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# The Fare Facs Gazette

The Newsletter of Historic Fairfax City, Inc.

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## African American Education in the Town/City of Fairfax

by William Page Johnson, II



There were few legal restrictions on the education of slaves in Virginia before 1832, although slave education was actively discouraged. At that time, the only instruction that most slaves received was religious instruction.

The situation changed in 1830 after the Nat Turner Slave Rebellion, in which approximately sixty-five white citizens were slain by a group of escaped slaves in rural Southampton County, Virginia. The Virginia General Assembly responded to panicky white citizens by passing a variety of laws that further restricted the rights of slaves and free Negroes. In 1832, the Assembly flatly forbade the education of slaves, free Negroes and mulattos. Slaves, free Negroes and mulattos were also forbidden to preach or even to assemble for religious services unless a licensed white minister conducted such services during daylight hours. The penalty for violating these ordinances was public whipping.

Consequently, these restrictions pushed the education of African Americans underground. These conditions would continue until slavery was abolished with the ratification of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution in 1865. During the Reconstruction period that followed the Civil War, many former Virginia slaves were

anxious to distance themselves from their former white masters. Many moved away from their homes to start new lives elsewhere. They also congregated together in their own churches and institutions. They often felt that their children would be best educated in schools taught by African American teachers. Ironically, this belief fueled the segregationist doctrine of 'separate but equal' that white southerners later enshrined into law during the Jim Crow era.

African American parents were convinced of the importance of education to enable their children to have a better life. While there was some public support for African American schools, they were not funded nearly to the extent of their white counterparts. As a result, many poor black sharecroppers and farmers in the South cooperated with northern philanthropists, such as Julius Rosenwald, in the construction of schools in rural areas. They often supplied the labor while the wealthy whites supplied the materials.

A striking example of the separate and unequal conditions of the time can be seen in the very buildings themselves. The Fairfax Elementary School, constructed for whites in 1873, was a substantial, two-story, brick building, built on an airy hillside. The building was restored in 1992 and now houses the Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center. By comparison, just down the street, the first African American School, built about the same time, was a wooden one-room structure, built in a ravine, along a creek, adjacent to the cemetery. It was demolished in 1926 because of its dilapidated condition.

### The First African American School

The first African American school in Fairfax, then called the Fairfax Colored School, <sup>1</sup> was constructed between 1874 and 1878. It was located at 10565 Main Street east of, and adjoining, the cemetery.

Fairfax, Virginia, February 2006-

Greetings from the President--

Hildie Carney resigned as President of HFCI at the end of 2005.

I would like to introduce myself as the new President beginning, 2006. So, a big "hats off" to President Carney for her stewardship of HFCI from 2003-2005. Many things were accomplished during her tenure with the principle achievement – City Council's approval for building an Interpretive Center on the grounds of the Blenheim property. Blenheim is a unique property purchased by the City in 1999. The House at Blenheim has undisturbed Civil War graffiti on the attic, first floor and second floor walls. Currently, the house is being restored to Circa 1858.

HFCI's mission statement is to promote and encourage an appreciation for and preservation of the history and artifacts of the City of Fairfax. One of my goals as President in 2006 is for the Board, HFCI's membership and City of Fairfax residents to refocus on this mission. Programs will be designed to look at how artifacts are added to our Museum. HFCI's "Collection Committee", chaired by Ellen Wigren and under the direction of the City's Office of Historic Resources is tasked with this. Chris Martin is the Director of the Office of Historic Resources and Susan Gray is the City's Museum Curator. Technicians are Cami St Germain, Trang Nguyen and Nat Rasmussen. We will update our Membership on new artifacts added to our collection in our Newsletter and on our web site. We will also focus in 2006 on homes that have been restored and renovated for preservation and historic purposes.

As President, I would like to acquaint our membership with other HFCI Committees and their important work also. Committees such as the Ratcliffe Cemetery Committee, the Blenheim Committee, the Historic Markers Committee and also tasked with important projects. You will be hearing more about these and other HFCI Committees in 2006. Please look at our web site for information on Museum programs, membership and other items of interest. As President of HFCI, I look forward to working with our Board and all City resident's in 2006.

HFCI's web site is [historicfairfax.org](http://historicfairfax.org).

Karen Stevenson

## Getting To Know You

HFCI Board Member Hildie Carney



Hildie has been involved in historic preservation for over 8 years, beginning with her work as a member of a team that was successful in preserving the City's historic Blenheim site. She was appointed to the Blenheim Task Force so that a Master Plan for the site would be planned. In 2001 she became a member of the HFCI Board and in 2003 she became the President and served for 3 years.

Under her leadership, the master plan and the interpretive center initiatives for the Blenheim historical site were approved. Also during her presidency, the board's full roster of 21 persons has remained filled and active.

Hildie began her involvement with the city when she moved to Country Club Hills in 1964 and joined the Fairfax Ferns Garden Club. Since that time, she has been involved in church, school and city committees. Her community involvement has included serving on the Board's of the Commission for Women, Human Services, Downtown Fairfax Coalition, and others.

Hildie is a former Naval Officer's wife; married her home town sweetheart and followed him around the Country. They have 4 children, Cynthia and Tim, born in Pensacola, FL, Dan, born in Great Lakes, IL, and Jennifer, born at Bethesda Naval Hospital. Hildie has 6 grandchildren.

Her interest in history and preservation has been invaluable to the HFCI Board and the City of Fairfax. Hildie is now a candidate for city council in the May 2 election.

We are proud to have Hildie as a Board member. Hildie, we thank you for all your hard work to make this Board a success.

## HFCI Semi-Annual Meeting

### *"Restoration, Rennovation & Rehab"*

*Meet our panel of experts to save time, money and your sanity while improving your home.*

May 10th, 7:30 pm  
Old Town Hall

## At The Fairfax Museum...

The following is a sampling of new objects that were accepted into the City of Fairfax's Historic Collections on October 24, 2005:

### Civil War Artifacts, Maps, and Manuscripts

1. Richard Ratcliffe Farr II Manuscript Collection
  - a. Ratcliffe's Enrollment Certificate to serve in "Mosby's Rangers," Nov. 2, 1863
  - b. Ratcliffe's Parole from "Mosby's Rangers," April 23, 1865
  - c. Mosby's Farewell, period copy
  - d. Ratcliffe's lock of hair, with accompanying note written by his mother, Margaret Willcoxon Farr.
2. Archaeological Artifacts
3. Maps, Large Format Reproductions of "Map of the Seat of War, 1861"; "The McDowell Map, 1862"
4. Pin - "Grand Army of the Republic" Pin
5. Carte D'Viste - Gen. M.L. Bonham

### Fairfax Business Ephemera

1. Business Card - "The Tapestry Room"
2. Invoice - "Fairfax Hay & Grain, Inc."

### Fairfax School Ephemera

1. Green Acres Elementary School T-Shirt, c. 1985
2. Fairfax High School Drama Play Bills, 1994 and 1995

### Postcards: Fairfax, Virginia

1. Westwood Motel
2. 29 Diner
4. Breezeway Motel
5. Zion Episcopal Church
6. Smokehouse - Greenway Court
10. Arlington/Fairfax Trolley
11. Sunset Grove Cottages
12. Circle Motor Court
14. Patton Motor Hotel
15. Anchorage Motel
16. Fairfax Hotel, Washington, DC
20. Chilla-Villa Motel
22. Gateway Motel

### Fairfax Documents and Memorabilia

1. Fairfax District - Boy Scouts of America Patch
3. "Fairfax County Bourbon" Broadside
4. Fairfax Land Document - Court Copy - 1800
5. City of Fairfax Bicentennial Commemoratives (2005)

1. Baseball Cap
2. T-Shirts ("Bursting with Pride" & "Symbols of America" July 4, 2005.
3. Fan with names of current City Council and past Mayors
4. Bumper Stickers with Bicentennial Logo: "Catch Our Spirit, Feel Our Pride"
5. CD - Bicentennial Story "The Heart Beats On" and Bicentennial Minutes.
6. Glass Bowl and Invitation (souvenirs from January 15, 2005 Bicentennial Gala).
7. Richard Ratcliffe Marker Dedication Program, January 14, 2005
8. "Spotlight on the Arts" Poster, April - May 2005  
Annual Reports: City of Fairfax - 1968 & 1988-89.  
Fairfax Election 2005 Memorabilia



## Second Sunday Programs

at the

### Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center

10209 Main Street

Fairfax, VA

All programs begin at 2 p.m. and are followed by informal discussion and refreshments in the Visitor Center.

Sunday, February 12 - "*Love and Legacy: The Civil War Romance of Antonia Ford and Major Joseph C. Willard,*" by Susan Inskeep Gray, Curator, Office of Historic Resources. Free

Sunday, March 12 - "*Desperate Women: Fighting Slavery in Virginia's Potomac Hinterland,*" by Dr. Deborah Lee, Research Fellow, Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. Free.

Sunday, April 9 - "*Springfield Before the Suburbs,*" by Jack Hiller, Fairfax historian and Fairfax County History Commission member. Free.

Sunday, May 14 - "*Old Town Fairfax and the Kitty Pozer Garden,*" Guided Walking Tour, \$4.00 for adults and \$2.00 for youth. Free to HFCI Members.

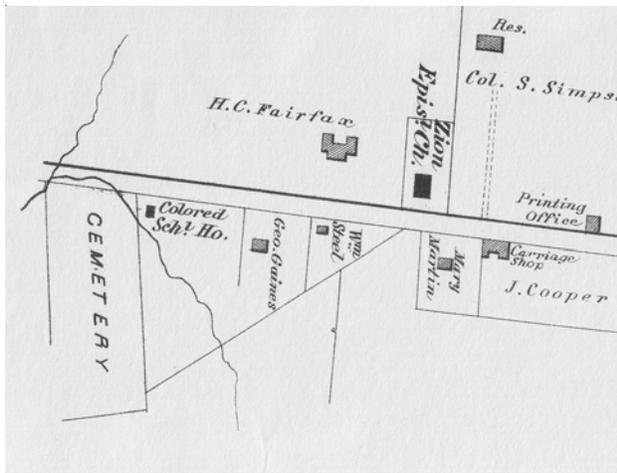
For more information and reservations, call the Museum and Visitor Center at 703-385-8414 or email [sgray@fairfaxva.gov](mailto:sgray@fairfaxva.gov).

## Schools.. - continued from pg. 1

On Christmas Eve, 1870, Bleecker & Harriet Canfield, white residents of the Town of Fairfax, sold, for thirty-seven dollars, a small lot adjacent to the cemetery to the Trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the Washington Conference, for the use and benefit of the "Methodist Episcopal Church Colored." The Canfield's, who were originally from New York, had sold two other small lots in Fairfax for the construction of churches, one for whites in 1869,<sup>2</sup> and another for blacks in 1870. Apparently, the Canfield's favored religious instruction over general education for African Americans because both deeds to the black church trustees carried an unusual restriction forbidding future use of the land as a schoolhouse.<sup>3</sup>

"It is expressly covenanted and agreed by the parties of the second part, the said Trustees, or their successors in Office, said building thereon erected shall at no times be used as a School House."<sup>4</sup>

In addition to a church, the African American community had apparently been attempting to construct a school in Fairfax as well. In 1874, Bleecker Canfield sold a 1-acre lot on Main Street to George W. Gaines.<sup>5</sup> This lot, too, was east of the cemetery and adjoined the Colored Church lot on the east and south. It is now the site of Everly Funeral Home. Gaines, who was a Blacksmith, lived and operated a small shop on this site. In spite of Canfield's earlier 1870 deed restriction, Gaines allowed an African American school to be constructed on his property immediately behind the Colored Church. Evidence of this fact is the appearance of the Colored School on an 1878 map of Fairfax Court House. The fact that Gaines allowed this is significant because he was a former Confederate officer and a veteran of the Civil War.



Enlarged portion of the 1878 Hopkins map of Fairfax Court House.

In 1882, Gaines formally conveyed the western half of his lot, approximately .42 acres, to the Colored School Trustees of Providence District for \$100.00.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, by conjecture, the first African American School in Fairfax was built sometime between 1874 and 1878.

In 1920, the fate of the church was chronicled in the Fairfax Herald:

#### "Razing Old Church

The old colored Methodist Church, at the foot of the hill, below the Central Garage, is being torn down, and, it is understood, the land will be sold. Several months ago the ceiling of the building, which had been unused for sometime, fell in, and later the roof also caved in and the walls bulged out, completing the wrecking of the structure."<sup>7</sup>

The Fairfax Colored School was in use for 50 years. After the destruction of the church, the school continued to be used for several more years. It was a wooden structure consisting of a single room and was served by a single teacher. Typically, teachers in African American schools were themselves African American. Also, teaching was usually not their only vocation as the pay was meager, and sometimes nonexistent. Sadly, nothing is known of these first educators. The earliest known teacher at the Fairfax African American School was Philip E. Hughes, who was teaching there at least by 1907.

Philip Edward Hughes was the son of former slaves, Jackson and Mariah Hughes. He was born on about February 8, 1871 in Fairfax County, Virginia. He was formally educated at the Wayland Seminary in Washington, D.C., which is now part of Virginia Union University in Richmond, VA.<sup>8</sup> As previously stated, education was extremely important to most African Americans, but with the Hughes family it appears to have been a calling. Philip listed his occupation as schoolteacher in the Federal Census of 1900. His sister, Mary, also listed her occupation as teacher. In 1902, Philip, a widower, married a local girl, Minnie E. Beckwith, who was also a teacher.<sup>9</sup> Later, one of their children, Corrine, became a public school teacher and a principal in Fairfax County, Virginia. Two of Philip & Minnie's grandchildren, also followed educational careers. Grandson, James L. Draper, was a public school teacher and a principal in Rappahannock County, Virginia. Granddaughter, Laurence Hughes Nolan, is a professor of law at Howard University Law School.

Minnie Beckwith Hughes was the daughter of freed slaves, Alfred and Methelda "Fannie" Beckwith. She was born

December 8, 1871 in Fairfax County, Virginia.<sup>10</sup> In 1891, she attended Hampton Institute, now Hampton University, in Hampton, VA and graduated in 1896. As a requirement for graduation, Minnie returned to Fairfax and began student teaching in 1894, at the vacant Hughesville School on Braddock Road. From 1894 to 1903, Minnie taught school at several locations in Fairfax County. In 1903, she took six years off to give birth to her three children, returning to the classroom in 1909. According to her granddaughter, Laurence Nolan, Minnie was teaching school near her home at the time of her marriage.<sup>11</sup> The couple lived on a small farm on Braddock Road. The home, which still stands, was located at 12115 Braddock Road just southeast of its intersection with the Fairfax County Parkway. The area was then known as Hughesville.



Philip and Minnie Hughes on the front porch of their home on Braddock Road, Fairfax, Virginia, c. 1938. Photo courtesy: Laurence Hughes Nolan.

In the fall of 1916, to make ends meet, Mr. Hughes, at the age of 45, and after 18 years of teaching, went to work for the U.S. Government Printing Office, as a full-time skilled laborer.<sup>12, 13</sup> His pay, \$.25 per hour, was approximately five times what he had previously earned as a teacher.<sup>14</sup> He held this job until his death on January 10, 1945, at the age of 73.<sup>15</sup>

Minnie Hughes succeeded her husband as the teacher at the Fairfax African American School in 1916. The distance from their home on Braddock Road to the school was approximately three miles, which she reached by horse and buggy. In the winter months, she usually arrived early enough to light a fire in the central pot-bellied stove.

Although she was a teacher for more than thirty years, Minnie did not receive regular pay from the Fairfax County School Board until 1916. A teacher's pay was small, only \$8.00 per month. Laurence Nolan, relates, "On one occasion there was not enough money to pay her [Minnie's] salary and

the community took up a collection for her. Grandma, who lived to be 103, earned much more in retirement than she ever did teaching."<sup>16</sup>

Etta Bowles Strozier, age 89, was a student at this school from 1923 to 1925. She recalls,

"The school was built on the side of a hill next to the cemetery. It had one room with a pot-bellied stove in the middle. There was no electricity and no indoor plumbing. The *facilities* were located outside and we kids had to get water from a small spring that flowed in front of the school, or later from a spigot across the street at the Electric Railway Depot."

As a child, Etta walked several miles to school, "through the woods and fields," from her home on Roberts Road. Etta recalls that Mrs. Hughes came to school in a small horse and buggy. She also remembers,

"Because there was no stable, Mrs. Hughes kept her horse underneath the school. We would occasionally hear him snorting underneath us. One day, because the building was in such bad shape, Mrs. Hughes fell through the rotten floorboards and landed right on that old horse. She wasn't hurt, but it took some time to get her unstuck."<sup>17</sup>

Mrs. Strozier has fond memories of both the school and Mr. & Mrs. Hughes.

By 1925, the community had outgrown the old school. A larger school would take its place. The old school lot and building were sold to the Fairfax Cemetery Association in 1927.<sup>18</sup> Curiously, the deed was not recorded until 1950.<sup>19</sup> The building was subsequently demolished and the land incorporated into the cemetery.

### Fairfax Rosenwald School

The Fairfax Rosenwald School, or, the second Fairfax Colored School, was constructed in 1925-26 and was located at 10515 School Street.

By 1917, the original school building, which was nearly fifty-years-old, was in a dilapidated condition and lacked basic sanitary facilities. The African American residents of Fairfax once again organized themselves for the purpose of advancing the cause of education. At the same time, Booker T. Washington, the founder of Tuskegee Institute, a vocational school for African Americans, was enlisting the support of

northern white philanthropists in the construction of schools for African American children across the South. His chief patron was Julius Rosenwald, the president of Sears, Roebuck & Co. Inc. In 1917, Rosenwald established the Julius Rosenwald Fund and pledged his fortune, \$63 million in today's dollars, to this effort. The Rosenwald plan was to encourage African Americans to buy land and build schools with the financial support of the Rosenwald Fund. The buildings would then be turned over to local authorities.

At about this time, the Fairfax Colored School League, an unincorporated body, was formed to raise funds and petition the Fairfax County School Board for a new school building. Under the leadership of league president, Ellen Gray, a contract to purchase two lots was signed with prominent Fairfax lawyer, John S. Barbour, for \$500.00.<sup>20</sup> The property, comprising 1.2 acres of Barbour's dairy farm, was located in the middle of a grove of large oak trees south of the Town of Fairfax. A private outlet road, which would later become School Street, provided ingress and egress from Route 123. This outlet road also happened to be the area in which most of Fairfax's African American citizens lived during much of the segregated 20<sup>th</sup> c.

Over the next five years the league worked hard to raise the necessary funds to complete the purchase of the land. In November 1922, they completed the sale and acquired title to the property. The league then embarked on a building fund with the assistance of the Julius Rosenwald Fund. In the spring of 1925, a delegation of League members addressed the Fairfax County School Board seeking assistance. The board was informed "of the wretched condition of building," and offered that, "some of the money would be returned from the sale of the property now in use."<sup>21</sup> After much discussion, the board agreed and decided to construct a new school at an estimated cost of \$4,000.00. Of this amount, \$2,500.00 would come from the school board; \$800 from African American contributors; and \$700.00 from the Rosenwald Fund. Bids for the new building went out immediately.<sup>22</sup> The low bidder was Edward W. Detwiler, a Fairfax contractor, whose bid of \$3,780.00 was accepted. Detwiler has also recently constructed the Clifton Colored School.<sup>23</sup> Several weeks later the League published a Card of Thanks in the Fairfax Herald:

"Card of Thanks

We wish to express our thanks and appreciation to our many friends, white and colored, who proved so friendly to us in our recent drive for funds to clear up certain land interests incident to our school, which is to be erected this summer.

FAIRFAX COLORED  
SCHOOL LEAGUE"<sup>24</sup>



THEN: Fairfax Rosenwald School, Dedication Day, May 7, 1926.  
Photo courtesy: Julius Rosenwald Fund Archives, John Hope & Aurelia E. Franklin Library, Fisk University, Nashville, TN.

Work began that spring and was completed by the fall. The new building was dedicated on May 7, 1926. Nearly 2,500 attended the daylong ceremonies. Minnie Hughes, who was now principal of the new school, gave the welcoming remarks. Other state and local dignitaries, including Fairfax County School Superintendent, Milton D. Hall, followed her.<sup>25</sup> The new school featured two classrooms, one for lower grades and one for upper grades, and a smaller industrial room. Later, this smaller room was used as a classroom as enrollment continued to grow. In addition to being principal, Minnie taught the upper grades, as well. Mrs. Agnes Chaves taught the lower grades.<sup>26</sup>

Between 1917 and 1932, the Julius Rosenwald Fund helped construct over 5,000 schools in 15 southern states. The Fairfax Rosenwald School was one of four such schools built in Fairfax County between 1924 and 1931.

Mabel Payne Colbert, 77, was a student at the Rosenwald School beginning in 1935. She had the following recollections,

"School was not like it is now. My brothers and sisters and I walked to school from our house on the bottom of School Street. Mrs. Hughes walked to school, too, with her son or grandson. He was crippled and the kids would tease him.<sup>27</sup> She was a kind person.

Our school had a big wood-burning stove, but no indoor plumbing. There was an outhouse out back near the tree line; one side for girls and one side for boys. We did not have a cafeteria, like they do today, until later.

We were very poor and didn't always have the proper clothing. In the winter when it snowed we wore guano sacks around our feet and legs to keep us warm and dry. By the time we got to school, we were half frozen. Mrs. Hughes would pour warm water from a kettle she kept on the stove over our hands to thaw us out. It was hard to learn when you were cold and hungry.

We children also had to help out. We fetched water from the neighbors and had to clean the school before we went home. Everyone had a task.

At recess, we made our own fun. We gathered leaves and played in them, things like that. Sometimes, the older boys would get into trouble and the teacher would have to beat them. Discipline was the rule."<sup>28</sup>



School children, Fairfax Rosenwald School, c. 1937. Etta Bowles Strosier, 4th row, far right; Mrs. Minnie Hughes, 3rd row, 2nd from left; Mrs. Agnes Chaves, 2nd row, far right; Warren Hunter, 1st row, 4th from right. Photo courtesy, Etta Strosier.

Warren Hunter, 83, who was a student at the Rosenwald School beginning in 1930, has similar memories,

"I went to the Rosenwald School until 7<sup>th</sup> grade. I lived almost across from City Hall on 123 [Rt. 123], which was part of Mr. Barbour's place at the time. I guess he was one of the richest men in town. My aunt worked for him. My father [James Hunter], worked at Layton Hall, Mr. Willard's [Joseph Willard] farm.

My house was in the black [segregated] part of Fairfax, which included everything south of West Drive. But even though there was segregation, that didn't stop us from playing with the white boys. We would play ball, and other games with them.

We didn't have organized sports activities at school, like they have now. We had 'Field Day', which was held annually at the end of the school year. All the black schools would come and compete in races and ball games, that sort of thing. During the school year though, we only had recess. We played a game at recess, which sounds silly now, called 'Dogs and Foxes.' One group of boys would be the dogs, who would then chase another group of boys who were the foxes. There were lots of woods around the school then to hide in. The game was over when all the foxes had been caught. I enjoyed that game.

We boys also had chores. It was our job to gather the firewood for the fire. You know, there was no such thing as 'snow days,' like now. It didn't matter if it snowed three feet, Mrs. Hughes, who lived a considerable distance from the school, would always be there and we were expected to be there, too. My, she taught a long time. She taught me, and my brother [Alvin S. Hunter], who went to the old school.



NOW: Eleven Oaks Elementary School, February 11, 2006. The location of the Rosenwald School was directly in front of the present Eleven Oaks School. Photo courtesy Page Johnson.

One other thing I remember, when the County finally got a school bus system about '37 or '38, Mrs. Hughes son, Philip, who we called, "Doc", became our bus driver and he drove us to the Jenny Deane School in Manassas, where the blacks went to high school."<sup>29</sup>

Minnie Hughes retired in May 1937. Upon her retirement her salary was just \$65 per month, or \$780.00 per year!<sup>30</sup> She was succeeded as principal by Henrietta B. Brown, 1937-39; America Brown, 1939-1940; Lutie L. Coates, 1940-1944; Bertha L. Waters, 1944-1948; Doris R. Jones, 1949-1951; and, Janie R. Howard, 1951-1952.<sup>31, 32</sup>

The Fairfax Rosenwald School was demolished in 1952 and replaced by Eleven Oaks Elementary School.<sup>33</sup>

### Eleven Oaks School

Eleven Oaks School was constructed in 1952 immediately behind the Rosenwald School. The Columbus Construction Co., of Washington, D.C, built the new school, which featured seven classrooms and a cafeteria, at a cost of \$223,674.00.<sup>34</sup> The new school opened its doors for the 1952-1953 school year. The Rosenwald School was torn down that same year.

Janie R. Howard continued on as principal of the new school.

"Mrs. Howard was a strict disciplinarian and many a young charge felt the sting of 'Old Betsy,' a wooden paddle which she used to gain the 'attention' of her pupils. But she was also known as a warm generous person. No pupil was ever deprived of a hot lunch at school because of lack of money. Mrs. Howard kept a special fund – of her own money – to pay for meals of needy children. She also collected clothes from her friends for a wardrobe pool for less fortunate students."<sup>35</sup>

The following year, 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court declared in *Brown vs. The Topeka Board of Education* that separate educational facilities were inherently unequal. In spite of this decision, Eleven Oaks remained a segregated school because of the Massive Resistance movement led by Virginia Senator, Harry F. Byrd. Massive Resistance was a series of laws and local codes adopted to prevent integration of the public schools. The linchpin of which was a law that cut off state funds and closed any public school that agreed to integrate. To avoid integration, many Virginia localities did close their schools in favor of private all-white academies.

While the segregation battle raged, life continued on at Eleven Oaks. In 1959, the school received an addition. A new library and two additional classrooms were constructed at a total cost of \$51,962.00.<sup>36</sup>

In February 1959, after five years of legal struggle, Arlington County became the first Virginia locality to begin integrating its schools, although it would be another decade before they were fully integrated.

During this time, most of Mabel Colbert's eight children attended Eleven Oaks School. When it was time for her son, Mark, to go to school he refused because, as she stated, "he wanted to stay with me." On the first day of school, Mrs. Howard, the school principal, met them at the door. Mrs. Howard could see there was a problem with Mark. She simply said to me, "Give me that boy." Once inside, Mark, who continued to object to school, apparently was introduced to 'Old Betsy.' Mabel recalls, "There were no problems with Mark after that!"<sup>37</sup>

Mabel also related, "I wanted my children to attend Green Acres. It was a newer school and had new books. The books at Eleven Oaks were hand-me-downs from the white schools." Several of Mabel's children did attend Green Acres.

In the fall of 1965, the county's only African American high school, Luther Jackson, reopened as a middle school leaving only two segregated schools in Fairfax County: Eleven Oaks Elementary and James Lee Elementary. That fall, first grade students at Eleven Oaks were assigned to the schools nearest their homes. The remaining students, in grades 2 through 6, remained segregated. James Lee Elementary remained fully segregated.<sup>38</sup> Sadly, Janie R. Howard, the principal at Eleven Oaks, died in her sleep just before the end of the 1965 school year.<sup>39</sup>

In 1966, the last two segregated schools in Fairfax County were adapted for reuse. James Lee, was closed as a school and adapted for use as a storage facility for teaching supplies. Eleven Oaks was partially closed, remaining in use as an integrated kindergarten. The building was also used as an annex for school administration, housing the central library center, offices of Special Education, Language Arts and Head Start staffs. Since 1968 it has been used as the Area IV Administrative Center.<sup>40</sup>

On a personal note, in the fall of 1965, I was a white first grader at nearby Green Acres Elementary School. I was oblivious to the historic events happening around me. As a child, I naturally assumed that white and black children had always attended school together. One of my, classmates that

year was Verne Quinn. Verne, who is now Verne Butz, just happens to be African American. She and I remain friends to this day.

Eleven Oaks will be demolished sometime in the near future in order to complete the construction of George Mason Boulevard.

### Epilogue

Julius Rosenwald, the white philanthropist, whose financial support led to the construction of over 5,000 schools for African American children throughout the South, including four built in Fairfax County, Virginia, died in 1932.

Philip Edward Hughes, the first known African American teacher in Fairfax, did not live to see integration of the public schools. He died January 10, 1945, at the age of 73.<sup>41</sup>

Ellen Gray, the president of the Fairfax Colored School League, also did not live to see integration. She died in February 1946.<sup>42</sup>

Janie Rucker Howard, the first and only principal of Eleven Oaks Elementary, died in her sleep, in March 1965, at the age of 53.<sup>43</sup>

Minnie Beckwith Hughes, teacher at the Fairfax Colored School and first principal of the Fairfax Rosenwald School died, September 29, 1975 at the age of 103.<sup>44</sup> At the time of her death she was the oldest pensioner in the history of the Fairfax County Public Schools.

### (Endnotes)

<sup>1</sup> Editor's Note: Although shocking by today's standards, no attempt has been made to alter racial epithets used in their historical context associated with African American structures and/or groups in Fairfax. Their usage is taken directly from historical references.

<sup>2</sup> Fairfax County Deed Book K4, p. 429, December 16, 1869, Fairfax County Circuit Court, Fairfax, VA.

<sup>3</sup> Fairfax County Deed Book L4, p. 198, May 20, 1870, Fairfax County Circuit Court, Fairfax, VA.

<sup>4</sup> Fairfax County Deed Book P4, p. 435, December 24, 1870, Fairfax County Circuit Court Clerk, Fairfax, VA.

<sup>5</sup> Fairfax County Deed Book R4, December 16, 1874, p. 361, Fairfax County Circuit Court Clerk, Fairfax, VA.

<sup>6</sup> Fairfax County Deed Book B5, p. 310, July 5, 1882, Fairfax County Circuit Court Clerk, Fairfax, VA.

<sup>7</sup> *Fairfax Herald*, March 12, 1920, p. 3, c. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Personal Correspondence with Laurence Hughes Nolan, 8728 Crider Brook Way, Potomac, MD, 20854, January 31, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Fairfax County Marriage License, October 14, 1902, Fairfax County Circuit Court Archives, Fairfax, VA.

<sup>10</sup> Fairfax County Public Schools Bulletin, V. 6, No. 10, June 1970, "Retired Teacher, Now 98, Recalls Lunch Pails, Slate Boards."

<sup>11</sup> Personal Correspondence with Laurence Hughes Nolan, 8728 Crider Brook Way, Potomac, MD, 20854, January 31, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> *Washington Post*, April 15, 1917, p. 10, c. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Fairfax County Public Schools Bulletin, V. 6, No. 10, June 1970, "Retired Teacher, Now 98, Recalls Lunch Pails, Slate Boards"

<sup>14</sup> *Washington Post*, June 3, 1917, p. A2, c. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Personal Correspondence with Laurence Hughes Nolan, 8728 Crider Brook Way, Potomac, MD, 20854, January 31, 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Personal Correspondence with Laurence Hughes Nolan, 8728 Crider Brook Way, Potomac, MD, 20854, January 31, 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Personal Correspondence with Etta Bowles Richards Strozier, 4501 Roberts Road, Fairfax, VA, January 31, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> *Fairfax Herald*, April 22, 1927, p. 5, c.6.

<sup>19</sup> Fairfax County Deed Book 758, p. 355, March 11, 1950, Fairfax County Circuit Court Clerk, Fairfax, VA.

<sup>20</sup> Fairfax County Deed Book A9, p. 209, November 22, 1922, Fairfax County Circuit Court Clerk, Fairfax, VA.

<sup>21</sup> *Herndon Observer*, March 12, 1925, p. 5, c. 4.

<sup>22</sup> John Hope and Aurelia Elizabeth Franklin Library, Special Collections, Julis Rosenwald Fund, Rosenwald Schools and Related Structures in Virginia, Fairfax County, Fisk University, 1000 Seventeenth Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37208.

<sup>23</sup> *Herndon Observer*, April 9, 1925, p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> *Fairfax Herald*, May 29, 1925, p. 2, c. 3.

<sup>25</sup> *Fairfax Herald*, May 14, 1926, p. 3, c. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Fairfax County Public Schools Bulletin, V. 7, No. 1, September 1970, "Schools of 60 Years Ago Recalled By Teacher."

<sup>27</sup> Douglas Taylor was Minnie Hughes' grandson. He had Muscular Dystrophy.

<sup>28</sup> Personal Correspondence with Mabel Payne Colbert, 4226 University Drive, Fairfax, VA, February 10, 2006.

<sup>29</sup> Personal communication with Warren Hunter, 2031 N. Dinwiddie Street, Arlington, VA, 22207, February 16, 2006.

<sup>30</sup> Fairfax County Public Schools Bulletin, V. 7, No. 1, September 1970, "Schools of 60 Years Ago Recalled By Teacher."

<sup>31</sup> Minnie Hughes Personnel Records, Fairfax County Public Schools, Human Resources, 6815 Edsall Road, Springfield, VA.

<sup>32</sup> *Fairfax Herald*, Various issues, 1937-1952.

<sup>33</sup> *Washington Post*, August 30, 1953, p. L7.

<sup>34</sup> *Washington Post*, October 8, 1952, p. 35.

<sup>35</sup> *Washington Post*, March 12, 1965, p. B11, Obituary of Janie R. Howard.

<sup>36</sup> Fairfax County Public Schools, Annual Reports 1952-1964, Sprague Center Library, 4414 Holborn Avenue, Annandale, VA.

<sup>37</sup> Personal Correspondence with Mabel Payne Colbert, 4226 University Drive, Fairfax, VA, February 10, 2006.

<sup>38</sup> Fairfax County Public Schools, Annual Reports 1952-1964, Sprague Center Library, 4414 Holborn Avenue, Annandale, VA.

<sup>39</sup> *Washington Post*, March 12, 1965, p. B11, obituary of Janie R. Howard.

<sup>40</sup> Fairfax County Public Schools, Annual Reports 1952-1964, Sprague Center Library, 4414 Holborn Avenue, Annandale, VA.

<sup>41</sup> Fairfax County Will Book 25, p. 110, January 19, 1945, Will of Philip Edward Hughes, Fairfax County Circuit Court Archives, Fairfax, VA.

<sup>42</sup> *Fairfax Herald*, February 22, 1946, p. 6.

<sup>43</sup> *Washington Post*, March 12, 1965, p. B11, Obituary of Janie R. Howard.

<sup>44</sup> *Martinsville Bulletin*, September 30, 1975, p. 6, c. 1, Obituary, Minnie B. Hughes.

## Baptismals in Accotink Creek

by Edward Coleman Trexler, Jr.

If you happened to be travelling north, on Route 123, past the Fairfax County Court House and near Rust curve, in the 1920s and 1930s, you might have witnessed one of the early Spring traditions of the Mount Calvary Baptist Church. Wagons and cars would have been parked along the road near the Accotink Creek crosses the road. A congregation would have been gathered, several hundred feet upstream near the confluence of the Tussico Branch. There the depth of the creek had been raised by a temporary dam placed downstream. Candidates for Baptism, dressed in white robes, would have been waiting to enter the creek for the ceremony administered by clergy. Entering the creek one by one as their name was announced they were immersed in the creek as the Minister proclaimed aloud "... I Baptize you in the name...". Shivering from the early Spring chill, the new communicant would run from the creek to be towed and wrapped in a blanket or coat. When all the candidates had been baptized, the congregants would return to cars and wagons and drive south along Route 123 to the Mount Calvary Baptist Church. There, the ceremony would be completed with prayers of thanksgiving and refreshments.

The Baptismal Area location is one of four candidate African-American sites where the HFCI Sites and Markers Committee is working to place new Historic Markers. The other three sites are the Fairfax Colored School site, and the Rosenwald School/Eleven Oaks site, discussed elsewhere, and the old Jermantown Cemetery site near Kamp Washington. Research is well along on the Baptismal and African American School sites, with assistance on the Baptismal Area being provided by neighbors in the Rust curve area and by the Mount Calvary Baptist Church.

Mount Calvary Baptist was founded in 1870 and was, until 1955, located on the west side of Route 123 near Armstrong Street. The Church moved south along 123 to School Street after 1955. HCFI hopes to initiate a fund raising drive soon in order to raise the necessary funds to cover the cost of these two markers in time to dedicate them in late 2006 or during Black History Month, February 2007.

Placing the markers in this time period will make them part of the City of Fairfax Jamestown 2007 Celebration Program. Other candidates for this celebration are the Old Fairfax High School, Old Firehouse, Simeon Draper and Richard Ratcliffe Farr markers. The Jamestown 2007 Program celebrates the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Virginia Colony and the birth of this nation. Other Jamestown 2007 projects include placing exhibits at the Fairfax City Museum of George Mason's Resolutions and Declarations, a Ceremony marking the new Blenheim Interpretive Center and a dramatic presentation of George Mason's Resolutions at Fairfax High School in October 2007. Please be ready to help with the fund raising and with other efforts to help make this commemoration very special.

Research for the Jermantown Cemetery marker is not as well along. We know from search of the Fairfax Deed Book records that it was deeded in 1868 to the "colored Burial Sons and Daughters of Benevolence of Fairfax Court House" by William Rumsey, and that it was then a part of Richard Ratcliffe's Mount Vineyard Plantation. Whether it had been a burial ground for African-Americans for years before that time is not known. Mount Calvary Baptist Church is arranging for Committee members to interview church elders in an effort to learn more about its origin. It also could have been the temporary burial site for Union soldiers killed in the Battle of Ox Hill; engagements that were part of that battle took place along Jermantown Road and at Kamp Washington (then Germantown). The Union suffered 1,500 casualties during the battle of Ox Hill and most were temporarily buried on the battlefield or along the withdrawal routes through Vienna or Fairfax Court House.

**Sources:** Mount Calvary Baptist Church 135<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Bulletin; John H. Rust and Lehnham Young families; Elders of Mount Calvary Baptist Church; Fairfax County Deed books, M7 and I 4; National Archives disinterment records; and the Battle of Chantilly ..., by Mauro.

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Lee Hubbard  
Steve Stombres  
Colonial Title

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