site. The Task Force will develop a comprehensive program to preserve the building and site, and to provide a public facility to meet the educational, cultural and operating cost estimates and financial strategies that will meet the long-term needs of Jefferson School. The planning process is to reflect extensive public involvement. Council will consider expertise and representation drawn from the following groups and individuals when making appointments to the 15 member Task Force:

- Preservation Piedmont
- PTO Council
- Jefferson School Alumni Association
- Citizens for Jefferson School
- Early childhood education specialist and/or parent
- Staff of Neighborhood representative
- Staff of Neighborhood representative
- Staff of Neighborhood representative
- UVA Office of African-American Affairs
- Development community
- Financial community
- Parks & Recreation Advisory Board
- Children's Families
- Neighborhood Association representative
- Attorney
- Adult Education
- School Board CIP Committee
- Chamber of Commerce representative

For an application contact the Clerk of Council at 976-3113 (or e-mail onsj@charlottesville.org).

The deadline for receipt of applications is Thursday, May 2, 2002.

Postcards sent by Citizens for Jefferson School to its members announcing the call for applicants to the Jefferson School Task Force, a City-appointed board to head the public process to determine the future use of Jefferson School. Card includes contact information for those wishing to apply to the board. Graphic provided by Amy Hill.



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Yearbook graphics, Jefferson High School's "Crimson and Black," 1950. Top left: Jefferson High School Band. Top right: Florence L. Coleman (Bryant). Bottom left: cheerleaders. Bottom right: advertising page.

Thematic Essays

Absence and Presence: On the Meaning(s) of The Jefferson School

by Corey D.B. Walker

On October 22, 1889, the Charlottesville School Board convened in the office of the Charlottesville Police Chief to discuss “the expediency of filling up another school room in the Midway building and of the selection of a teacher to take charge of the same.” Although the primary aim of the meeting concerned the addition of another primary class in the Midway building, the School Board also took up other business. The minutes of this meeting include the following resolution passed by the Board:

Whereas the Trustees of the Jefferson school home property, which has heretofore and is now rented for the use of the colored graded school, have either died or removed from the State, so that there is now no party present in this State legally authorized to control and protect this property. Therefore be it ordered that the Clerk of this Board is hereby authorized to employ Counsel to move the County or this City to appoint the Trustees of the Public free schools of this City to take charge of and manage this property with a view to carrying out the purpose and intention of the Donors.

Thus with the passage of this resolution, the Charlottesville School Board effectively assumed control and ownership of the property of Jefferson School.

To begin to interpret the actions of the Charlottesville School Board in connection with the Jefferson School is indeed challenging for any number of reasons. We may decide to take a direct route in attempting to come to grips with a rationale that provides a suitable explanation of the action taken by the School Board. We can try to “look behind” this vignette and

Corey D.B. Walker is Assistant Professor in the Department of Religious Studies with a joint appointment in the Carter G. Woodson Institute at the University of Virginia.

On the Council on Human Relations...

It was the Gastons who took us to the Council on Human Relations. That's where we met Teresa [Price], Florence Bryant, Maye Jackson, and George Ferguson. We were very compatible, and we had a lot of Christmas parties and all sorts of nice things. And our children played together.

Imagine Bunn wanted to get to work on housing, but Reverend Bunn said "It's jobs, jobs, jobs." And so we all went and talked to employers. You understand what the employment situation was at that time. Not a single secretary at the University or the hospital was Black. Blacks were janitors, messengers, orderlies in the hospital. So members of the Council helped break the color line and find non-blue collar jobs for Blacks. That was 1961. There were never any repercussions. Everyone was so afraid of repercussions.

In 1963 everybody was having stand-ins at restaurants. At Buddy's down on Emmett where the Science Museum is now there was a sit-in. Some rednecks came and roughed them up. Paul [Gaston] put his hands up to save his glasses, and they said that was a threatening gesture, so

explore the history of the relations of the Trustees of the Jefferson School and the School Board. We may even be so bold as to inquire into and ascertain the legality of the School Board's action.

In as much as these lines of inquiry may help us in trying to understand the event inscribed in the recorded minutes of the Charlottesville School Board, what I find most interesting is that this action was taken—perhaps it could only be taken—as a result of the lack of presence of the Trustees of Jefferson School. That is, in light of the absence of a presence—physical as well as legal—the School Board concluded that there was an absolute absence of the interests of the Trustees such that “now no party present in this State legally authorized to control and protect this property.” But the question remains: How should we proceed in interpreting such an absence that is read and understood in this fashion?

I do not pretend to fully engage this question, as it would require much more development and analysis than what I am prepared to present in what follows. Instead, I would like to suggest that what this question gestures towards is a new terrain on which we can begin to interrogate the meaning(s) of Jefferson School. Indeed, it is often in the space of some type of absence—the absence of textual evidence, material artifacts, or persons familiar with the object of interest—where we begin to construct meaning. It is not that such an absence marks an absolute abyss, a nothingness, but rather it requires us to become attuned to a different type of presence that forces us to revise our mode of inquiry in order to create some sense of meaning. In other words, the absence of the Trustees of Jefferson School directs us to the very presence of a group of Trustees of Jefferson School who “rented for the use of the colored graded school” property in the City. But, who were these “Trustees?” How did they come to possess this property? What was their relationship with the “Public free school of this City?” How and why did they rent the property for the “use of the colored graded school?” How and in what manner did these Trustees constitute themselves as “Trustees?” These and other equally intriguing lines of thought and investigation are opened because of an absence.

To think in the space of an absence is not easy, especially in our contemporary moment that

can be characterized by a pervasive conjuring of presence, any presence, in the face of absence. What I mean by this is that there is an intense desire to construct ideas, images, and symbols that convey a particular presence that will do specific kinds of cultural, social, political, and economic work. The anxiety over absence is logical given the resonance that these constructions of presence provide for our sense of identity and for giving meaning to our world.

Yet, the very process of construction of the ideas, images, and symbols that enable us to construct a presence is vitally important for us to contemplate, especially in regards to the Jefferson School. To begin to inquire into how we construct meaning serves as a pivotal reminder that our constructions are necessarily selective and fragmentary. The task is never complete and one's perspective is never total. We might find ourselves privileging particular images, symbols, narratives, and artifacts that capture the essence of the Jefferson School, or rather, the reality of the Charlottesville African-American community. Despite the nobility of our intentions, we must confront the awesome fact that we do not approach the Jefferson School unscathed by our own historicity. In other words, in as much as we are seeking to represent the Jefferson School, we bring to the project our own embeddedness in our various histories. Thus, we must constantly ask ourselves why this narrative instead of another? Why this voice and not another? Who is silent? What is missing?

Now, some may think that putting such a suggestion forward leads down the nefarious road of a vacuous relativism whereby chaos reigns. Nothing could be far from the point. What I am attempting to highlight is that in the process of constructing and interpreting the many meanings of the Jefferson School we cannot operate under the assumption that we are telling the "real" history or "real" story as it was lived and experienced. We must face the absence that is always already a presence.

In this respect, absence takes on an added meaning. It is in the face of the absence of any pretension of articulating the "real" history or the "real" story or the "true" meaning of the Jefferson School where we are afforded the opportunity to challenge the sedimented and regi-

they had filed a lawsuit. Then there we all were at the courthouse, it lasted two days. That poor judge had never had anything like this before, and we had newspapers from Washington. Oh, the publicity! And then suddenly bowling alleys...everything [movies, hotels, restaurants] was open. It just happened almost overnight.

—Jane Foster, with Gene Foster and Teresa Price, former members Council on Human Relations



Above, left to right:

Teresa Price, Jane Foster, Gene Foster, 2002
Photograph by Liz Sargent

On the effects of integration on the city schools...

We were marked as being militant or radical. We felt there weren't enough Black teachers, among other things. The book The Bus Stops Here was interesting because the author wrote she couldn't understand how one of the students (me) had been in the system with White students for so long. Why was he acting this way? What was his problem? She pinpointed me because I was supposedly one of the ringleaders as far as the militancy and advocacy, and they couldn't mesh that with the fact that I had been one of the early Black students at Venable in 1959.

—Alex-zan

I can't ever remember having a Black teacher.

—Alex-zan

They had never had a Black teacher before and I had never had White students before. For a few days there wasn't much participation. They sat very politely, but they didn't participate. There were five or six African Americans in the class. I told them this was new for both of us. You as students, me as a teacher. We can really support each other, but that doesn't mean there will be preferences for anyone.

—Florence Bryant

mented ways of thinking about this institution and the reciprocal relations to various communities. We open up new vistas for understanding and (re)constructing interpretations of the varied meanings of the Jefferson School as institution, symbol, and metaphor by exploring the silences, gaps, and absences that have gone overlooked, unnoticed, and unremarked. To explore an absence that is always already a presence may be the most critical aspect of attempting to unravel the thickly textured meaning(s) of the Jefferson School. It encourages us to think in new and exciting ways about the contingencies of the internal relations and external associations of the interrelationships between the Jefferson School and the many communities that interacted with this School.

To mine the absent presence is to foreground the important idea that our interpretations and constructions of meaning(s) with respect to the Jefferson School are necessarily marked by how we comprehend the logics and operations of gender, race, and class. These are but three critical issues that we may often think are ancillary to our venture. Yet they are always a part of how we view the world. At the same time our understandings of these constructs are always changing and shifting. Thus, the meaning(s) of the Jefferson School is not “out there” waiting to be discovered in some pristine state. Instead, all of the contingencies, ironies, and contradictions of race, gender, and class that inform our cognitive grids and constitute the fabric of United States society are inevitably woven into the meaning(s) of the Jefferson School.

We are always haunted by an absence full of possibility, promise, and presence. And it is in this space that we can begin to understand the meaning(s) of the Jefferson School.

*The Conspiracy of the Good: Civil Rights and the Struggle for Community in Two American Cities, 1875-2000*¹

by Michael James

In 1992, I visited Charlottesville for the first time, spending a long summer as a visiting fellow at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. As a result of the work from that summer and the many subsequent visits to the city and the University of Virginia, I wrote *The Conspiracy of the Good*, a book that has as its central theme an analysis of the tension that is produced when the rhetoric of “communal goodness” collides with preservation of power. My research at the Foundation (then called the Virginia Center for the Study of the Humanities and Social Policy) and in the City of Charlottesville led me to better understand the struggle that ensues as various groups—defined by social class, color and ideology—clashed over how best to characterize “the community.” But *Conspiracy of the Good* was not initially about Charlottesville. It was about the West, specifically about Southern California and the city of Pasadena.

When I began my research on Pasadena and the West in the early 1990s, I decided for many reasons that my project was geographically too narrow and needed a larger context. I therefore added an additional location, a second city that I believed would provide another perspective to my analysis. I wanted a community similar in size and “character” to Pasadena, and since my research was focused on civil rights, it was logical that the other city would be in the South. I chose Charlottesville, hence my 1992 summer sojourn as a fellow at the Foundation. The history of Charlottesville, a city, like Pasadena with a rich and problematic past, has helped me understand more about the shifting meaning of other staples of our national self-perception, like “community,” “neighborhood,” “race” and “civil rights.” Throughout the history of both cities, I found those concepts constantly undergoing redefini-

¹ *Conspiracy of the Good: Civil Rights and the Struggle for Community in Two American Cities, 1875-2000* will be published by Peter Lang, fall 2004.

The county began integrated teachers meetings early, I mean before integration came. We began to meet with the White teachers, with the staff, but I was still teaching at Burley, and one of the things that my other co-teachers and I found out was that while we were limited in books and materials, at Albemarle High School they had multiple copies of things we could only get one copy of or two. And I knew that was wrong. And, I would have wanted to integrate just to have the same materials.

—Lyria Hailstork, Jefferson School graduate



Lyria Hailstork, 2003.

Photograph by Liz Sargent.

Michael James is professor of Education at Connecticut College. His essay is taken from his forthcoming book, *Conspiracy of the Good: Civil Rights and the Struggle for Community in Two American Cities, 1875-2000*.

On Federal programs to facilitate integration...

I [Hank Allen] was the Director of the Consultative Resource Center on School Desegregation, which was run through the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education, between 1973 and 1980. There were twenty-seven centers like it throughout the United States.

You had Black people in the South and White people in the South who very seldom communicated with each other. The only time they communicated was when they were working; Black people were working for White folks. That's how they communicated. There wasn't a whole lot of respect. And so suddenly we were going to desegregate the schools, bring all these kids together, Black and White kids, Black and White teachers, administrators and councilors and coaches. It was quite a job to get them to understand what this desegregation process entailed.

In 1954, the Supreme Court issued the verdict through Brown vs. Board to desegregate the public schools. The court made a decision, but they did not lay out a plan for how desegregation should happen. It took from that time until 1970 to really desegregate the schools. The politicians did everything in their power to stop it. The states didn't want to follow the decision. Finally, the federal government decided that in order to move, to have a smooth transition into desegregation, someone had to help the school districts and the people. So they provided funding for these centers.

tion. Today, the "neighborhood school," the defining slogan during the school desegregation wars in the 1960s and 1970s, no longer arouses the same passions it once did. Now, in both cities, the "neighborhood school" has come to mean something very different.

What I learned from Charlottesville and Pasadena convinces me that the historiography of civil rights can no longer be isolated to a single region—the South. Nor can it be viewed as the single message of Black versus White. By seeing the struggle primarily as "race relations," we miss the many structural developments that help us better understand why, as the new millennium begins, the gap between those who hold most of the nation's wealth and the rest of us is greater than at any time since the second half of the nineteenth century. America has become, in Andrew Hacker's words, "Two Nations." Hacker's division is color, but if we continue to see our segregated society as divided only between Black and White, we fail to get at the crucial nexus of race and social class. I want to make it very clear that I am not dismissing race and racism from my story. Nor, to paraphrase sociologist Jack Bloom, am I suggesting the primacy of class over race. Whites, rich and poor, labor and the business elite, have profited from racism. However, as Bloom wrote, racial practices are embedded within class and economic and political systems. By the study of those systems, over time we can come to better understand how race and racism have been used to justify inequalities.²

The tension that comes when there are competing definitions of what constitutes "goodness," "necessity" and "what's best for the community" are amply illustrated in the book's final chapter, titled "Massive Resistance." The story that follows is drawn from the post war civil rights struggle in Charlottesville, specifically the controversy that swirled around the leadership of Jefferson Colored School in 1945-46.

In one of his last official acts as Superintendent of Charlottesville's schools, Dr. James Johnson, about to retire after 40 years of service to the community, submitted to the board of

² Andrew Hacker, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1992); Jack Bloom, *Class, Race, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 1, 3-5.

education his end-of-year report. Written early in May 1945, the report reflected Johnson's typical compulsive detail. For the last few years, the city had been "adjusting" to the federal court order equalizing salaries between Black and White teachers, so Johnson's report listed every teacher in the system, both Black and White, with his or her current salary and the proposed increase for the following year. What set Johnson's end-of-year report apart from prior teacher "re-elections," was his recommendation that five teachers be "let go."

In a growing city the size of Charlottesville, releasing a handful of teachers might not have caused much of a stir except that all five were from the same school. The teachers were experienced educators, without any apparent blemish on their personnel records. Most important, all were from Jefferson High School, the only Black secondary school in the city. In the preceding few years, seven teachers at Jefferson had quit or been fired. Now, in one end-of-year recommendation, the superintendent wanted to replace nearly a third of the teaching staff. In notes penned along the margin of his copy of Johnson's memo, A.L. Hench, a longtime member of the board, made it clear that something serious was unfolding at the school. "It is said," Hench wrote, "that these [five teachers] have been attempting to incite insubordination to [principal] Duncan. Hence we dropped consideration of the re-election of any teacher in the Jefferson High School."³ Until Hench and his colleagues on the board got to the bottom of the supposed insubordination, no Black teachers (including the librarian and school clerks) were to be reappointed for the following year.

Owen Duncan, the target of the alleged insubordination, was principal of the city's only Black high school. The building contained both the "grammar grades" (what would be called a junior high school if in a separate building) and the secondary school. It appears that his main administrative duties were at the high school. Duncan had taken over the school before the war, and the break with some of his faculty is the first indication that the White community had of any significant discord at Jefferson. That is not to say that the White school board

³ Dr. James Johnson to Dr. A.G.A. Balz, Chairman of the School Board of the City of Charlottesville, 3 May 1945, in Albert G.A. Balz papers (ms 3795), Box 3, Folder: "Special Committee to Investigate Conditions at Jefferson High School." Other than the central players in the Jefferson School controversy, all teachers have remained anonymous.

My training for the job was basically human relations training. When people don't speak to each other, don't understand each other, you've got a human relations problem.

We had to be invited to help in a school system. The superintendent had to approve it, because everybody in the school had to know we were coming, and they had to know that they had to cooperate with us. Charlottesville was not terribly receptive, we worked a little bit with Charlottesville. Albemarle was worse.

When they desegregated the schools, the number of Black principals went from 214 to 14. Black coaches disappeared. Assistant principals disappeared. Councilors disappeared. The Black kids became angry and they caused a lot of problems. And rightly so.

We worked with the teachers, though. We would sit down with the teachers and talk about the process, get them to understand the process, accept the process, and know something about the problems they were going to face and how to work with those problems. Then they could work with the students.

We had workshops, training sessions. We mixed the staff up in groups. We always had more

Whites in a group than Blacks because we found out that White people just wouldn't talk about this issue. We wanted them to feel comfortable in a majority environment. Black folks could

always operate in a minority environment. We learned that in the South. I knew that we needed

to sit people down and by talking learn to respect each other. If you don't have respect, you've got a problem. That's one of the reasons we have a race problem in this country today.

—Hank Allen, former Director, Consultative Resource Center on School Desegregation



Hank Allen, February 2004.
Photograph by Liz Sargent.

did not have knowledge of the substandard conditions at the two schools. Throughout the Depression decade, Black educators and school patrons had been feuding with the board over the quality of education at Jefferson. Until the spring of 1945, however, there had never been any indication that there was concern within the Black community over the quality of school leadership.

Insubordination is serious business and grounds for immediate dismissal, so the board moved quickly but cautiously. Johnson's recommendation to terminate the Jefferson teachers had come at Duncan's request, but the board suspected there might have been more to the situation than the principal's side of the story. Along with the re-election memo, Johnson sent board members a copy of a letter he had received from a "citizen's committee" of concerned parents and patrons. A few weeks before, at a community meeting in late April, the entire Jefferson high school faculty—all eighteen teachers as well as the librarian and school clerk—had risen in protest against Duncan. Before a "large group of citizens," the Jefferson teachers aired their many grievances. They accused Duncan of all sorts of anti-progressive school practices, including managing the school as if it were his personal fiefdom. As a result of his "autocratic" and "dictatorial" leadership, there were no longer "harmonious relations" between the teachers and the principal. Furthermore, many teachers were afraid of the man: he was "threatening," "sarcastic," "belittling," "coarse" and "offensive" to nearly everyone but especially toward the five he wanted removed. As the board would soon find out, these were some of the most experienced and respected teachers at the school.

Ten influential Black leaders—including a minister, the head of the parent-teacher association, and a prominent businessman and former newspaper publisher (who also happened to be the husband of a Duncan adversary)—sent the protest letter to Johnson and the board.⁴ It was clear that some in the African-American community had a serious problem with the school's leadership. Duncan and a majority of the high-school teachers had developed a pro-

⁴ City School Board, Charlottesville, Va., from The Committee, 3 May 1945, in Special Committee folder.

found dislike for one another. The White board of education needed to investigate — but from their perspective, this was not about “race relations.” Duncan was Black and so were all the teachers. The blow-up at Jefferson was apparently caused by bad blood between the teachers and the principal. Board chairman Albert Balz put together a “Special Committee to Investigate Conditions at Jefferson High School,” including himself, Hench and superintendent Johnson. Another board member, George Starnes, an attorney in Charlottesville, would chair the proceedings. The next week Starnes began to call in the teachers, one by one.

The board, reflecting the marginal status of the Black community, decided that the interviews would be held at Lane High, the new White high school, rather than at Jefferson. The board wanted to know if the controversy was confined to interpersonal relationships — was Duncan a poor administrator causing the teachers to react to the lack of “harmonious relations?” Or was the principal, being challenged by a group of “hot heads,” or worse yet, “radicals?” As the testimony began to unfold, the answer turned out to be both. The interviews went on for two weeks and included meetings with members of the “Charlottesville 400,” the core of the city’s African-American elite. But Starnes, Balz, Hench and their fellow board members could not see that the Jefferson School controversy was about more than “bad blood.” This was, after all, about race and caste.⁵

A half century later, reading from the committee transcripts and the notes from Balz and Hench, one can sense the enormous gulf between Duncan and the teachers. Although none of the teachers came out and said Duncan was miscast in the role of principal — that would have been too risky for these Black teachers were sitting one-by-one in front the White board of education, the board that had hired Duncan—the implication was clear: before Jefferson High could be fixed, Duncan had to go. Many—but only those *not* on Duncan’s dismissal list—said the teachers should shoulder some of the blame. When Starnes asked one of the “troublemakers,” a reference to one of the five teachers Duncan wanted dismissed, if the fault lay entirely

⁵ Based on the charges brought against Duncan, Starnes prepared for the investigative committee eight questions that he believed would uncover whether Duncan or the teachers were at fault. Following the teacher testimony, Starnes then prepared another seven questions for Duncan.

On the situation at Lane High School...

Some of the Black students had a very rough time those first few years. They didn't let the Black kids play sports or participate in the music programs. They discontinued the honor society. This one lady said "I'd give you your own football field if you'd just play football over there. We'll play football over here.

—Teresa Jackson Price

I started in 1966, and it wasn't until the fall of '67 that we had full integration. When they closed Burley, they took away their football team, their band, the Black history day. They took away every bit of it. They did not attempt to integrate it into the school curriculum at all! So that the whole curriculum and activities were slanted towards the White middle class. It was horrible. They were disenfranchised at a time when young people needed role models. The message was we have to do this, and you don't count. And you have to assimilate, and your way of speaking is no good, and your school activities aren't valuable enough to give them a place in our curriculum and our after school activities.

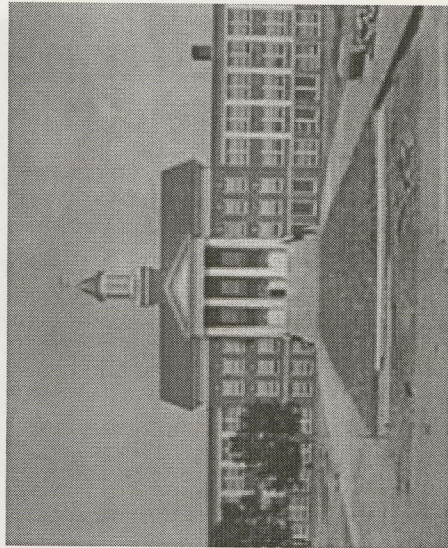
—Susan Cone Scott

In my 45 minute note keeping class, every day we spent about 30 minutes most days talking about race relations. Then I would say, "We're going to have to stop talking now because I don't want you to go home and tell somebody that I'm not teaching school. But they had an interaction, Black and White kids, and interaction with me, and we learned so much from each other. Some kids cried. It was a good counseling session.

—Teresa Jackson Price

What I felt was this explosive quality, this tension. Sometimes I would just take the class period and let them process it. I didn't know the term process then. I just knew there was no way anybody was going to learn anything that day.

—Susan Cone Scott



Lane High School, ca. 1940.
Photograph source: McCuffey Reader.

with Duncan, she said, "If everyone said nothing, there would be no trouble, but would that be best for the system?"⁶

What was "best for the system" was the long-festering question that divided White Charlottesville from the Black community. Everything in this small Southern city was about race. As a result, the board's options were limited. The testimony pointed to a poorly equipped administrator who practiced a kind of school leadership rooted in an authoritarian tradition. The situation was so dreadful that the five targeted teachers (three were women) had become confrontational, argumentative, disrespectful, and insubordinate toward a male authority. From the teachers' perspective, the situation had become unmanageable. Yet outside the school, an element of Black leadership in the community praised Duncan. After the committee had taken the teachers' testimony, its members interviewed eight influential citizens, including Thomas Inge, a merchant, two doctors and a minister. Duncan had lived in the Inge household when he first arrived, and the grocer vouched for his dedication and work ethic. Whether the committee had solicited these interviews is unclear. One citizen told the committee that "he and the group had come down merely to see what they could do to help..." None of the eight were critical of Duncan. Many praised his leadership, which may have been more an act of deference to White power than outright support for the principal since to openly criticize a Black leader appointed by a White board called into question White rule.

One of the teachers Duncan wanted out was Elnora Sellers, wife of T.J. Sellers, the former publisher of the city's first Black newspaper, *The Reflector*. The newspaper had had a short history—it was in business for only a few years during the 1930s—but T.J. and Elnora Sellers had made their mark. The Sellers were pillars of the community, actively engaged in the political and social affairs of Charlottesville. Elnora Sellers helped organize some of the first Black women's organizations in the city. She and her husband were two of the most visible and respected members of Charlottesville's Black elite. T.J. Sellers was one of the ten members of

⁶ Interviews with teachers, 5.

the community who first brought the complaints about Duncan to the board. He was an outspoken critic of White rule, and his editorial writing often took the city's White leadership to task for its unequal distribution of funds in the name of public education. After the war, he had become the Charlottesville editor of the *Roanoke Tribune*, an influential Black weekly newspaper.⁷

Mr. and Mrs. Sellers did not go unnoticed by some in the White community. A few years after the war ended, Sarah Patton Boyle, a White liberal in Charlottesville, sought T.J. Sellers' aid in helping her understand why her offer of "assistance" to Gregory Swanson, the first African American admitted to the University of Virginia law school, was rebuffed. Swanson had angrily walked out on Boyle when she read him a draft of a newspaper article she had written. Although she had never met him, Boyle knew Sellers' reputation in the community and contacted him in the hope that he could shed light on why Swanson had become so angry at her offer of "help." When Sellers read Boyle's proposed newspaper article, he accused her of "gross paternalism" that arose out of what he called "the 'Master class' turned liberal" syndrome. Over the ensuing months, the two continued to meet and talk. Boyle ended up referring to those meetings as "The T.J. Sellers Course for Backward Southern Whites." The lessons she learned from Sellers about paternalism and race became her best-selling book published in 1962, *The Desegregated Heart*. During the late 1950s, she would be one of the most outspoken White critics of Virginia's "Massive Resistance" to school desegregation. Boyle learned that being quiet was not in the Sellers' family tradition. During the Duncan controversy, it was Elnora Sellers who told the investigating committee that being quiet about Duncan was not "best for the system."⁸

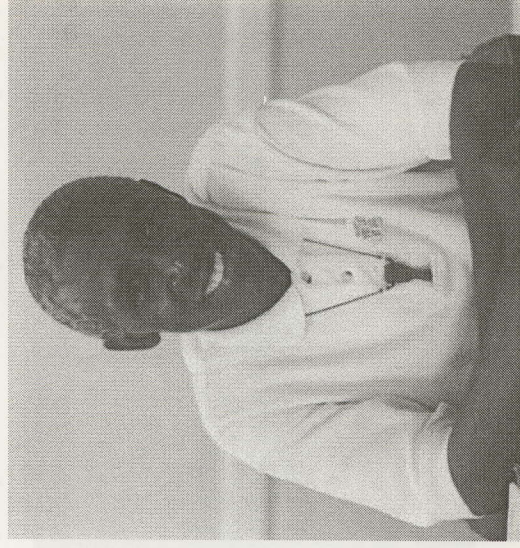
⁷ See the few surviving issues of *The Reflector*, the black newspaper founded by T.J. Sellers, on-line at the University of Virginia Library, http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/afam/raceandplace/news_main.html.
⁸ Sarah Patton Boyle, *The Desegregated Heart: A Virginian's Stand in Time of Transition*, with an introduction by Jennifer Ritterhouse (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1962; reprint, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001), xii-xiii. Also see, Bradley Charles Mittendorf, "From Discussion to Confrontation" (Master's thesis, University of Virginia, 1993), 35-43. T.J. Sellers was one of the ten who brought the charge of incompetence before the board of education.

We moved into integration with little to no preparation, with much hostility and distrust on both sides. The school system to my mind failed these young people miserably. I don't think any of us, whether we were White or Black who were in favor of integration understood how difficult it was going to be culturally.

—Susan Cone Scott

I remember Lane because we did a lot. We had walk-outs, sit-ins, and boycotts, everything at Lane. We had to speak out. We made sure people heard. We would hold up a hallway or a staircase, we would block a door, we would confront the principal.

—Alex-zan



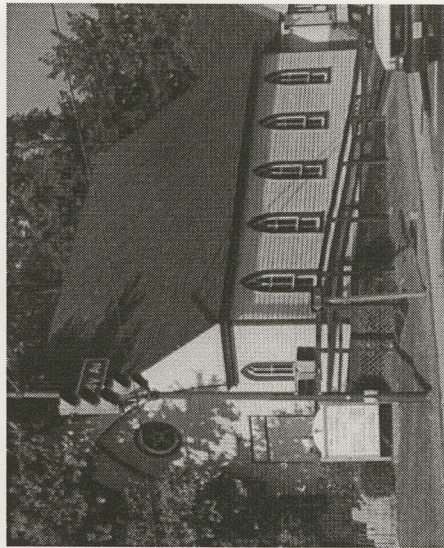
Alex-zan, 2004.
Photograph by Alexandria Searls.

Walk-Out at Lane High School

We were more defiant, more militant than the school system had seen previously. We tried to say "you don't have Black history, you don't have Black teachers, etc." We had to be defiant, we had to speak out. During those days, the Black Panthers and militancy and fist raising was happening. We called ourselves the Wrecking Crew. We would hold up a hallway or a staircase, we would block a door, we would confront the principal. We used to stop traffic on Main Street. We made sure people heard. We were declared a threat to the Virginia school system.

We marched one day from Lane High School up to Trinity, at the corner of Tenth and Grady. We expressed some grievances about how we were being treated.

—Alex-zan



Trinity Church, site of Lane High School walk-out.
Photograph by Liz Sargent.

White Power and Black Agency

As the board's investigative committee gathered for its final deliberations in late May 1945, what was "best for the system" turned on two crucial questions. With the rumors of a possible student strike, would students carrying signs and chanting "Down With Duncan!" have walked out, organized (maybe) by two "radical" teachers? Or was this "ruckus," to use Duncan's term, between Duncan and the Jefferson teachers provoked by a very personal conflict between a few teachers and Duncan? If that was the case, what should the board tell the public? Balz and his colleagues concluded they needed to discipline Owen Duncan, but they also needed to discipline the teachers. In Charlottesville's biracial system, however, any decision the White board made could not be construed as sanctioning any increase in Black political power. Therefore, the board would not dismiss Duncan. To do so would embolden the teachers and the larger Black community that had first aired the grievances. Equally important, the board could not fire the five teachers. To do so would only encourage a near tyrannical principal. Central to the board's public position was its belief that it must remain above the internal bickering in the Black community. To Balz, Hench, Starnes and the others, this dispute was none of their doing.

On May 23, at a special board of education meeting, Balz and the board scolded everyone in the Black community, including the parents, teachers and Duncan. They did not fire Duncan nor dismiss any of the teachers Duncan wanted out of the school. The board told the Black community that the principal "has strangely failed to stimulate eager cooperation ... [and] by autocratic manner and contemptuous treatment he has repressed constructive criticism and suggestions by the teachers ..." The board accepted the explanation "that these features of the administration are not due to disrespect for the ability of the teachers but rather to certain unfortunate mannerisms."⁹

⁹ See the final report of the "Committee to Investigate Certain Complaints of Conditions at Jefferson High School," 14 June 1945, Special Committee Folder.

On the other hand, the board criticized "some of the teachers" for their failure to cooperate with Duncan and their "unwillingness to accept the advice of the principal in matters properly within his jurisdiction." The board reported considering dismissing certain teachers (probably the five originally listed, though the committee did not make the names public) but instead said it had decided to "recommend no change so drastic." The board then told the superintendent to "observe carefully" the dynamics between Duncan and the teachers during the upcoming year.¹⁰

As to the alleged student strike and the general "laxity of discipline" reported at the school, the board blamed Charlottesville's changing culture. The initial draft of the committee's report blamed the students because they "come from a backward race," but either Hench or Balz crossed that out and replaced it with "many pupils come from homes where there is no family unity or home training." The final report went on to say that the lack of "family unity" and "home training" was equally true of the some of the White students at the end of the war. The report blamed the unsettled conditions caused by World War II, especially the anticipated early induction of some of the boys into the military. (When *The Daily Progress* reported the board's findings, the newspaper left out the board's criticism of White households.) The committee went on to warn Black parents against "carping" about Duncan in front of their children. To do so was just one more reason the school did not have "respect for authority [which was] fundamental in an ordered and orderly society."¹¹

By doing nothing, the board did everything the biracial state required. The board solidified power within the White community by keeping an ineffective administrator in control, which further served to undermine Black agency. In a complex and rapidly changing social order, the rules of segregation required the board to pit oppositional forces against one another rather than to search for common ground. For the White board, solutions arising from common ground in the Black community were a non sequitur. As far as the school board was con-

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid. See "School Head and Staff Criticized: But Board Retains Jefferson Faculty," *The Daily Progress*, 29 May 1945, 1.

Three years ago the Wrecking Crew got together and re-initiated the group. So now we're doing some positive community things, giving scholarships, doing small things that we can do. I am a motivational speaker now. When I share the fact that we were declared a threat to the Virginia school system with audiences they can't believe it. I get really tickled because they say "Oh, not you Alex-zan!"

—Alex-zan

That first year, there was absolutely no mention of integration. There was this fierce sublimated anger at what was happening. I quickly became known as someone who was pro-integration and was not going to be unfair. The first time the Black students all walked out they came and got me. They said "You've got to come, we're going up to the church. We're having a walk-out!" It happened to be my first period and I went up there, and they kind of welcomed me to the meeting. We did not have permission to leave the school on our free periods, but I went. I was just, I was a rebel. I was furious about what was going on, and I did it.

—Susan Cone Scott

There was a small group of us, about seven, who clearly were in favor of integration. We got a lot of hostility from the other faculty. It was so volatile, you never knew what would happen. Sometimes I would just take the class period and let my students process it. I didn't know the word "process" then, I just knew that there was no way anybody was going to learn anything that day.

—Susan Cone Scott,
teacher at Lane High School, 1965-1968

We were very supportive of her, we created a bond with her. She stands out. I could tell you a couple we actually just about drove crazy, but on the supportive end, she certainly stands out.

—Alex-zan talking about teacher Susan Cone



Susan Cone Scott, May 2004.
Photograph by Jacky Taylor.

cerned, the “problem” was *within* the Black community and had nothing to do with the White community. Unless Black Charlottesville’s “problems” threatened White social and economic stability, it was the duty of the board to remain disconnected.

Yet, the Charlottesville Board of Education was never disconnected. They might have believed they had resolved the “problem,” but the problem did not go away. Less than a year later, the school board received a petition signed by nearly 250 people demanding the removal of Owen Duncan. In a letter cosigned by Douglass Edwards, president of the Parent-Teacher Association, and L.B. Burns, president of the City Federation of Women’s Clubs, the petitioners charged that Duncan was “dictatorial and intolerant of the views of others.” He had “lost control” of the school, because he was “emotionally unstable” and “this unfortunate weakness” had caused numerous “unnecessary brawls with students, teachers and patrons.” The community was concerned that students were getting the wrong message. There were too many students off-grounds during the school day, hanging about Vinegar Hill’s pool halls and shoeshine parlors, unsavory places to Charlottesville’s Black elite. This time the petitioners held Duncan wholly responsible for the school’s “laxity of discipline.” The petitioners recommended (“respectfully” they said) that the board remove Duncan because it was “necessary” and in “the best interests of the students and community in general.” The petitioners said Duncan’s removal was “necessary” so they could “cooperate with the school administrator and authorities in building a more progressive community.”¹² Once again, those on the margin defined “progressive” in ways most majority Whites did not appreciate.

The board of education responded by appointing another committee, only this time the new superintendent, G. Tyler Miller, possibly intending to blunt any criticism from the Black community, asked the state’s Assistant Supervisor of Negro Education, Archie Richardson, to come to Charlottesville and “thoroughly investigate the situation.” Richardson had been the first African American appointed to the Virginia State Department of Education by then state

¹² L.B. Burns and Douglass Edwards to the Charlottesville Board of Education, no date but carries date stamp, 15 April 1946, Special Committee Folder.

superintendent Sidney Hall. When Richardson appeared before the congressional committee on federal aid to education before the war, it was clear that he spoke the language of accommodation.

In April of 1946, Archie Richardson interviewed patrons, teachers, students and Duncan, though he was not vested with any power or authority. His role was to "investigate" and "report," but the final decision was left to the board. Superintendent Miller, writing to the City Federation of Women's Clubs and the PTA, concluded that the board, once again, "does not consider removal of the Principal justified."¹³

Language will often reinforce arrangements of power. In his response to the Black community, superintendent Miller, who in a few months would depart for Richmond to become state superintendent of public instruction, said the Charlottesville board had "carefully checked" all signatures on the petition. Miller told the community that 52 signatures were from patrons from the high school and 14 were from the primary school. There were 138 "other signers." Miller went so far as to "disqualify" 19 names, because he said the signatures were "uncertain." More important, the board knew who had not signed the petition, and that turned out to be most of the high school faculty. Only seven teachers and a departing visiting nurse took the risk of signing the petition. Could fear of retaliation have kept the others away? Miller's report told the board that improvements were at hand because "further changes in [Jefferson] personnel will take place in the coming year."¹⁴ And changes did take place. By the start of the 1946-1947 school year, nearly all Duncan's "troublemakers," including Elnora Sellers, had left the school, presumably discouraged by the futility of their efforts.

By taking an instrument of community solidarity—the petition—and dividing it into "classifications," the White board effectively used the petition against the Black community. By "classifying" most of the petitioners as "others" and showing that the majority of teachers at the

¹³ G. Tyler Miller to The President of the City Federation of Women's Clubs and to the President of the Parent Teachers Association, 27 May 1946, Special Committee Folder.
¹⁴ *Ibid.*

On Vinegar Hill and urban renewal...

When they tore it down, I gave it some thought. It doesn't matter how poor a neighborhood is, there's an affinity for the neighborhood for the people who live there. You're destroying family roots, which is always bad.

—Florence Bryant

Everyone who went to Jefferson School knew that the neighborhood had been wiped out five years ago. You had a giant four-lane road but you didn't have anything else. They had put that road in first. For kids, it was spooky. One of the first government phrases we learned was "urban renewal," so we thought of urban renewal as bulldozers. I vaguely remember the neighborhood as a little kid—vaguely. Commerce Street looks like Vinegar Hill. If you want to know what Vinegar Hill looked like, go down Commerce Street.

—Bruce Edmonds

I guess it was urban renewal that was coming. I think the city planners thought that urban renewal was improving sections. Some of the houses were decrepit. I am not sure that things were improved.

—Lyria Hallstork

On Inge's store...

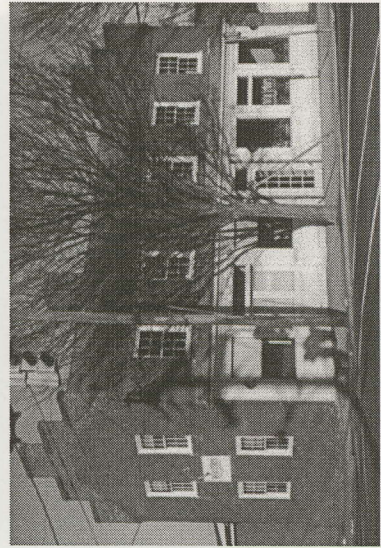
I used to spend a lot of time here, although I lived in New Jersey, and worked in my grandfather's store. My grandfather came here from Danville, Virginia and established his store in 1891. It was in existence for a goodly number of years, probably until the 1970s. It was a landmark. To me it still is a landmark. Every time I go by there, all I can think about is how my grandmother used to ring that bell for dinner.

—Theodore Inge, Jr.

If we were due at ten of nine, we would leave at about twenty-five before nine. About seventy students walked to school together. Everyone was synchronized to leave at the last possible moment. A whole stream of us, walking to school and walking home. We went by Inge's grocery.

Sometimes we'd stop and get apples.

—Kenneth Martin



The former Inge's Store, 2003.
Photograph by Liz Sargent.

high school had not signed the petition, the board made its inaction legitimate. Miller told the Black community that Duncan, although flawed, was not principally "at fault." Once again, the "conditions" at the school were the result of a "breakdown of discipline" within the Black community. Miller wrote "After careful consideration of the petitions, the communications from the Federation of Women's Clubs and the PTA, the report by Mr. A.G. Richardson, and the report of the Special Investigative Committee ..." the has board decided "unanimously" to do nothing except blame the Black community for its "lack of support of the principal and the teaching staff."¹⁵ If the parents and teachers worked together, there would be no more attempts at a disruptive student "strike" and no more complaints of students leaving school to frequent Vinegar Hill's gas stations, pool halls and shoeshine parlors.¹⁶

As one can read from the Jefferson High School controversy, *Conspiracy of the Good* emphasizes issues of social class that I believe continually get pushed aside in the discussion about race and power in America. For too long, the majority White opinion of Black and, in the West, Latino communities have been of single entities, all alike, bound alone by color and language. Yet Charlottesville's Black community has always been as vexed with class conflicts as the city's White community. The Jefferson controversy over the role of the high-school principal, a man who many, including a contingent of the city's Black elite, argued was unfit to lead the school, was a complex story of power and its ramifications within a biracial state. Today in an equally complex but very different struggle over who defines authority, Charlottesville will decide if the old Jefferson Colored High School building should be torn down to make way for the promised renaissance of "urban renewal." I've been told some African Americans in the city like that idea, others—mostly old timers and those interested in historic preservation—object.

Although I have used many themes to tell the story of Charlottesville and Pasadena, *The Conspiracy of the Good* is principally about the educational policy and practice that has

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.* *The Daily Progress* did not cover the second Jefferson School controversy.

marked the phenomenal expansion of the American school since the Civil War. I do not see public schooling as an isolated institution—although, too often, too many parents, reformers, observers, and analysts isolate public education from the larger context of American politics. I can only understand the history of schooling in places like Charlottesville and Pasadena when it is rooted in larger themes of class conflict, racial unrest, industrial development and political economy. Schools have always been sites of community building, places where an assortment of groups, often with disparate intentions and means of expression, have battled for ideological elbowroom. I have emphasized “race” and “race relations” in the book only when and if the ideas focus attention on the actions that constitute racism. In addition, I use no category called “difference.” I have tried to illuminate supposed “differences” with an analysis that substantiates similarities. As with race and class, however, I have not reduced “difference” to “commonality.” America’s “melting pot” does not exist. It never has. Instead, I have treated multiple communities—African Americans, Latinos, organized labor, the White and male working class, wealthy and poor women and the business elite—as players, but certainly not equal players, in a larger story about power and its ramifications.¹⁷

I see Pasadena and Charlottesville as two sides of the same coin. I do not see a one-to-one correspondence between the two cities, and it is not my intention to compare and contrast their histories, although I suspect that comparisons are inevitable. Rather, the history of each city is reflective of larger, common social, political and economic themes. The themes are often confusing and contradictory. The role of politics in shaping class concerns is an example. In the 1960s, mainly prosperous White members of the westside Pasadena community around the Arroyo Seco, that canyon-like draw where the Rose Bowl sits, came to realize that their status was rapidly being eroded by demographic shifts that placed increasing numbers of poor Black students in the local high school. They argued that resources were being diverted to the now more prestigious eastside Pasadena High School, which remained nearly all White. They spoke about the “quality” of education, about “growing segregation” and about

¹⁷ My categories have evolved since I began the book. Many thanks to Barbara Jean Fields, “Origins of the New South and the Negro Question,” *The Journal of Southern History*, 67 (No. 4, November 2001), 811-812, 814, for illuminating the particulars of race, racism and “race relations.”

A special role model for me was Mr. George P. Inge. In 1891, he opened a grocery store at the corner of West Main Street and Fourth Street. Besides being a successful businessman, he and his wife were successful parents. They had nine children. Four were schoolteachers, two medical doctors, one a college professor, and two businessmen. He was active in civic and community affairs. Without telling him, I adopted him as my grandfather, and found many excuses to visit the store. My mother would tease me by declaring that I was the only child in the neighborhood who saw the need to dress in her Sunday best to go to Inge's store to buy a loaf of bread.

He appointed himself a one-man welcoming committee. He greeted his adult customers with a smile and wholesome conversation—and the neighborhood children with a smile, praise, words of wisdom and a treat. His words of wisdom to me once: "Young lady, when you grow up, be sure to register to vote. Those politicians have a say in your life, from the cradle to the cross. They can decide where you are born and where you can be buried.

—Grace Tinsley, Jefferson School graduate

On Charlottesville's neighborhoods...

We used to live in the area they called the heights. Out there on Ridge Street. We used to call Ridge Street 'plum nelly.' Plum out of the city, and nelly out of the state.

Because it was so far away.

—Priscilla Whiting

I am a Charlottesville native, a product of Charlottesville public schools. I grew up on Fourth Street NW—right across from Jefferson School, where I gained an appreciation for community, for being part of a community of people who shared their lives with each other and cared for each other; a community where people are known, recognized, and valued. And I had such wonderful role models.

—Grace Tinsley

We weren't allowed to go through there (Vinegar Hill). There were quite a few unsavory characters living among good people.

—Kenneth Martin

“fairness.” Their arguments were not dissimilar to those offered by Charlottesville’s Black community over the last century. The coalition that was formed as a response to Pasadena’s repeated stonewalling—a multi-ethnic alliance that squabbled some over who was to lead, Whites or Blacks—led to the federal court order that mandated the landmark desegregation of Pasadena’s schools. The irony of Pasadena was that the political struggle to desegregate schools was led by well-off Whites, not, as it was in Charlottesville and the South, by Black political organizations like the NAACP.

I intend *Conspiracy of the Good* to address the nagging question that is part of the public debate over schooling. Why have our public schools, especially those in poor and working-class communities of color, failed to live up to the promises contained in the American Dream? Reforms appear to come as often as political elections, yet meaningful change seldom gets the traction promised by its proponents. I suspect this is because “progressive,” well-meaning, good-hearted men and women, who often espouse “good intentions” in the name of “helping those in need,” have ended up doing more harm than good. Why is that? I am not speaking only of church and independent charity work, although in both cities studied here the history of charity outreach plays a significant role in the history of good intentions gone bad. No, I am speaking more to those institutionalized, mainly governmental efforts that preach about addressing the community’s “needs” but end up creating structures that attempt to “fix” the so-called “morally depraved,” correct the anti-social behavior of the “riff raff,” and remake “the others” into model citizens who hopefully know their place, and more important, stay there without complaint.

The Conspiracy of the Good is about how these plans go awry. If the volume has a thematic undercarriage, it is that the core value of the American experience is conflict, not consensus, no matter what mainstream historians have tried to sell us over the decades. In places like Charlottesville and Pasadena, the past has been twisted time and again to meet the needs of an elite that uses the politics of selfishness, cloaked as “communal goodness.” That certainly was the case at Jefferson Colored School just as World War II ended.

Some things that make for the success of a pupil

- Native ability
- Previous preparation
- Desire for self-improvement
- Suitable home study
- Ambition and perseverance
- Effort to do work assigned
- Regular and punctual attendance
- Proper attitude of home toward school

Some things that cause a pupil to fail

- Unprepared for work attempted
- Failure to study at home
- Discouraging conditions for home study
- Too many social diversions
- Keeping late hours at night
- Irregular attendance
- Lack of determination
- Late entrance

If your child is failing to make satisfactory progress, please come to the school to confer with the school officials about ways and means of aiding the child.

.....Principal
Booker PearsonTeacher

PARENT'S SIGNATURE

- September.....*Ruth Wyatt Coles*.....
- October.....*Ruth Wyatt Coles*.....
- November.....*Ruth Wyatt Coles*.....
- December.....*Ruth Wyatt Coles*.....
- January.....*Ruth Wyatt Coles*.....
- February.....*Ruth Wyatt Coles*.....
- March.....*Ruth Wyatt Coles*.....
- April.....*Ruth Wyatt Coles*.....
- May.....

Above: Jefferson School Report card.
 Provided by Ruth Coles Harris

I was born in a house at 230 Fifth Street. It was

torn down to make room for the Carver

Recreation Center that was a part, a later part, of Jefferson School. Three teachers lived near us.

Mrs. Rebecca McGinness, Miss Marion Wyatt, and Mrs. Ruth Coles. Miss Wyatt and Mrs. Coles

were sisters, and they lived in the same house. They lived right around the corner from us. And

then across the street lived Mrs. Nannie Cox Jackson, the Jacksons. So we were all in a little

area where everybody knew everybody. Many of us who lived in the neighborhood went to the

same church—Ebenezer.

—Lyria Hailstork

There were several churches, the churches and the school were the heart of the community.

That's where you saw people, that's where you interacted. It was really close knit,

people knew each other.

—Rudolf Goffney

Everybody knew everybody.

—Ruth Coles Harris

Bell Funeral home is on the right hand side. Scott Dean's was right there near the garage. We used to go down there and have hamburgers and hot dogs. We were surrounded by funeral homes. A funeral home was across the street from Bell's. It was Pryor Funeral Home.

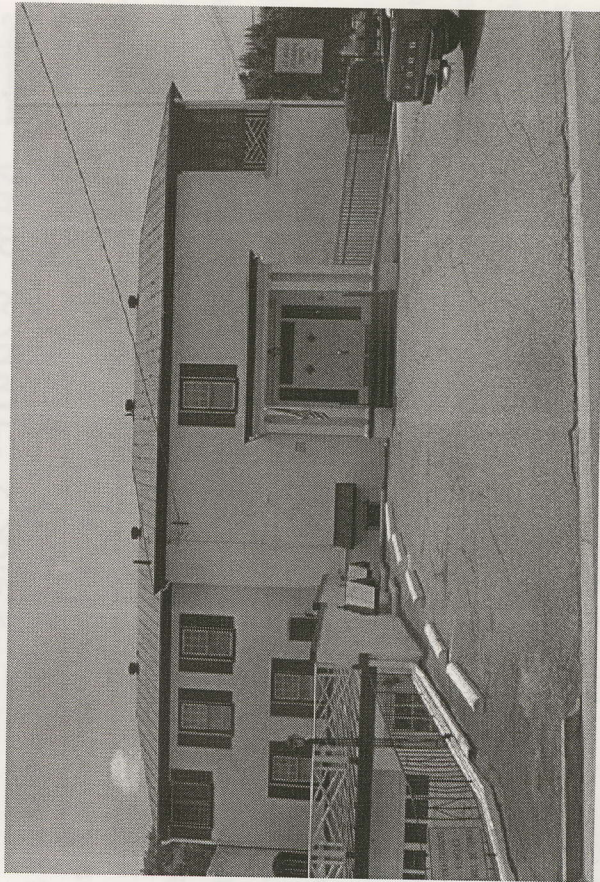
—William Gilmore

The area around Jefferson was 'mixed.' The ground around Fifth Street N.W.—Brown Street, Fifth Street and Sixth Street—included many nice homes. The area on the lower side of Jefferson—Commerce Street, lower end of Brown Street, Fourth Street to Preston Avenue—there were some nice homes, but there were many which were in very poor condition, outdoor plumbing, etc. Many were rented homes wherein the landlords did not improve their property.

—Marian Dukes

In the immediate neighborhood of the school there were two Black physicians, Drs. Johnson and Stratton, two Black dentists, Drs. Coles and Jackson, the J.F. Bell Funeral Home (still in existence and operated by the family) and two Black Baptist churches. One—Ebenezer—still remains. One memory that stands out is that the gas house was right near the school. The noxious odors, and at times, the gases and fumes, were released into the air. This was very annoying.

—Rudolph Goffney



Ebenezer Baptist Church (above) and J.F. Bell Funeral Home (below), 2004. Photographs by Adriane Fowler.

An Experience of Jefferson School

by Alexandria Searls

I moved to Charlottesville in 1979, a White eighteen-year-old arriving alone at the Trailways bus station, ready for college, and only a block away from Fourth Street and two blocks from Jefferson School. It was years before I heard that name—"Jefferson School"—and began to locate myself and understand where my arrival had been. As an undergraduate at the University of Virginia, I didn't even learn about the razing of Vinegar Hill. I saw grass where the Omni stands now, but the grass didn't speak to me the way it did to those who knew. Still, an emptiness blew over the ridge, the lonely call of a bedraggled city lot, of patches of dirt and a silver gum wrapper. An absence whispered.

The first person I met was the Black taxidriver who drove me to the dorms. I asked him what Charlottesville was like. He said, "it's all right here, it's all right—you're attending the University?" and I told him all about myself while he maintained a polite and distant composure. We drove down Main Street, and I looked at the train station wondering what all right really meant.

The term "African American" wasn't used then. Besides fellow students, most of the Black people I encountered were dressed in white and serving me drinks and food at fraternity functions. Though I was born in Lynchburg, Virginia, I had gone to high school in New York City, and the visible racial divide of Charlottesville came as a discomfort. Over white tablecloths I accepted drinks from men who wouldn't make eye contact with me. In taxis, I continued to initiate one-sided conversations. I'd ramble, punctuated by concise and courteous replies, and I was too green to guess at what I wasn't being told or how I was being perceived.

Everybody walked to school. Except if it snowed or it rained real hard, my mother would get a taxi. We would get in, and then as many of the neighborhood kids as could would pile in. They

just knew to come over. We'd ride to school on top of each other.

—Priscilla Whiting

The neighborhood around the school was basically residential. This was called Vinegar Hill. The pool hall was here. We used to play pool. We weren't supposed to, but we would shoot pool.

—William Gilmore

Alexandria Searls is a photographer and filmmaker. She also teaches Media Production at the University of Virginia. She is a co-founder of Citizens for Jefferson School.

On community...

All the neighbors knew your parents and the parents knew the teachers, and if you did anything that you shouldn't do at school, word got home before you did. A lot of our teachers were members of the same bridge club that our mother belonged to. You didn't get away with anything much because every neighbor was your parent and as we said, everyone felt free to correct you if they saw you doing something you shouldn't be doing.

—Frances Coles Wood

We lived at Sixth and Brown, and the school was off Fifth Street. Sometimes it wasn't too convenient when you wanted to stroll home with your friends and stay out a long time, because you were expected to be in the house after school within five minutes of the time school let out. So you couldn't play very long.

—Ruth Coles Harris

All the teachers knew your parents and the parents knew the teachers, and if you did anything that you shouldn't do at school, word got home before you did. You...you didn't want that to get home.

—Frances Coles Wood

The White fraternity and sorority members also lived in a culture foreign to me, one that mandated wearing a shade of lime green that I had never before seen in a garment. Parties revealed pink wrap-around skirts, plump whales on belts, and shiny gold add-a-beads. It was nothing to do with beauty, so I decided that it was tribal, a sign of membership in a group whose ethos was somewhat mystifying. As for the necklaces, boy and girl knew the exact monetary value per bead. Long strands impressed. I am gold and fluorescent, therefore correct. Hand me a drink. You can spill it on my Docksidiers—they're made for the wet.

Town got subsumed by gown, and it wasn't until after the working world and graduate school that I learned of the demolition of the African American neighborhood of Vinegar Hill. In 1996, I saw the documentary film "West Main Street" by Reid Oechslin and Chris Farina. It showed photographs of the old churches and homes, as well as the area after the leveling. A place I had come to love turned out to have done this devastating thing in the name of urban renewal. I had seen the divide, but missed the depth of the fault line. It felt like a trust betrayed, the kind of trust you have in a neighborhood and the faces you see everyday.

Town began to surface as gown grew mustier in the trunk. By this time Charlottesville wasn't as slow and Southern as it used to be. Sometimes you even got honked at right when the light turned green. The smoked ham store was gone from the Downtown Mall. University Cafeteria's spoon bread was a happy memory. And you couldn't rent a farmhouse and twenty acres for \$400 anymore—at least, not easily.

Jefferson School was discussed in "West Main Street," but I missed the words. Then in May 2000 the name found a home with me. As a Democratic volunteer I picked up an African-American woman to take her to the polls. She was seventy or so, with a house on Paoli or Anderson. She got into the back seat of my station wagon, her neat suit and shoes in marked contrast to the car's casual disarray. I asked her where the polls were for her precinct. "At Jefferson School," she said. "Where's that?" I asked. "You don't know Jefferson School!" she exclaimed. "How could you not know Jefferson School?" She told me the directions as we went: through the tunnel to West Main Street, left on Fourth.

Jefferson School Oral History Publication • "An Experience of Jefferson School"

Of course it turned out that I had seen the building countless times. From its side I had found it massive and utilitarian, a fortress wall of red brick. I remembered that I had once attended a Darden Business School dance in Carver Recreation, feeling the nostalgic awkwardness of socializing in a gym. But mostly I had noticed Jefferson School as I drove here and there—it was a rectangle that my car passed by.

The woman headed to the gym, past leaflets and signs. Ready to wait, I parked the car, taking in the Democratic table on the left, the Republican area to the right, and the strip of sidewalk between. Local politics were new to me. Until this council race—and the events leading up to it—only politicians Tom Vandever, John Conover, and Kay Slaughter had existed for me, people to smile at and admire from a distance, shyly. For twenty years I had never heard of the Meadowcreek Parkway. When I first saw a sketch of the road in the *C'ville Review* I gave the lanes a glance then turned the page. "That looks like one of those roads they never build," I thought. "Why waste time reading about it?"

Now in 2000 I was battling the road and other changes—historic houses coming down, green space to be filled. The loss of architectural treasures was scattered and piecemeal... on West Main Street, the small structures extant since Jefferson, then the building where Back Alley Disc used to be, then the blue houses... Instead of a large scale leveling like Vinegar Hill it was a bit by bit collapse, character squelched in pockets, a beloved town changing by committee. With a one-party council, it seemed as if the power of the Democratic Party was being wielded in many different ways, and that to stop the loss I needed to join the decision-making process that selected candidates. Nip things in the bud, so to speak, if those politicians could be considered flowers.

The Meadowcreek Parkway would intersect two places particularly dear to me, the last farm on Rio Road, and the Vietnam Dogwood Memorial in McIntire Park. Green would turn to asphalt, beauty into pavement and exhaust. I saw the park as the heart of the city, a heart that would be severed. Soon, however, I saw that heart as already severed—in the racial divide, in the history of Vinegar Hill and the earlier history of McIntire Park and Washington Park.

All the neighbors knew your parents. In fact the people who lived fifteen blocks away or closer knew your parents. And they did not mind correcting you if you needed correction.

—Bernadine Coles Gines

Even when I was working, I had a certain time to go home. My mother and father always said, "You be home at a certain time."

And heaven help you if you weren't.

—William Gilmore

On activities at Jefferson School...

One thing I remember is in May we would have this exercise, and we would have May Day. We would wrap the May Pole. What would happen is, the girls would be given a color and the mothers would go to the store and buy the crepe paper. And make you a crepe paper dress. Then the strip that you had to tie the May Pole with, that was the same color as your dress. My mother used to take a slip and put this paper on it. And ruffle it up. The boys all wore paper sashes.

—Priscilla Whiting

In the early years anybody who wanted to sing could sing. You could be in the Glee Club. But then it got to be an audition, and they got very good. Every year we would go to music festivals. Those were things you looked forward to. We'd go and compete with the other schools in the state. And we always won a ribbon, always.

—Helen Sanders

The principal always gave out the diplomas.

Someone was always roasted.

—William Gilmore

A lot of people would come to the football games just to see the band.

—Priscilla Whiting

Paul McIntire gave the larger park to the White population of Charlottesville, the much smaller park to the Black population. Can anything unequivocally good come out of inequality, even out of unequal gifts? The recipients of the smaller portion lose, but then, ironically, the recipients of the larger portion also lose—they divide the land, and divide it again, and bitterly argue over what remains, an argument that is an appropriate legacy to separate and unfair.

My passenger finished voting, and we left Jefferson School. The next time I heard of it was in the Fall of 2001, in City Council Chambers. I listened as council discussed a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the school. The RFP would be sent out; developers would answer. Jefferson was to be closed to students.

In the front rows a fair-sized group of older African-American women each took turns addressing the issue. They were speaking from the heart, and most of council seemed to be speaking solely from the head, and the disconnect sounded in the vocal tones: the gulf between sweet and dry, hopes and a ledger sheet.

One woman came late and out of breath. "I was lying in bed when I heard you talking about Jefferson School on the television. I jumped up and ran over here. I just had to speak about Jefferson School."

That was when I made the decision to get involved, when I heard the caring and felt the weight of a nearly lost cause. I had seen my own favorite places go, at least on paper. Maybe it would be easier now, taking on a cause that wasn't my own.

I suggested to Nancy O'Brien, a former mayor of Charlottesville, that we call a meeting. We arranged for it to happen at the Jefferson-Madison Regional Library. We ran a notice in the paper: come talk about the future of Jefferson School. The attendance was extraordinary. We sat in the Jefferson Room in a circle, then a second circle grew. We listened to people make

personal testimony about Jefferson School and about Vinegar Hill. It was an amazing experience. There was a magnetic crackle in the room, like faith rekindling.

We weren't the only group organizing. Jefferson Alumni had met earlier that day. At least a few people from their meeting joined us in the Jefferson Room. There was some reserve between people, but also openness—openness and reserve in each person as we went around the circles introducing ourselves.

Afterwards Eugene Williams came up to me. He said that it was no accident that the meeting had happened in that room. That was the room where Judge Paul ordered desegregation. The library had been a courthouse in another incarnation. This meeting in the library was the beginning of Citizens for Jefferson School.

My experience in Charlottesville race relations had started in the taxi as a passenger, then had gone to being the driver of a voter, then to sitting on a bench in council chambers behind a group of women. The seats were always separated, the distance palpable yet unmeasurable. With the meeting in the library, the seats had come together. No one was over there. We were all here.

The first growth of Citizens was one of the most exciting times of my life. I met so many wonderful people. Black, White, young, old, men and women: there was a balance in the membership, and it was the first time I had worked on a project with equal representation between the races. I was often in the company of my elders. At forty, it was thrilling for me to be in a group of vital women in their 60s, 70s, and 80s, women with decades more experience in public speaking and service, women educated at Jefferson School to be active members of a community. Jefferson School had prepared them for life, while much of my own education had prepared me for tests. I stumbled in public while they moved with grace. Watching grace was a blessing.

The current parking lot was always the playground. The May Day exercises were out there. The May Day pole would be out in the yard.

Before they put the addition on, they used to put the seats out there. It was really the elementary school that did the May Day exercises. Each class would have a presentation, the wrapping of the May Pole. There would be outdoor volleyball. All kinds of games. Sack races. All those kinds of things you identify with May Day.

—Florence Bryant

Mr. Paige, the band teacher, he had us marching in those spirals that came back out, and working at night. He dreamed up the idea of putting a light on the hats, and cutting the stadium lights and having the band march in these formations. And it was breathtaking I'm sure. He saw ahead of what we were doing. He dreamed.

—Mary Inge

I used to belong to the Glee Club. I also belonged to the Drama Class. There were several plays that we did. We used to do them all the time. We used to have an activity night. We used to have shows. It was a very active school. Parents were always involved in the activities.

—William Gilmore

Football

My father was very active in the sports program at Jefferson because my brothers played football. In the early years to get a football team, my grandmother—Nannie Cox Jackson—pretty much got it underway. And my father provided transportation in an open truck because they could not afford to rent a bus in those early days. My grandmother recruited the coach and a doctor. They obtained most of the early uniforms from the left-over things at the University of Virginia. We always walked to Wine Cellar field for practice. Have you heard of Wine Cellar field? It's behind Lane High School further down that way. It was a "marvelous" tract of land with many bumps and holes. Later, of course, we went to Washington Park to play.

—Teresa Jackson Price

My brother played professional football. He played for Jefferson. He and I talk... we often say, you know, you got to professional football and Jefferson School didn't even have a stadium. They didn't have anything. His name was Roosevelt Brown. They called him Rosie.

—Lyria Hailstork

We got to know each other: alumni, preservationists, and advocates for the preschool currently in the building. I'll never forget alumna Priscilla Whiting, on oxygen, yet dragging her tank and tubes cheerfully along with her to all the meetings we held or attended. Priscilla was right in the middle of everything we attempted.

The School Board would soon be voting on a transfer of the school's deed to City Council, and we began to lobby them to retain the deed and to preserve the educational legacy of Jefferson School. We didn't succeed, but once the deed was transferred, Citizens for Jefferson determined to negotiate with the city. A badly attended public process had happened before; a new, more representational one was needed. We met in Jefferson School, in the old library room on the top floor, and we talked about our different hopes, hopes that didn't involve the housing that the Request for Proposals seemed to have in mind.

We discussed the history. The educational legacy of the school stretched back to an earlier Jefferson for freed slaves not far from the current Jefferson School. There was also a grade school named Jefferson where the school parking lot now was. The current building, Charlottesville's first African-American high school, came after years of Black students having to leave Charlottesville—and family and friends—to complete their secondary education.

My view of desegregation as desirable hadn't included the fact that so many talented and dedicated Black educators were let go during the process, or that there would be unequal treatment of students in the same school. There was an educational loss even in the progress of civil rights legislation.

I found out about events and a timeline that kept shifting my view of Virginia. Massive Resistance, the state's pledge to segregation, led to school closings that lasted for years in one county. Later, in 1970, while I was in grade school in Ohio, not imagining that segregation still existed, Virginia was still struggling with its race laws.

Finally, desegregation sent Jefferson's students to Lane High School, but the story didn't end there. Jefferson went on to house all the integrated sixth grades of the city, then the preschool for at-risk kids and an adult education center for English as a Second Language and other programs. The preschool was predominantly Black, and this was a source of contention. Was it a form of segregation? Shouldn't the students be integrated into the elementary schools? As for me, I saw a happy place where children of all races were growing and learning with dedicated teachers. One of the preschool teachers was a member of the Inge family who had owned a grocery store in the Vinegar Hill neighborhood not far from the school. The grocery was gone, but the building still stood, a last remnant.

At the time I began thinking of the council race coming up. I had thought about running for two years, wondering how I could change the pro-growth course Charlottesville seemed to be on. It was Jefferson School that cinched it. I felt carried by the momentum.

The competition for the Democratic nomination brought Jefferson School to the forefront. I wrote the Washington Post—and even they sent a reporter down to weigh in. The article wasn't completely accurate, but it reinforced how significant Jefferson School was, even nationally, a legacy of education that reached from slavery to the Civil Rights Movement to what was to be the last operational day of the preschool and the classes for recent immigrants.

While I sought the nomination, I heard that some people were saying that I was using Jefferson School to get elected, that I didn't really care. No one accused me directly. I'd hear from one person that they heard another person say they heard it. Gossip was a town of mirrors, people describing someone else's image of you while they themselves held the curved or broken mirror. You return the favor to the one you think responsible, or to someone else, and the mistrust and anger grows. It takes a while to realize that the mirror itself is the evil, even when it reveals a view that someone actually held.

After the games my grandmother would feed both teams—the Jefferson team and the opponent. So that was a big thing. And I was very popular because all the girls wanted me to ask my grandmother if they could be waitresses. I never got to go to the football games before she retired because the family always went to help her get the meals.

—Teresa Jackson Price

We used to have dances after football games. At the barn [at Washington Park]. We played on the lower level and the barn was up on the hill.

--Elizabeth Minor, Jefferson School graduate

I played football. We practiced on the field just off of Preston Avenue. The team was named the Red Devils.

—DuBois Johnson

I played baseball and football. We played against Dunbar in Lynchburg, and Addison in Roanoke, Maggie Walker Armstrong in Richmond, Peabody in Petersburg, as well as schools in Alexandria and Lexington. We had red uniforms with black trim. We practiced and competed on Wine Cellar field and later at Washington Park.

—Clarence Jones, Jefferson School graduate

We had the best football team around.

—William Gilmore

If there was a football game or a basketball game, then all of the community would participate in it because that was probably the only thing happening at that particular time. So it was a real wholesome time in history.

—Rudolph Goffney

Since at that time most Virginia cities had only one Black high school, we had to travel from city to city for sports competitions. We would go to places like Richmond, Roanoke, or Lynchburg. We would go to a city, play a game and return the same day. At that time, there were no places that Blacks could stay over night. You couldn't stay in any of the hotels or motels because the owners and the laws of the state did not permit it. In fact, you couldn't use a "White's only" restroom or take a drink at the water fountain; things were very, very different then than they are now.

—Rudolph Goffney

Racial tension reflected off the mirrors, glancing from sources hard to identify. Even talking about the Black vote bothered me. Was there a White vote—or many different White people voting different ways?

Citizens for Jefferson School kept moving. A lot of our efforts went to reaching out to the public. Since I had been ignorant of the history, I knew there was a need for education, even for people who had lived in Charlottesville a long time. Citizens for Jefferson School worked on a Back to School Day, an exhibition, and the Jefferson School Oral History. I helped with a Martin Luther King Day parade that stopped at Jefferson School. There was a Festival of the Book reader's theater event, and, most recently, two Vinegar Hill Film Festival programs. Barbara Myer organized a Day of Caring for people to take care of the school grounds. Helena Devereaux helped accomplish an historic marker. Kenneth Martin designed and operated a website. And these weren't all of the efforts.

Being in Jefferson School was so peaceful. You didn't hear the outside world. The building began to look beautiful to me. The children inside were beautiful.

After I got the nomination, and after I lost the council race, I spent a month at the school filming. I also became a member of the Jefferson Task Force. The Task Force lasted a year and a half. When the Task Force convened, Citizens for Jefferson stopped meeting as much.

The Task Force was time-consuming and often conflictual. Sometimes I was part of the conflict, sometimes I wasn't. I felt obligated to stand up for or against certain language, especially since two of the facilitators didn't inspire my trust. I found them condescending; I felt that they interviewed in order to label and that previous contracts with the City made their direction suspect. The results of the Task Force were satisfactory, though. The members had open minds, and there was facilitation skill among us that made up for what was lacking in the paid associates. I would have liked a stronger community outreach component (to use governmental language), but the final report was fine. Before the report was issued, the Jefferson Alumni had endorsed the idea of a public library at Jefferson School. Priscilla Whiting pre-

sented the endorsement at a Task Force community meeting. The Task Force report ended up recommending a public library as one preferred scenario.

A library would continue Jefferson's educational legacy, and Jefferson would fulfill, in brick as well as books, a library's mission to preserve and distribute an archive of history and knowledge. We now have to overcome some of the obstacles to the idea, and I hope that we can find the community will to make the transition happen. One library had been a courthouse, now a school could be a library: uses shifting with a common thread—the education and bringing together of a community of all races.

SEVENTH ANNUAL OPERETTA

A PRESENTATION BY

The Mixed Glee Club

of

Jefferson High School

"THE BELLE OF BARCELONA"

A MUSICAL COMEDY IN THREE ACTS



THURSDAY, JANUARY 13th, 1949

8:30 P. M.

Operettas

I can remember the plays and how we enjoyed being together. We took our Operetta Lilawalla down to Newport News to perform, and we thought we were big stuff then.

—Charlie Rogers, Jefferson School graduate

We used to put on Operettas and they were fantastic. We did one called "Lilawalla," and another called "The Belle of Barcelona."

—Elizabeth Minor

I think about the Operettas we used to have in the auditorium and the makeshift stage curtains that looked like bed sheets pulled on a string or a rope so that you couldn't see backstage.

And how much fun we used to have rehearsing for those operettas, and all the beautiful costumes that we used to have.

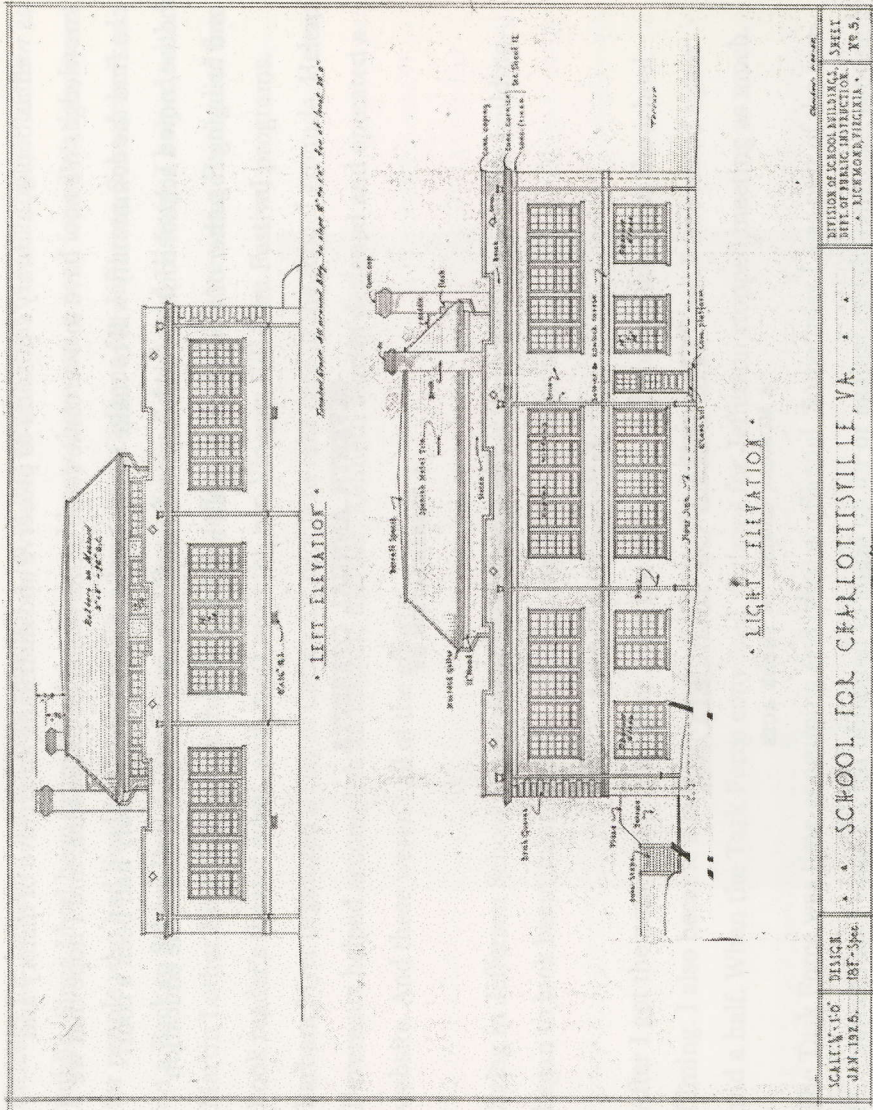
—Ruth Coles Harris

Of course I was in the operettas!

—Priscilla Whiting

Left:

Operetta program.
Photocopy provided by Elizabeth Minor.



Elevation of the Jefferson High School, part of the architectural plans developed in 1925.

The City of Charlottesville's Stewardship of Jefferson School

By Rochelle D. Small-Toney

The first publicly constructed school for people of color in Charlottesville, Virginia was the Jefferson Colored Graded/Elementary School. Built in 1894, three decades following the Emancipation Proclamation and sixty years prior to the United States Supreme Court Brown vs. Board of Education decision that declared separate but equal public education facilities "inherently unequal."

One of the earliest documentation of local government actions that responded to the need to provide elementary education to "colored" children of Charlottesville is the April 26, 1893 minutes of the Charlottesville School Board. The Board used surplus funds from the expansion of the Midway School, the local elementary school for White students to construct a "brick schoolhouse for the colored." This desire became a reality on January 27, 1894 when the School Board acquired land in the heart of Vinegar Hill, an established African American enclave on Toole's Hill on the far eastern portion of the hill facing Fourth Street NW for the construction of a school. The October 22, 1894 School Board minutes record the Belmont Building and Construction Company as the contractor for the project. And by 1894 the State Superintendent of Public Instruction's Biennial Report (1894-95) lists the Jefferson Colored Graded/Elementary School on Commerce Street with six grades and six teachers. The school later expanded to eighth grade.

The need and community desire for public education for colored children rapidly grew beyond the early successes of Jefferson Colored Graded/Elementary School. Local ministers from the pulpits of Mount Zion First African Baptist Church, First Baptist Church, Zion Union Baptist Church, Ebenezer Baptist Church and Trinity Episcopal Church kept alive the

Rochelle D. Small-Toney was appointed Assistant City Manager for the City of Charlottesville, Virginia in 1999. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1978 from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a Master of Public Administration degree in 1981 from the same institution. She serves as a lead city staff liaison to the Jefferson School project.

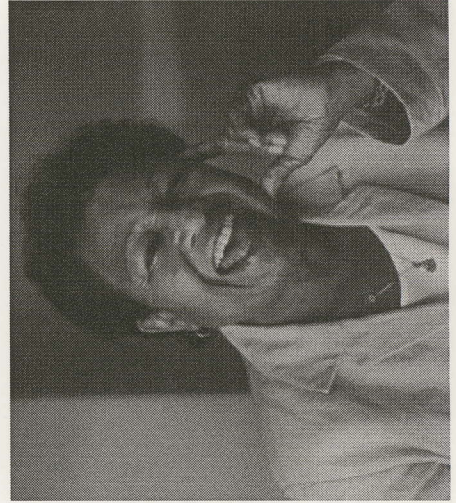
On keeping Jefferson School alive...

It should remain standing, as representative of something we're proud of. We're proud of the fact that it was the first Black high school in the city of Charlottesville and it shouldn't be torn down. It should be soundly restored and used in some capacity!

—Theodore Inge, Jr.

The on-going fight has been to keep Jefferson School and bring the building alive because that's all we have left. There's nothing left of the neighborhood. You know from the bottom of Vinegar Hill all the way up to Inge's Store was Black owned. All the way down from Main Street to Preston Avenue was Black owned.

—Ida Lewis, one of the co-founders of the Jefferson School Alumni Reunion Committee



furor of obtaining education through the eleventh grade for the colored children of Charlottesville. Eighty-six citizens signed and presented a petition imploring the School Board to construct a high school for all grades up to the eleventh.

After two land acquisitions on Fifth Street NW in 1924, the New Jefferson High School was built on the corner of Commerce and Fifth Streets adjacent to Jefferson Graded School. The new high school contained ten classrooms, an auditorium and cafeteria. This was the first opportunity for Charlottesville's African American children to receive a secondary education without leaving the community.

As the student population increased, Jefferson High School was expanded in 1939 as a PWA project. Most notably, this addition also housed the "colored library" branch until 1948 when the libraries were integrated. Another expansion in 1958 Jefferson added the much needed Carver Recreation Center that included a school gymnasium and community recreation facilities. Old Jefferson Graded School was demolished in 1959.

Jefferson High School and Carver Recreation Center were the center of African American educational, social and cultural life on "the Hill". In 1951 Jefferson High School reverted back to an elementary school after city and county African American high school aged students were moved to the Burley High School. In later years beginning in 1964 Jefferson School ushered in the desegregation of Charlottesville's public schools. It served the City public school system as an elementary school until 1992 through periods of newly constructed schools. At the center of the city Jefferson School was home to the city's centralized pre-school intervention program and a variety of community based education programs for adults from 1994 through 2002. Although Jefferson School closed June 2002 as a multi-service center, Carver Recreation Center continues to operate.

Left:

Ida Lewis, 2004.
Photography by Alexandria Searls

Urban renewal in Charlottesville in the 60s, 70s and 80s reordered and changed forever the areas surrounding downtown. Very few businesses, homes and establishments in the African American settlement of Vinegar Hill survived the renewal. Now, strategically located within a commercial corridor, between the Downtown Pedestrian Mall, West Main Street as it approaches the University of Virginia, the Jefferson School site prominently borders the fringe of the Starr Hill residential neighborhood. It is the largest publicly held parcel of land that is part of the former Vinegar Hill.

The importance to the community of preserving Jefferson School and revitalizing it's long-standing public use, balanced against the economic and housing growth opportunities the site presented prompted the City Economic Development Department to retained the services of the Torti Gallis firm to develop guidelines and concepts for the potential redevelopment of the site in February 2001. After further consideration by the community and City Council it was determined that a mixed use of commercial and housing was not a viable redevelopment solution.

After years of study, discussions between the School Board, City Council and the public on the future needs of a growing population of pre-school children, the School Board was faced with the decision to either extensively renovate Jefferson School and retain the preschool on site or decentralize and establish preschools at the six elementary schools. At the January 27, 2002 meeting the Charlottesville School Board voted 4-3 in favor of relocating the preschool and adult education programs that had been housed in Jefferson since 1994 and transferred the deed for building and site to the City of Charlottesville.

City Council by Resolution formally accepted the deed for Jefferson School on February 19, 2002. The minutes of this meeting record the following excerpts from an agreed upon statement by City Council read by then Mayor Blake Caravati.

"Tonight we unanimously approved the acceptance of the deed to the Jefferson School property. Council does not take this action lightly, for we recognize the responsibility that comes

That is my school, you know, and even now when I am asked to be on boards, and to apply for things, they want to know what did you do, where did you come from, what is your background? Well, what do I say? I attended Jefferson School in Charlottesville, Virginia. I'm a graduate of Jefferson High School.

—Mary Inge

I can see in this reunion the cohesiveness of the people. I think it is just tremendous that they are able to do this, and the excitement they have, and all of the energy that they are putting into these reunions.

—Janice Rogers

When I come down, it's sometimes just for a short trip. I always drive around, drive by to see if the outside looks like the shrubby and the grass looks attractive, like it's being preserved and well kept.

—DuBois Johnson

It's a tremendous thing to come to the reunions.

Sometimes you come and see a person you haven't seen for forty years, or fifty years. That's just tremendous. It's an experience that you have to live long enough to do! So, that's a

tremendous thing in itself.

—Rudolph Goffney

I see the Jefferson School building as the last monument to education in the Black community.

I would like to see it retained as a museum/archive where the records, artifacts, and history of the Black educational experience can be stored and exhibited.

—Rudolph Goffney

I know I won't be around nearly as long as I would like. And no one else with the experiences will be around. So you're going to need reminders of those things when you don't have the people around to tell others what happened. So for that reason, not just for Blacks, but for all people... because if people don't learn what happened, they'll never know why or how, or how to prevent it from happening again.

—Rudolph Goffney

I really do want my children to see it, or hear about it.

—Lyria Hailstork

The first time we had our reunion, people hadn't been to Charlottesville in Oh! 30 years or something. And they came back, and then some of them decided to move back. We had the first one, it must have been, in the early 1990s.

—Priscilla Whiting

with ownership of this unique property. This Council, individually and collectively, understands that we are stewards of the building's future, but also of its legacy and to the memories of those who were educated there. ... Our hope is to go beyond the preservation of Jefferson, to it being a palace of celebration that brings the community together around the history of the African American community in Charlottesville, to Vinegar Hill and to the unique history of Jefferson School."

In February 2002 the Steering Committee of the Citizens for Jefferson School, a local based community organization devoted to the preservation of Jefferson School's building and site as a historical landmark lead by Mrs. Grace Tinsley urged City Council to delay issuing a Request For Proposal to solicit public/private partnerships in developing the site. The Steering Committee also asked that a Task Force of citizens be appointed to study the potential future uses of the building and site. On April 1, 2002 City Council approved the CFJS proposal for a community process that would be led by a City Council appointed sixteen member task force representative of various expertise and interests within the community. Thirteen guiding principles were also approved by City Council to provide guidance to the task force. Of great importance to the community and Council, the Task Force was directed to explore the advantages and disadvantages of state and national historic designation of the property, the use of historic tax credits for redevelopment purposes, and the preservation and presentation of the historical and cultural heritage of African Americans and the Vinegar Hill community that attended Jefferson School or lived within its midst.

Members appointed by City Council on May 20, 2002 to the Task Force were Bitsy Waters, Teresa Price, Lelia Brown, Nancy O'Brien, Mary Reese, Patricia Edwards, Rick Turner, Ned Michie, Craig Barton, Peter McIntosh, Kenneth Martin, Noah Schwartz, Jackie Taylor, Alexandria Searls, Frank Stoner and Sue Lewis. Council retained the firms of Mary Means and Associates and Kweli Consulting to facilitate and assist the Task Force in the planning process. In the adopted 2003-2007 Capital Improvement Plan City Council also set aside \$1.5

million for the repair, maintenance, study and future development of Jefferson School. Stabilization of the windows and doors is currently underway.

The Task Force began its work on September 30, 2002. The work of the Task Force culminated after eighteen months of study and community input with a final report to City Council on January 20, 2004. The final report recommended to City Council three development scenarios for the building:

- 1) Jefferson Library and Cultural Center with the Jefferson Madison Regional Library as a central anchor of the development;
- 2) Jefferson Learning and Community Center with a full daycare center as a tenant anchor;
- 3) Jefferson Multipurpose Center that provides a one-stop center for adult education, job training and employment services as the tenant anchor.

The Task Force also recommended Carver Recreation Center continues serving the neighborhood and community as a recreation center after undergoing extensive renovation as a separate project by the City of Charlottesville and that the center be included in the historic designation processes. Although tasked with developing options for the land surrounding the school, the Task Force could not reach agreement on the type of development, i.e. housing, commercial, if any at all should occur on the property.

At the June 16, 2004 the City was notified by the State Board of Historic Resources that the Preliminary Information Form was recommended to advance to the nomination process. The City has also retained the services of a tax credit expert to assist in developing the future oversight entities related to a public/private redevelopment and to guide the City through the redevelopment process.

It is the goal of the City, with the help, guidance and support of the larger community to redevelop Jefferson School and Carver Recreation Center and to bring honor to its legacy of African American primary and secondary education, and cultural/recreational affairs during

What a city chooses to commemorate, memorialize, says a great deal about what a city values and what sort of place it aspires to be. Jefferson is important for two principle reasons for me. It's the site where a group of people who lived in America but were denied their rights and opportunities took greater control of their own lives through the form of education... The other aspect that's so important is that it's the site where Charlottesville moved towards fulfilling the promise of this country. It's the place where we came together as a community, a whole complete community, for the first time. All little eleven year olds and twelve year olds came together at this one place and spent time together and learned together, both in the classroom and just by being there.

—David Saunier

It's important to me that Jefferson be recognized, the symbolism that is the preservation and the recognition is important. Communities construct statuary to commemorate events. We see Lewis and Clark statues, the commemoration of fearless exploration, which is a worthy value. To me Jefferson is a monument to the city living out its promise of being an inclusive community.

—David Saunier



David Saunier, student of integrated sixth grade at Jefferson School.
Photography by Alexandria Searls

segregation, it's role in the desegregation of Charlottesville public schools, and as the center for advancing preschool and adult education in the later years of operation. With continued guidance and support from the community, alumni, and preservationists Jefferson School will return its tradition of public service to the entire community of Charlottesville.

Thoughts on Jefferson School and Recollections about the Creation of Citizens for Jefferson School

by Nancy K. O'Brien

Thinking back, my first encounter with Jefferson was when we first moved here and my oldest daughter started her journey through the school system in the sixth grade. Having come from an integrated system, I was not fully aware of the importance of Jefferson School. I had missed (not sadly) the closing of schools in Virginia. What I remember most vividly was that the principal, Mrs. Garrett, knew every child's name within a week. I was just amazed at her grasp of the school and the students and the general attitude toward learning that existed in the school—it was so thick you could feel it. My older son followed two years later and his experience at Jefferson still stands out as a most memorable year for him. It was so for many of his friends.

Jefferson then left my consciousness as the new schools opened and it was no longer the city's sixth grade. Until—Alexandria Searls started nagging me about the school. She had learned from Priscilla Whiting and the preschool teachers about the imminent closing of the school. Rumors were flying about the future uses of the school. Somewhere there was talk about Chuck Lewis buying it and making into a conference center. At another time it was proposed to put the UVA soccer arena in that spot and Vinegar Hill. That was put to rest fairly quickly. Developers were eyeing the building and site. While I was not here during Vinegar Hill's clearing, I was part of a City Council that made efforts to rebuild on the vacant land. The scars of clearing were still evident. I had seen similar results in New Haven, my previous residence. Try as I might, it was impossible to get the votes to put housing back on the site. The Housing Authority owned the land and operated as a separate entity. So, City Council took over the Authority, and then we did see some development occur. Unfortunately, it was never done in a way that recreated the positive aspects of the Black economic and community

Nancy O'Brien is a founding member of Citizens for Jefferson School, and served as the city of Charlottesville's first woman mayor.

Jefferson Pre-School Center

Jefferson had eight classrooms of four year olds, and five classrooms of preschool special education children. We were in the centermost portion of the building, but there were other programs in the building at the time. A recreation program, a seniors program, Piedmont Virginia Community College, an Even Start Program, Adult Education, etc. The building was constantly in use. It was the most used school building that I've seen.

The teachers of the integrated preschool appreciated being together and having a focus because they were relatively isolated in the elementary schools where they were before, particularly the pre-school special education children. And the teachers started to see lots of opportunities by us being in the building together. There were obstacles that we overcame, unifying the whole school by having room symbols of natural things they each picked. Then we had flags hung with those symbols outside the classrooms, and the symbols painted on the wall of the playground. The symbols became a classroom identity for the children. The school song too, sung to the tune of "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands," incorporated each room symbol with "We've got the whales from the ocean at Jefferson..." so they each had felt a part of the whole school. We had school assemblies once a month where every-

structure that had existed on the Hill. Only Inge's store remained viable. I recall Inge's as an old fashioned place, dark and cool inside, with Mr. Inge sharing wisdom and gossip with customers.

Back to Alex and the school. The parents in the preschool were up in arms and trying to save the school. The Jefferson Alumni had been up in arms for even longer. Preservation Piedmont had been trying to get the school designated as a National Historic site for several years. Small groups of citizens were meeting in living rooms to seek ways of saving the school. One of the City's consultants, Torti-Gallas, added the school to the study of corridors that was underway. Workshops were held. Dots were placed on lists to depict what one supported or didn't support. I started going to community meetings. I attended the School Board meetings. I was appalled at the deaf ears turned to the pleas of the citizens who spoke out for the school. This was a group of people who were pleading from the heart. And they were being ignored—too emotional, I guess. I talked with Grace Tinsley, Teresa Price, Nancy Gercke, Kenneth Martin, and many others. I put red spots on what I didn't like and green spots on what I wanted to see along with many others. I learned the schools were not integrated but desegregated and I haven't used the former word since. Each step along the way in life one learns something or becomes more acutely aware of something and I was certainly learning.

There was some urgency in moving ahead. Community organizing was something I had experience in doing. We gathered a small group together that included alumni, preschool parents and, in some cases, children, preservationists and any other group known to be discussing the future of the school. We decided to hold a public meeting in the Jefferson Madison Library downtown. Emails flew, many fingers dialed phone numbers, and letters were sent, a press release was issued, School Board members, and City Councilors were invited. About 110 people filled the upstairs room. We sat in a large circle in the room and had to add a concentric circle in order to accommodate everyone. The room buzzed. We all looked at, talked, and listened to each other—what did Jefferson School mean to us? Who were we? We were and still are the people who remember when—Black and White, alumni, former students and their

parents, civil rights activists, teachers—we all shared our stories. Gradually the room full of individuals became one, ready to move as a body—Black and White, young and old, male and female. Black and White, we shared ownership of the school and it's meaning in our lives. I have never participated in a meeting like that one anywhere in my life. I was in tears at the end of the evening, it was so moving. From football to discipline to music to favorite and/or most fearsome teachers and principles, we remembered together. Experiences from being a student, a teacher, an alum were shared—some people had all three, some just listened in awe and respect as we heard each other's stories. Segregation and desegregation recollections were shared.

That night we all agreed an organization that included everyone would be important in reaching our goals of preserving the school. Our first goal was to preserve the school building. Secondly, we wanted to continue the educational use of the building. We felt strongly the preschool should stay and continue to be a central place where early learning took place and where teachers could support each other and weave a strong program.

The new group named itself Citizens for Jefferson School. With leadership from Amy Hill, Kenneth Martin, Alexandria Searls, Teresa Price, Grace Tinsley, Priscilla Whiting, David Saunier, and Barbara Myer, and many others the organization developed by-laws, elected officers, developed a strategic plan, became incorporated and gained 501-c-3 status. CFJS partnered with the Alumni, Preservation Jefferson, pre-school parents, and Preservation Piedmont to educate the City Council about the depth of concern about the school. CFJS asked Council to delay decisions on the future uses of the school; it advocated leaving the preschool at Jefferson, along with Adult Education, and English as a Second Language. Barbara Myer partnered CFJS with the United Way Larry Richardson Day of Caring and community volunteers weeded, pruned and planted bulbs around the school. Alexandria Searls and Amy Hill prepared a visual exhibit of the past and present that was exhibited at the Downtown Visitors Center and in several schools. CFJS eventually asked for creation of a Task Force and the hiring of a facilitator to bring together a community consensus and to propose preferred future uses of the building and site. The Task Force was established, Citizens for Jefferson School saw many of its members appointed to the Task Force and

body came together, sang our school song, and had cultural events.

The advantages included the big rooms with big windows, a space for a playground, and a huge gym. Then we had the blacktop area within the fence that we could have all of our wheeled toys.

That alone made other preschool people very envious about Jefferson. It was a wonderful place to walk into in the morning when all the kids got off the buses, they would be looking at books, they'd be carrying on conversations with each other... it had a very joyous spirit. And in the summertime, we had summer preschool there. About half the school was there at that time for the summer program. We had Camp Jefferson with a pretend pond and fishing and a tent for camping. The courtyard became a really wonderful place. I hadn't seen anything quite like it before.

To people from the outside that would come in and see heavily Black classrooms of children, it could look, I think, to people that this was a return to the old segregated Jefferson. But in fact, there again, that was an opportunity for us to make this a model school, to show that we could have this kind of a place, be put in a deteriorated building, and make it a place that was envied by many people in the community.

—Nancy Gercke, co-director
centralized pre-school

I feel like the Jefferson School has a soul and spirit of its own.

—Nancy Gercke



Nancy Gercke, May 2004.
Photograph by Liz Sargent

moved into a monitoring mode as the study proceeded. CFJS assisted the Task Force in outreach to encourage people to attend the public input sessions of the Task Force. Venable students shared their ideas for future uses.

Citizens for Jefferson School made a difference in the expansion of dialogue about Jefferson School. Decisions are yet to come about CFJS's future and the future of the school itself.

CFJS has supported one proposal from the Task Force—the creation of a Cultural Heritage Center. It is the sharing of the experiences of the people who remember that I hope to see in a Cultural Heritage Center, along with the important dates, memorabilia, and trophies. I hope future generations can experience the joy, pain, wonder, and exhilaration of being part of the history of people who love and have loved this special place. As a pivotal site for educating African Americans newly freed from slavery, to the dismantling of school segregation, Jefferson School stands as a local reminder of things past, and possibilities yet to come.

Jefferson School Chronology

ca. 1865-9

First Jefferson School established by Anna Gardner, a schoolteacher near the Baptist Church along West Main Street.

early 1870s

Segregated public schools established in Charlottesville. "Jefferson," a nine-room school located near the corner of Seventh and Main, provides elementary level education to the city's Black children. A public school for White children established along Garrett Street.

1894

Jefferson Graded or Public School for Black children constructed along Fourth Street, NW. Midway School for White children constructed along Ridge and West Main Street. The Midway School includes grades 1-12, the Jefferson Graded School grades 1-6. Charlottesville's families that desired and could afford additional education for their children were forced to send them to private boarding schools or to live with friends or relatives whose communities offered additional opportunities.

1896

Supreme Court established doctrine of "separate but equal" in Plessy vs. Ferguson, providing a legal basis for segregated educational facilities.

1924-25

Construction of new Jefferson High School building along Commerce Street between Fourth and Fifth Streets NW, Charlottesville. Architect: Calrow, Browne and Fitz-Gibbon Architects of Norfolk, Virginia. The elementary grades remained housed in the Jefferson Graded School building, while grades 7-11 were taught in the new building.

1929-1930

Jefferson School received accreditation as a high school.

1939

Public Works Administration addition to Jefferson School constructed to the north and west of the original building.

I began speaking about the Jefferson Preschool and the Jefferson School at every public opportunity presented. I was less than fully informed at the time, but I spoke from the heart. I spoke too often alone. I felt that if I didn't speak I would be less worthy of my sense of connection to those whose profound humanity I so admired. Already I owed them a debt and had to repay it. I had to repay the debt both to the Jefferson Preschool for their incredibly fine fulfillment of my daughter's desire to go to school, and to Charlottesville's Black community who had fought for so long, so often alone, to create and preserve the physical building in which my daughter was experiencing her first taste of school.

—Barbara Myer, pre-school parent



Barbara Myer and daughter Eleanor Myer-Sessoms.
Photograph by Alexandria Searls.

On race relations and the future...

Trust. Trust is a huge issue. What it takes in my mind is a very politically incorrect admission, which is people are different, cultures are different.

—Susan Cone Scott

We've only got desegregation by law, but we're having a hard time getting into integration.. We are holding things back for some reason or other. We can make things so much better, and I think we need to make them much better for a lot of reasons.

—Eugene Williams

You may have heard that it's hard to teach whom you don't love. As Martin Luther King used to say, you get to know the folk once you get to talk to them.

—Alex-zan

I think its going to take a group of people that's actually committed to the well-being of children, the well-being of the community. We've got to change the mindset, be inclusive. And we've also got to get away from the labeling and the stereotyping.

--Alex-zan

1951

Burley High School for Black children in Charlottesville and Albemarle County constructed. Jefferson School subsequently used as the city's elementary and junior high school. Their White counterparts: Venable Elementary and Lane High School.

1954

Supreme Court rules "separate but equal" no longer retains legal basis. Chief Justice Earl Warren opined: "Public school segregation by state law violates the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment." The decision initiated mandatory public school desegregation. Commonwealth of Virginia legislators opposed the ruling through various means.

1956

Virginia State Legislature calls a special session to introduce a thirteen-bill package referred to as the "massive resistance" legislation. Schools attempted to integrate, it suggested, would have their doors closed and funding terminated. The Charlottesville, Virginia-Arlington, Norfolk, Prince Edward, and Warren school districts were the communities within the state that attempted to test the legality of the massive resistance legislation.

1958

Charlottesville delays opening school in September despite a ruling by Judge John Paul's desegregation decree. Twelve students from Jefferson and Burley did not return to the segregated schools.

Addition to Jefferson School constructed to the north of the 1939 addition. Architect: Baker, Heyward and Llorens Architects of Charlottesville.

1959

Virginia Supreme Court struck down the massive resistance legislation. Although the public schools in Arlington, Norfolk, and Warren counties were integrated by February 2, 1959, the Charlottesville city schools were given a stay, and were integrated by September 1959. Nine Black children attend Venable, three attended Lane High School.

School gymnasium (now Carver Recreation Center) addition constructed to the north of the 1958 addition along Fifth Street, NW. Architect: Baker, Heyward and Llorens Architects of Charlottesville.

ca. 1960

Jefferson Graded School razed.

ca. 1960-1965

Integration occurs gradually, as many take advantage of a provision of the desegregation plan that allowed children to transfer from a school if their race was in the minority. Token integration is prevalent.

Most of the buildings located within the Vinegar Hill neighborhood demolished to effect urban revitalization efforts by City of Charlottesville.

1964

Jefferson, for the first time, does not open as a school for Black children, and is no longer utilized by the city as a full time facility.

1965-67

Jefferson School serves as a temporary citywide middle school during the construction of Buford and Walker as future upper elementary and junior high schools.

1970s-80s

The building begins to house the city's English as a Second Language program, and Piedmont Virginia Community College classes. Carver Recreation Center, a municipal public-use facility, is established. The center is used for voting by a precinct of the same name. The school parking lot is used as the city's farmers' market.

1976

Jefferson School class of 1930 holds its 46th Reunion in Charlottesville. An article in the *Daily Progress* notes that 17 members of the class attended.

1988-89

Start of 2 Title 1 Preschool classes housed at Jackson Via School serving educational-ly needy four year olds from Jackson Via and Johnson School districts.

1990

The Jefferson School Alumni organize the first all-class reunion. These reunions have since become a tradition. Now held every other year on even numbered years, the reunions are well attended. Events include a bus tour of the city, breakfast, dinner dance, and church service.

1995-96

Jefferson School becomes the home for a citywide centralized pre-school. Five classes of 4 year old children at the Jefferson building serving 4 classes of educationally needy children (Title 1) and 1 class of "at risk" children from the entire City. In addition, all 5 classes of preschool special education children moved into the building at the same time.

2000

The School Board was presented cost options for 5 different scenarios of housing preschool programs. The Board decided that the cost of renovating the Jefferson was more expensive than building a new center.

2002

The School Board votes 4 to 3 in favor of locating the preschool education program temporarily in the 6 elementary schools and also reaffirms its position to give the deed to the City of Charlottesville.

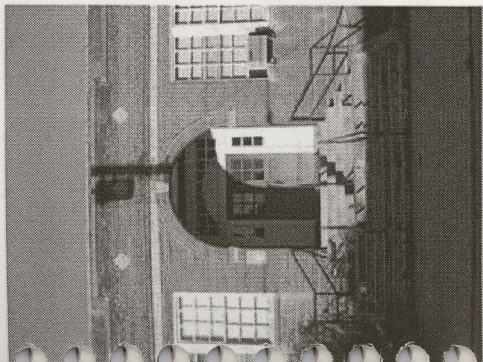
Citizens for Jefferson School holds its first public meeting. Consensus among those present was to urge the School Board to delay the transfer of the Jefferson building deed to City Council. In addition, the group agreed to ask for a 12-18 month study on the school's use as well as preserving the building as an educational institution. Support for the preschool center concept was also agreed to although not necessarily within the Jefferson school building.

Jefferson School Oral History Project begins.

The following pages are part of an exhibit developed by Elizabeth H. Moore, a University of Virginia School of Architecture Masters of Architectural History candidate. The panels were completed as an individual project for Professor Daniel Bluestone's "Community History Workshop" during Spring 2004.

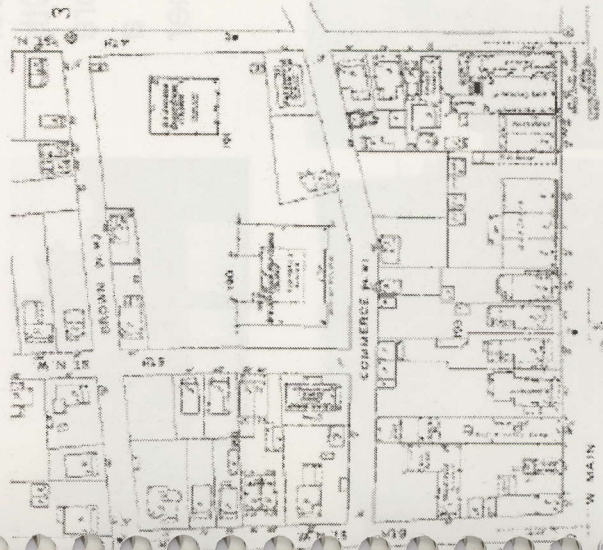
Miss Moore's thesis deals with the representation of race in the school building architecture of central Virginia.

Ceremonial Entrances: Embodying a Sense of Place



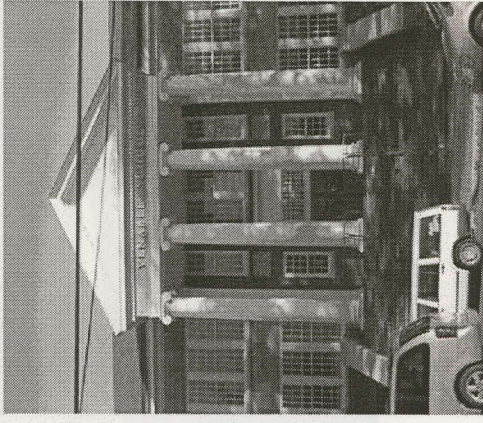
Jefferson School

Jefferson School Site Plan



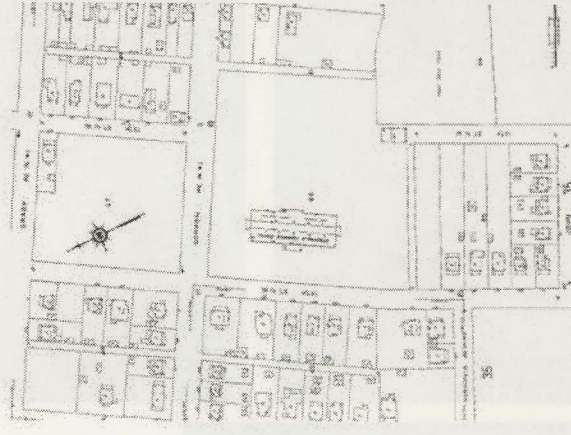
Venable School sits at a prominent spot in the district, fully visible as approached and lying on an open parcel of land. The steps leading up to the raised entrance portico from the street create a grand entrance into the school. Other white schools display this same type of ceremonial entrance such as McGuffey School and Midway School.

Jefferson School, on the other hand, lies tucked into the district, hidden from public view along Main Street only a block to its south. A recessed arched entryway leads into the school and fails to create the same ceremonial entrance so important in the white schools. However, Jefferson School lies on the western edge of Vinegar Hill, an African American community of Charlottesville, and faces Commerce Street, the main street of this community. Its embeddedness into the urban fabric of Vinegar Hill illustrates the importance of education within the community and the prominent position it occupies culturally.



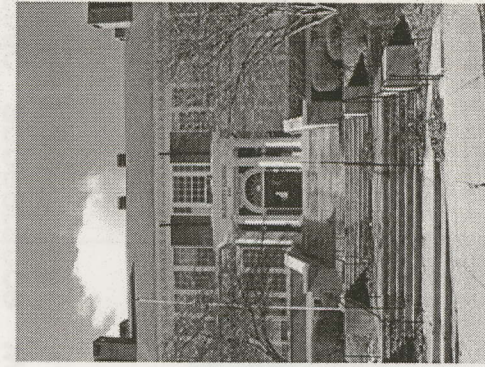
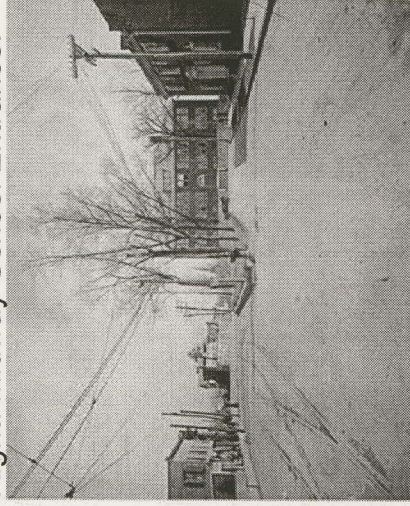
Venable School

Venable School Site Plan



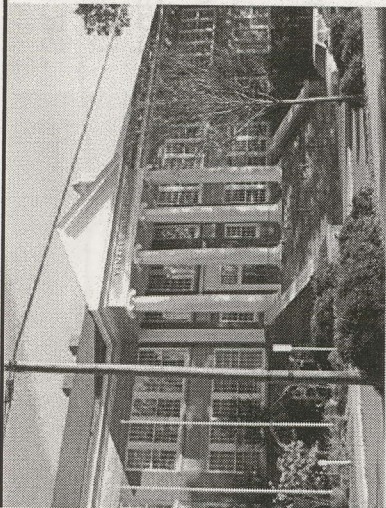
Left: McGuffey School Entrance.

Right: Midway School Entrance.



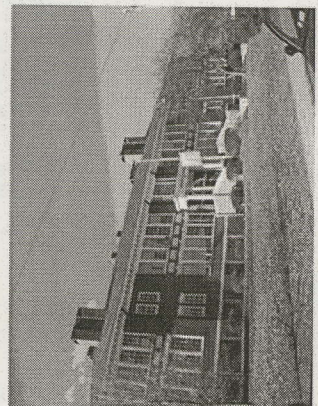
Architectural Style and the Making of Citizens

Venable School uses civic-minded architecture often seen in governmental buildings to teach students to be community leaders. It has a hidden basement and two fully visible floors displaying characteristics of Colonial Revival architecture like the pedimented entrance portico and the two cupolas protruding from the roof. These elements appear in other white educational buildings such as Clark Elementary, McGuffey Elementary, and the University of Virginia's Peabody Hall.



Venable School

Civic-Minded Architecture



Middle: Clark School.

Bottom Left: McGuffey School.

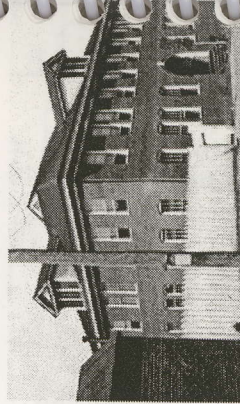
Bottom Right: Peabody Hall.

Jefferson School displays elements common in industrial architecture. It contains one fully visible floor and a basement seen on the eastern elevation. The beltcourse, brick detailing, and clerestory draw from industrial buildings, such as the Coca-Cola Bottling Company on 10th Street. Although this school illustrates industrial features, an 1894 graded school stood until the mid-20th century portraying a more civic appearance with a hipped-roof and dormer windows.



Jefferson School

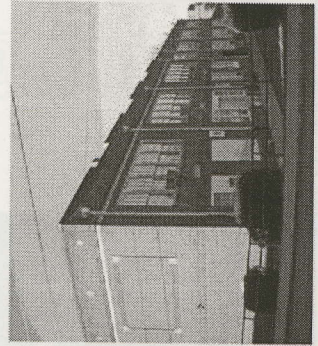
Industrial Architecture Elements



Middle: 1894 Jefferson School.

Bottom Left: Eastern elevation of Jefferson School.

Bottom Right: Coca-Cola Bottling Company.



The transcripts of the interviews conducted as part of this project are housed at the Albemarle Charlottesville Historical Society and the Carter G. Woodson Institute at the University of Virginia.

An additional set of transcripts has been provided to the Alumni Reunion Committee for use in establishing a museum about the school and Charlottesville's African-American heritage.

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