

African American History Inventory

AAHI

The goal of the AAHI is to capture, communicate, and preserve the African American experience throughout Fairfax County's history.

An inventory of African American residents' contributions, churches, homes, schools, communities, cemeteries, events, etc. has been collected to document the African American culture and history of the county.

The inventory includes research topics and sources, publications, websites, maps, information about oral histories available and maps etc.

THE BEGINNING

The Fairfax County History Commission, George Mason University Capstone Students, and George Mason University Center for Mason Legacies worked together to create and host the African American History Inventory(AHHI) database.

AAHI

<https://fairfaxaahi.centerformasonslegacies.com/>

Intended for use by residents, students, educators, historians, et al.

A user guide is provided.

Periodically additions will be made to the inventory.

Input from visitors to the site is welcomed.

Breaking Down Barriers is a small part of the
AAHI.

The following stories of Fairfax County residents represent the enslaved, military, educators, entertainers, and community activists who were involved in both national and local issues.

These African Americans represent the many county residents who worked to break down barriers.

West Ford



Enslaved at Bushfield and Mount Vernon Plantations

Special provisions were made for him
in owner's will:

West Ford was to be inoculated against smallpox.

He was to be taught a trade.

He would gain his freedom at age 21 in 1806.

At Mount Vernon

In 1802 at Mount Vernon, he supervised other enslaved workers,

Conducted business for his owner Bushrod Washington, and

Assisted with the thousands of visitors to the plantation and George Washington's tomb.

1806 West Ford was given his freedom

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He stayed at Mount Vernon and worked as a caretaker of the plantation and carpenter.

In 1829 when Bushrod died, his will left West Ford 100 acres, near the plantation.

West Ford sold the property to buy more land that became known as the Gum Springs Community.

Gum Springs established 1833

1858 West Ford advised the Mount Vernon Ladies Association on the architectural restoration of Mount Vernon.

During the Civil War, the Gum Springs community was a refuge for freed and runaway slaves.

When he died in 1863, Ford was buried at Mount Vernon.

The newspaper *Alexandria Gazette* announced West Ford's passing.

Sgt. Cain Duncan



November 1863

Cain Duncan was arrested for desertion from the United States Colored Troops.

A bounty hunter was awarded \$30 for bringing Cain in.

Cain enlisted as a Private on November 23, 1863 and reported to the 23rd Regiment US Colored Infantry at Camp Casey, Virginia.

Cain's unit guarded wagon trains, forts and railroads in Virginia.

1865

Cain's rank was raised to Sergeant.

The 23rd was engaged in the final pursuit of Robert E. Lee's army.

After Lee's surrender, Cain's regiment was transferred to Brownsville, Texas where he mustered out in November 1865.

His military records indicate that military officials were convinced that Cain was not aware he had been drafted.

The "Deserter" label was erased from his records but the bounty hunter got to keep the money.

Cain settled in Centreville after the Civil War.

William Jasper



William Jasper

William was born enslaved on the Hayfield Plantation.

In 1846, he and his family were freed by the plantation owner.

1853, he registered as a free black and was given permission to live in Fairfax County.

Georgianna Jasper



Land owner

William Jasper bought 13 acres from Thomas Javins.

After the Civil War, William Jasper voted in Fairfax County.

Jasper and other formerly enslaved community residents wanted to see their children be educated.

In 1881, William Jasper and his wife Georgianna deeded one half acre of their property for \$10.00 to the local school district to build a school house.

Laurel Grove School

The one room school house was built by neighbors, parents, and grandparents. They provided the materials and labor.

They hired teachers, raised funds for books, a piano and other furnishings. The segregated school educated grades first through seventh.

William Jasper's Legacy

The students faced challenges but were proud of the education they received. The school provided the basic skills to the children of those once enslaved.

They learned from used textbooks. Geography was taught without maps. The shutters on the windows were shut to prevent rocks from breaking windows.

Laurel Grove, which was one of the first African American Schools in Fairfax County, closed its doors in 1932.

Today, the school house is a museum.

Pvt. Harry Hatcher

World War I



Harry Hatcher

At the age of 24, Harry was drafted in the first call of African Americans and assigned to the 93rd division, a segregated unit.

He reported October 26, 1917, six and a half months after the US declared war.

His first two weeks in France he spent unloading cargo from ships.

Then the 93rd was assigned to 10th French Army Corps, 372nd French infantry division.

Only 20% of African American soldiers saw combat in World War I and they did so by serving with the French Army, not the US Army.

The War in France

Harry's unit faced fierce fighting against the Germans in eastern France.

He was wounded and died October 8, 1918.

Only 120 out of the 600 men from his unit were able to fight again.

He was buried in an American military cemetery in France.

The 372nd Infantry, in which Harry served, received the highest French military medal for their bravery on the battlefield. Croix de Guerre

Dr. Edwin B. Henderson



“Grandfather of Black Basketball”

Henderson graduated from Howard and Columbia universities. He earned a Ph.D. in athletic training from Central Chiropractic College in Kansas City.

While studying physical education, he learned to play basketball.

In 1907, he started a basketball league of African Americans in Washington. DC.

He introduced physical education to DC segregated schools.

The Importance of Sports

He worked to improve sport facilities.

He sponsored the first track meet for African American high schools and colleges.

To encourage athletic competition among African Americans, he established athletic associations.

In His Home Community

Henderson organized the Falls Church Branch of the NAACP.

He fought racial discrimination and segregation in transportation and schools.

In the 1950s, he was the president of Virginia NAACP state conference.

He wrote thousands of letters about civil rights issues to editors of local newspapers.

In 2022, the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) honored the late Dr. Edwin B. Henderson by renaming its sports complex after him.

Mary Ellen (Nellie) Henderson



Educator

Starting in 1917, Mary Ellen Henderson taught and served as principal of the Falls Church “Colored School” for 32 years.

The two room school had no bathrooms, running water, or janitorial service. Heat came from wood fires in pot belly stoves. Water was brought in from nearby wells.

Students learned from hand me down textbooks.

Nellie Henderson, As a Reformer

For 20 years, Henderson crusaded before the School Board for a new school building.

In 1945, a published study that she had completed listed the differences between the white and “colored” schools in Fairfax County. "Our Disgrace and Shame: School Facilities for Negro Children in Fairfax County."

The study gained white supporters and finally the school board agreed to build a new school with an auditorium, clinic, and gymnasium.

As Activist

First African American to join the Falls Church branch of the League of Women Voters

Founding member of the Women's Democratic Club

Volunteered with the Girl Scouts for 30 years

Devoted her lifetime to provide quality education and facilities for African Americans

She and her husband Edwin B. Henderson helped form the Colored Citizens' Protective League

Louise Archer



Louise Archer, Educator

In 1922, Louise Archer became teacher and principal in a segregated, one room school for grades first through seventh in Vienna.

Her devotion to her students was unending.

She would give students rides to school, established the first 4-H club for African Americans in the county, and organized the first graduation ceremony for her students.

She taught sewing, cooking, music and poetry to the upper grade levels.

Her students managed garden plots to raise vegetables for school lunches.

In the Community

In 1939, Louise Archer organized a Parent Teacher Association whose fundraising made it possible to pay for supplies and build a new three-room schoolhouse.

Two years later students, parents and faculty raised \$300 that paid for bus expenses, kitchen supplies, electricity for the school, and the salary of a music teacher.

After Louise Archer died in 1948, parents, students and community leaders asked the school board to rename the Vienna Colored School to the Louise Archer School.

William McKinley Carter



William McKinley Carter

William Carter was a native of Vienna, Virginia.

He became a charter member of Fairfax County NAACP.

Carter led protests against the Whites Only library in Vienna.

In 1958, he co-founded the Vienna Friends of the Library.

He also led the community effort to open an integrated library,
Patrick Henry Library in 1962.

Carter was also President of Citizen's Progress Association in
Fairfax County.

Annie Harper



Annie Harper

Annie Harper was a resident of Gum Springs.

When trying to vote, she was informed that she had to register to vote six months in advance and pay the poll tax for three previous years consecutively.

In March 1964, Annie Harper and three other county residents joined to file a court case against Poll Taxes.

Virginia Poll Tax Receipt


1947

SOUTHSIDE

STATE TAX

RICHMOND, VA.

N^o 94703

 Mail or Bring This Bill With You.

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO G. P. HULCE, TREASURER
THIS BILL IS PAYABLE AT THE COURT HOUSE, 10TH AND HULL STREETS

PAGE 411 LINE _____

PENALTY MAKING LATE RETURNS, 10% MINIMUM, \$2.00	BONDS, NOTES, ETC. AT 50¢ PER \$100	MONEY AT 20¢ PER \$100	CAPITAL NOT OTHERWISE TAXED AT 75¢ PER \$100	POLL OR CAPITATION TAX DUE	TOTAL TAX
				\$1.50	
5% PENALTY AFTER DECEMBER 5TH	5% PENALTY DECEMBER 6, 1947 - - - - - 6% INTEREST FROM JULY 1, 1948 TO DATE OF PAYMENT - - - TOTAL TAX, PENALTY & INTEREST - - - - -				

PAID G. P. HULCE, Treas.

1.50

DEC-3-47 2351 1st H
SOUTH RICHMOND
COURT HOUSE

CASE

The Harper vs. Virginia Board of Elections case lost in the US District Court.

With ACLU backing, the case went to the US Supreme Court.

The solicitor general of the United States, Thurgood Marshall presented oral arguments against the poll tax.

On March 24, 1966, the US Supreme Court ruled that a poll tax in state or local elections is unconstitutional.

Court Ruling

In a 6 to 3 vote, the Court ruled in favor of Ms. Harper. The Court noted that "a state violates the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution whenever it makes the affluence of the voter or payment of any fee an electoral standard. Voter qualifications have no relation to wealth."

Lillian Blackwell



Lillian Blackwell

1911-1996 Lillian was born In Loudoun County and raised in Arlington and Oakton.

1950s She picketed in front of public places to protest exclusion of Blacks and segregated seating.

1963 A case was filed in Federal Court.

The case sued to ban segregation in public places: restaurants, theaters, hospitals, etc.

Three judges ruled that VA segregated seating laws were unconstitutional.

In Action

Lillian continued working to protect Civil Rights.

Mrs. Blackwell and her youngest son, Lawrence, also were plaintiffs in a 1959 suit that led to the integration of Fairfax County schools.

Lillian Blackwell was a member of the Fairfax County Human Relations Council, Membership Chairman of Fairfax NAACP, a Member of the National Council of Negro Women and of the Black Women United For Action.

John Jackson, the guitarist



John Jackson was born in Woodsville, Virginia

In Fairfax County, his music talent was discovered while strumming his guitar at a gas station.

Jackson became the most important Black Appalachian musician to come to broad public attention during the mid-1960s.

His Music

His music was a combination of blues, country, gospel, and ragtime. He cut an album and joined the Blues Festival circuit. He performed at the White House and toured parts of Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. At the same time, he continued his job as a grave digger in Vienna

Digging the Blues and *Steamboat Whistle* by John Jackson can be heard on You Tube.

James and Marguerite Mott



Activism Began at a Park

In 1965, Marguerite and James Mott were denied entrance to Lake Fairfax Park because of their race.

They sued the US District Court in Alexandria and won equal access to county facilities for Blacks.

The Motts were motivated to work together to improve conditions in their community that had no sewers, no water, or public transportation.

Community Improvement

The Motts started the Braddock Community Center in a log cabin on their property that was later replaced by two trailers.

Food and clothing were distributed at the center.

The Motts worked for several years pushing the county to bring sewers and public transportation to their area. The sewers were constructed in 1984.

They paid for several neighborhood children's college education.

The Community Should Not Be Forgotten

Mrs. Mott worked behind the scenes, while Mr. Mott did most of the public speaking.

Mrs. Mott served on the Fairfax County Human Rights committee. At the community center, she led the senior women's group that helped the sick and organized trips.

In 1995, the county built a new community center that was named the Mott Community Center.

Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall



Introduction to law

After getting caught pulling a prank in high school, the principal made Thurgood Marshall read the US Constitution.

Marshall became interested in the document, especially the Bill of Rights. He memorized various parts of the Constitution.

He was aware of the racial injustices and realized that the courts might be the best way to correct the injustices.

He attended the all-black Lincoln University in Pennsylvania.

After being rejected from the University of Maryland School of Law because of his race, Thurgood Marshall attended Howard University and graduated first in his class.

Actions

While at Howard University, Marshall met and worked with vice dean of the law school, Charles Hamilton Houston who directed the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund.

As a lawyer, Marshall worked through the courts to eliminate “separate but equal” laws. In each case, he argued that the conditions might be separate, but they were never equal.

On December 8, 1953, Thurgood Marshall, the chief legal counsel of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) gave the argument for the plaintiffs in the US Supreme Court’s 1954 decision in Brown v. Board of Education that resulted in the elimination of segregation in public schools.

Earned the nickname
“Mr. Civil Rights”

President Kennedy appointed Marshall to the US
Court of Appeals.

In 1967, President Lyndon Johnson appointed him
as Solicitor General.

Two years later, President Johnson appointed
Marshall to the US Supreme Court where he
continued to support the rights of all citizens.