



Michael Winn

Education for Children of African Descent & Rosenwald Schools



August 2021

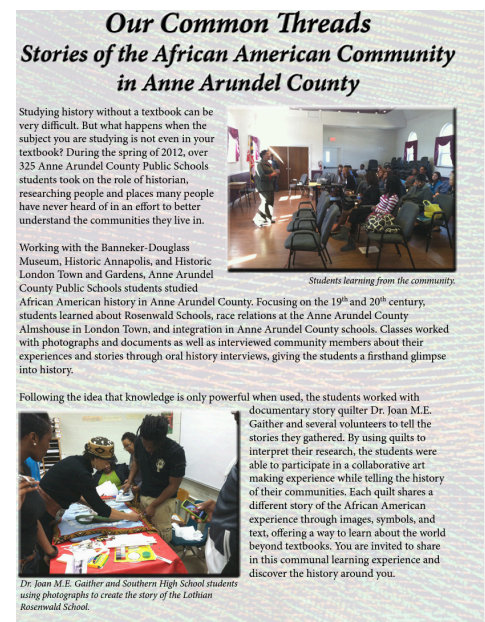
Friends,

I expect that only a few of us know that in the troubled week following the 6 January mob attack upon the United States Capitol, the Rosenwald Schools Study Act was signed into law. The bill authorizes research of the sites associated with the life and legacy of Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools.

The National Trust of Historic Places going back to 2002 sought to establish a national historical park marking the legacy of Julius Rosenwald and Booker T. Washington, who together established Rosenwald Schools throughout the segregated South — including Maryland, Anne Arundel County, with five schools within the historic boundaries of Westminster Parish.

We became aware of Rosenwald schools while working on the Trail of Souls. It was suggested that we make one or more memorial quilts — for the pilgrimage and for the upcoming 325th anniversary celebration of SMC in 2017, three years following.

We visited The Banneker-Douglass Museum in Annapolis to view the quilt exhibition mounted on the upper level.



Courtesy Photo Common Threads: Stories of the African American Community in Anne Arundel County, Banneker-Douglass Museum, Annapolis, MD
June 2-August 31, 2012.

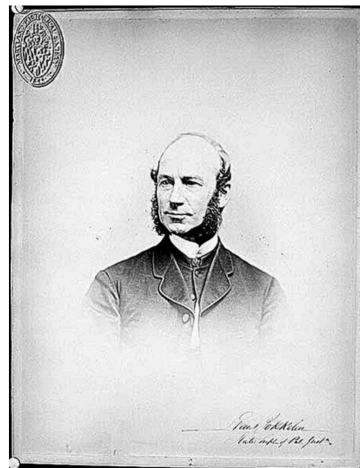
The exhibition was a project completed by Anne Arundel County high school students who studied seven Rosenwald Schools in the county including three of the five within historic Westminster Parish (Freetown, Marley Neck, and Queenstown), and presented their findings with documentary quilts.



Legislation barred education for all persons of African descent and remained in effect until 1 November 1864. It was illegal to educate all enslaved and free Black persons. This was Maryland law until 1864. And three years later, by 1867, any commitment to provide education to Black Marylanders was gone.

In the Trail of Souls writeup we just barely touched upon the education of children of African descent before 1864. We reported that the August 1831 Nat Turner rebellion in Southampton, VA resulted in state legislatures throughout southern slave states, including Maryland, prohibiting education of enslaved and free persons of African descent. This included restricting rights of assembly and other civil liberties, and required white ministers be present at all colored worship services.

The Rev. Libertus Van Bokkelen, a Protestant Episcopal priest who was appointed as the first state superintendent of public instruction in November 1864, days after Maryland's new state constitution outlawed slavery.



The Rev. Libertus Van Bokkelen is Maryland's first School Superintendent. (XX)

As historian Janice Hayes Williams wrote in 2005, he was a leading proponent of education for children of newly freed Black Marylanders.

"The colored population in this state have shown their interest in building up schools for their children; however, there is not at present a willingness to educate colored children at public expense. This I do not understand. Why are there skeptics?" he said in his first report to the General Assembly.

It did not go over well. Local opposition from whites resulted in the Maryland Constitutional Convention of 1867, which eliminated the position and ousted Van Bokkelen.

Out of office, Van Bokkelen encouraged a growing number of schools for Black children to seek funding from private sources. Between 1866 and 1869, Anne Arundel County "colored schools" received funds and teachers from a variety of groups, including the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People. Van Bokkelen was a member.

By 1869, there was no money for and no system of public education for Black children in Maryland until the arrival of Rosenwald schools.

From 1913 to 1932, numerous Rosenwald schools were built in Maryland including five within historic Westminster Parish. These schools were to educate Black children and by 1928 one in three rural southern Black schoolchildren attended a Rosenwald school. The history of Rosenwald Schools is being re-captured and the heritage of the remaining school buildings is being reclaimed and preserved.



Rosenwald Schools began their demise after the Brown v. Board of decision in 1954. Still, Annapolis public schools remained segregated and unequal for years. There is no evidence before 1954 and from 1954 to 1966 that SMC showed any interest in the schools of Anne Arundel County. SMC remained hands off when it came to public education and desegregation.

In Anne Arundel County school desegregation was reportedly not complete until 1966. The people of SMC and its clergy maintained their distance from what happened with the schools just as SMC at that same point in history kept its distance from the civil rights movement, voting rights, and the expanding Viet Nam war.

As the rector of SMC in the 1960s told us 40 years later in a recorded oral history conducted by the SMC History & Archives Project, he did not have time with his liturgical, pastoral, and family demands to address the moral issues of the day. He had to serve in a pastoral role and not a prophetic role as rector. Besides, the parish was not yet ready.

As the minutes reported from his interview with the vestry before being hired in 1963, he agreed that he would abide by diocesan proscriptions regarding race though his personal feelings were mixed as regards to the "Negro".

Along with pictures, I have attached some information used by the quilters at the Banneker-Douglas Museum to tell the story of Rosenwald Schools. Of the five Rosenwald schools that were built within historic Westminster parish, two are less than one mile distance from the SMC campus — Browns Woods and Skidmore. We could walk there together.

Two in Glen Burnie are nearby St. Alban's Episcopal Church, now difficult to reach from both St. Alban's and the former site of SMC's historic chapel of ease because of new roads and residential construction. The fifth school is in Severn.

My wife and I took our own pilgrimage to Freetown, Marley Neck, and St. Alban's Church on Juneteenth 2021. We met 85 year old George Crawford at Freetown who proudly showed off the Freetown Community.



George attended this Rosenwald school instead of traveling north into Baltimore City to attend a colored elementary school. Later he would travel into Annapolis for junior and senior high school at the all Black segregated Wiley Bates Junior & Senior High School.

I hope we can get to know the Freetown community; the church a short distance from Freetown that

holds the Marley Neck Rosenwald School; St. Alban's Episcopal Church; and the National Trust for Historic Places. I hope we can pursue a relationship with Fisk University in Nashville, TN where an historical and archival center exists for the study of Rosenwald Schools.



I will close my writing to you with lots of expressions of hope. Hope that we can become a church that learns from its history, tells the truth about its history, and works to achieve reconciliation and reparations. Fortunately, so many opportunities exist for us to explore. We cannot let the past just pass us by and the future simply bring more of the same.

Respectfully,

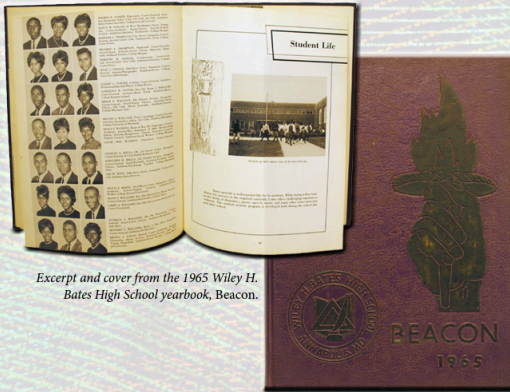
Mike

Integration of Annapolis's High Schools

Wiley H. Bates High School was dedicated on November 27, 1932 as the only high school in Anne Arundel County for African American students. It opened its doors to the student body on January 1, 1933. Annapolis High School opened in the fall of 1932. Although the two high schools were only several hundred yards from each other on either side of Spa Road, they would remain segregated until the fall of 1966.

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* mandated that schools be integrated "with all deliberate speed." However, school integration in Anne Arundel County was slow to take place. The first action toward integration was to announce that, in September 1956, students in the first three grades of all public elementary schools could choose which school to attend—whether traditionally black or white. School integration crept slowly forward from that ruling and by 1964, all of the city's traditionally white public elementary schools had a few African American students, but no traditionally black schools had white students. Neither Bates High School nor Annapolis High School had integrated by 1965.

It was not until a ruling in January 1966 by the United States Office of Education that Anne Arundel County schools must fully desegregate that action really took place. This ruling was most apparent at the high school level. In the fall of 1966, Bates High School and Annapolis High School were combined with the ninth and tenth graders attending Bates, which had been renamed Annapolis Middle High School, and the eleventh and twelfth graders going to Annapolis High School.



Excerpt and cover from the 1965 Wiley H. Bates High School yearbook, Beacon.



45th Anniversary of the Desegregation of Bates and Annapolis High Schools

Historic Annapolis and Bates Middle School partnered to commemorate the 45th anniversary of the desegregation of Bates High School and Annapolis High School. The entire Bates Middle School 6th grade learned about the history of Bates High School by watching the video, *Bringing Back Bates*. They analyzed period photographs of civil rights activities in Maryland to understand the regional history and then interviewed community members, who were students during desegregation or witnessed the 1960s in Annapolis to get the very personal stories and local experiences.

The sixth graders then thought about all they had learned and heard about Annapolis, Maryland, and the nation in the 1960s and selected one idea, theme, or event that resonated with them to design a quilt square. The students worked with Dr. Joan M.E. Gaither and community volunteers during a two-hour workshop to create their quilt squares, which were sewn together by community members and school administrators, teachers, and students.

The *Our Common Threads* project team would like to thank Bates Middle School principal, Ms. Diane Bragdon, and the teachers and students in the 6th grade class for their participation.



Bates Middle School students learning how to quilt from Dr. Joan M.E. Gaither.

Courtesy Photo
Common Threads: Stories of the African American Community in Anne Arundel County, Banneker-Douglass Museum, Annapolis, MD
June 2-August 31, 2012



Browns Woods Rosenwald School

About a mile from SMC and on the other side of Mill Creek within this historically Black community a school building still stands and independent research has been started and reported by Gwen Manseau from nearby Hollywood Farm. The community would likely welcome SMC help to convert current the site into an active community center similar to Freetown in Glen Burnie.



Skidmore Rosenwald School

Within this historically Black community less than a mile from SMC and located on land SMC may have owned from 1746-1764, and first populated by formerly enslaved persons who gained their freedom with the 1800 execution of the will of John Ridout. The school is gone and the exact school

location uncertain.



Freetown Rosenwald School (Glen Burnie)

The building (shown here without the 21st century addition) is a lively community center not far from historic Marley Chapel. This could be a wonderful location for SMC to meet the community and learn how to possibly aid Browns Wood's efforts to establish a similar community center



Marley Neck Rosenwald School (Glen Burnie)

At/nearby the site of historic Marley Chapel on Curtis Creek, this former Rosenwald school building exists as a community building and is listed on Maryland's National Register of Historic Places.



Queenstown/Sunnyside Rosenwald School

The school building in Severn remains and is listed on Maryland's national register of historic places. There is no record of any link to SMC except for its location within Westminster Parish.



Focus Area 3
Education for Children of African Descent and Rosenwald Schools
What's Next ?

- Aligning SMC in some ways with the communities where at least three of the Rosenwald Schools listed are located — Browns Woods, Freetown, and Skidmore
- Aligning with local and national Rosenwald School historic preservation efforts and with Fisk University, an HBCU in Nashville TN, where research and preservation efforts continue on behalf of the heritage of Rosenwald Schools
- Continuing to develop and maintain relationships with nearby schools on the Broadneck Peninsula as possible
- Exploring a relationship with St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Glen Burnie. SMC helped to launch this parish in 1900, a successor to SMC's Marley Chapel and the only parish start SMC ever achieved.

When building relationships in Browns Woods, Skidmore, and other historical Black communities we need also consider SMC's relationships with Asbury Broadneck Methodist Church.