

**Unequal Access:**  
**The Desegregation of Public Libraries in Northern Virginia**



By Chris Barbuschak and Suzanne S. LaPierre  
for the Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees



September 2021

Cover photo: Mabel Jolly, school librarian at the segregated Luther Jackson High School in Merrifield, Virginia, pictured on January 15, 1959. (*FCPL*)

## **Preface**

In April 2021, Jessica A. Hudson, the Library Director for Fairfax County Public Library (FCPL), tasked the Virginia Room staff with researching the history of Northern Virginia's segregated libraries and giving a presentation on the topic to the Library Board of Trustees. In addition to investigating FCPL's own history, staff were directed to examine the situation in Northern Virginia as a whole, including the library systems in the cities of Alexandria and Falls Church, and the counties of Arlington, Loudoun, and Prince William.

This report is the result of that research. The authors used a variety of historical resources to examine how Black residents were served by Northern Virginia libraries during the period of segregation. This report incorporates newspaper articles, meeting minutes, state library reports, books, memoirs, and oral histories to re-count the history of local segregated libraries and the various circumstances that led to their desegregation.

To understand how Black residents accessed FCPL libraries and resources during its early years, surviving in-house records were consulted, as well as records at the Library of Virginia in Richmond. Staff also interviewed longtime residents and former FCPL librarians for their experiences and recollections. Additionally, archivists and librarians at neighboring Northern Virginia libraries were queried for records and information about their own library systems' association with segregation.

This report is divided into two parts. The first details the history of FCPL and its segregationist past, a narrative which has never been fully examined before. The second segment investigates how neighboring Northern Virginia libraries, and libraries elsewhere in Virginia, had limitations in place when serving – or failed to serve – Black residents. It also highlights the vital contributions of Black Virginian citizens-turned-activists who worked to desegregate libraries that remained segregated even after they were legally mandated to integrate. It is the authors' hopes that this report will inspire others to further research and examine the history of segregation and public library systems.

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**Part I**

**Fairfax County Public Library in the Segregation Era, 1939-1962**

By Chris Barbuschak

## Introduction

In 1962, Bernice Lloyd Bell, a library student at the historically Black college, Atlanta University in Atlanta Georgia, began working on her thesis requirement for her Master of Science in Library Service degree. Bell sought to discover if progress had been made in making public library facilities available to Black residents in 13 Southern states since two similar surveys had been conducted in 1953. She sent out questionnaires to 290 libraries around the country, including 33 library systems in Virginia, asking a range of questions concerning integration. The results were incorporated into her August 1963 unpublished thesis, *Integration in Public Library Service in Thirteen Southern States, 1954-1962*.

Fairfax County Public Library (FCPL) was one of the library systems that responded to her survey. Although the completed six-page questionnaire, likely answered by FCPL Director Mary K. McCulloch, no longer exists, Bell compiled some of the responses into a table of statistics. According to the questionnaire, FCPL responded as always being open to all races.

The 1954 Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* which overruled “separate but equal” doctrine had no influence on FCPL’s decision to open up library facilities as they were already open to everyone by then. According to FCPL, it was generally known that Black citizens had free access to the library and its branches, however no special efforts were made to inform those residents of the services available to them. FCPL also included books by Black authors in their collection, but did not subscribe to Black magazines of special interest. Lastly, FCPL replied that they did not presently host story hours, nor was there a Black member on the Library Board of Trustees.<sup>1</sup>

States and Cities	Year of Integration	Influence of 1954 Supreme Court Decision	Economics of Integration	Generally known that Negro has Access to Main Library	Special Effort Made to Notify Negro of Services	Books by and about Negro in Collection	Magazines of Special Interest to Negro in Collection	Age Restriction	Negro Children Invited to Story Hour	Negro on Public Library Board
Virginia (Continued)										
Bedford	X1944	No	Nc	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Sn	No
Brookneal	X1939	No	Nc	Yes	No	Yes	NM	Na	Sn	No
Chatam	1940	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes* <sup>1</sup>	Yes	No
Courtland	X1958	Ns	Nc	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Culpeper	1946	No	Na	Yes	Yes	Yes	Na	No	Na	No
*Danville	196?	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Fairfax	X	No	Nc	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Sn	No

FCPL’s responses about integration to Bernice Lloyd Bell were included in her 1963 Master’s thesis *Integration in Public Library Service in Thirteen Southern States, 1954-1962*.

<sup>1</sup> Bell, Bernice Lloyd. *Integration in Public Library Service in Thirteen Southern States, 1954-1962*. Atlanta, GA: August 1963, 114.

Although FCPL responded to Bell's survey as always being open to all races, this was in fact not always the case. The Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees agreed to serve the Black residents of the county at one of their first Board meetings in 1940, however limiters were in place from the beginning. FCPL maintained a segregated book collection for both Blacks and Whites, segregated the bookmobile deposit stations, and at one point, entirely stopped bookmobile service to Black residents in the early 1940s. Simultaneously, FCPL partnered with already existing Fairfax County community libraries that only served White residents, further restricting access to library resources.

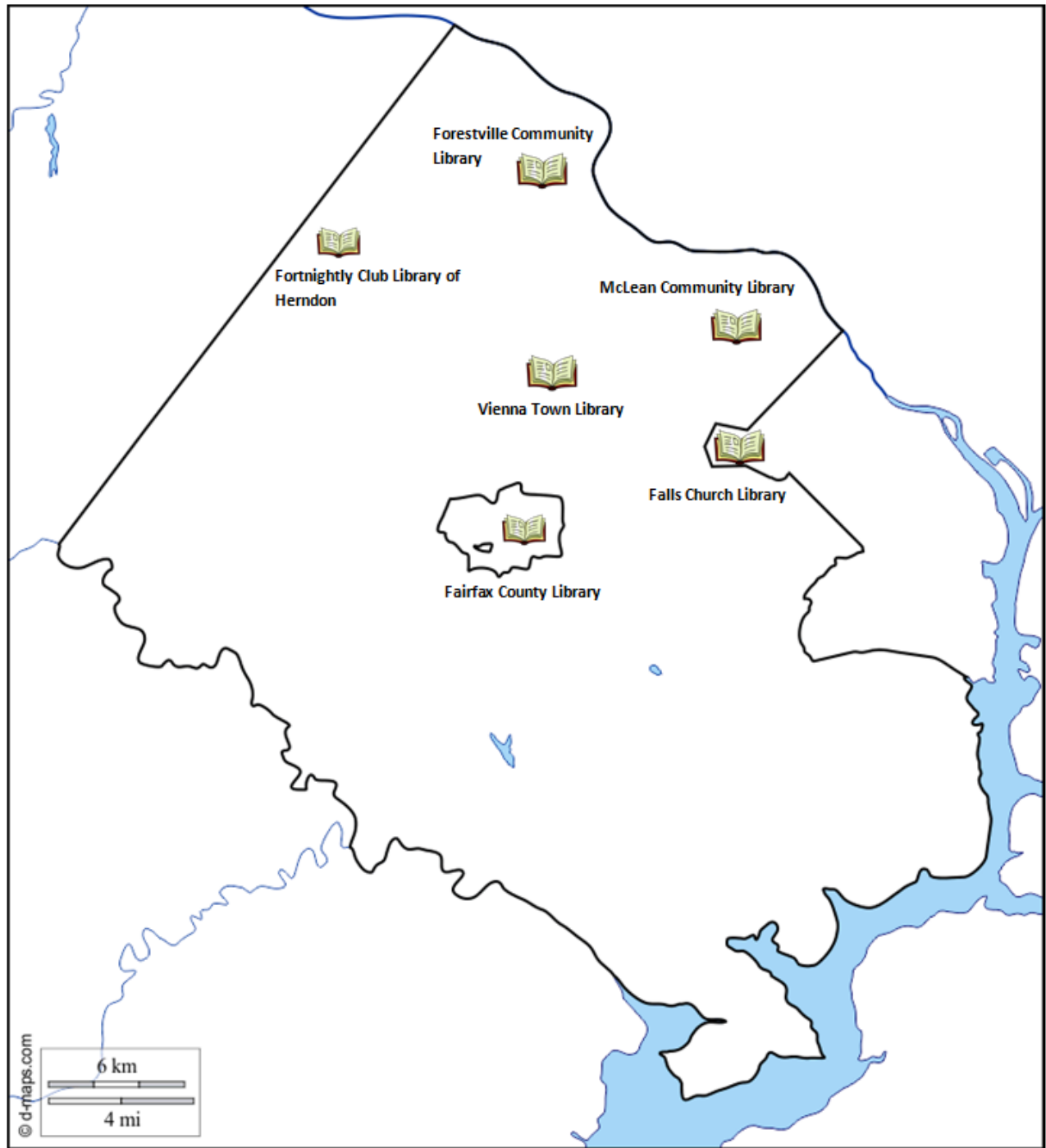
When FCPL opened its first publicly accessible library building in 1950, it is not clear if the building was open to everybody. Although the Library Board of Trustees directed the policy and operation of FCPL, their early policy documents and bylaws are presumed lost which contributes to this uncertainty. The Board's meeting minutes contain no record of their decision to allow FCPL facilities to be accessible to everyone. Four years after opening the first library, branch service began with the opening of Thomas Jefferson Library in 1954. Its opening is the first documented instance that an FCPL building was open to all citizens.

In 1989, historian Nan Netherton published *Books and Beyond: Fairfax County Public Library's First Fifty Years* which chronicled the history of the library system. Netherton, and the researchers who assisted her, found no written occurrences of library facilities ever being segregated. However, despite a thorough recounting of the library's history, the book did not fully examine the early limited services FCPL provided to the county's Black residents. This report uses surviving FCPL and State Library records, correspondence, meeting minutes, and personal recollections to remedy that omission.

### **Early Libraries in Fairfax County, Virginia**

Prior to the establishment of FCPL in 1939, individual communities and towns in Fairfax County formed their own libraries without professional assistance. There were at least six known small libraries: Fortnightly Club Library of Herndon (1889); Vienna Town Library (1897); Falls Church Library (1899); McLean Community Library (1915); Fairfax County Library (1929); and the Forestville (Great Falls) Community Library (1938). All but the Vienna Town Library eventually partnered with FCPL to serve as community libraries. Additionally, a few churches, schools, and clubs maintained small circulating libraries including the Annandale School (1904); Great Falls Episcopal Church (1933); Church of the Holy Comforter in Vienna (1936); and Vale Club (1937).

While founding charters, by-laws, or constitutional documents no longer survive for most of the six community libraries, by the time they partnered with FCPL in 1939 as unofficial branches, documentation confirms that all of them only served the White residents of Fairfax County. In time, all of the communities that had these volunteer-run libraries received their own FCPL branches. Of the original six libraries, two officially transitioned into FCPL branches: Dolley Madison in McLean (1956) and Herndon Fortnightly (1971).



**Map of Community and Town Libraries serving Fairfax County prior to the establishment of Fairfax County Public Library in 1939. All but Vienna later partnered with FCPL as unofficial community library branches and shared books from their collections.**



In 1927, the Good Templars donated a lot and the Herndon Fortnightly Club built this building at 660 Spring Street for their library. It was leased to Fairfax County Public Library in 1971. (*Herndon Historical Society*)

### **Fortnightly Club and Library Association of Herndon**

The Fortnightly Club of Herndon, one of the oldest federated women's clubs in Virginia, organized the first library in the county in 1889. The group was originally founded as a study club with 40 books in its collection.<sup>2</sup> The library formally opened to the public on May 28, 1900, and during its regular hours of operation it was reported to be "free to all".<sup>3</sup>

When the library incorporated in 1925 as the Fortnightly Club and Library Association, its charter made no mention of segregationist policies. However, when the library partnered with FCPL as a community library, FCPL circulation reports dating from the 1940s confirm that the Herndon Fortnightly Library maintained a "Whites only" policy. In May 2021, Barbara Glakas of the Herndon Historical Society spoke to twelve long-time residents of Herndon to gauge their recollections on whether the library was indeed segregated.

One White resident, a woman in her late 70s and who attended school in Herndon, recalled the library being segregated in the 1950s. Other White residents that Glakas interviewed did not recall if it was segregated, however half of them told her, "But it probably was since so many other things were segregated in town."<sup>4</sup> The Town of Herndon itself was generally segregated well into the 1960s. Mark Anderson, a former FCPL employee from 1989-2007, grew up in Herndon from 1952-1964, and remembered the Fortnightly Club Library having limiters in place in their service to Black residents.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Cox, Celeste. "Herndon Owes Library to Fortnightly Club". *Northern Virginia Sun*, August 12, 1958, 7.

<sup>3</sup> "The Herndon Library". *Fairfax Herald*, June 29, 1900, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Glakas, email message to Chris Barbuschak, May 12, 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Anderson, email message to Chris Barbuschak, May 10, 2021.



Glakas also interviewed a 93-year-old Black resident who grew up in Oak Grove, a historically Black community in Herndon. She moved to the area in 1939 and recalled, “I never went to that library,” because she “never tried or wanted to go. We knew not to.” She remembered that the Oak Grove School’s teachers lived in nearby Vienna and Washington, D.C. and they would bring books to the school for the children to use (in addition to textbooks provided by Fairfax County Public Schools).<sup>6</sup>

The Herndon Fortnightly Library officially became a part of the Fairfax County Public Library system in July 1971.



**The Vienna Town Library as it appeared in the early 1960s. The building was relocated to Mill Street in 1970 and is still extant today as the Little Library Museum. (FCPL)**

### **Vienna Town Library**

The Vienna Town Library, a small square clapboard building originally located at Library Lane and Maple Avenue, was the town’s first public library erected in 1897. The building was moved to the corner of Center Street, SE and Maple Avenue in 1912.<sup>7</sup> When the Vienna Library Association incorporated on November 7, 1913, they recorded their purpose as “to establish and maintain a circulating library for the use and benefit of the white inhabitants of said town and vicinity.”<sup>8</sup> The Vienna Library Association fiercely resisted pressure to integrate during the 1950s, which led to the creation of the Friends of the Library, Vienna, Virginia in 1958. The Friends’ efforts to have a library in town that equally provided materials and services to all residents culminated with the opening of FCPL’s Patrick Henry branch in 1962.

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<sup>6</sup> Barbara Glakas, email message to Chris Barbuschak, May 12, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Stuntz, Connie P, and Mayo S. Stuntz. *This Was Vienna, Virginia: Facts and Photos*. Vienna, Virginia, 1987, 239.

<sup>8</sup> “Vienna Library Association, Incorporated.” Fairfax County Charter Book 1, November 7, 1913, 314-316.

(c) The purposes for which it is formed are as follows: To establish and maintain a circulating library for the use and benefit of the white inhabitants of said town and vicinity and in order to promote or advance the necessary objects and purposes of such corporation to receive gifts and bequests of money or other property, and to confer upon the board of trustees the powers of making and altering by-laws in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia or not in conflict therewith.

The Vienna Library Association's "Whites only" policy as recorded in their 1913 charter.  
(Fairfax County Circuit Court)

### The First "County Library" in Fairfax County

Before FCPL's creation in 1939, a Fairfax County Library was already in existence. In November 1929, at the request of Thomas R. Keith and Professor Ormond Stone, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors gave approval for a room in the old Clerk's Office Building on the Fairfax Courthouse grounds to be used as a County Library. However, the Board stipulated that the county would have no connection or responsibility with it, nor would it provide the library with financial assistance.<sup>9</sup> During its decade-long existence, the library was known as the Fairfax County Library, but never officially designated as such.

In early February 1930, a committee of representative citizens formed the Fairfax County Library Association and elected as its president Mrs. Milton D. Hall, wife of the former Superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools.<sup>10</sup> The Association reached out to the community for financial assistance and donations of furniture, shelving, and books to create the library.

Initially, the Fairfax County Library was intended to be subscription based. Library cards were sent out to citizens requesting annual dues: an active member was \$1.00, a contributing member \$5.00, and a sustaining member \$25.00. However, by the time the library finally opened in 1932, the Association provided fully free service, but offered an optional sustaining membership. Private donations entirely supported the library and the Association appointed Lydia Palmer as its volunteer librarian.

After nearly three years of efforts, the Fairfax County Library opened on Friday, July 25, 1932, from 2:00-5:00 p.m. The entire book collection was donated by Fairfax County citizens. The library consisted of two rooms: a reading area and the old vault of the Clerk's office which

<sup>9</sup> Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Minute Book 5, November 6, 1929, 506.

<sup>10</sup> "County Library Plans Progressing". *Fairfax County Independent*, February 6, 1930, 1.



housed the books.<sup>11</sup> The library was segregated from the beginning. “Any white resident of Fairfax County is entitled to borrow books or use the library as a reading room during these hours,” reported the *Fairfax Herald* upon the library’s grand opening.<sup>12</sup>



**The first Fairfax County Library was located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the old Clerk’s Office. (FCPL)**

Subsequently, the County Library became somewhat of a nomad moving no less than five different times. In 1934, the library was forced to relocate into the basement of a county building because the old Clerks Office Building was torn down.<sup>13</sup> The library moved again in 1935 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the new Trial Justice Building.<sup>14</sup> In March 1938, the Board of Supervisors ordered the library to vacate its quarters again, and it moved into the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor auditorium of the old Fairfax Elementary School (now the Fairfax Museum & Visitor Center) which had previously been the meeting place for the local Klu Klux Klan chapter, the Cavaliers of Virginia.<sup>15</sup> It moved one final time later that year to Old Town Hall.

By 1938, Lydia Palmer had developed the library from humble beginnings into a well-equipped library of 4,500 books without any assistance from the county.<sup>16</sup> In February 1938, she appeared before the Board of Supervisors requesting that they include an appropriation for the Fairfax County Library in the 1939 budget. The county attorney reported that after reviewing State law, the Board first needed to establish a free county-wide library system and the Circuit Court had to appoint a library Board of Trustees before making an appropriation of county funds.<sup>17</sup> In lieu of

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<sup>11</sup> “County Library Rooms”. *Fairfax Herald*, October 30, 1931, 1.

<sup>12</sup> “To Be Opened”. *Fairfax Herald*, July 22, 1932, 1.

<sup>13</sup> “In New Location”. *Fairfax Herald*, January 19, 1934, 6.

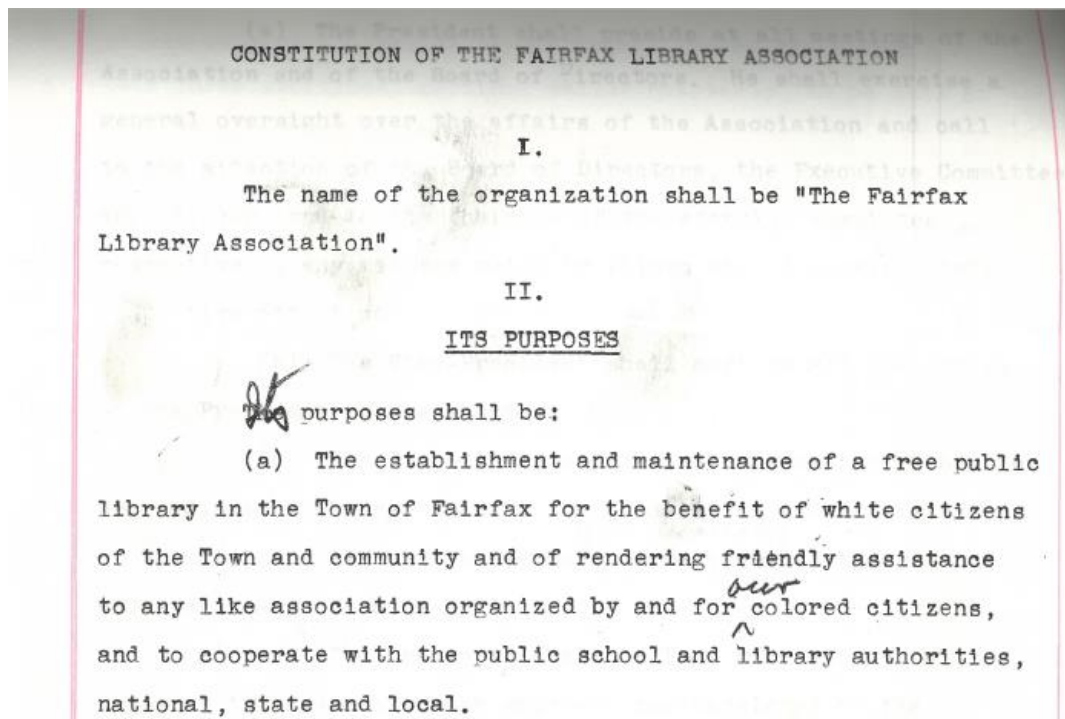
<sup>14</sup> “County Library Moves”. *Fairfax Herald*, January 11, 1935, 6.

<sup>15</sup> “Library Moved”. *Fairfax Herald*, March 4, 1938, 1.

<sup>16</sup> “Fairfax Library Moves”. *Fairfax Herald*, September 30, 1938, 1.

<sup>17</sup> Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Minute Book 8, February 2, 1938, 29.

these facts, the Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce organized a County Library Committee to petition the Board of Supervisors for the creation of a county free library system.



**The 1939 draft constitution of The Fairfax Library Association noted it would benefit the Town of Fairfax's White citizens and offer friendly assistance to similar Black library associations. (FCPL)**

### **Town of Fairfax Library**

With the establishment of the Fairfax County Public Library system in February 1939, the County Library, which finally had a permanent home in Old Town Hall in Fairfax, was reorganized as the Town of Fairfax Library. In June 1939, the Fairfax Town Library Association formed and elected officers.<sup>18</sup> In a draft constitution written by outgoing Association president John S. Barbour, he outlined their purpose to be “the establishment and maintenance of a free public library in the Town of Fairfax for the benefit of white citizens of the Town and community and of rendering friendly assistance to any like association organized by and for [our] colored citizens...”<sup>19</sup> The Association voted to adopt the constitution at their meeting on December 15, 1939.<sup>20</sup> Lydia Palmer, the original librarian of the County Library, continued to serve as librarian until retiring in 1940. The library was renamed the Huddleson Memorial Library in 1962, in honor of Nellie H. Huddleson, a co-founder of the Herndon Fortnightly Library and early supporter of the County Library. The library is still extant today on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of Old Town Hall.

<sup>18</sup> “Fairfax Library”. *Fairfax Herald*, June 23, 1939, 1.

<sup>19</sup> “Constitution of the Fairfax Library Association, 1930”. Fairfax County Public Library Records (unprocessed), MSS 10-01, Virginia Room, Fairfax County Public Library.

<sup>20</sup> “Library Association Meets”. *Fairfax Herald*, December 22, 1939, 6.

### **Fairfax County Public Library (FCPL) Is Established**

After nearly a decade of efforts to create a permanent county library, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors voted to establish a county free library system for the use and benefit of its residents on February 1, 1939. With this motion, the Fairfax County Public Library system was born. The Board requested that the Judge of the Circuit Court appoint a library board of five trustees of local citizens. One of the trustees was required by law to be the Superintendent of Public Schools.<sup>21</sup> The first board members appointed were: John F. Bethune, Ruth B. Hatch, Kitty Pozer, Kathryn Robinson and Superintendent Wilbert T. Woodson. These original Trustees were responsible for creating and directing the policy and the operation of the library system.

In March 1939, the Board of Supervisors reluctantly budgeted \$250 to fund the library.<sup>22</sup> Because that amount was insufficient for operation, the Trustees solicited assistance from the State Library Board and the federal Works Progress Administration (WPA). WPA agreed to make the Fairfax County Public Library a demonstration statewide library project. Under those terms, the WPA supported the loaning of a bookmobile with 1,000 books and financed salaries for the bookmobile driver, County Librarian, additional personnel, and the book collection.<sup>23</sup> The community libraries of Fairfax, Falls Church, Forestville (Great Falls), Herndon, McLean, and later for a brief time, Lorton, agreed to support the project by loaning their books for circulation. In return, books from FCPL would be deposited at the cooperating community libraries by the bookmobile.

The Library Board of Trustees appointed John S. Mehler as the system's first County Librarian in June 1940.<sup>24</sup> When the WPA bookmobile arrived in Fairfax the following month, FCPL held a special ceremony to welcome it on the Fairfax Courthouse green on July 30, 1940. It was attended by R. Walton Moore, members of the Board of Supervisors, circuit court, and other public officials.<sup>25</sup> Bookmobile service started almost immediately with the vehicle carrying books loaned from the WPA, the State library, and the participating community libraries.

Because the WPA required the bookmobile to be housed in a garage, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors agreed to build a 24x24 cinderblock library building with bookshelves and an attached garage for \$1,090 in June 1940.<sup>26</sup> It was completed later that summer. The building was not accessible to the public nor did it have a reading room. It only served as the office headquarters for the bookmobile and library staff for the next decade.

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<sup>21</sup> Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Minute Book 8, February 1, 1939, 299.

<sup>22</sup> Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Minute Book 8, March 15, 1939, 331.

<sup>23</sup> Netherton, Nan. *Books and Beyond: Fairfax County Public Library's First Fifty Years*. Fairfax, VA: Fairfax County Public Library, 1989, 1.

<sup>24</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, June 21, 1940.

<sup>25</sup> ""Bookmobile" Will Arrive For Fairfax Next Tuesday". *The Sun* (Arlington, Va.), July 26, 1940, 1.

<sup>26</sup> Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Minute Book 9, June 5, 1940, 135.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
Fairfax County Free Library

Summary of statements concerning cooperation with local community libraries, as made at a meeting of the Board of Trustees with representatives of local libraries at Fairfax Court House on September 11, 1939.

1. The Board of Trustees, appointed by the Judge of the Circuit Court, will function under State law in conjunction with the State Library Board and the W. P. A., a federal agency.
2. The Board of Trustees will operate the Fairfax County Free Library in cooperation with the foregoing State and federal agencies and with those local community libraries which desire to cooperate and to participate in the benefits of the system.
3. Each existing community library will continue under its own management.
4. The County Librarian will have general direction of library operation, under the supervision of the Board of Trustees, and will cooperate with and assist the community libraries to make their service more effective.
5. Assistants, such as clerks, typists, bookbinders, and others, assigned to local libraries through the Board of Trustees, will work under the general direction of the County Librarian without cost to the local libraries.
6. Funds raised by local libraries will be disbursed at the discretion of their respective managers.
7. Funds appropriated for or contributed to the County Free Library will be disbursed by the Board of Trustees.
8. Books contributed by State and federal agencies will be available for circulation through all community libraries.
9. Books made available by the local libraries for circulation throughout the county will remain the property of the contributing library.
10. For each book made available and accepted for county-wide circulation the Board of Trustees will be credited by W. P. A. with twenty-five cents as local contribution to be matched by one dollar of W.P.A. funds in operation of the County Library, represented by books, County Librarian's salary, bookmobile (book truck library), drivers, bookbinders, clerks, typists, etc.
11. Books made available by local libraries for circulation may not be withdrawn from circulation within one year after their acceptance.
12. Books allocated and marked for colored readers will not be available to white readers, and vice versa.
13. Several thousand new books will be made available through the Board of Trustees. Local libraries will be called upon to prepare lists of books desired for this distribution. These books will remain the property of the Board of Trustees, available to local libraries.
14. The bookmobile and operators thereof will be under the immediate direction of the County Librarian and the supervision of the Board of Trustees.

Statement No. 12 records that the original Library Board of Trustees agreed to maintain a segregated book collection during their 3<sup>rd</sup> board meeting on September 11, 1939. (FCPL)



### FCPL Extends Service to Black Residents

At the third meeting of the Library Board of Trustees held on September 11, 1939, the trustees met with representatives of the existing community libraries and discussed how they could all cooperate together. A series of numbered statements made at the meeting were recorded by Chairman John F. Bethune one of which was, "Books allocated and marked for colored readers will not be available to white readers, and vice versa."<sup>27</sup> However, these numbered statements were not recorded in the official Library Board of Trustees minutes and only survive because John S. Barbour, president of the Fairfax Library Committee, retained them in his law office files.

No further discussion occurred about offering service to Black residents until the eighth meeting of the Library Board of Trustees on July 22, 1940. This was the second meeting since the hiring of the County Librarian. The first topic of discussion was County Librarian Mehler's suggestion that FCPL provide service to Black residents. One of the questions posed was, if it was to be offered, what type and how much service should be provided? The Board's minutes recorded that they agreed to offer it:

"Under the setup of this project negroes should be served. As none of the books from the various community libraries will be available for negro service other books will have to be provided. The Extension Division State Library can furnish 400 children's books, 100 books for children of High School age, and 50 books for adults. Whether these will be sufficient we will have to wait until operations start to see."<sup>28</sup>

This statement confirms that all existing Fairfax County community libraries were segregated at the time, and that FCPL itself would maintain an entirely segregated book collection for the county's Black residents as was previously discussed at their September 1939 meeting.

1. Negro service. *yes.*

A. Is it to be offered? If so, what type and how much?

Under the setup of this project negroes should be served. As none of the books from the various community libraries will be available for negro service other books will have to be provided. The Extension Division State Library can furnish 400 children's books, 100 books for children of High School age, and 50 books for adults. Whether these will be sufficient we will have to wait until operations start to see.

Minutes from the July 22, 1940 Board meeting record FCPL agreeing to offer service to Black residents. Handwritten notes "Yes" and "OK as is" were penciled in next to the statement. (FCPL)

<sup>27</sup> "Board of Trustees Fairfax County Free Library Summary of Statements..." Fairfax County Public Library Records (unprocessed), MSS 10-01, Virginia Room, Fairfax County Public Library.

<sup>28</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, July 22, 1940.

Despite previously approving service to Black residents, the question came up again five months later at the Library Board of Trustees meeting on December 10, 1940. By then, Mehler had just retired as County Librarian in November, and the Board appointed Dorothea C. Asher as his replacement. The minutes reported:

“The subject of service to negroes was discussed, and it was agreed that this service should be established in Fairfax. Books for negro use have been loaned by the Virginia State Library Extension Division”.<sup>29</sup>

Asher established a Fairfax “Colored” deposit station and made a contact to establish a Falls Church “Colored” station by the following Library Board meeting on January 14, 1941.<sup>30</sup> FCPL’s deposit stations were placed in either homes or stores and the bookmobile would drop off books to be read by the local residents usually on a monthly schedule. During its first month of operation, the Fairfax “Colored” station had 4 adults and 2 children register as FCPL borrowers and they checked out 9 adult and 2 juvenile fiction titles.<sup>31</sup> The Falls Church “Colored” station was up and running by the following Library Board meeting on February 11, 1941.<sup>32</sup> The exact locations and conditions of these two deposit stations are unknown.

While the segregated book collection was no doubt the reason for the two book deposit stations being segregated themselves, the practice of employing racially restrictive covenants in neighborhoods by Fairfax County real estate developers, property owners, and citizens associations was also a contributing factor. Restrictive covenants, which were written into land deeds recorded at the Fairfax County Courthouse, explicitly prevented Blacks and other people of color from purchasing homes in new housing developments. These covenants created a very segregated Fairfax County. The practice was finally outlawed in 1968 when Congress passed the Fair Housing Act. But until then, Black residents had limiters in place when it came to where they could live and purchase property in the county. Consequently, the Fairfax and Falls Church “Colored” stations would have been placed in Black neighborhoods.

The Black residents of the county had access to library books only through those two deposit stations, and it is unknown how accessible they really were. Conversely, White residents could obtain library books and register for library cards through multiple bookmobile stops, deposit stations, school library branches, and community library branches conveniently placed around the county.

As the County Librarian, Dorothea Asher was required to submit detailed weekly work reports to the State Library in Richmond. She meticulously chronicled her daily tasks, the bookmobile routes she travelled, conditions of bookmobile stops, stations, and community libraries, individuals and groups she met with, and her personal observations and opinions about the library system. Some of her entries describe how she interacted with the local Black community:

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<sup>29</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, December 10, 1940.

<sup>30</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, January 14, 1941.

<sup>31</sup> “Monthly Report on Demonstration Area, Statewide Library Project, WPA, Virginia”, January 1941. Fairfax County Public Library Records (unprocessed), MSS 10-01, Virginia Room, Fairfax County Public Library.

<sup>32</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, February 11, 1941.

**Saturday, January 4, 1941:** “Made fire; Interviewed two women about a colored deposit.”

**Monday, January 13, 1941:** “Fairfax Town Library- appointment with Mrs. Sweet and talked to her about the negro deposit in Fairfax...Took colored deposit.”

**Thursday February 27, 1941:** “Deposit to Falls Church colored station.”

**Saturday, May 17, 1941:** “Went to Arlington to try to see about a worker for a colored unit. Saw the library, but the person in charge teaches in Washington.”

**Thursday, June 6, 1941:** “Made Fairfax Colored deposit.”<sup>33</sup>



Left to right: Dorothea Asher, County Librarian; Capt. John F. Bethune, Library Board Chairman; and Major W.H. Hitchcock, U.S. Army Director of Recreation and Publicity at Fort Belvoir in 1941 with the first FCPL Bookmobile loaned by the WPA. (FCPL)

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<sup>33</sup> Weekly Reports of Project Technicians and Assistant Project Technicians, 1941. Fairfax County Public Library Records (unprocessed), MSS 10-01, Virginia Room, Fairfax County Public Library.

Surviving library records do not indicate if any additional bookmobile deposit stations or stops were established specifically for the Black community. In June 1942, there were 79 bookmobile side-service stops around the county.<sup>34</sup> By 1945, “Colored” deposit stations appear to have been discontinued all together. In April 1945, FCPL undertook a thorough reorganization of bookmobile service under Margaret Edwards, the new County Librarian appointed by the Library Board in 1944. She eliminated many stations and stops and set a definite arrival and departure time for each. The 1945-1946 bookmobile schedule no longer lists the Fairfax and Falls Church “Colored” stations nor any new segregated stations or stops.

If this was the case, Black residents were not provided any library service by FCPL for a few years in the early 1940s. In addition to not being able to access a book deposit station or the bookmobile itself, those residents could also not access the independent community libraries. Surviving FCPL monthly records of circulation, registration, and book stock for partnering community libraries confirm this. The monthly record form had a prompt asking whether service was provided to Whites, Blacks, or both. All extant forms from 1942-1943 were answered as “White” only. Grids designated for “Negro Borrower Registration” statistics are left blank or crossed out on every monthly record for the Forrestville (Great Falls), Falls Church, Herndon Fortnightly Club, Lorton, and McLean Community Libraries.

Surviving FCPL records provide no clues as to why service to Black residents was discontinued in the early 1940s. Simultaneously, FCPL was struggling in 1941 with financial problems, staff resignations, and wartime demands. By 1942, WPA assistance was entirely withdrawn and the county became responsible for operating the library. However, throughout these struggles, FCPL continued to establish new bookmobile stops and expand library access in White communities.<sup>35</sup>

It is possible that FCPL deemed the Fairfax and Falls Church “Colored” stations as having low circulation. FCPL began recording library statistics in November 1940. These included records of book stock, circulation, borrower registration, bookmobile service, and operational costs. When service began for the county’s Black residents at the Fairfax “Colored” Station in January 1941, statistics were kept for the registrants and the type of books circulated to the Black community. These statistics were maintained for less than a year, ending in October 1941. For subsequent monthly reports in 1942, designated columns for those statistics were left blank and White statistics were written over them. Within that ten-month period, 1,179 White residents registered for a library card, while only 46 Black residents became new registrants. Table 1 and Table 2 illustrate how the White population was better served than the county’s Black residents.

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<sup>34</sup> “Public Library Statistical Report”, June 30, 1942, Fairfax County Public Library Records (unprocessed), MSS 10-01, Virginia Room, Fairfax County Public Library.

<sup>35</sup> Petrie, Patricia. “The Fairfax County Public Library 1939-1962”. 1962, 3.



**Table 1**  
**Circulation Statistics, January-October 1941**<sup>36</sup>

<b><u>1941</u></b>	<b><u>White Fiction</u></b>	<b><u>White Non-Fiction</u></b>	<b><u>Black Fiction</u></b>	<b><u>Black Non-Fiction</u></b>
January	2949	502	11	0
February	3125	412	21	10
March	3011	355	21	3
April	3233	511	36	7
May	2912	482	39	12
June	3073	635	10	7
July	4034	692	18	4
August	4109	778	10	5
September	3925	740	12	3
October	4168	626	16	0
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>34539</b>	<b>5733</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>51</b>

**Table 2**  
**New Registrant Statistics, January-October 1941**<sup>37</sup>

<b><u>1941</u></b>	<b><u>White Adults</u></b>	<b><u>White Juveniles</u></b>	<b><u>Black Adults</u></b>	<b><u>Black Juveniles</u></b>
January	222	122	4	2
February	162	97	5	0
March	113	54	5	3
April	93	29	2	1
May	120	59	1	0
June	118	86	0	0
July	92	61	0	0
August	80	47	3	8
September	51	19	0	0
October	115	39	7	4
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>1166</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>18</b>

<sup>36</sup> Monthly Reports on Demonstration Area, Statewide Library Project, WPA, Virginia, 1941. MSS 10-01, Fairfax County Public Library Records (unprocessed), Virginia Room, Fairfax County Public Library.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

For Deposit Stations (Schools and community libraries, stores, homes, etc.) where WPA workers are not employed, or where total circulation is not reported on WPA Form #10

Name of demonstration area

Service to: white White  
(Indicate whether white, negro, or both)

Type of Community Library  
Station Community Library  
(School, store, community library, etc.)

BORROWER REGISTR/TICU			
	Reported	New this	
	Last month	month	Total
WHITE			
Adult	89	1	90
Juvenile			
Total			90

NFCRO			
Adult			
Juvenile	////////		
Total			
		TOTAL	

(Books permanently located here)

On hand first of month	During Month			On hand at end of month
	Donated	Pur- chased	Dis- carded	
631	2	-	-	633
				633

Reviewed by \_\_\_\_\_

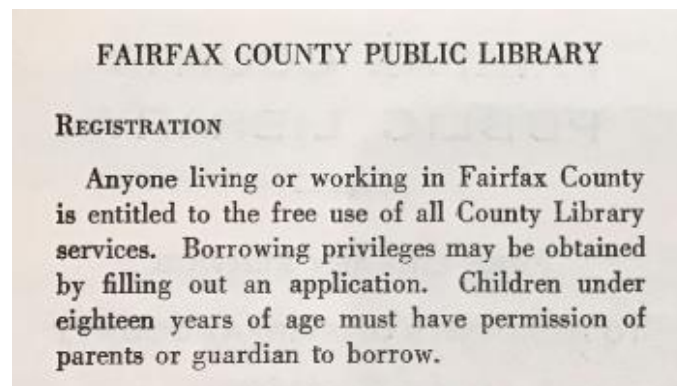
An example of an FCPL monthly record form for the partnering Forestville (Great Falls) Community Library. Completed in January 1942 by Laura V. Moore, the Forestville librarian, she notes the library only provided service to Whites and crossed out the box for Black registration statistics. (FCPL)

Beginning in 1944, the Extension Division of the Virginia State Library began publishing annual statistics of all public libraries in the state. They mailed out surveys to every public library and compiled the resulting data in their report *Statistics of Virginia Public Libraries*. For their 1944-1945 and 1945-1946 reports, the Extension Division designated a “Service to Negroes” column in their table of statistics. A checkmark indicated whether a system’s main library or its branches served the Black community.

The County Librarian was responsible for completing the Extension Division’s annual survey. In the 1944-1945 report, Margaret Edwards reported that FCPL did not provide service to Black residents.<sup>38</sup> However, in the 1945-1946 report, newly appointed County Librarian, Ruth Ashburn, stated that the main branch did provide such service.<sup>39</sup>

Subsequent Virginia State Library reports no longer designated a column for “Service to Negroes” presumably because of the new law passed as Chapter 170 of the 1946 Acts of Assembly which required libraries who received state aid to serve all residents. That law, which still appears in the Code of Virginia today under § 42.1-55 reads, “The service of books in library systems and libraries receiving state aid shall be free and shall be made available to all persons living in the county, region, or municipality.”<sup>40</sup> Due to the vagueness of the language “made available”, many libraries in the Commonwealth could still get away with segregated library service.

FCPL incorporated that language in a flyer they produced advertising service after ceremoniously launching a new larger bookmobile in July 1948. It included the text, “Anyone living or working in Fairfax County is entitled to the free use of all County Library services.”<sup>41</sup> If FCPL reestablished deposit stations or bookmobile stops in Black communities then, it is not visibly apparent in extant records.



**An excerpt from a 1948 FCPL brochure advertising bookmobile services proclaimed that anyone living or working in Fairfax County was entitled to free use of all County Library services. (*Library of Virginia*)**

<sup>38</sup> *Statistics of Virginia Public Libraries*. Richmond: Extension Division, Virginia State Library, 1945.

<sup>39</sup> *Statistics of Virginia Public Libraries*. Richmond: Extension Division, Virginia State Library, 1946.

<sup>40</sup> Virginia General Assembly. “§ 42.1-55. Free Service Available to All.” Code of Virginia Code - Chapter 3. State and Federal Aid, 2021. Accessed June 4, 2021. <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodefull/title42.1/chapter3/>.

<sup>41</sup> “Fairfax County Public Library” Brochure, 1948, Records of the Public Library Development Division of the Virginia State Library and Archives, 1920-1992. Accession 35467, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, Box 15, Folder 3.



# STATISTICS OF VIRGINIA PUBLIC LIBRARIES, 1944-1945

LIBRARY	LIBRARIAN	DATE ESTABLISHED	POPULATION 1940 CENSUS	INCOME					PER CAPITA INCOME	TOTAL VOLUMES	TOTAL CIRCULATION	HOURS PER WEEK	SERVICE TO NEGROES (f)	
				County	City or Town	School	Other	State Aid					Main Library	Branch
<b>REGIONAL LIBRARY:</b> Southside Regional (Mecklenburg and Lunenburg Counties) Chase City (a)	Mrs. Peggy H. Dolan	1944	45,777	\$6,850.00	\$ 630.00	\$	\$ 144.77	\$ 725.00	\$8,349.77	22,236	64,737	39	X	
<b>COUNTY LIBRARIES:</b>														
Alleghany	Charles P. Jones Memorial, (a)	1929	22,688	1,200.00	1,800.00		275.10	500.00	3,775.10	12,026	42,003	40		X
Arlington	Mrs. Mildred G. Blattner	1935	57,040	25,000.00			1,000.00	1,000.00	26,000.00	29,521	149,864	48		
Brunswick	Mrs. Edith R. Clanton	1940	19,575	3,231.95			135.64	650.00	4,007.59	7,616	42,793	48	X	
Charlotte	Charles County Public, (a)	1937	15,891				5,333.07	1,000.00	6,333.07	8,835	17,835	38	X	
Elizabeth City	Charles H. Taylor Memorial, (a)	1926	38,181	1,000.00	1,350.00	1,050.00	1,540.92	780.00	5,720.92	18,219	57,367	36		
Fairfax	Margaret Edwards	1940	40,929	6,550.00			68.96	1,000.00	7,618.96	24,839	113,512(e)	43		
Franklin	Mrs. Cabell Smith	1941	25,864	1,590.00			2,167.21	1,000.00	4,757.21	10,343	17,361	39	X	
Halifax	Sterling Bagby	1938	41,271	1,500.00		1,420.00	42.60		2,962.60	11,331	19,813	43	X	
Hanover	Ruth Ashburn	1936	18,500	3,000.00			1,781.00	1,000.00	5,781.00	11,124	32,769	48		
Loudoun	Dahlia E. Callis	1923	7,149	3,000.00			12.00	3,907.86	6,919.86	6,613	18,000	36		X
Mathews														
Montgomery	Mrs. Elizabeth W. Farley	1940	15,556	3,300.00	730.00		50.00	800.00	4,870.00	7,343	26,452	23	X	
Netoway	L. Louise Clark	1940	18,613	1,000.00	1,000.00	150.00	40.00		2,190.00	4,947	7,523	60	X	
Patrick	Mrs. Mamie Whitehead	1939	61,697	3,946.00			42.33		3,988.33	9,395	33,466	45	X	
Pittsylvania	Mrs. Grace M. Carnahan	1937	22,767	2,666.66	1,333.34		784.00	1,000.00	5,784.00	7,564	68,532	54	X	
Pulaski	Mrs. Blanche B. Pedneau	1932	42,897	1,500.00			800.00		2,300.00	3,428	18,700	18		
Roanoke	Florence B. Yoder	1928	40,057	1,175.00	2,165.00		990.00	1,000.00	5,330.00	13,000	42,741	42		X
Rockingham														
Harrisonburg														
<b>TOTAL</b>				\$66,559.61	\$ 8,998.34	\$2,620.00	\$14,207.60	\$14,362.86	\$106,748.41	208,880	773,468			

1944-1945 statistics for FCPL indicate that they were not providing service to Fairfax County's Black residents. (FCPL)

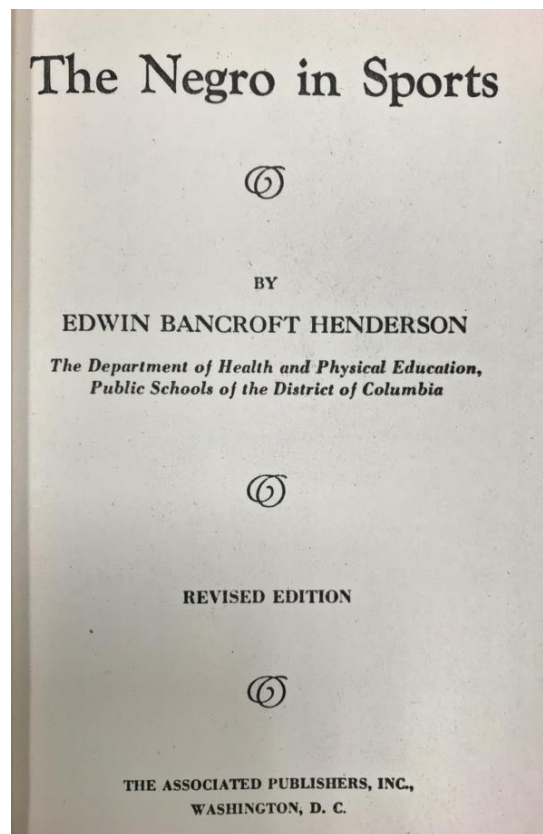
LIBRARY	LIBRARIAN	DATE ESTABLISHED	POPULATION 1940 CENSUS*	INCOME					PER CAPITA INCOME	TOTAL VOLUMES	TOTAL CIRCULATION	HOURS PER WEEK	SERVICE TO NEGROES		
				County	City or Town	School	Other	State Aid					Total	Main Library	Branch
REGIONAL LIBRARIES:															
Southside Regional (Niedlenburg and Lunenburg Counties) Boydton (a)	Peggy Hampton	1944	45,777	\$7,000.00	\$ 890.00	\$	\$1,050.25	\$2,569.94	\$11,510.29	18,326	81,554	39	X		
COUNTY LIBRARIES:															
Alleghany Charles P. Jones Memorial, (a)	Helen N. Leitch	1929	22,688	1,200.00	1,800.00		364.18	600.00	3,064.18	13,828	43,568	36		X	
Arlington Mrs. Mildred G. Blatner		1935	57,040	31,815.00				999.88	32,814.88	34,555	181,985	53		X	
Brunswick Sarah Matthews, Act.		1940	19,575	3,300.00			118.91	632.33	4,071.24	7,881	36,001	43		X	
Charlotte Charlotte County Public, Charlotte C. H.	Mrs. Ruth Eggleston, Act.	1937	15,861				5,294.23	1,000.00	6,294.23	9,889	16,985	38		X	
Elizabeth City Charles H. Taylor Memorial, Hampton	Ruth Brisco	1926	38,181	1,250.00	1,350.00	1,030.00	2,255.80	1,000.00	6,905.80	15	19,003	59,110	36	X	
Fairfax Fair County Public, (a) (b)	Ruth Ashburn	1940	40,929	8,400.00			304.10	1,000.00	9,704.10	23	8,341	98,754	43	X	
Franklin Mrs. Cabell Smith		1941	25,864	3,143.06		300.00	861.84	1,000.00	5,304.90	20	16,078	17,252	39		X
Halifax Sterling Bagby		1938	41,271	2,000.00		2,200.00	61.34	999.78	5,261.12	12	12,470	85,968(b)	40½		X
Hanover Kitty Winston, Act.		1942	18,500	2,549.59			30.00		2,579.59	13	5,707	1,503	36		X
Loudoun Elizabeth Jane Culkia		1936	20,291	3,000.00			2,541.00	999.51	6,540.51	32	11,045	31,208	48		X
Mathews Dablia E. Callia, Act.		1923	7,149	3,000.00				1,000.00	4,000.00	55	6,613	3,098	30½		X
Montgomery Montgomery County Public, (c)	Mrs. Edith M. Jones, Act.	1940	15,556	3,300.00	720.00		162.73	\$12.89	4,695.62	30	7,626	20,027	23		X
Nottoway Nottoway County, L. Louise Clark		1940	16,613	1,000.00	1,000.00		46.00		2,046.00	12	5,355	8,576	39		X
Patriek Fitzhugh County Public, (a)	Mrs. Mamie Whitehead, A	1939	61,697	3,946.00			83.70		4,029.70	66	8,232	25,897	42		X
Pulaski Pulaski County Free, (a)	Mrs. Grace M. Carnahan	1937	22,767	3,333.33	1,666.67		1,187.06	1,000.00	7,187.06	31	9,642	71,074	49		X
Roanoke Roanoke County Public, (a) (d)	Mrs. Blanche B. Pedneau	1932	42,897	2,712.00	2,475.00	1,200.00	1,527.88	5,000.00	12,014.88	30	7,981	36,128	62		X
Rockingham Rockingham Public, (a)	Florence Yoder	1928	40,057	1,750.00	3,515.00		805.00	1,499.34	7,869.34	18	14,073	44,853	54		X
Smyth Smyth County, (a) (e)	Katrina Umberger	1946	28,861	290.00	120.00	3,450.00		5,000.00	8,800.00	30	14,064	22,380	36		X
TOTAL			581,574	\$52,988.98	\$13,536.67	\$8,200.00	\$16,694.12	\$24,833.67	\$146,253.44		229,119	858,901			

1945-1946 statistics for FCPL document the Main Library as now providing service to Black residents. (FCPL)

### FCPL Acquires Books by Black Authors

In May 1945, County Librarian Margaret Edwards wrote to the Extension Division of the State Library requesting a list of books by Black authors. On June 1, 1945, Ernestine Grafton, the head of the Extension Division, provided her with a bibliography of Black literature compiled by Mollie Huston Lee.<sup>42</sup> Lee was the first Black librarian in Wake County, North Carolina, and founded the Richard B. Harrison Public Library in Raleigh. It was the first library in that city to serve the Black population when it opened in November 1935.

Evidently, Edwards acquired books from Lee's list because the June 16, 1945, issue of the *Fairfax Journal* featured the headline, "Fairfax Library Has Four Books on Negroes". One of those books included *The Negro in Sports* by Edwin B. Henderson, a local Falls Church resident and founder of the NAACP Fairfax County chapter in 1918. The *Journal* article went on to encourage Fairfax County readers to become more familiar with the struggles of Black Americans through reading.<sup>43</sup>



Title page from FCPL's existing copy of *The Negro in Sports*. The 1945 copy was deaccessioned at some point and replaced in December 1978 with this copy now in the Virginia Room's collection. (FCPL)

<sup>42</sup> Letter, Ernestine Grafton to Margaret Edwards, June 1, 1945, Records of the Public Library Development Division of the Virginia State Library and Archives, 1920-1992. Accession 35467, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, Box 15, Folder 4.

<sup>43</sup> Netherton, Nan. *Books and Beyond: Fairfax County Public Library's First Fifty Years*. Fairfax, VA: Fairfax County Public Library, 1989, 3-4.

### **FCPL's Collaboration with Fairfax County Public Schools**

When the library system was established in 1939, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), like the rest of the state of Virginia, continued to maintain a segregated school system. The Public Free Schools Act passed in 1870 stipulated that school districts in the state were to be separated for White and Black students. FCPS did not offer high school education until 1907, at which time it was only available to White children. At their own expense, Black students were forced to travel to Manassas or Washington, D.C. to attend high school until 1954, when FCPS opened the segregated Luther Jackson High School.

There were 16 “Colored” elementary schools in operation during the 1939-1940 school year when FCPL was created. 15 of those schools had some sort of classroom library for its students, although they were by no means equally created or maintained (See Table 3). One school, Woodlawn, only had two books in its entire library. Other schools were more fortunate and had dictionaries, encyclopedias, and additional books. Bailey’s School had one of the biggest libraries during the 1939-1940 school year with 245 books in each of its two classrooms.

Black school libraries were assembled in a variety of ways when FCPS did not provide tattered well-worn books formerly used by White students. School Board minutes record that on some occasions, FCPS acquired “Rosenwald Library Units” for Black schools. Mostly though, it was PTAs, school leagues, clubs, and parents who donated books to the schools. Local Black communities or the schools would host parties, luncheons, rallies, and carnivals to raise funds for needed school supplies. In December 1940, the Fairfax “Colored” School League gifted its school a \$60 library unit.<sup>44</sup>

In many instances, the teachers raised money and, in some cases, used their own cash to acquire books and other materials for their classrooms. During the 1944-1945 school year, Mrs. Mildred Jennings, a teacher at the Falls Church School, received \$19.41 from her class and purchased books, tacks, and posters.<sup>45</sup> In that same school year, Mrs. Annie M. Moore improved the Odricks School library with \$15.19 she had received from a variety of fundraisers.<sup>46</sup> Historical FCPS school reports contain multiple documented instances of such private purchases of books which should have been supplied by county funds.

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<sup>44</sup> “Colored School News”. *Fairfax Herald*, December 20, 1940, 1.

<sup>45</sup> Russell-Porte, Evelyn D. *A History of Education for Black Students in Fairfax County Prior to 1954*. Blacksburg, Va.: University Libraries, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2000, 127.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 207.

**Table 3**  
**Library Conditions in Operating FCPS “Colored” Schools, 1938-1940**

Data compiled from 1938-1940 principal term reports<sup>47</sup>

<u>“Colored” Schools</u>	<u>Had a Library?</u>	<u>Description</u>
Baileys (2-Room)	✓	Each classroom had a dictionary and an encyclopedia. 245 books in each classroom’s library in 1939-40.
Chesterbrook (Rented Church)	✓	No dictionary or encyclopedia. The school had 40 books at the beginning of the 1938-39 school year and 52 at the end of the year in its room library.
Clifton (2-Room)	✓	No dictionary or encyclopedia, but the school had a bookcase with 27 books in 1938-39.
Cub Run (2-Room)	✓	The school had an encyclopedia and a room library with 258 books at the end of the 1938-39 school year.
Fairfax (2-Room)	✓	No dictionary or encyclopedia. One classroom had 72 books and the other had 50 books in 1939-40.
Falls Church (2-Room)	✓	Two dictionaries, but no encyclopedias. One classroom had 65 books and the other had 50 or 60 (the number is partially illegible) in their room libraries.
Floris (2-Room)	✓	Each classroom had a dictionary and an encyclopedia. There were 135 books in one room’s library and 75 in the other room’s library in 1939-40.
Gum Springs (2-Room)	✓	No dictionaries, no encyclopedias. Only 2 books in each classroom’s library.
Vienna (Louise Archer) (3-Room)	✓	There was one dictionary in the school and three encyclopedia sets. Each classroom had a room library and added books throughout the 1939-40 school year as follows: Room 1: 46 at the beginning of the year, added 37, end of year total 83; Room 2: 30 at the beginning of the year, added 6, end of year total 36; Room 3: 75 at the beginning of the year, added 10, end of year total 85.
Merrifield (2-Room)	No Record Filed	Didn’t have a library until 1942.
Mount Pleasant (1-Room)	✓	No dictionary or encyclopedia. The school had 158 books in a bookcase at 1938-39 school year’s end.
Oak Grove (2-Room)	✓	No dictionaries or encyclopedias. There were 81 books in each classroom’s library in 1939-40.
Odrick’s Corner (1-Room)	✓	The school had a dictionary and an encyclopedia and a library cabinet with 118 books in it in 1938-39.
Pearson (1-Room)	✓	The school had a dictionary but no encyclopedia. There was a book cabinet with 40 books in it in 1938-39.
Spring Bank (1-Room)	✓	The school had no dictionary, but it did have an encyclopedia. There was a bookcase with 60 books in it.
Woodlawn (1-Room)	✓	No dictionary, no encyclopedia, and only 2 books in the school’s library.

<sup>47</sup> Jeff Clark, Video Producer, Fairfax County Public Schools, email message to Chris Barbuschak, June 11, 2021.



When the Library Board of Trustees agreed to offer service to Black patrons in July 1940, they also agreed that service should be given to the schools and that they be made depositories through an agreement with FCPS.<sup>48</sup> One month later, the Fairfax County School Board invited C.W. Dickinson, Jr., Director of School Libraries and Textbooks for the State Department of Education, to discuss potential relations between the Fairfax County School Board and the Library Board of Trustees. At the August 20, 1940 School Board meeting, Dickinson suggested that they appoint a committee to prepare a contract between the two boards regarding the handling and distributing of library books amongst the schools. The School Board agreed and directed Dickinson to prepare the agreement.<sup>49</sup>

On October 1, 1940, Library Board Trustee and Superintendent of Schools Wilbert T. Woodson presented Dickinson's submitted proposed agreement to the School Board. The memorandum of agreement stipulated that FCPL would house a collection of public school library books purchased by the School Board for circulation to public school children and adults. It further specified that "all state and county public school book funds appropriated for county-wide library service shall be used for the purchase of books and other materials needed in the general public education program for adults and children of both races."<sup>50</sup>

The books were to be circulated at regular intervals during the school term and through convenient county-wide loan stations during the summer. Books for adult readers were to be circulated from existing library deposit stations which included public school buildings during the regular school term. In return, the School Board agreed to furnish library supplies needed to maintain the school library book collection. The School Board approved the agreement and revised it again on March 13, 1943.<sup>51</sup> Despite the revisions, the agreement always stipulated that books were to be purchased for both races.

Evidence indicates that the Black schools did not receive the School Board purchased book units nor the same type of service given to the White schools during the 1940s. FCPL's 1945-1946 annual report notes, "The regular deposit of 25 books (recreational type) to each of 16 elementary White schools in the County was changed this year to a deposit of 40 books every other month".<sup>52</sup> Surviving FCPL circulation reports for school libraries from 1945-1949 contain only a single instance of a deposit being made at a Black school. On May 13, 1948, Principal B. Oswald Robinson signed off that 80 books were circulated at Louise Archer (Vienna "Colored") Elementary School.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, July 22, 1940.

<sup>49</sup> Fairfax County School Board Minutes, August 20, 1940,  
<https://insys.fcps.edu/schoolboardapps/ArchivedSBMinutes/1940-1949/19400820r.pdf>.

<sup>50</sup> Fairfax County School Board Minutes, October 1, 1940,  
<https://insys.fcps.edu/schoolboardapps/ArchivedSBMinutes/1940-1949/19411001r.pdf>.

<sup>51</sup> Fairfax County School Board Minutes, March 16, 1943,  
<https://insys.fcps.edu/schoolboardapps/ArchivedSBMinutes/1940-1949/19430315r.pdf>.

<sup>52</sup> Fairfax County Public Library. *Annual Report Fairfax County Public Library, Fiscal Year 1945-1946*. 1946.

<sup>53</sup> School Reports, Fairfax County Public Library Records (unprocessed), MSS 10-01, Virginia Room, Fairfax County Public Library.

FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY  
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA

Date 5/13/48

Name of school Louise Archer

Circulation:

Fiction	<u>63</u>
Non-Fiction	<u>17</u>
Total	<u>80</u>

Signed S. Lowell Johnson  
Principal

**The only 1940s recorded FCPL book deposit to an FCPS Black school occurred in May 1948. (FCPL)**

Despite this lack of support in the 1940s, local Black communities persevered. In September 1946, a branch library for the use of adults had opened at the Vienna “Colored” School (renamed Louise Archer Elementary School in April 1948). Its creation was spearheaded by a surprising ally: two members of the Whites-only Vienna Library Association, Edna Moody and its President, Esther W. Hall. The duo organized the library’s creation and even personally gifted books to get it started.<sup>54</sup> Creating such a library was necessary for the Black community as the Vienna Town Library continued to adhere to its Whites-only policy.



**The Vienna “Colored” School’s 7<sup>th</sup> grade class pose in front of the school in 1946. That same year, this building housed a branch library for Black adults. (Fairfax County Public Schools)**

<sup>54</sup> "Colored Library Opened in Vienna". *Fairfax Herald*, September 6, 1946, 1.

FCPL helped establish a Bailey's Crossroads library specifically to be used by the community's Black residents. In 1946, the Library Board of Trustees appointed Ruth Ashburn as the new County Librarian. Ashburn had formerly served as a librarian for the segregated Purcellville Public Library. During the summer of 1947, Ashburn, in conjunction with Vivian Frye, director of the Bailey's Crossroads Summer Playground, and the Fairfax County Recreation Association, sponsored library service to be provided at the Bailey's "Colored" School. School officials agreed to have the facility open for library service throughout the academic year. A door knocking campaign resulted in adding more than 100 books to the library's collection, and Ashburn promised to loan additional FCPL books if circulation justified it. The County Recreation Association agreed to provide a volunteer librarian for at least one evening each week.<sup>55</sup>



**Bailey's "Colored" School as it appeared in 1942. In 1947, through FCPL's sponsorship, the school offered library service to the Black community. (*Fairfax County Public Schools*)**

By the early 1950s, FCPL bookmobiles started making scheduled stops at segregated schools. In 1951, Mary E. Elliott, a student at the Drexel Institute of Technology School of Library Science in Philadelphia, studied FCPL as a part of her requirements for a Masters in Library Science. Her thesis, *The Development of Library Service in Fairfax County, Virginia Since 1939*, contains an appendix of FCPL's 1951 schedule of bookmobile routes which included 32 elementary and 8 private schools. Each school, including four segregated schools, received a deposit of 40 books.<sup>56</sup> Merrifield Elementary was on the Tremont Gardens Route and visited on the first Tuesday of the month. The bookmobile stopped at Louise Archer Elementary on the second Friday of the month while traveling on the Vienna Route. A second bookmobile visited Fairfax Elementary and Cub Run Elementary on the Burke Route also on the month's second Friday.<sup>57</sup>

It is not clear for how long the memorandum of agreement between FCPL and FCPS remained in place. In 1963, even the State Library was wondering if the agreement was still in use as they

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<sup>55</sup> "Bailey's Cross Roads Negroes Get Library; More Books Sought". *Fairfax Standard*, [Summer] 1946.

<sup>56</sup> Elliott, Mary E. *The Development of Library Service in Fairfax County, Virginia Since 1939*. Philadelphia: Drexel Institute of Technology, School of Library Service, 1951, 35.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 49-54.

had no record of its termination.<sup>58</sup> In June 1946, Woodson told the Library Board of Trustees that due to the important need for books in school libraries, which apparently FCPS was now maintaining, the School Board could no longer make definite contributions toward the financing of services rendered by FCPL. Despite this, the Library Board agreed to continue serving the schools under the existing arrangement.<sup>59</sup> FCPL received donations from PTA groups to acquire special unit books for the schools, but most of the subsequent financing came from FCPL itself.<sup>60</sup>

In 1989, historian Nan Netherton interviewed former Library Director Mary McCulloch and asked her if she was aware of the school's agreement when she started at FCPL in 1953. "Not to my knowledge, I was not aware of that arrangement," said McCulloch indicating that the contract had been discontinued by then. However, FCPL continued to make school deposits which could be made upon written request from a school's principal.<sup>61</sup> It is unknown if additional Black schools were added to the bookmobile routes prior to their desegregation in 1966.

In the mid-1930s, FCPS received grant funding from the federal government's Public Works Administration and started building modernized "brick and mortar" White elementary and high schools. Many of the schools built during the 1940s-1950s included a room designated for a library. James Lee Elementary School was the first segregated school of this type of construction to have a designated library component built for its students in 1947. Louise Archer Elementary School did not have a stand-alone library until 1952 when it received an addition.<sup>62</sup>

FCPS constructed five additional all-Black schools between 1952-1956: Drew-Smith (1952), Oak Grove (1952), Eleven Oaks (1953), Luther Jackson High School (1954), and Lillian Carey (1956). Of these, only Drew-Smith and Luther Jackson are documented as having a designated library (See Table 4).

In 1960, FCPS slowly began admitting Black students to White schools. Under mounting legal pressure from the courts, FCPS drafted a plan to speed up the process. By then, all FCPL library facilities were already open to everyone, and never encountered the heated public controversy that FCPS faced when it came to desegregation. This presents an interesting paradox and raises the question how was it possible that the public libraries in Fairfax County were desegregated, but the public schools were not, especially since the Superintendent of Schools, Wilbert T. Woodson, was also a Library Board member?

Woodson's personal beliefs possibly shed light on the matter and are a common sentiment shared by others at the time who perceived a difference in environments between the public library and the public school. Woodson personally opposed enforced school integration, however, his

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<sup>58</sup> Letter, Florence B. Yoder to Mary K. McCulloch, March 25, 1963, Records of the Public Library Development Division of the Virginia State Library and Archives, 1920-1992. Accession 35467, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, Box 14, Folder 8.

<sup>59</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, June 10, 1946.

<sup>60</sup> Elliott, Mary E. *The Development of Library Service in Fairfax County, Virginia Since 1939*. Philadelphia: Drexel Institute of Technology, School of Library Service, 1951, 35.

<sup>61</sup> Fairfax County Library Board of Trustees. *Policies of Fairfax County, Virginia Public Library Board of Trustees as of March 1962*. 1962, 8.

<sup>62</sup> Jeff Clark, Video Producer, Fairfax County Public Schools, email message to Chris Barbuschak, June 11, 2021.

position regarding library integration may have been different because in his opinion, a library would not have been as intimate as a public school setting. On July 6, 1959, he wrote to School Board member Robert F. Davis:

“The order to desegregate schools is highly improper and infringes on human rights. To force integration of schools is to force social mixing, since attendance in public schools is usually compulsory. Next to the home the public school brings people into closest social relationship. Association in hotels, restaurants, buses, trains, airplanes, and churches is less serious since relationship among people in these situations is not so close or intimate and people have a choice with whom they wish to associate, it not being required by law, as pupils in a classroom and in school activities.”<sup>63</sup>

Although Woodson personally opposed school integration, the decision to desegregate FCPS was not his to make, but rather the School Board’s. Even after his retirement from FCPS (and by default the Library Board) in 1961, it still took another five years for FCPS to fully integrate.

Immediately following the Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision declaring school segregation unconstitutional, Virginia’s state government embarked on a policy known as Massive Resistance. Led by Senator Harry F. Byrd, Sr. and his political machine known as the Byrd Organization, the Commonwealth fiercely opposed the integration of public schools and passed anti-desegregation legislation known as the Stanley Plan in 1956. The plan contained a series of laws which allowed the governor to shut down any school that did integrate and created a State Pupil Placement Board that blocked Black students from being assigned to White schools. Even after state and federal lawsuits overruled Massive Resistance policies, school desegregation in the Commonwealth continued to move at a glacial pace. The seven segregated Black schools in Fairfax County closed or fully integrated between 1964 and 1966.



**Students using the library at Luther Jackson High School in 1956. (FCPL)**

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<sup>63</sup> Memo, Wilbert T. Woodson to Robert F. Davis, July 6, 1959. W.T. Woodson Papers, MSS 06-03, Virginia Room, Fairfax County Public Library.

**Table 4**  
**Stand-Alone Libraries in FCPS Segregated Schools Built 1947-1956<sup>64</sup>**

<b><u>School</u></b>	<b><u>Year Opened</u></b>	<b><u>Had a Library?</u></b>	<b><u>Comments</u></b>
Louise Archer (Vienna "Colored")	1939, Modernized 1948, 1952	✓	Did not have a stand-alone library until the construction of a 1952 addition.
James Lee	1947	✓	Had six rooms capable of housing 250 students, an auditorium, cafeteria, indoor toilets, clinic, and library.
Drew-Smith	mid-year 1952-53	✓	The school had seven classrooms, a multi-purpose room, a library, principal's office, clinic, teachers' room, and storage space.
Oak Grove	mid-year 1952-53	No	Had a "book storage room" but not an actual library.
Eleven Oaks	1953	Unknown	Had seven classrooms and a cafeteria, but library status is unknown.
Luther Jackson	1954	✓	The high school had a library space when completed. The elementary school likely used the high school's library until Lillian Carey opened in 1956.
Lillian Carey	1956	Unknown	School Board minutes indicate that the school had only five classrooms when it was first constructed. No other types of rooms are specified.

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<sup>64</sup> Jeff Clark, Video Producer, Fairfax County Public Schools, email message to Chris Barbuschak, June 11, 2021.



7-6-59

*Copy to Bob Dauterive*

The order to desegregate schools is highly improper and infringes on human rights. To force integration of schools is to force social mixing, since attendance in public schools is usually compulsory. Next to the home the public school brings people into closest social relationship. Association in hotels, restaurants, buses, trains, airplanes, and churches is less serious since relationship among people in these situations is not so close or intimate and people have a choice with whom they wish to associate, it not being required by law, as pupils in a classroom and in school activities.

To force desegregation in schools is most unfair. It takes advantage of the immaturity of children in that it tends to use it to force upon both parents and children social adjustments to which so many parents strongly object. What part should parents play in choosing their children's associates?

Desegregation, instead of helping Negro children, is proving and will continue, at least for sometime, to prove hurtful to both Negroes and whites because (1) widespread public support of the public school is being lost, (2) political support is becoming much more difficult, (3) financial support of those most able to pay is being lost with their opposition to being taxed for public schools.

Schools are basically social institutions requiring close relationships if the educative process is to function properly. In order to have a learning situation in a primary, elementary, or secondary school or classroom there must be an atmosphere of general acceptability by parents and pupils of other pupils and their parents. Failure to secure and maintain this atmosphere is most damaging to the results or outcomes the school should attain. Integration in the school and classroom will do much to undermine the good work of our schools.

In a school and classroom pupils must associate with one another. To force this association by law is contrary to the principles which our founding fathers sought when they came to America--the pilgrims in order that their children not be brought up under the religious and social conditions prevailing in England and Holland, and others of the founding fathers for other and similar reasons. We have come to think of these things as basic to the American way of life - to be free to choose our associates and those of our children.

It is my impression that our people generally do not wish to be in social groups where their presence is not generally acceptable. W.T.W.





**Reception dedicating the expanded Headquarters library on February 13, 1950: Seated (left-right): Ruth Ashburn, Librarian; Capt. John F. Bethune, Chairman Library Board; Mrs. Fred Robinson, Library Board. Standing (left-right): William J. Duvall, Contractor; W.T. Woodson, Library Board & Superintendent of Schools; Earl B. Bailey, Architect; William L. Carne, Library Board; Harry Davis, Contractor. (FCPL)**

### **FCPL Expands and Opens Branches**

From 1939 to 1950, FCPL only provided bookmobile service to the residents of Fairfax County.<sup>65</sup> The first library building in Fairfax was initially only used for the processing and storage of the book collection, and it housed the bookmobile and a staff of four. By 1947, the collection had grown so much that Chairman John Bethune asked the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors for an addition to be built onto the library building. The Board agreed in November 1947, and construction began two years later.<sup>66</sup> The book collection was expanded into the garage and the building received a 23x23 rear addition and an 18x44 attached garage for the bookmobile.

Upon completion in February 1950, the library had tripled in size, but only contained one table with four chairs. Patrons were forced to share it with library staff.<sup>67</sup> Only two stools were designated for children. There is no surviving documentation indicating if Black residents could come into the library when it opened, nor do any long-time Fairfax County residents interviewed remember.

Two years later, on July 14, 1952, the Library Board of Trustees asked the Extension Division of the Virginia State Library to conduct a survey of the conditions and needs of FCPL. The resulting report published in November 1952 by Christine Coffey, Assistant Extension Librarian of the Virginia State Library, was mostly negative and revealed that FCPL was in a horrible state. Coffey found that FCPL suffered from a variety of maladies including an inadequate

<sup>65</sup> Fairfax County Public Library. *Fairfax County Public Library Annual Report 1963-1964*. 1964, 2.

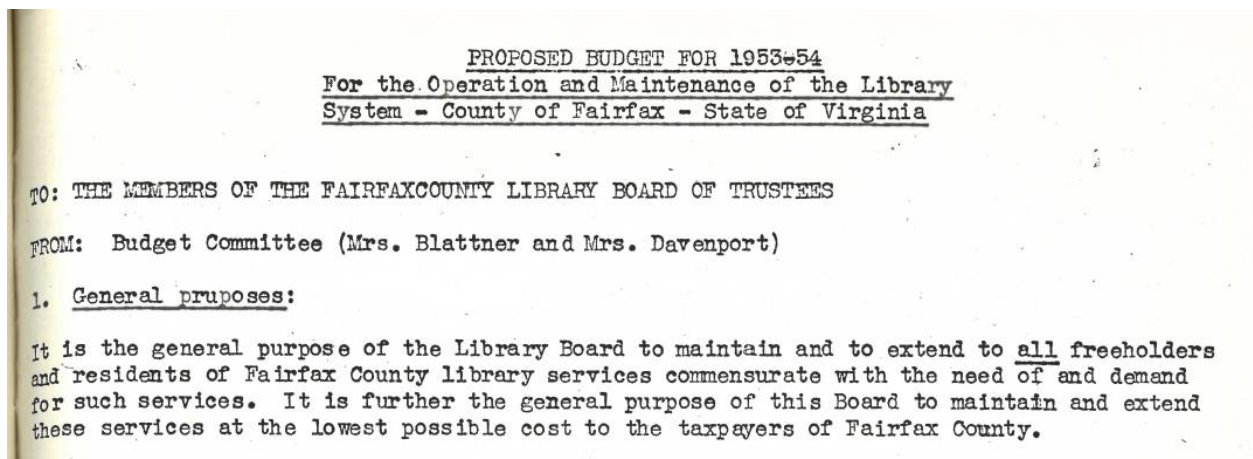
<sup>66</sup> Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Minute Book 15, November 19, 1947, 385.

<sup>67</sup> Netherton, Nan. *Books and Beyond: Fairfax County Public Library's First Fifty Years*. Fairfax, VA: Fairfax County Public Library, 1989, 6.

collection, insufficient financial support, lack of a complete catalog, a neglect in service to adults, poorly chosen bookmobile stops, a deficiency in personnel, and overall, just plain inadequate service.

Coffey began her report with a recent quote from Amy Winslow of the American Library Association: "The public library provides, on equal terms, free service to all individuals and groups in the community."<sup>68</sup> However, she made no mention of whether FCPL provided service to its Black residents. She did, however, recommend that, "the Headquarters library should be opened to all residents of the county wherever they live. Indeed, failure to do so is a violation of one of the requirements made by the State Library Board of public libraries receiving state aid."<sup>69</sup>

An earlier May 1952 memo to the Library Board of Trustees from their Budget Committee reiterated this: "It is the general purpose of the Library Board to maintain and to extend to all freeholders and residents of Fairfax County library services commensurate with the need of and deemed for such services."<sup>70</sup>



**A 1952 memo from the Library Board's Budget Committee to the Library Board of Trustees reminding them that they were to extend service to all residents of Fairfax County. (FCPL)**

Following the release of the state's scathing 1952 report, the Library Board of Trustees appointed Mary K. McCulloch as Fairfax County Library Director on July 13, 1953, whom they tasked with reorganizing FCPL. Less than two weeks on the job, McCulloch immediately closed the library to the public for six months for a complete inventorying, reorganization, and remodeling on July 27, 1953. The bookmobile garage was converted into office space with expanded library shelving, a card catalog was created, and preparations were made to open two

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<sup>68</sup> Coffey, Christine. *Report of a Survey of Certain Aspects of Public Library Service in Fairfax County*. Richmond, Va: Virginia State Library, 1952, 1.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>70</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, May 15, 1952.

new branches. After the remodeling and reorganization, the Headquarters library reopened on December 21, 1953, and bookmobile service resumed on January 4, 1954.<sup>71</sup>

On that same date in 1954, FCPL's first branch, Thomas Jefferson, opened to the public in Falls Church, followed by the Martha Washington branch in Alexandria on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. Community efforts to open FCPL branches had been brewing since 1952. Several citizens groups had earlier organized to petition the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and the Library Board of Trustees for branch service. The Library Board allowed these "Friends of the Library" groups to raise funds for establishing branches, locate potential quarters, provide equipment, and enlist volunteer help to get a branch started.

At the August 17, 1953, Library Board of Trustees meeting, trustee Kathryn Robinson made the motion that all communities allowed branches be permitted to suggest the names for them. FCPS Superintendent and Trustee Wilbert T. Woodson added on to the motion that the Library Board set the policy that all future branches be named for famous deceased Virginians. The Board passed the motion, and the policy was in place until 1983.<sup>72</sup> As of 2021, 9 of FCPL's 23 branches still retain the names of famous Virginians.

## YOUR THOS. JEFFERSON LIBRARY!

### WHAT IT IS:

1. A branch of the Fairfax County Public Library, open free of charge to all residents of the area. Cards are free to all who can write their names.
2. The Library is located in the rear of the Family Barbershop in the Graham Road Shopping Center, with its own entrance in the rear.
3. Library hours at present are: Mon., Wed., Fri., 1-5; 7-9; Sat. 9-1.
4. The Falls Church Library will be closed to county borrowers after July 1 except upon payment of \$5.00 per family for library cards.

**A 1954 flyer created by the Friends of the Thomas Jefferson Library noted the new Thomas Jefferson branch was open "free of charge to all residents." (FCPL)**

On January 4, 1954, the Thomas Jefferson Library opened in the rear of the Family Barber Shop in the Graham Road Shopping Center in Falls Church. The Friends of the Thomas Jefferson Library created flyers promoting its open house on January 9<sup>th</sup> which invited "everybody", and offered "a card for everyone who can print his own name."<sup>73</sup> After the opening, a fundraising flyer issued by the Friends declared the branch, "open free of charge to all residents of the area."<sup>74</sup> The *Fairfax County Sun Echo* also confirmed the library's inclusiveness in a May 14,

<sup>71</sup> Fairfax County Public Library. *Fairfax County Public Library Annual Report, 1953-1954*. 1954, 1.

<sup>72</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, August 17, 1953.

<sup>73</sup> Friends of the Thomas Jefferson Library Brochure, "Libraries-Branched-Thomas Jefferson" Vertical File, Virginia Room, Fairfax County Public Library.

<sup>74</sup> Friends of the Thomas Jefferson Library. "Your Thos. Jefferson Library!". 1954, Thomas Jefferson Library Branch Archives, Fairfax County Public Library.

1954, article saying, “It may be used by all county residents free of charge.”<sup>75</sup> Although the library had its own private entrance at the back of the White-owned barber shop, it is unclear if Black residents would have felt comfortable using it, or if it was even accessed by the Black community during its entire year of operation in that storefront.

Thomas Jefferson quickly outgrew the barber shop space and moved into a two-bedroom apartment in the Jefferson Village Apartments on January 24, 1955.<sup>76</sup> In November 1962, Thomas Jefferson reopened in new quarters at 7415 Arlington Boulevard becoming FCPL’s first building specifically constructed by Fairfax County as a permanent branch library.

After Martha Washington’s opening in May 1954, a third branch, George Mason, opened in Annandale in February 1955, followed by Dolley Madison in McLean in December 1956, Richard Byrd in Springfield in January 1958, and Woodrow Wilson in Falls Church in January 1961.

No documentation exists recording what FCPL’s policies were when opening these branches or if they were truly open to everyone. Pre-1962 library policy documents are presumed destroyed, FCPL annual reports never noted any discriminatory policies, nor is there any discussion concerning segregated facilities in the Library Board of Trustees minutes. Additionally, historical photographs of these library buildings do not feature any discriminatory signage indicating segregation. A Washington *Sunday Star* article from February 24, 1957, is the earliest recorded instance that explicitly stated FCPL was open to both Whites and Blacks. “Spokesmen for libraries in the nearby Virginia area said library facilities are open to colored residents in Fairfax and Arlington Counties and cities of Alexandria and Falls Church,” reported correspondent Tom Burke during his coverage of Purcellville Public Library’s integration suit.<sup>77</sup>

It seems likely that following the State Library’s 1952 scathing report, the hiring of Mary McCulloch in 1953, and the reopening of the Headquarters library and Thomas Jefferson branch six months later, that FCPL quietly allowed everyone into library facilities. Although never explicitly mentioned in the Library Board of Trustees minutes or other records, language is used by the Board that supports everyone could come to the library. In 1955, the Library Board of Trustees outlined its purpose in a report: “It is the function of the Library Board to give policy guidance to the Director in order that library service may be made freely available to ALL citizens of Fairfax County.”<sup>78</sup>

At the November 19, 1956, Library Board of Trustees meeting, Director McCulloch presented the Board with copies of the Library Bill of Rights which promoted inclusion. The American Library Association’s (ALA) Council had adopted the *Library Bill of Rights* on June 18, 1948.

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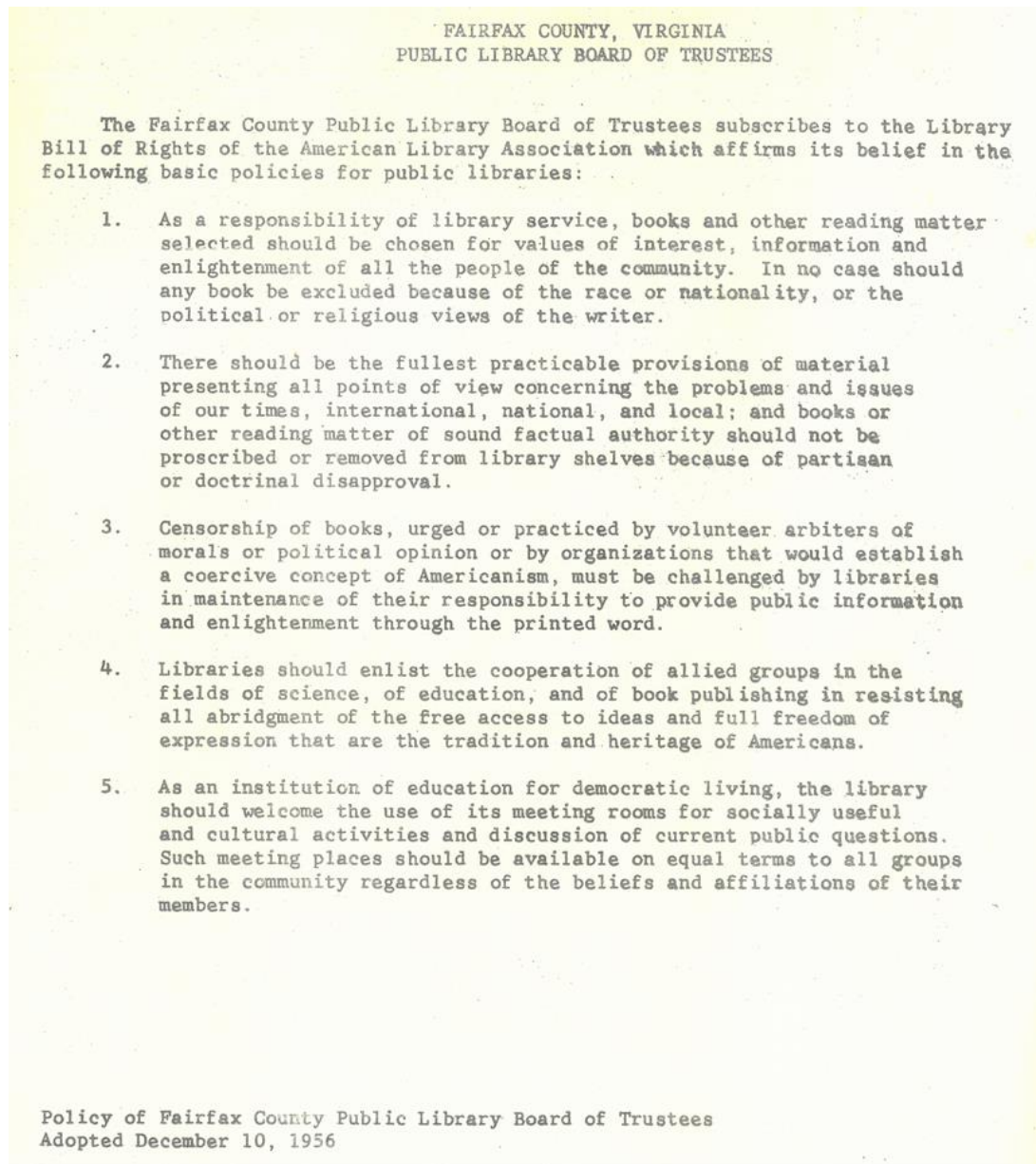
<sup>75</sup> “Library Reports Progress”. *Fairfax County Sun Echo*, May 14, 1954, 1.

<sup>76</sup> Netherton, Nan. *Books and Beyond: Fairfax County Public Library’s First Fifty Years*. Fairfax, VA: Fairfax County Public Library, 1989, 30.

<sup>77</sup> Burke, Tom. “Library Integration Suit Studied in Purcellville”. *The Sunday Star* (Washington, D.C.), February 24, 1957, A-13.

<sup>78</sup> “Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees. *Statutory Basis, Functions, History, Present Service, Projected Service*. Fairfax, Va, 1955.

McCulloch suggested that the Library Board incorporate them as part of their policies.<sup>79</sup> They carried this motion at their meeting on December 10, 1956.<sup>80</sup> It was not until 1961 when ALA adopted an addition to the *Library Bill of Rights* to be clearer on discrimination: “The rights of an individual to the use of a library should not be denied or abridged because of his race, religion, national origins or political views.”<sup>81</sup>



**The Library Bill of Rights as adopted by the FCPL Board of Trustees on December 10, 1956. (FCPL)**

<sup>79</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, November 19, 1956.

<sup>80</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, December 10, 1956.

<sup>81</sup> American Library Association. *Intellectual Freedom Manual*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2010, 56.



## FUNCTIONS

The Library Board of Trustees has a direct responsibility to the citizens of Fairfax County for the growth and development of the County Library System.

The Library Board, with the aid of the Director, must submit to the Board of Supervisors a proposed budget each year. The Board of Supervisors have the authority to examine the submitted budget and make such appropriations as deemed proper. After the budget is approved, it is the responsibility of the Library Board to provide county library services under its jurisdiction within the limits of its budget.

It is the function of the Library Board to give policy guidance to the Director in order that library service may be made freely available to ALL citizens of Fairfax County.

### **A 1955 Library Board of Trustees report outlined its purpose to ensure that library services were available to everyone. (FCPL)**

In their 1957-1958 Annual Report, FCPL noted that their branches were accessible to all county residents: “What services does the library render? The public library seeks to promote enlightened citizenship and the enrichment of personal life through adequate facilities within easy reach of every citizen.”<sup>82</sup>

In addition to the opening of the first three library branches, bookmobile service continued providing 30% of total services with 68 stops, 8 deposit stations, and 39 schools served in 1954.<sup>83</sup> In 1955, the State requested that a new deposit station be added at State Prison Camp #30 in Fairfax and FCPL added “one in Chantilly at a colored home.”<sup>84</sup>

Despite FCPL appearing to be open to everyone in the 1950s, they did not successfully relay this message to Black residents. Library student Bernice Lloyd Bell confirmed this in her August 1963 thesis, *Integration in Public Library Service in Thirteen Southern States, 1954-1962*, noting that FCPL never made any special efforts to notify the county’s Black residents of available library services.<sup>85</sup>

In May 2021, Virginia Room staff asked several long-time Black residents whether they used FCPL facilities while growing up in the 1950s. Everyone interviewed said they never went to the library, nor do they remember the bookmobile visiting their neighborhood. “My library experience was through our schools,” recalled one resident.<sup>86</sup> Despite not going to the library, nobody could specifically remember if FCPL was ever segregated in the 1950s. It is possible Black residents did not feel comfortable entering libraries while other public accommodations such as restaurants, motels, hospitals, and even the public schools themselves remained segregated. However, several Vienna residents interviewed still remembered not being allowed into the Vienna Town Library and the community efforts to recruit FCPL’s help to change this.

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<sup>82</sup> Fairfax County Public Library. *Fairfax County Public Library Annual Report, 1957-1958*. 1958, 3.

<sup>83</sup> Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Minute Book 22, October 13, 1954, 147.

<sup>84</sup> FCPL Operating Budget Files, 1953-1958, Fairfax County Public Library Records (unprocessed), MSS 10-01, Virginia Room, Fairfax County Public Library.

<sup>85</sup> Bell, Bernice Lloyd. *Integration in Public Library Service in Thirteen Southern States, 1954-1962*. Atlanta, GA: August 1963, 114.

<sup>86</sup> Maddy McCoy email message to Chris Barbuschak, June 12, 2021.



Patrick Henry Library was housed in this storefront in the Vienna Shopping Center from 1962-1971. (FCPL)

### **Establishing the Patrick Henry Library Branch**

While the previous five FCPL branches and main library were desegregated when they opened between 1953-1961, Patrick Henry Library was the first branch explicitly established with the purpose of being accessible to all residents of the Town of Vienna. Up until its opening in 1962, Vienna's Black residents were barred from using the only library around, the Vienna Town Library.

Some of the members of the Vienna Library Association did not agree with this policy and were concerned that the town's Black citizens, particularly children, did not have library access. In early 1946, a few members donated books and helped create a branch library for adults in the Vienna "Colored" School.<sup>87</sup> That June, the Vienna Library Association voted to present duplicate books to the school's principal Louise Archer, for use by the school's children.<sup>88</sup>

On January 24, 1946, volunteer librarian, June Waldrip, composed a letter to Ernestine Grafton, head of the Extension Division of the State Library and described some of the efforts of the Vienna Town Library's members. She wrote:

"It is too bad we have no library for negroes. This library was chartered in 1913 for "the white people of Vienna" – hence I cannot serve books to colored folk. But the President Mrs. [Esther W.] Hall and myself – and a few others interested have contributed small amounts of money – books – to the few shelves of books Mrs. [Louise] Archer, the principal, has in her school (the colored school)."<sup>89</sup>

<sup>87</sup> "Colored Library Opened in Vienna". *Fairfax Herald*, September 6, 1946, 1.

<sup>88</sup> "Vienna Library Notes". *Fairfax Herald*, June 14, 1946, 1.

<sup>89</sup> Letter, June Waldrip to Ernestine Grafton, January 24, 1946, Records of the Public Library Development Division of the Virginia State Library and Archives, 1920-1992. Accession 35467, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, Box 15, Folder 5.

Round Hill, Virginia  
25th January, 1946

Dear Miss Grafton -

Thank you for remembering us at Christmas time.

I am more than sorry to have delayed answering your form of last August 1945 -

It is too bad we have no library service for negroes - This library was chartered in 1913 for "the white people of Vienna" - hence I cannot serve books to colored folk. But the President Mrs. Hall and myself - and a few other interested have contributed small amounts of money - books - to the few shelves of books Mrs. Orcher, the principal, has in her school - (the colored school.)

Page 1 of a 4-page letter written on January 25, 1946, by Vienna Library Association librarian June Waldrip to Ernestine Grafton, head of the Extension Division of the State Library, about their efforts on creating a library at the Vienna "Colored" School. (Library of Virginia)

The Vienna Library Association always held themselves aloof from FCPL and refused to abide by the Library Board's policies and requirements in order to receive bookmobile service as a community library. They also later resisted pressure to assimilate into an FCPL branch library. The community's frustration with the Association reached a climax in the 1950s because of an incident with the Carter family.

William McKinley Carter (1897-1977), a prominent Black citizen of Vienna, was a retired Internal Revenue Service employee and a descendant of the Carter family that had lived in neighboring Freedom Hill since 1842.<sup>90</sup> He was a charter member of the Fairfax County branch of the NAACP and was a long-time president of the Citizens Progressive Association of Vienna.<sup>91</sup> At some point in the 1950s, a White woman checked out books from the Vienna Town Library for Carter's children. Wyndell Carter, one of those children, later recalled, "Once the board of trustees found out we had books, they came and took them back. That kind of perturbed my dad and some friends."<sup>92</sup>

Another of William Carter's children, Maurice Carter, who was then active in civic affairs, attended a Vienna Town Council meeting on June 6, 1955, seeking support for the Vienna Lions Little League. During the meeting, the Vienna Library Association asked the Council for their annual contribution for the Vienna Town Library. Based on recollections twenty years after the fact, Carter is remembered standing up and objecting to the donation, demanding that the Association change their library charter to serve all Vienna residents.<sup>93</sup> The Vienna Town Council approved the contribution anyways.<sup>94</sup>



**Maurice Carter (1924-2010) pictured in 1968. (FCPL)**

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<sup>90</sup> "Joyce Kilmer's Son Heads Vienna Unit". *Northern Virginia Sun*, February 13, 1959, 3.

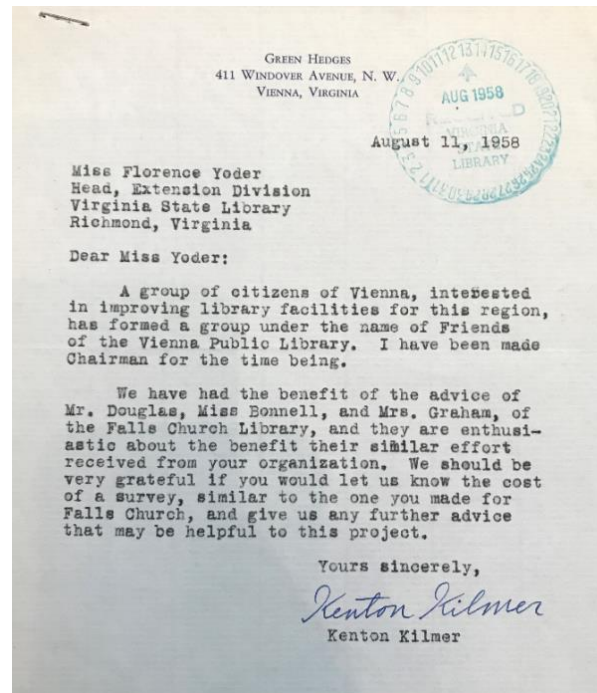
<sup>91</sup> "William Carter, Vienna Civic Leader". *The Washington Post*, December 21, 1977, B-16.

<sup>92</sup> Lesinski, Jennifer. "Family Helps Change Face of Vienna". *Vienna Connection*, undated.

<sup>93</sup> Bonham, Carol. "A Tale of Two Libraries". *Northern Virginian*, Volume XVII, Number 5, September/October 1987, 26-28.

<sup>94</sup> Vienna Town Council Minutes, June 6, 1955, 5.

In 1958, disgruntled citizens met in William Carter's living room and informally established the Friends of the Library Vienna, Virginia, a biracial organization. Kenton Kilmer, the son of poet Joyce Kilmer, was informally made chairman, and wrote to Florence Yoder, head of the Extension Division of the Virginia State Library, requesting that a survey be conducted regarding library service in the Town of Vienna.<sup>95</sup> Yoder responded with the recommendation that he contact FCPL to make arrangements for branch service.<sup>96</sup>



**Kenton Kilmer's August 1958 letter to the State Library. (*Library of Virginia*)**

Elsa Burrowes, Patrick Henry Library's branch manager from 1970-1982, was hired by FCPL as Patrick Henry's reference librarian in 1968. Her orientation included a briefing on the history of what led to the formation of that branch. She recalled in May 2021: "The Friends determined to bring a branch of Fairfax County Public Library to Vienna, because in the late 1950s to early 1960s at least, it was understood that Fairfax County Public Library served "everybody.""<sup>97</sup>

Before courting FCPL, the Friends first attempted to work with the existing Vienna Library Association. They invited Paul Stenger, President of the Association, to their charter meeting on October 14, 1958. At the meeting, the Vienna Friends of the Library defined their goals, appointed nominating and constitution committees, adopted several resolutions, and named Kenton Kilmer as temporary group chairman until an official election could be carried out in January 1959.<sup>98</sup> William Carter's son, Maurice, introduced a resolution to have the Vienna

<sup>95</sup> Letter, Kenton Kilmer to Florence Yoder, August 11, 1958, Records of the Public Library Development Division of the Virginia State Library and Archives, 1920-1992. Accession 35467, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, Box 14, Folder 11.

<sup>96</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, September 8, 1958.

<sup>97</sup> Elsa Burrowes email message to Chris Barbuschak, May 8, 2021.

<sup>98</sup> Schindler, Beverly. "Vienna Apartment Zoning Approved". *Fairfax County Sun Echo*, October 23, 1958, 1.



Library Association's charter changed to "permit all citizens of Vienna use of the Library facilities" if the Town Library was permitted to continue to operate in its present location.<sup>99</sup> At the time, the legal ownership of the Vienna Town Library's property on Center Street and Maple Avenue was in question.

Paul Stenger objected to the resolution calling the motion premature, but the Friends ignored him and passed it.<sup>100</sup> "They know we're trying to clear title to the land and want to develop the library. They said they were going to organize to help us. They talked to me and I went to their first meeting. Then they passed the resolution. They don't appear to be a friend," said Stenger.<sup>101</sup> Interviewed after the meeting by a *Northern Virginia Sun* reporter, Stenger could not remember any Black residents having ever entered the library to borrow books. However, he did say the library did loan books out to "colored groups" and Louise Archer Elementary School.<sup>102</sup>

Four months later, the Friends group formally organized in February 1959, with a membership of 90 individuals.<sup>103</sup> The officers elected were Kenton Kilmer, president; David Mayer, vice president; Katherine Brand, corresponding secretary; Ross Netherton, record secretary; and William Carter, treasurer.<sup>104</sup> "By electing Carter, we were saying that this organization was going to be for all people of Vienna, and McKinley handled himself and the Friends' finances in an exemplary manner," recalled Ross Netherton's wife, Nan, in 1990.<sup>105</sup>

In a 1960 publicity brochure, the Friends listed their six beliefs as:

1. Every person should have free public library services available to him in his own community with access to modern library services obtainable through cooperation with regional, state and national library agencies.
2. The community library should be easy to reach and use, offering hours of service most suitable to the public.
3. The library should have a professional librarian and offer services to locate information, guide readers, and help organize materials for individual and group projects.
4. Not only books, but other materials such as films, records and pictorial materials should be offered.
5. Public libraries are an investment, financed largely by taxes, for which the public is entitled to a maximum return.
6. The community library should supplement school and private libraries and be closely related to area needs and interests through joint planning.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Schindler, Beverly. "Vienna Apartment Zoning Approved". *Fairfax County Sun Echo*, October 23, 1958, 1.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Mitchell, Lynn C. "Vienna Library Asked to Desegregate". *Northern Virginia Sun*, October 16, 1958, 1.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Friends of the Library, Vienna, Virginia. "The Friends of the Library" Brochure, 1960. Vertical File: Libraries-Branched-Patrick Henry, Virginia Room, Fairfax County Public Library.

<sup>104</sup> Schindler, Beverly. "Vienna Library's Friends Organize". *Fairfax County Sun Echo*, February 19, 1959.

<sup>105</sup> Scott, Barbara. "Town-based library dates to 1890s". *Vienna Times*, November 8, 1990, A1.

<sup>106</sup> Friends of the Library, Vienna, Virginia. "The Friends of the Library" Brochure, 1960. Vertical File: Libraries-Branched-Patrick Henry, Virginia Room, Fairfax County Public Library.

Ross Netherton and Katherine Brand met with FCPL Director Mary McCulloch on January 7, 1959, to discuss ways that a branch might be established in Vienna.<sup>107</sup> Netherton later recalled in 1970 that, “Mrs. McCulloch had been extremely helpful in working to get a branch library established in Vienna.”<sup>108</sup> Later that month on January 21, 1959, Kilmer, Carter, Brand, Netherton and a couple of other Vienna citizens accompanied Director McCulloch on a tour of the George Mason and Richard Byrd library branches to get an idea of what branch service would entail.<sup>109</sup>

The Friends met with the Library Board of Trustees in late 1959 and it was agreed that if the Friends’ membership agreed to the Board’s policies and requirements for establishing a new branch by November, money should be budgeted for it in the 1961 county budget.<sup>110</sup> Director McCulloch attended the Friends’ October 30, 1959 meeting and its members agreed to move forward with establishing an FCPL branch in Vienna.<sup>111</sup> Unfortunately though, the County Executive made significant cuts to the 1961 library budget which eliminated the proposed Vienna branch for that year.<sup>112</sup> Undaunted, the Friends persevered.

One of the requirements to establish the branch was to raise 25% of its first year’s operating expenses, a cost of \$7,500. The remaining balance would be assumed by Fairfax County, including all operational costs after its first year of opening. Consequently, the Friends embarked on an aggressive fundraising campaign for the library in the summer of 1960.



**Vienna Mayor Guy M. Wilson looks on as Friends of the Library president, Kenton Kilmer, receives a \$2,500 check in support of an FCPL branch library from developer Stephen G. Yeonas in September 1960. (FCPL)**

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<sup>107</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, January 12, 1959.

<sup>108</sup> Netherton, Ross. *Annual Report of the Friends of the Library, Vienna, Virginia, January 27, 1970*. 1970.

<sup>109</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, February 9, 1959.

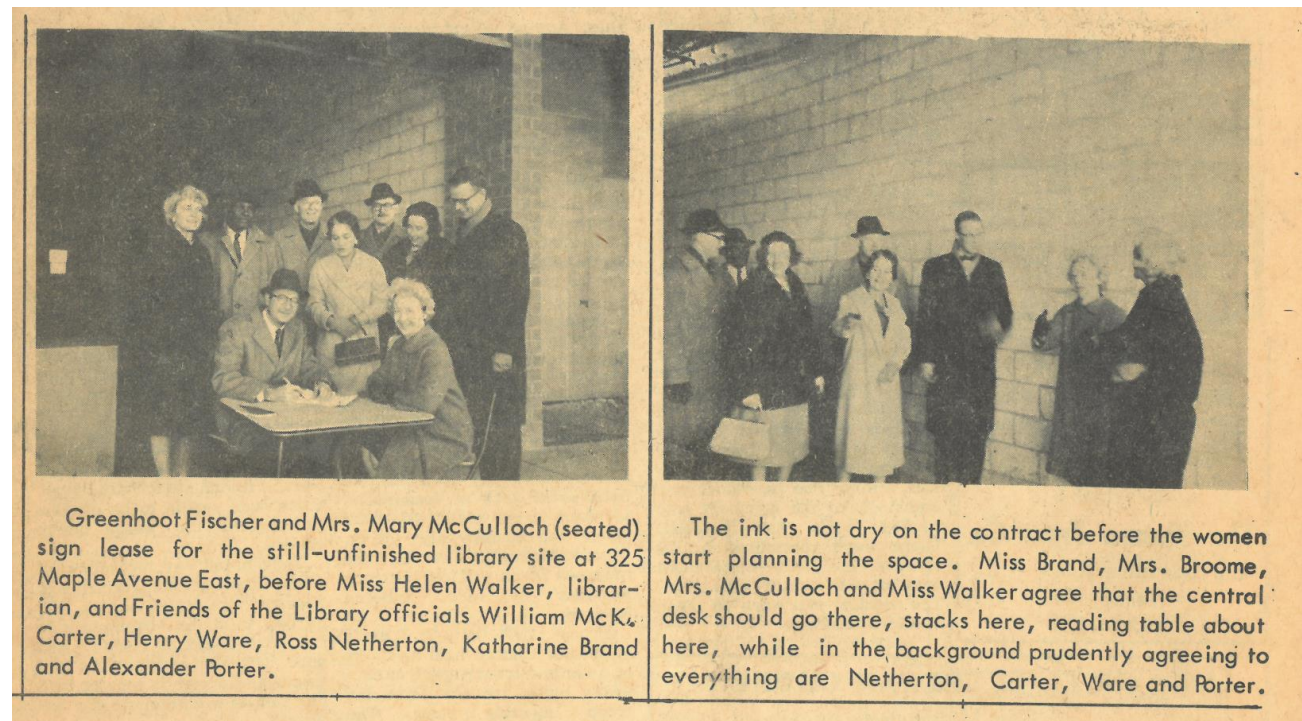
<sup>110</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, October 12, 1959.

<sup>111</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, November 16, 1959.

<sup>112</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, January 11, 1960.

By September 1960, the Friends' membership exploded to 1,800 individuals.<sup>113</sup> Local Vienna organizations and businesses graciously donated to the fundraising drive including the Vienna Women's Club, Vienna Optimists, Five Hills Garden Club, Young Ladies Domestic Club, Welcome Wagon Club, Vienna Trust Co., and the Ayr Hill subdivision. Jimmy Mallis of the Rollin Road Restaurant created his own unique fundraising project by turning over all proceeds to the Friends from cups of coffee purchased at his restaurant.<sup>114</sup> One of the biggest fundraisers was Stephens G. Yeonas, a Vienna developer, who donated \$2,500 in September 1960.<sup>115</sup>

The Vienna Town Council, which had supported the Whites-only Vienna Town Library with financial contributions for nearly half-a-century, enthusiastically supported the efforts to bring an FCPL branch to the town. In the fall of 1960, the Council passed a resolution pledging their financial support if the Friends' efforts fell short. The Council's assistance went unneeded as the Friends surpassed their financial goal netting \$9,050.50 by the November 1960 deadline.<sup>116</sup> Because of their successful fundraising efforts, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors agreed to provide funds for opening a branch in the 1962 budget in December 1960.<sup>117</sup>



**Director McCulloch and Friends of the Library officials (including William Carter) watch Patrick Henry's lease signing and tour the unfinished space in January 1962. (*Vienna Virginian*)**

<sup>113</sup> Schindler, Beverly. "Yeonas Donation of \$2,500 Helps Vienna's Library". *Fairfax County Sun Echo*, September 8, 1960.

<sup>114</sup> Schindler, Beverly. "Vienna Council Defers Five-Year Plan". *Fairfax County Sun Echo*, October 6, 1960.

<sup>115</sup> "Big Gift for Library". *Northern Virginia Sun*, September 9, 1960, B-1.

<sup>116</sup> "Town Council Says "OK" to Library Use". *The Vienna Virginian*, January 25, 1962, 1.

<sup>117</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, December 19, 1960.

The Friends submitted to the Library Board a list of proposed names for the new branch which included Margaret Clarke, Patrick Henry, and John Marshall. Clarke (1893-1960) was a deceased Vienna resident, philanthropist, and early supporter of bringing an FCPL branch to the town. Library Trustee Nan Watters moved that the branch be named for Patrick Henry, and it was approved by the Board at their March 13, 1961 meeting.<sup>118</sup>

The Library Board approved the rental of space in the new Vienna Shopping Center at 325 Maple Avenue East for the Patrick Henry Library on December 11, 1961, and the Friends unanimously agreed to the new library's quarters.<sup>119</sup> The Board signed a five-year \$525 monthly lease at their January 8, 1962 meeting.<sup>120</sup> Later that month, Director McCulloch signed the lease in the unfinished library space with the Friends' in attendance. The Friends in turn gave her an \$8,800 check made out to the county for the required 25% first year's operating expenses. They reserved their remaining funds for a gala on opening day and other overheads.



**Patrons in front of the Patrick Henry Library holding a sign for the April 1962 Open House which says, "Everyone Welcome". (FCPL)**

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<sup>118</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, March 13, 1961.

<sup>119</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, December 11, 1961.

<sup>120</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, January 8, 1962.

The Friends held an open house at Patrick Henry Library on Sunday, April 8, 1962. Invitations that went out to the public noted the open house was “open to all Vienna residents”.<sup>121</sup> Over 1,500 patrons attended the event including Vienna Councilmen and members of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.<sup>122</sup> The library officially opened the following morning at 10:00 a.m. with Helen Walker as the branch manager overseeing a collection of 6,200 books. The first day had 367 customers checking out books.<sup>123</sup> By the end of the first three weeks, Patrick Henry had registered 1,359 borrowers.<sup>124</sup>



**Children of Friends of the Library members read books at Patrick Henry’s Open House on April 8, 1962. Front to back: Sharon Onesty, Miriam Kilmer, and Anneke Mayer. (*Vienna Virginian*)**

At a ceremony on November 17, 1968, a special bookshelf was dedicated in honor of Mr. and Mrs. William McKinley Carter. The Friends of the Library suggested the idea for the shelf which was to be a designated space for special gift books presented to the library. The first gift to be featured was the *International Encyclopedia of Negro Life and History*. The Friends purchased the first volume, and the Vienna Town Council purchased the remaining set. Members of the Carter family, library staff, FCPL Director Mary McCulloch, Vienna Mayor James Martinelli, and Centreville District Supervisor Martha Pennino attended the ceremony.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> “Library Supporters”. *Northern Virginia Sun*, April 3, 1962, 1.

<sup>122</sup> *Virginia Librarian*. Richmond: Virginia Library Association, Summer 1962, Vol. IX No. 2, 16.

<sup>123</sup> “First Day Busy At Branch”. *The Vienna Virginian*, April 12, 1962.

<sup>124</sup> *Virginia Librarian*. Richmond: Virginia Library Association, Summer 1962, Vol. IX No. 2, 16.

<sup>125</sup> Netherton, Ross. *Report of Activities of the Friends of the Library Vienna, Virginia, for 1968*. January 20, 1969, 3.





**Friends President, Ross Netherton and William McKinley Carter at the dedication of the Carter Shelf on November 17, 1968. (FCPL)**

The opening of the Patrick Henry branch decimated the Vienna Town Library. “There was a lot of ill feelings with the start of the other library,” recalled Jean Rockwell, a former member of the Vienna Library Association, in 1990.<sup>126</sup> By November 1962, Mary McCulloch reported to Florence Yoder, head of the Extension Division at the Virginia State Library, that it was only open 8 or 9 hours a week and had very little business.<sup>127</sup> Despite this, the Vienna Library Association still desired to start a building campaign for its own new library. They had been sporadically receiving donations for a new building since the 1950s, including a minstrel show benefit staged by the Vienna Lions Club and sponsored by the Vienna Hills Women’s Club in November 1956.<sup>128</sup> However, constructing a new library never became a reality.

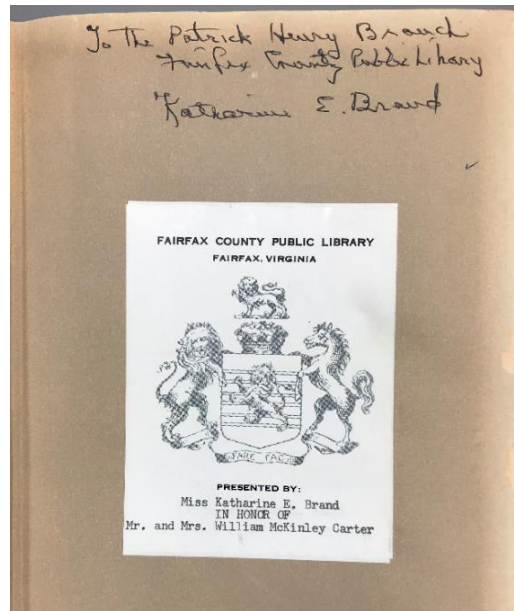
In 1969, the dispute over the legal ownership of the land underneath the original Vienna Town Library was settled and the county exchanged properties to pave the way for a permanent Patrick Henry Library building on the site. The original Vienna Town Library was moved next to the Freeman Store on Mill Street and a new permanent Patrick Henry Library was constructed there opening on September 7, 1971.

<sup>126</sup> Scott, Barbara. “Town-based library dates to 1890s”. *Vienna Times*, November 8, 1990, A1.

<sup>127</sup> Letter, Mary K. McCulloch to Florence B. Yoder, November 21, 1962, Records of the Public Library Development Division of the Virginia State Library and Archives, 1920-1992. Accession 35467, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, Box 14, Folder 10.

<sup>128</sup> “Minstrel To Benefit Library”. *The Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), November 23, 1956, B-2.





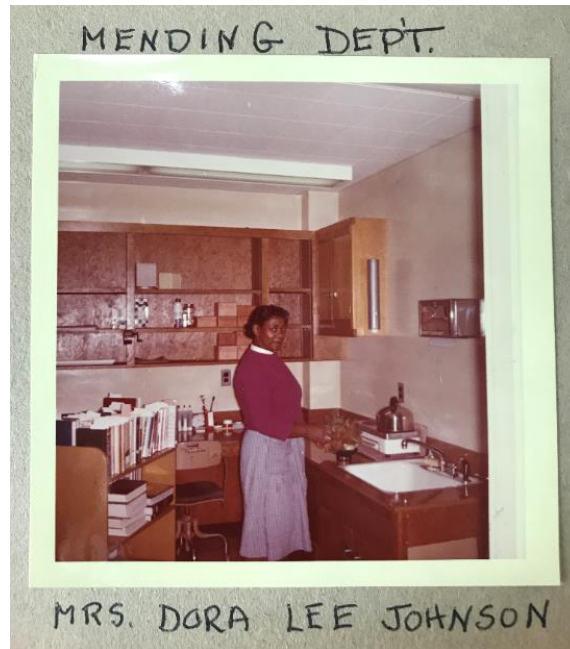
Volumes 1-12 of *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* were once featured on Patrick Henry's honorary Carter shelf. A bookplate was placed in each volume. Katharine Brand was the original Friends' corresponding secretary. The set was later transferred to FCPL's Virginia Room. (FCPL)

On February 7, 1987, Patrick Henry Library rededicated the Carter collection of materials on Black history in a festive ceremony of speeches, gospel singing, and folktales. At the end of his speech, Vondell Carter presented the library with a portrait of his parents.<sup>129</sup> As of August 2021, the portrait of William and Lillian Carter still greets everyone who uses the library's meeting room. The books on the Carter shelf were later unified into the branch's general collection.



William and Lillian Carter's portrait hangs in the Patrick Henry Library meeting room in 2021. (Chris Barbuschak)

<sup>129</sup> Fairfax County Public Library. "Patrick Henry Celebrates Black History Month". *Cross Reference*, March 1987, 1.



Dora Lee Johnson pictured at the new Headquarters Library in 1963. (FCPL)

### **The First Black Employee at FCPL**

Dora Lee (Anderson) Johnson (1920-1999) is the earliest known Black employee who worked for FCPL. Johnson was the great-granddaughter of Frank Napper, a freed slave. Napper was one of the earliest settlers of Bowmantown, a historically Black village in Loudoun County, Virginia established shortly before the Civil War.<sup>130</sup> Johnson was born in Aldie, Virginia on January 10, 1920, and only received a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade education.<sup>131</sup>

Early library personnel records no longer exist making it difficult to determine when Johnson was hired, however, her name first appears on a 1957 roster of library employee salaries listing her as a Custodian I at the Thomas Jefferson branch.<sup>132</sup> She also appears in the oldest existing FCPL staff directory dating from July 1962. Johnson, who resided in Leesburg at the time, is listed as working in the Maintenance Department and General Delivery at Thomas Jefferson.<sup>133</sup> She also did book mending at the new Headquarters library in Fairfax which opened in 1962. Johnson later moved to Falls Church and remained on the Maintenance staff at Headquarters until she left in mid-1968. She went on to work for Fairfax County Public Schools as a cafeteria worker. After her husband died, Johnson remarried in 1980, and went by the name Dora Lee Morgan. She passed away in Alexandria on February 23, 1999.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>130</sup> History Matters, LLC. *Loudoun County African-American Historic Architectural Resources Survey*. Washington, D.C., September 2004, 109.

<sup>131</sup> Marriage certificate, Samuel Morgan to Dora Lee Johnson, May 24, 1980, Virginia Department of Health; Richmond, Virginia; *Virginia, Marriages, 1936-2014*; Roll: 101141829.

<sup>132</sup> FCPL Operating Budget Files, 1959-1961, Fairfax County Public Library Records (unprocessed), MSS 10-01, Virginia Room, Fairfax County Public Library.

<sup>133</sup> Fairfax County Public Library. *Fairfax County Public Library Directory, July 1962*. 1962.

<sup>134</sup> "Morgan, Dora Lee Johnson". *The Washington Post*, February 26, 1999, B-7.



Janice Bragg, FCPL's first Black library aide. (*Legacy.com*)

### **The First Black Library Professional at FCPL**

At the Library Board of Trustees meeting on September 9, 1963, the minutes recorded the following:

“The Fairfax County Public Library has recently employed a well-qualified library aide who is a negro; she has been assigned to the Thomas Jefferson branch and it is understood that she is well received by staff and patrons. A negro library page has also been employed at the Headquarters Library.”<sup>135</sup>

The library aide was 23-year-old Janice Juanita Bragg (1938-2020) of McLean, Virginia. Bragg left FCPL by October 1964, and went on to become a teacher for the Washington, D.C. and Baltimore City Public School systems. She also conducted instruction for D.C.'s Kingman Boys' Club in the late 1970s.<sup>136</sup> Bragg passed away on May 16, 2020, in Elkridge, Maryland.<sup>137</sup> The unnamed library page employed at the Headquarters Library mentioned in the minutes has not been identified.

In 1989, Nan Netherton conducted a 60-minute oral history with retired Library Director Mary K. McCulloch about her experiences at FCPL. While McCulloch discussed a variety of topics concerning her career as director from 1953-1969, she did not discuss whether FCPL was ever segregated under her tenure. Netherton did however ask her about employee discrimination:

**Netherton:** What about discrimination?... Did you and your personnel, and the Library Board of Trustees address this problem of people in minorities who might come and seek a job in the library system in Fairfax County?

**McCulloch:** I never had any problem in that area whatsoever.

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<sup>135</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, September 9, 1963.

<sup>136</sup> Barry, Francis. “A school away from school in the Kingman Boys' Club.” *The Washington Post*, November 15, 1978, Z-1.

<sup>137</sup> “Death Notice, Janice R. Bragg.” *The Washington Post*, May 27, 2020, B-7.

**Netherton:** Well, I was just wondering if you remembered applications from Black candidates?

**McCulloch:** I remember it was difficult to find professional Black librarians if you were looking for some.<sup>138</sup>



**Rev. James and Vera P. Swann. (*Presbyterian Church (USA)*)**

### **The First Black Library Trustee of FCPL**

At the Library Board of Trustees meeting on September 19, 1973, W. Franklin Gooding, the Clerk of the Court, swore in Vera P. Swann (1931- ) of Springfield District as the first Black member of the Library Board. She was sworn in along with new member Marion C. Kreuger of Annandale District.<sup>139</sup>

Vera Peral Poe was born in 1931 in Cheraw, South Carolina and attended the historically Black college Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina. She majored in Religion and History and graduated in 1951.<sup>140</sup> Poe taught in High Point, North Carolina for one year and married Rev. Darius L. Swann, Ph.D. (1924-2020), the Presbyterian Church's first Black missionary assigned to a non-African country. The couple spent a decade working as missionaries in India.

In 1964, the Swanns moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, and attempted to send their son, James Swann, to the integrated Seversville School located two blocks from their house. Their son

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<sup>138</sup> Interview with Mary K. McCulloch, February 2, 1989, Northern Virginia Oral History Project collection, C0030, Special Collections Research Center, George Mason University Libraries.

<sup>139</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, September 19, 1973.

<sup>140</sup> Darius and Vera Swann. Abena Productions. Accessed June 14, 2021.

<http://www.abenaproductions.com/vAUTHOR.HTM>.

returned home with a note from the principal notifying his parents that he had to attend the segregated Biddleville School, which was twice as far away, before he could transfer to Seversville. Refusing to do that, the Swanns sued the school system in January 1965 with civil rights attorney Julius L. Chambers representing them. Their case, *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, went to the Supreme Court in 1971. Their ruling upheld court-ordered busing in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district which paved the way to use busing nationally as a means of desegregation.<sup>141</sup>

The Swanns moved to Fairfax County in the early 1970s. Vera Swann served on the Library Board of Trustees for four years until 1977, when she was unavailable for reappointment. Joan Dumas replaced Swann in September 1977.<sup>142</sup> She went on to teach at the Alexandria campus of Northern Virginia Community College and has had a very active career of service with the Presbyterian Church. She has written and published several books on Black Presbyterian history. Her husband, Rev. Darius Swann, passed away on March 8, 2020, but Vera Swann continues to live in Northern Virginia.

### **Conclusion**

Even though the FCPL Board of Trustees agreed to serve Black residents in 1940, and positively responded to Bernice Lloyd Bell's 1962 questionnaire that the library system was always open to all races, this was simply not the case. A limited number of segregated book deposit stations, a discontinuance in this service, and partnering with Whites-only community libraries significantly impacted Black residents accessing library resources. Black children largely experienced the library through the public school system, which itself was segregated and poorly served both by FCPL and FCPS. Although FCPL libraries were desegregated at least by 1954 with the opening of the Thomas Jefferson branch, FCPL never made any efforts to notify the county's Black residents of available library services.

FCPL's commitment to provide library service to all Fairfax County citizens slowly began in the 1950s and progressed over the next twenty years with the opening of Patrick Henry Library in Vienna and the hiring and appointing of Black library staff and a Library Board member. Throughout the 1960s, FCPL was one of the forefront county agencies promoting inclusion and engaging with Black communities. By 1969, the system was hosting "Get Acquainted" evening programs with Black families and working with teenagers in Gum Springs, the oldest Black community in the county, to bring better service to them. In October 1972, the Library Board of Trustees reaffirmed their commitment to all Fairfax County citizens, writing in their policy manual: "The FCPL serves a diverse population with wide-ranging and ever-increasing needs and interests (expressed and unexpressed) for the information and assistance available in library materials. The library is dedicated to the concept of service to everyone."<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Smith, Harrison. "Darius L. Swann, 95, Lead plaintiff in Supreme Court busing case was also missionary in India." *The Washington Post*, March 24, 2020, B-6.

<sup>142</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, September 21, 1977.

<sup>143</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees. *Policies of Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Fairfax, Virginia*. 1977, 8.

## **Part II**

### **“We are Staying”:**

### **Desegregation of Libraries in Northern Virginia and Elsewhere in the State**

By Suzanne S. LaPierre



## Northern Virginia

For the purposes of this research, Northern Virginia is defined as counties and cities bordering Fairfax County. These include the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William, as well as the independent cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, City of Manassas, and Manassas Park. Of these, the City of Alexandria had the most well-known story of resistance to public library segregation: the 1939 protest organized by Samuel W. Tucker was an important milestone of civil rights activism, sometimes referred to as “America’s first sit-down strike”<sup>1</sup>.

The requirement that libraries receiving state aid serve all residents was passed into law as Chapter 170 of the 1946 Acts of Assembly. The language still appears in the Code of Virginia as § 42.1-55: “The service of books in library systems and libraries receiving state aid shall be free and shall be made available to all persons living in the county, region, or municipality.” The wording did not specify the desegregation of library buildings, necessarily, though it required library service be provided free to all residents. In the 1940’s and 50’s, many libraries interpreted this to mean bookmobile deliveries or segregated library facilities could suffice as service to Black residents. However, some – notably the board of Loudoun County’s Purcellville Public Library- chose to ignore the law altogether until activists forced the issue.

The City of Alexandria (1939) and Loudoun County (1956-57) cases are among the most historically significant in Northern Virginia because they were well-publicized and controversial at the time. However, Arlington appears to be the first county in the state to officially desegregate its public library, quietly allowing integration in 1950 after the branch for Black residents was compelled to close.<sup>2</sup> Farther south in Virginia, well-publicized cases of library desegregation, spurred by activists in Danville and Petersburg, occurred in 1959-60. What follows is an outline of some of the early public libraries in Northern Virginia and what we know about their history of segregation and integration.

## City of Alexandria

Alexandria Library has roots going back to 1794, as a private lending library called the Alexandria Library Company. The first branch of what is currently Alexandria Library opened in 1937, when Robert South Barrett donated funds to build a public library in memory of his mother, physician Kate Waller Barrett. This still stands on Queen Street, now known as the Barrett Branch of the Alexandria Library, but at the time was known simply as the Alexandria Library, as it was the only branch.<sup>3</sup> The library opened in 1937 for “all persons of the white race living in the city of Alexandria and to all persons of the white race who are taxpayers in

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<sup>1</sup> “America’s First Sit-Down Strike: The 1939 Alexandria Library Sit-in”. Pdf by the Alexandria Black History Museum.

<sup>2</sup> Newport News has been cited as the first library in Virginia to desegregate on July 19, 1952, according to Wiegand, W. *Part of Our Lives: A People’s History of the American Public Library*, Oxford University Press, 2015. Perhaps it was known as such because there was a public announcement associated with that event. However, we found that Arlington library desegregation preceded Newport News by two years, albeit without fanfare.

<sup>3</sup> “Alexandria Library Sit-In”, Alexandria Library website. <https://alexlibraryva.org/1939-sit-in>. Accessed May 8, 2021.

Alexandria.”<sup>4</sup> White people who lived outside Alexandria and did not pay taxes could use the library for a fee of \$1.50 a year. Non-White taxpayers and residents could not use the library, with or without a fee.<sup>5</sup>

In 1939, Samuel Wilbert Tucker, a young lawyer who lived only a block and a half from the library but had been denied use of it because of his race, planned a protest which would mark one of the first sit-ins of the civil rights movement.<sup>6</sup> Born in Alexandria, Tucker was a gifted student who passed the bar exam at age 20 a few months after his graduation from Howard University, without ever attending law school. (He had studied for the bar at the DC Public Library and Library of Congress, both of which were open to all.)

Tucker’s strategy was two-fold: He initiated legal maneuvers as well as a public protest designed to garner publicity. Tucker accompanied his neighbor, George Wilson, a retired US Army Sergeant, to the library and attempted to apply for a library card for Wilson but was denied due to Wilson’s race.<sup>7</sup> Tucker filed suit, citing that all Alexandrians who paid taxes should have access to the publicly funded facility. While waiting for results, he also planned the now-famous protest. He recruited five young men, ages 18-22 (one was his younger brother, Otto), as well as a 14-year-old look-out, Robert (Bobby) Strange. (Originally there were eleven, but only five showed up for the event, probably due to family concerns for their safety.)

On Monday, August 21, 1939, the young men- smartly attired and well-mannered- entered one at a time and requested library cards. Each was denied due to race, after which each proceeded to sit quietly in the library and read. When the young men declined to leave, police were called. Police informed the men they could be arrested if they did not leave. William "Buddy" Evans replied: “Well, we are staying.”<sup>8</sup> The look-out alerted Tucker that police were on their way and Tucker alerted the press. Reporters and photographers arrived in time to record the arrest of the protesters, news of which spread via newspapers in several states throughout the U.S.<sup>9</sup>

The sit-in participants were charged with trespassing. In his capacity as a lawyer, Tucker argued that, as citizens, the men had a right to be in a public building and thus were not trespassing. The charge was lowered to disorderly conduct. Tucker argued successfully that skin color alone was not enough to constitute disorderly conduct, as the men had been polite and well-dressed. Ultimately, the young men were not convicted and did not serve jail time.

The case raised hope in the Black community that libraries throughout the region would be integrated. “The decision, in all probability, means that all public libraries in the South, which

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<sup>4</sup> Minutes of the Alexandria Library Association, 1931-47, p. 150, 153, 158.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, J. Douglas. “Too Radical for Us: The Passing of Managed Race Relations”. *Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics, and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia*. The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill & London, 2002, p. 261-262.

<sup>6</sup> Silcox, Nancy Noyes. *Samuel Wilbert Tucker: The Story of a Civil Rights Trailblazer and the 1939 Alexandria Library Sit-In*. History4All, Inc., Fairfax, VA, 2014, p. 41.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, p. 261.

<sup>8</sup> “Quintet arrested for ‘Library Sit-Down.’” *Washington Tribune*, August 26, 1939, I.

<sup>9</sup> Silcox, *Samuel Wilbert Tucker*, p. 45.

now bar colored, can be forced to admit them,” reported *Baltimore Afro-American* newspaper.<sup>10</sup> The protest did not result in the library being integrated, however. Instead, a separate library for Black residents was hastily built, opening less than a year later. The Robert H. Robinson Library, located at 638 North Alfred Street, opened on April 24, 1940. The Robinson Library was smaller, open fewer hours, and had older books. The librarian, who was Black, was paid half the salary of the White librarian at the Queen Street branch.<sup>11</sup>

Records show that the city’s library board had discussed the “question of a colored library” as early as March 1937, before the Queens Street library opened in August of that year, but no action had been taken.<sup>12</sup> The board renewed discussions shortly before Tucker’s attempt to procure a library card for Wilson, debating options such as expanding the library at the Parker-Gray school for Black students, building an annex onto the Whites-only library (with or without a separate entrance), or erecting a new building.<sup>13</sup> Tucker’s litigation lit a fire under officials to take action. Courts dragged out the case against the young protesters, as well as the petition for Wilson to be granted a library card, in an apparent attempt to get plans for a separate library for Black citizens underway to justify denial of services at the Queen Street library.

Tucker was disgusted with the “solution” of a separate library, refusing to accept a library card issued for the “Colored library” as it was known, and not the one near his home. He sent a letter to a librarian at the Queen Street branch dated February 13, 1940: “I refuse and will always refuse to accept a card to be used at the library to be constructed and operated at Alfred and Wythe Streets in lieu of a card to be used at the existing library on Queen Street for which I have made an application. Continued delay – beyond the close of this month – in issuing to me a card for use at the library on Queen Street will be taken as a refusal to do so, whereupon I will feel justified in seeking the aid of court to enforce my right.”<sup>14</sup> However, illness sidelined Tucker from continuing the fight and the situation ended with two segregated libraries.

Perhaps Tucker anticipated how inferior the library for Black residents would be compared to the Queen Street facility reserved for Whites. His sister, Elsie Thomas, described the contrast in the documentary film *Out of Obscurity*: “When you compare the Queen Street Library with Robert Robinson Library, it was like comparing the mansion to the slave quarters.”<sup>15</sup> Despite the inequity, many Black Alexandrians, especially children, made eager use of the new resource.<sup>16</sup>

Desegregation of Alexandria’s public libraries eventually happened in phases between 1959-1962. “The Robinson Library continued to serve the needs of African American Alexandrians, despite acknowledged, overcrowded conditions, until February 1959. That winter the Alexandria Library quietly integrated for African American adults and high school students. Children

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<sup>10</sup> “Smash Va. Library Color Bar,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, January 20, 1940.

<sup>11</sup> “Alexandria Library Sit-In”, Alexandria Library website.

<sup>12</sup> Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, p. 261.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p.262.

<sup>14</sup> “Letter from Samuel W. Tucker to Alexandria Library, February 13, 1940”. Alexandria Library Special Collection website. <https://alxndria.ent.sirsi.net/custom/web/lhsc/sitin/tuckerletter/doc.html>. Accessed May 8, 2021.

<sup>15</sup> *Out of Obscurity*, Documentary film, 2000. River Road Productions.

<sup>16</sup> “Alexandria Sit-In, 1939”. Boundary Stones, WETA’s Local History Website.

<https://boundarystones.weta.org/2016/11/29/alexandria-library-sit-1939>. Last Updated December 17, 2020.

continued to be served by the Robinson Library until July 1962 when the Alexandria Library was fully integrated,” according to Dr. Brenda Mitchell-Powell, for the Alexandria Black History Museum.<sup>17</sup> The Robinson Library building currently houses the Alexandria Black History Museum. Tucker is now widely recognized as a civil rights trailblazer. There is an elementary school named after him in Alexandria.



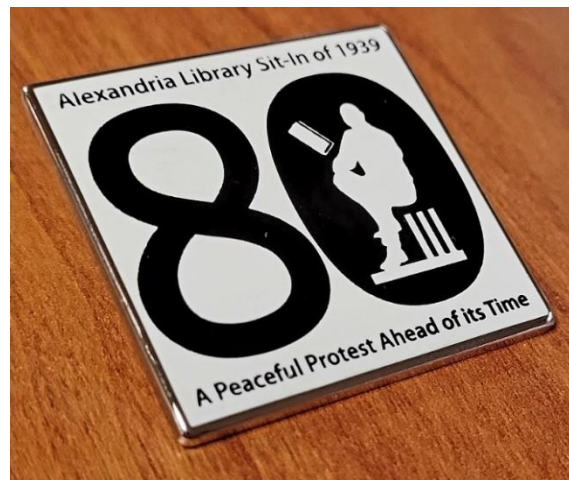
## Samuel Wilbert Tucker

The Story of a Civil Rights Trailblazer  
and the 1939 Alexandria Library Sit-In



Nancy Noyes Silcox

Left: Alexandria Library protesters arrested, August 21, 1939. (*Alexandria Black History Resource Center*)  
Right: Samuel Wilbert Tucker biography by Nancy Silcox. (*FCPL*)



Pin commemorating the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Alexandria Library sit-in. (*Virginia Room, FCPL*)

<sup>17</sup> Mitchell-Powell, Brenda. "The Robert H. Robinson Library". City of Alexandria website.  
<https://www.alexandriava.gov/historic/blackhistory/default.aspx?id=37350#TheSitDownStrikeandtheRobinsonLibrary>. Accessed May 20, 2021.

## Loudoun County

Today's Loudoun County Public Library, founded in 1973, was preceded by Purcellville Public Library founded in 1938, the only public library in Loudoun at the time. Unlike the City of Alexandria case, which resulted in separate facilities for Black and White residents, Purcellville Public Library desegregated completely in 1956-57 in a case that drew public attention and controversy. It became the first public building to be desegregated in Loudoun County.<sup>18</sup>

Purcellville Public Library's board had ignored the 1946 state mandate to provide services to all residents, as well as multiple requests for bookmobile service for Black residents, including a 1953 request from Principal of the Carver Elementary School for Black students. Integration only occurred after legal action was initiated by a Black resident- who also happened to be working as a decorator for President Eisenhower's sister-in-law.

In 1956, Purcellville residents Samuel Cardoza Murray and Josie Cook Murray, a couple who ran a local upholstery shop and worked as interior decorators, were hired by First Lady Mamie Eisenhower's sister, Mabel Frances "Mike" Moore, who lived near Hillsboro. The Murrays went to the library to research the "Austrian" style draperies Moore requested. They were not allowed to check out a book and were instead referred to the chairman of the Purcellville Library Board, Oscar L. Emerick, who said that it "would not be in the spirit of the citizens who organized the library" for the Murrays to check out a book. (At this time, a Black resident wanting to check out a book would have to have a White person check it out for them. Emerick offered to check out the book for the Murrays but not let them check the book out themselves.)<sup>19</sup>

Mr. Murray, who was 42 at the time, objected to not being allowed to check out the book in his own name, stating that he paid taxes, and Mrs. Murray supported his decision, according to an interview she gave in 2001.<sup>20</sup> The Murrays found a lawyer, Oliver Ellis Stone of Alexandria, who agreed to take their case after several other attorneys turned it down. Some integrated civic groups offered to pay for the cost of the lawsuit, but Mr. Murray said he and his wife would pay for everything themselves.

Stone reminded the Library Board that Virginia law specified library services must be available to all residents to be supported by state tax funds. Town and county funding was also at stake. Many meetings and impassioned speeches later, during which segregationists (calling themselves "Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberty") floated ideas such as closing the library and moving it to private ownership to avoid integration, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors narrowly voted to desegregate the library to preserve funding on April 8, 1957. The vote was 4-to-3.

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<sup>18</sup> Exline, Matthew. "Desegregation of the Purcellville Public Library". *We Have Been Waiting Too Long: The Struggle Against Racial Segregation in Loudoun County, Virginia*. Have History Will Travel Press, 2nd edition, 2020, p. 43.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 47.

<sup>20</sup> Scheel, Eugene. "Couple Wrote First Chapter of County's Civil Rights Movement." *The Washington Post*. April 8, 2001.

During the controversy, the “Loudoun Defenders” as the segregationists were called for short, circulated a petition to support their cause and received 44 signatures, compared to 366 signatures on a counter-petition.<sup>21</sup> This seems to indicate their views did not represent the majority opinion at the time. Tom Burke, a reporter for *Washington Star*, indicated that Purcellville was out of step with the rest of the region, writing: “Library facilities are open to colored residents in Fairfax and Arlington counties and the cities of Alexandria and Falls Church.”<sup>22</sup>

While White customers continued to treat the Murrays respectfully at their shop, others, including the town deputy, tried to make them uncomfortable, if not afraid. One day the deputy himself led a line of 15 cars which drove slowly, with horns blaring, past the Murray’s home on Lincoln Road. When the Murrays complained, “the deputy said the group was just teenagers who wanted to show the Murrays how well they could drive.”<sup>23</sup>

Poignantly, after the 1957 desegregation of Purcellville Library, it remained largely unused by Black residents.<sup>24</sup> According to an article published in *Loudoun Times-Mirror* newspaper a week after the desegregation vote: “Since Thursday’s vote, one Negro woman and her young daughter have registered as members and have taken out books.”<sup>25</sup> The fact that only one woman with a child ventured to use the library after such a well-publicized case (covered by both Black and White newspapers at the time) indicates that most Black residents did not feel comfortable or welcome using the library even after the formal desegregation. Nevertheless, many consider the event the first victory of the civil rights movement in Loudoun County.

The Murrays, however, were free to engage in research and complete their decorating job for Mrs. Moore. President and First lady Eisenhower were so impressed when they saw the drapes the Murrays designed hanging at the Moore’s home that they requested the Murrays create similar drapes, as well as chairs and other furnishings, for their farm near Gettysburg.<sup>26</sup> That property is now known as Eisenhower National Historic Site, operated by the National Park Service and open to the public.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Burke, Tom. “Library Integration Suit Studied in Purcellville”. *The Sunday Star* (Washington, D.C.), February 24, 1957, A-13.

<sup>23</sup> Scheel, “Couple Wrote the First Chapter”.

<sup>24</sup> Exline, *We Have been Waiting*, p. 56.

<sup>25</sup> “Defenders Oppose Library Funds”. *Loudoun Times-Mirror*, v. 158, no. 13. March 28, 1957.

<sup>26</sup> Scheel, “Couple Wrote First Chapter”.

<sup>27</sup> The information about the Murrays creating the draperies and other trimmings for the Eisenhower home came from historian Eugene Scheel’s interview with Josie Murray circa 2001 (verified via email communication between Mr. Scheel, June 21, 2021). According to Michael R. Florer, M.A., Museum Curator and Library Manager at Eisenhower National Historic Site, “The Eisenhowers hired an interior designer for their Gettysburg home. Her business was Elisabeth Draper, Inc. and located in New York City. Though she did all the designing, she contracted out some and perhaps most of the production of various furnishings. So, there is the possibility of the Murrays doing work for the Eisenhowers through Elisabeth Draper”(via email communication, June 10, 2021).





Eisenhower National Historic Site, Gettysburg, PA, features draperies and other furnishings made by the Murrys at the request of President and First Lady Eisenhower, according to Josie Murray's interview with historian Eugene Scheel. Many rooms feature the "Austrian style" drapery which the Murrys attempted to research at the library. *(Carol Highsmith, NPS)*

By the State

## Library Was Ordered 10 Years Ago To Serve All, Regardless of Race

The problem of serving all the community is not a new one to trustees of the Purcellville public library.

Ten years ago, in 1947, minutes of the board show that a letter was received from the State librarian requiring library service be extended to all persons, regardless of race. But by "committee arrangement," the State took no action and agreed not to withhold State funds from the library in spite of the library's non-compliance with the order.

William Tuck was Governor at the time.

Then on April 16, 1953, minutes show that a letter was received from Alfred K. Talbot, principal of Carver school, requesting bookmobile service for the school. A library committee was authorized to report on Talbot's request at the next meeting. But no action was taken.

On January 13, 1955, the com-

mittee on social order of the Society of Friends requested by letter that library service be made available to Negroes. No action was taken.

Some trustees themselves have sought at various times to have bookmobile service extended to the colored population, the minutes show.

In April 1955 a committee of the library itself recommended bookmobile service be made available to Negroes. The committee's report was tabled.

In January 1956 the trustees split 6-6 on the question of extending bookmobile services. That tie vote meant no change in policy.

In July 1956 the board voted to reopen the whole question again.

But it was not actually reopened until six months later on January 10, 1957, when Samuel Murray of Purcellville asked to borrow a book.

February 28, 1957, editorial on the Purcellville Library desegregation case. (*The Blue Ridge Herald*)

Also in Loudoun, the Thomas Balch Library operated for fifty years as a subscription library, becoming a public, but segregated, library in 1960. According to the library's website, it was desegregated in 1965, however current staff report that the exact date is uncertain. Gene Ashton, a Black high school student, worked at the library from 1963-64. Although he had a library card, and reports being treated with warmth and respect and trusted with the keys to the library, he also reports not seeing any other Black adults or children using the library during that time.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Ashton, Gene. Personal account. From the vertical file "African American History - Integration of Thomas Balch Library", collection of Thomas Balch Library.

## Arlington County

Arlington County Public Library began as a library in the Glencarlyn community in the late 1800's, housing the book collection of former Union Civil War General and Missouri Congressman Samuel Burdett. In 1923, the Burdett Library opened as the first of Arlington's public libraries. On June 25, 1944, "a new branch was added to the library system- the Holmes Branch, for the Negro citizens of the County," according to a document authored by Jeanne Rose, former Reference Supervisor of the Arlington County Department of Libraries.<sup>29</sup> Located at 13<sup>th</sup> and South Queen Streets, Holmes Branch began as a "volunteer organization and a small library on November 19, 1940, in the George Washington Carver Homes project.... It entered the County system with 1,000 standard books and flourished for several years. In 1950, however, it closed to make way for a Government (sic) housing project and never reopened. Its book stock and patrons were assimilated by the other libraries."<sup>30</sup>

Arlington County libraries were segregated until the Holmes Branch Library was forced to close in 1949/50, leaving Black residents without access to public library service.<sup>31</sup> Judith Knudsen, current Manager of the Center for Local History of the Arlington Central Library, relayed more information about the story of the Holmes Branch via email communication, as follows.

"On June 25, 1944, the Holmes Branch for African Americans was formally opened and became part of the county's library system. Located at 13th and S. Queen Streets, it had originally opened on November 19, 1940, as a volunteer organization and library in the George Washington Carver Homes Project. The County Board appropriated \$2,100 toward the library which helped make possible additional books, 2,500 at the opening, and it flourished for several years. In 1949, however, the Federal Housing Administration informed the Library Department that, as of July 1, the building which housed the branch would no longer be available, which meant there would no longer be a library for African Americans. The adult books were stored in the hope that another location would be found later, and the children's books were deposited in the African American Hoffman-Boston School where they were needed to make their library facilities acceptable to the state. In January 1950, unable to find another location for the Holmes Branch, the County Manager, approved "the use of all branches by all residents" of the County."<sup>32</sup>

This indicates that Arlington County was the first in Virginia to desegregate a formerly segregated library system, albeit without controversy or fanfare.

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<sup>29</sup> Rose, Jeanne. "A Brief History of the Arlington County Libraries". <http://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/1960-4-Libraries.pdf>. Accessed April 27, 2021.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> The Center for Local History of the Arlington Central Library was closed due to COVID during the writing of this report.

<sup>32</sup> Judith Knudsen, Manager, Center for Local History, Arlington Central Library, email to author, April 28, 2021. An exact citation was unavailable due to the building being closed for the COVID-19 pandemic.



**Central Library, Arlington, 1961. This branch now includes Arlington Public Library's Center for Local History.  
(Arlington Public Library)**

## **City of Falls Church**

The Mary Riley Styles Library, which currently serves the City of Falls Church, has its roots as a private library founded by its namesake in 1899. Styles directed the Library Committee of the Woman's Club of Falls Church, which managed the library until 1940. For most of this time it was in the former Congregational Church Building. By 1940, the library had outgrown the ability of the Women's Club to manage and was gifted to the Town of Falls Church. The Falls Church community was among the first in Northern Virginia to plan a building specifically intended for use as a library.<sup>33</sup> Groundbreaking took place in August 1957 and the building opened to the public in 1958. (Falls Church City became independent from Fairfax County in 1948.)

We found no formal decree of a Whites-only policy at Falls Church City's public library, or the private library that preceded it.<sup>34</sup> Current staff report no knowledge of any explicit segregation policy, and a Falls Church Library brochure from c. 1951 proclaims "anyone over six may have a card".<sup>35</sup> However, surviving monthly records from Fairfax County Public Library (FCPL) during

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<sup>33</sup> "History of the Library." City of Falls Church website. <https://www.fallschurchva.gov/665/History-of-the-Library>. Accessed May 8, 2021.

<sup>34</sup> At the time of this report, the City of Falls Church local history collection was in storage and inaccessible due to library renovation. However, email communication from Lorri Culhane, Reference Librarian at Mary Riley Styles Public Library, to Suzanne LaPierre confirms the above information was reviewed by management and appears to be accurate.

<sup>35</sup> "Two Years in the Falls Church Public Library, 1949-1951," brochure, circa 1951. Collection of the Library of Virginia.

1942-43 tracking service to residents at the Falls Church location indicate that only White customers were served.<sup>36</sup>

Further, Minutes from the FCPL Library Board meeting on July 22, 1940, indicate that all the Fairfax County community libraries, of which Falls Church was included, were segregated at that time. The Minutes record plans to provide services to Black residents and note that procuring new books will be necessary because “none of the books from the various community libraries will be available for negro service.”<sup>37</sup> The documentation of a “Colored station” in Falls Church serviced by Fairfax County’s bookmobile beginning in 1941 further indicates the segregation of neighborhoods and library services in the area.<sup>38</sup>

During school segregation, Falls Church Negro School (aka Falls Church Colored School), and later James Lee Elementary School, educated young Black children of Falls Church. Until 1954, the only option for older Black children to continue their education was the regional high school in Manassas.<sup>39</sup> This would mean high-school-age Black students of Falls Church theoretically had access to the Carnegie Library at the Manassas High School.<sup>40</sup> However, students were required to provide their own transportation or boarding to attend the school, so this negated the opportunity for most.

Carnegie stipulated that the library at Manassas High School also be available to members of the community, so other Black residents would technically have had access to it. However, the Manassas location would have been inconvenient, if not inaccessible, for most residents of Falls Church. The Manassas school and its library are discussed more in the Prince William section of this report.

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<sup>36</sup> Where FCPL forms prompt for race of customers, statistics are recorded in the spaces designated for Whites while the spaces designated for “Negro Borrower Registration” are left blank or crossed out.

<sup>37</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, July 2, 1940.

<sup>38</sup> Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees Minutes, January 14, 1941.

<sup>39</sup> Gernand, Bradley E, and Netherton, Nan. *Falls Church: A Virginia Village Revisited*. The Donning Company Publishers, Virginia Beach, VA, 2000, p. 105-106.

<sup>40</sup> The first high school for Black students in the area was Manassas Industrial School, which became public in 1937 and served Black students in Fairfax, Fauquier, and Prince William counties. Gar-Field High School and Occoquan Elementary School integrated in 1961, having previously served only White students. The last schools designated for Black students in Prince William County were finally desegregated in 1966. Source: Historic Prince William. <https://www.historicprincewilliam.org/county-history/schools>. Accessed May 11, 2021.





Mary Riley Styles Public Library resided in several buildings over the decades, including a garage, post office, and church. This 1955 photo is from E. Broad St., its last location before the current building on N. Virginia Ave.  
(MRSPL)



"Falls Church Colored School" in 1942 (Virginia Room, FCPL)



## **Prince William County (Including Manassas City and the City of Manassas Park)**

Prince William Public Library was founded in 1952 as a demonstration library project funded by the Library of Virginia. Based on its success, the Board of County Supervisors agreed to support it from that point on. The first library structures were in Manassas. A bookmobile from the library's earliest days covered other parts of the county, including service to Black communities. The bookmobile was in operation until the 1970's.<sup>41</sup>

According to Donald L. Wilson, Virginia Librarian for The Ruth E. Lloyd Information Center, the library appears to have been implicitly segregated in its earliest years, like all public institutions in Prince William County at the time: "A few years ago I asked Ren Conner, son of one of the earliest staff Katherine Conner (1910-2005) if the library was segregated. His mother was acting library director during several periods in the 1950s and 1960's. Ren said that on his many visits to our library he never saw a person of color using it. He consulted some friends whose memory also went back that far, and they agreed with his assessment."

Prior to 1952, students and other community members had access to school libraries, but the schools were segregated until 1961, and many remained so until 1966, so these services were essentially segregated. Manassas High School, the regional high school for Black students, had a library built in 1910 funded by Andrew Carnegie, who stipulated that it be available to the citizens of the community. In effect this was the first public library in the county.<sup>42</sup>

This school began as Manassas Industrial School for Colored Youth, chartered in 1893 by Jennie Dean, who was born into slavery in Prince William County.<sup>43</sup> Originally private, it became public in 1937. Carnegie's donation of \$15,000 enabled the school to build an administration building with a library and various classrooms.<sup>44</sup> After that time, the library on that campus (on the west side of Manassas) would have been the primary library in the county for students of color. The school was in operation as the Regional High School (serving Black students from several counties, including Fairfax and the City of Falls Church) until 1966.<sup>45</sup>

Schools provided access to books for some residents, both Black and White, before the public library opened in Prince William County. Donald Custis wrote in his memoir of a time when the high school for White students he attended was his only source of library books: "I was born and raised in rural Prince William County during a time when there were no public library facilities available. The only library I was able to use at all was a small collection of books at the old

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<sup>41</sup> Donald L. Wilson, Virginia Librarian, The Ruth E. Lloyd Information Center for Genealogy and Local History (RELIC), Prince William Public Libraries. Email correspondence to Suzanne LaPierre, May 4, 2021.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> "Library, Manassas Industrial School". Braddock Heritage. <http://braddockheritage.org/items/show/169>. Accessed May 14, 2021.

<sup>44</sup> Donald L. Wilson, Virginia Librarian, The Ruth E. Lloyd Information Center for Genealogy and Local History (RELIC), Prince William Public Libraries. Email to Suzanne LaPierre, May 4, 2021.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

Occoquan District High School.”<sup>46</sup> Occoquan District High School was built in 1927 and replaced by Gar-Field High School in 1953.

The City of Manassas Park and Manassas City both became independent of Prince William County in 1975. City of Manassas Park opened Manassas Park City Library in 2020. The City of Manassas receives library service through Prince William County, which opened Manassas City Library branch in 2021. Both were part of Prince William County during the segregation era.<sup>47</sup>

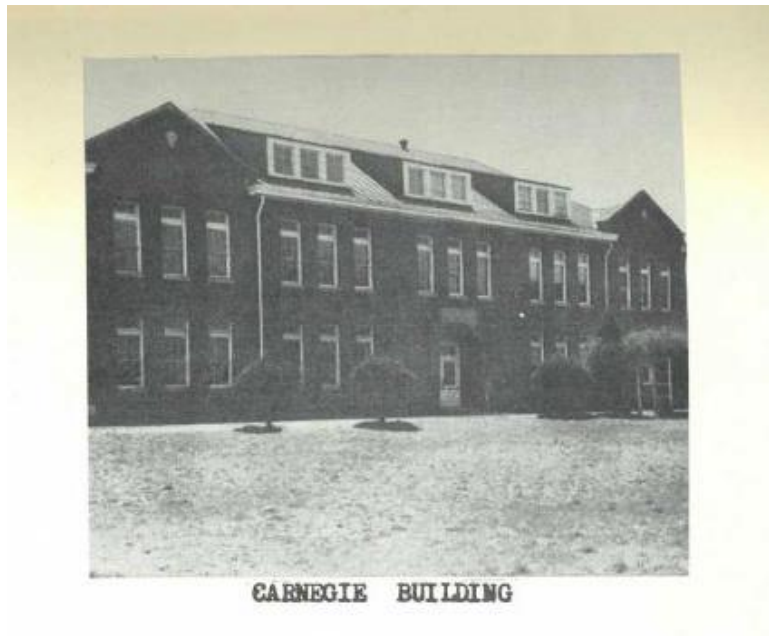


**Manassas Industrial School Library, 1914. (*Library of Virginia*)**

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<sup>46</sup> Curtis, Donald E. *The Curtis Collection: A Personal View of Prince William County History*, PW County Historical Commission, 1988., p. 154.

<sup>47</sup> Wilson, D. Email to Suzanne LaPierre, May 6, 2021.



Carnegie Building as pictured in *The Jay Dee*, the 1950 Yearbook of Manassas High School. (Virginia Room, FCPL)



LIBRARY CLUB

The Library Club, pictured in *The Jay Dee*, 1950 Yearbook of Manassas High School. (Virginia Room, FCPL)

## Elsewhere in Virginia

Although the Southeastern Library Association recommended in 1928 “library service to Negroes should be a part of every public library program,” as of 1935, 83% of the Black population in twelve Southern states still lacked access to library services.<sup>48</sup> A 1935 federal survey showed that of 46 public libraries in Virginia, only 8 served Black residents.<sup>49</sup>

*Statistics of Virginia Public Libraries 1944-45* lists 86 public libraries in the state, reporting that 13 provided “service to Negroes” in the main library, while 15 had a separate branch to serve Black residents. In two cases, the same library system reported service to Black residents both in the main library and a separate branch, so this amounts to 26 separate library systems out of the 86 that provided some sort of service to Black residents.

The counties of Danville, Newport News, Petersburg, and Portsmouth, were sites of well-publicized library desegregation cases elsewhere in Virginia during the 50’s and 60’s. Following are brief descriptions of each of those cases.

### Danville

The Danville Public Library was also known as the Confederate Memorial Library because it resided in the 1859 Sutherlin Mansion used by Jefferson Davis to hold his last cabinet meeting of the Civil War. Danville itself is sometimes known as the “Last Capitol of the Confederacy” because of events that took place in the mansion during the week leading up to Robert E. Lee’s surrender on April 10, 1865. The library opened in 1928 for use by White residents only.

Although the library was segregated, in the early 30’s a Black assistant named Mrs. Frankie H. Jones was hired by the White librarian and sometimes took over duties when the White librarian was absent. Later a branch opened at the high school for Black students and Mrs. Jones was transferred there. In 1950, a library branch for Black residents opened, named William F. Grasty Library after a local Black educator.<sup>50</sup> As was usually the case, the library designated for Black residents was much smaller than one for Whites and contained older books discarded from the main library.<sup>51</sup> While officials claimed Black residents had equal access to materials from either library, there was no access to the catalog from Grasty Library.

On April 2, 1960, a group of Black teenagers, led by 17-year-old high school student Robert A. Williams, protested the segregated facilities by “invading” the Whites-only library. They were not allowed to check out books and were told the library was closed. The teenagers, who knew each other from high school and Loyal Baptist Church, also protested a segregated park. A week later, crosses were burned on the lawn of the Loyal Baptist Church. On September 4, while the

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<sup>48</sup> Barker, Tommie Dora, *Libraries of the South: A Report on Developments, 1930-1935*. American Library Association, Chicago, IL, 1936.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Wiegand, *The Desegregation of Public Libraries*.

<sup>51</sup> In his memoir, *Life After Life*, writer Evans Hopkins relates his experience as a child using the tiny two-room library reserved for Colored residents of Danville which held “books discarded from the segregated main library” but was nevertheless a place of discovery for the avid reader.



library remained closed as officials attempted to forestall integration, the KKK gathered at a racetrack nearby for a speech by their imperial wizard. They burned a cross and raised the Confederate flag. However, continued civil rights protests and legal action compelled the city council to vote on September 13, 1960, to integrate the library.

When the Danville Public Library reopened as an integrated facility, there were new requirements in place, including a four-page library card application and a \$2.50 membership fee. The cumbersome application required users to list their education level, college degrees, reasons for using the library, reading habits, etcetera. Applicants were also required to supply two character and two credit references which local officials promised to review with “rigid scrutiny”.<sup>52</sup> Also upon re-opening, furniture had been removed to require standing-only service because that was thought to be less “intimate” than having people of different races seated together. Clearly, although residents of all races were now allowed in, the environment was not a welcoming one.



Postcard of Danville Confederate Memorial Library, circa 1938 (*Card Cow*)  
The building now houses the Danville Museum of Fine Arts & History

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p. 98.

## Newport News

In Newport News, William Hale Thompson, who was a local attorney and vice chairman of the Virginia NAACP's legal staff, sued the city and the Library Board in 1950 for access to the public library on West Avenue. A trial date was set in 1952, but before that time, the library system announced its facilities were open to "all adult inhabitants of the city of Newport News," apparently due to pressure from the lawsuit. In 2018, Thompson was memorialized with a mural painted at the site of his former law office, on corner of 25th Street and Jefferson Avenue. (The building is currently a barber shop.) While some claim that Newport News was the first county in Virginia to desegregate a formerly segregated public library, we found that Arlington preceded Newport News in doing so by two years. However, Newport News was the first to desegregate as the result of legal action by a citizen.

Even before the lawsuit, Thompson had been lobbying for library service to all residents, prompted the opening of a library for Black residents on the second floor of the Doris Miller Recreation Building in 1949. This was the only library available to Black children and teens after school hours because, even after the West Avenue branch integrated in 1952, it was only for use by adults. After moving a few times, the library morphed into the Pearl Bailey Library on Wickham Avenue in 1985, where it now includes a conference room named after Thompson.

Perhaps Thompson received some inspiration from his excellent high school library. Huntington High School, which for a time was the only high school for Black students of Newport News (later one of two), boasted one of the best school libraries in the state, and the only one with a full-time professional librarian. According to *Huntington High School: Symbol of Community Hope and Unity 1920-1971*: "In 1938, the Huntington High School library was recognized and considered by some critics as one of the best in any Virginia high schools. It housed more than thirty-five hundred books; held subscriptions to thirty-six then current magazines and six daily newspapers, including the *Journal and Guide* and *The New York Times*. It was the only high school library in Virginia with a full-time librarian, who had a collegiate professional degree in library science."<sup>53</sup>

Pat Taylor, also a graduate of Huntington High and current member of Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, remembers the impressive library. Although unsure of the funding source of the library, she reports the school had a great deal of community support. Taylor was active in the movement to preserve the Huntington High building on Hampton Avenue, once slated for demolition. It is now a Boys and Girls Club featuring a mural about Black history by artist S. Ross Browne.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Lucas, Hattie Thomas. *Huntington High School: Symbol of Community Hope and Unity*. Pub. Connections, 1999.

<sup>54</sup> Taylor, who remembers sitting in the back of the bus with her grandmother as a child, nevertheless recalls race relations in the city as uncommonly cooperative, a fact she attributes in part to the presence of military personnel of all races. Taylor, Pat. personal conversation with S. LaPierre, August 22, 2021.





(Left) Choice Neighborhoods Initiative member Pat Taylor, active in preserving Hunting High, is shown here with a mural by the same artist who created the one of Thompson nearby (Right).  
See Appendix C for existing sites. (S. LaPierre)

## Petersburg

In 1923, Clara McKenney donated her historic 1890 mansion to the city of Petersburg for use as public library in memory of her late husband, attorney William R. McKenney. Her deed stipulated: “(the library is) to be maintained for both white and colored persons, all of the building, including the first floor and all above that was to be for the exclusive use of white persons; and the basement of the building was to be kept and maintained for the exclusive use of colored persons with separate entrance and exit thereto.”<sup>55</sup> The library remained segregated in this manner for decades. While all users theoretically had access to all books by request, the catalog was in the Whites-only part of the library, preventing Black users from knowing what was purportedly available to them. Reference books and current periodicals were also in the Whites-only part of the library.

Reverend Wyatt Tee Walker, pastor of Gillfield Baptist Church and president of the local chapter of NAACP, brought attention to the matter in June of 1959, when he deliberately entered the Whites-only floor and, conspicuously wearing his clerical collar (which he did not typically

<sup>55</sup> Tobias, Carl. “Untenable, Unchristian, and Unconstitutional”. *University of Richmond School of Law Scholarship Repository*. 58 Mo. L. Rev. 855, 1993.

wear), requested a particular biography of Robert E. Lee. He was refused service and told to go to the basement, which had a separate entrance for Black residents. Walker had anticipated this and had tipped off reporters, initiating protests.

Clara McKenney's daughter, Virginia Claiborne wrote to the mayor in support of integration: "The present branch facilities... represented human dignity in 1923. The same is not true in 1959."<sup>56</sup> Both Claiborne and Louis Brownlow, who had been city manager at the time the building was gifted, wrote letters (later made public) testifying that the donor would have wanted the library to be integrated. Some other White residents also backed integration. However, local segregationists insisted the gift language meant the library could not be integrated and must close if forced to do so.

On February 27, 1960, approximately 140 Black residents, most of them students from Peabody High School and Virginia State College, entered via the main door and took all the available seats. This deliberate "trespassing" of the Whites-only part of the library resulted in the library closing for the next four days, while the city council worked to pass a tougher ordinance to deter integration efforts.

On March 7, 1960, 15 Black residents again walked through the Whites-only entrance of the library and took seats inside. Eleven were arrested and, thanks to the newly passed city ordinance, each faced up to a year in jail and a fine of up to \$1,000. Five of them remained in jail for over forty hours. The arrests spurred further protests and prayer vigils by hundreds of citizens- and a telegram of support from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The Petersburg Public Library was compelled to desegregate in 1960- in time for a May 5 visit from the Freedom Riders. Later that year, Walker left Petersburg to serve as Dr. King's Chief of Staff.



**Petersburg Library sit-in, February 27, 1960. (Historic Petersburg Foundation, Inc.)**

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<sup>56</sup> "Library Desegregation Asked by Kin of Donor," *Washington Post-Times-Herald*, April 5, 1960.



Virginia State College student Lillian Pride is served a warrant by Petersburg Chief of Police, March 7, 1960.  
(*Richmond Times-Dispatch*)

## Portsmouth

In Portsmouth, Virginia, two Black dentists, Hugo Owens and James W. Holley, pressured the Portsmouth Public Library to integrate beginning in 1958. The library board resisted by taking no action on their request, cancelling meetings when pressed to do so. When the board eventually agreed to study the matter in 1959, they announced that the library could be integrated once they had a larger space- perhaps within two years (eyeing a post office building as the potential site of a larger library). Owens and Holley filed suit in federal district court, decrying the unfair treatment: “The conduct of discrimination by the Portsmouth Public Library based on race is humiliating, embarrassing, and grossly unfair. This conduct tends to reasonably suggest and imply that your complainants and other Negroes are inferior.”<sup>57</sup>

Compelled by the courts to respond, the library board replied that Black residents were denied use of the central library because “the present library quarters are so small, cramped, and

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<sup>57</sup> Wiegand, *The Desegregation of Public Libraries*.



crowded as to make it impracticable to accommodate both races.”<sup>58</sup> Another excuse was that Black and White teenagers might cause trouble with one another in an integrated library. To this the judge replied: “I have a little bit more confidence in teen-agers on these race problems than I do in adults.”<sup>59</sup> In 1960, the judge ruled that the Portsmouth library must be integrated.

However, it wasn’t until 1963 that the library moved into larger quarters in the remodeled post office with an integrated staff and library board. Until then, the library formerly available to Black residents remained in use. Portsmouth Colored Community Library had served Black residents since 1945. Bertha Edwards, a graduate of Hampton University, served as librarian at the 900 square foot brick building from 1945 – 1962, when the library closed, whereupon she went to work as part of an integrated staff at the new location of Portsmouth Public Library. The Portsmouth Community Library had roots stretching back to the 1920’s, when Black citizens led by St. James Episcopal Church Pastor M. B. Birchette began a small community library which was housed in a few different locations until the addition of city funds allowed for a permanent building and expanded collection. However, it had nothing close to the resources of the Whites-only main library and Owens deemed it “totally inadequate”<sup>60</sup>.



In this 1945 image, librarian Bertha Edwards, left, is standing in the library doorway with her assistant, Charlotte Fouik. Portsmouth Public library photograph.

An image from “Highlights from the Portsmouth Colored Community Library Museum” (*City of Portsmouth*)

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p. 60.

## **“We Stand on the Threshold”: Virginian Civil Rights Activists and the Desegregation of Libraries**

Many Black citizens-turned-activists of Virginia played a pivotal role in the integration of public libraries where local officials ignored the 1946 state mandate to serve all residents and/or the 1954 Supreme Court decision that segregation is inherently unequal. Many were young people, some only teenagers. Samuel Wilbert Tucker’s sit-in participants in Alexandria consisted of young men between 18 and 22 years of age, with 14-year-old, Robert (Bobby) Strange playing a key role as a look-out. Tucker himself was only 26 years old at the time of the sit-in. Farther South in Virginia, Danville Public Library and Petersburg Public Library were also integrated following sit-ins and activism conducted mainly by Black high school and college students, including 17-year-old Robert A. Williams of Danville and 20-year-old C. J. Malloy of Petersburg. Malloy, a student at Virginia State College, read a group statement at a city council meeting on March 1, 1960, that included these words: “Segregation as a part of the fabric of American life is dead. We stand on the threshold of America becoming her ideal.”

Black professionals were also among the activists who committed themselves to desegregating Virginia’s public libraries: interior decorators Samuel Cardoza Murray and Josie Cook Murray of Loudoun County, attorneys Samuel Tucker of Alexandria and William Hale Thompson of Newport News, Reverends Walker and Williams of Petersburg, and dentists Hugo Owens and James W. Holley of Portsmouth. Tucker, who had studied for the bar exam at D.C. Public Library and the Library of Congress, naturally found it unacceptable that the Alexandria Library near his home remained closed to him. Likewise, the Murrays found it unacceptable that they were unable to use their own community library for research related to their profession.

Several of these professionals went on to distinguish themselves in the civil rights movement, education, and politics. Rev. Walker became Chief of Staff to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr; Dr. Owens became the first Black Rector of Old Dominion University; Dr. Holley became the first Black Mayor of Portsmouth. The Murrays became decorators to the President and First Lady of the United States. Samuel Tucker became the leading attorney for the NAACP in the state of Virginia, fought against school segregation, and ran for Congress twice.

Black civil rights activists did have some White allies, such as Virginia Claiborne in Petersburg and others who wrote letters, signed petitions, or cast votes on behalf of integration. William Faulkner spoke on behalf of integrating the libraries in Danville and Petersburg during a June 3, 1960, speech at the University of Virginia. However, it was Black activists who risked harassment and arrest participating in protests, took on legal expenses, and risked their careers for the sake of making the final push to integrate public libraries in Virginia where segregation remained into the 1950’s and 60’s. Please see Appendix B for more information on these notable Virginians.

## **“A Deep-Seated Custom”: Lack of Advocacy from Library Associations**

Library professional associations were disappointingly passive when it came to the movement to desegregate public libraries. Despite advocacy from some individual White librarians in the South, notably Juliette Morgan of Montgomery Alabama and Ruth Brown of Bartlesville Oklahoma, the American Library Association (ALA) did little to encourage integration. Although the ALA had passed its Library Bill of Rights in June of 1939, months prior to Tucker’s sit-in, the organization did not respond to the protest. Referring to 1946-64 attempts to dismantle Jim Crow practices, library historian Wayne Wiegand writes: “At no time during these years did the American Library Association file any amicus brief in federal cases involving the desegregation of public libraries... during these years the association also allowed segregated libraries to hold full membership.” It was not until 1960, when civil rights activists scored victories in Danville and Petersburg Virginia as well as elsewhere in the South, that the ALA began to address the issue.<sup>61</sup> Finally, in February 1961, the ALA adopted an addition to the Library Bill of Rights: “The rights of an individual to the use of a library should not be denied or abridged because of his race, religion, national origins or political views.”

The Virginia Library Association (VLA) appears to have been similarly placid. During the VLA Annual Conference in Richmond on November 10-12, 1955, the “segregation controversy” was discussed in cautious terms by speaker Harold Sugg, Associate Editor of the *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*. He opined that “...legally enforced segregation, however wrong it may be in principle, is nonetheless a deep-seated custom in the South that cannot be quickly and rashly removed” and warns of “damages that the extremes on both sides would cause.” The write-up of the event in the official VLA publication *The Virginia Librarian* seems to concur with this “bothsidesism” framing of the issue.<sup>62</sup>

Passive acceptance of discrimination was belied by the appearance of progress in VLA literature from the time. The October 1955 issue of *The Virginia Librarian* advertises Black educator Saunders Redding as a dinner speaker at the upcoming VLA Annual Conference. Right under Redding’s photograph is text inviting (presumably White) members to book a room at the luxurious Jefferson Hotel in Richmond, while “Negro members who plan to attend should correspond with Mrs. Verdelle Bradley who will arrange for their accommodation at Virginia Union University.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Scott, Susan Lee. “Integration of Public Library Facilities in the South: Attitudes and Actions of the Library Profession,” *Southeastern Librarian* 18, Fall 1968, p. 162.

<sup>62</sup> *Virginia Librarian*. Richmond: Virginia Library Association, January 1956, V. 2, No. 4, p. 37.

<sup>63</sup> *Virginia Librarian*. Richmond: Virginia Library Association, October 1955, V. 2, No. 3, p. 26.



J.  
Saunders  
Redding,  
a  
Dinner  
Speaker



Reservations are to be made directly with the Jefferson Hotel. Negro members who plan to attend should correspond with Mrs. Verdelle Bradley who will arrange for their accommodation at Virginia Union University.

**Excerpt from *The Virginia Librarian*, October 1955 (Virginia Room, FCPL)**

The lack of advocacy from library organizations during the Jim Crow era is especially disappointing considering the progress of 1925 when Hampton Library School was established. Part of Hampton Institute (now Hampton University) in Virginia, it was the first and only library school for Black students to issue a bachelor's degree in library science and was accredited by the ALA. When established, it was one of only two accredited library schools in the South.<sup>64</sup> Hampton graduate Thomas Fountain Blue launched the first Black library conference March 15-18, 1927. It took place in the museum on campus and was attended by 40 librarians from the South.<sup>65</sup> Sadly, the school closed in 1939 due to lack of sufficient funding.

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<sup>64</sup> Smith, S. L. "The Passing of the Hampton Library School." *The Journal of Negro Education* 9, no. 1 (1940): 51-58.

<sup>65</sup> The Hampton Library School was initiated with a grant from Carnegie Corporation in 1925. The Carnegie Corporation also funded the 1927 conference.



Library Conference, Hampton Institute, 1927 (*Hampton University*)

## Conclusion

This conclusion addresses the following questions which were part of the initial inquiry from the FCPL Library Board regarding the desegregation of libraries in Fairfax County and the surrounding areas of Northern Virginia:

- Where libraries were not formally segregated, were there other limiters in place?
- How did many libraries remain unsegregated while schools were segregated?

In addition to formal segregation, where it is documented, there appears to have been much “soft segregation” of public libraries even where Black residents were not specifically prohibited from using them. Oral interviews from people who were residents at the time indicate they do not remember seeing Black residents using public libraries that were in largely White neighborhoods.<sup>66</sup> Prior to the *Fair Housing Act* of 1968, housing discrimination was rampant, as was prejudicial treatment in granting zoning permits.<sup>67</sup> Due to these barriers along with transportation difficulties, access to public facilities such as libraries was often implicitly segregated by access issues even where it was not specified or enforced.

There are indications that Black residents did not feel comfortable or welcome in libraries that were formerly Whites-only simply because the libraries had been compelled to integrate. The day after formal integration of the Danville Public Library, 78 White residents used the library; 0 Black residents entered. However, on that same day, 25 Black residents used the smaller “Colored” library that had been formerly available to them.<sup>68</sup> In Petersburg, VA, there were also 0 Black library users the first day the public library was formally open to people of all races. The Portsmouth Public Library reported that in the first month after desegregation, 22 Black customers applied for and received library cards; the following month the number had risen to 47.<sup>69</sup> In Loudoun County, a journalist reported only one Black woman and child checking out books in the week following the desegregation of Purcellville Public Library.<sup>70</sup> Since all of these desegregation cases had been well-publicized, it is unlikely that Black residents were unaware they had access.

Gene Ashton, who as a Black high school student had a job at the formerly segregated Thomas Balch Library in Leesburg, recounts seeing no other Black residents using the library during the time he worked there (1963-64). He wrote: “People not only don’t go where they aren’t welcomed, but people also many times don’t go where they were used to being not welcomed.”<sup>71</sup>

In some cases, an integrated library could present not only as unwelcoming but hostile. In his memoir, Danville native Evans Hopkins writes of his vivid impression upon entering the newly integrated Danville Public Library as a child. “When the courts finally mandated that the library

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Munsey, Everard. “Hardships of Negroes in Fairfax Deplored”. *The Washington Post*, Nov. 29, 1961, C1.

<sup>68</sup> Wiegand, *The Desegregation of Public Libraries*.

<sup>69</sup> *Virginia Librarian*. Richmond: Virginia Library Association, Summer 1960, V. 7, No. 2, p. 30.

<sup>70</sup> “Defenders Oppose Library Funds”. *Loudoun Times Mirror*, March 28, 1957.

<sup>71</sup> Ashton, Gene. Personal account. Vertical file, Thomas Balch Library.

integrate, I was overjoyed. I remember arranging to ride into town with a teacher after school and rushing into the main library to the books that had been denied to me. But once inside the library, I discovered that all of the tables and chairs had been removed. In a final attempt to maintain segregation, city officials decided that while blacks would have to be allowed into the library, they would not be permitted to sit and study alongside whites. When I recall the shock of seeing the spitefulness of whites evidenced by the bare floors of that library, I begin to understand how anger turns to rage.”<sup>72</sup> Hopkins, a journalist, still resides in Virginia.

As for the question of why libraries were integrated when schools were not, after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the landmark decision of the U.S. Supreme Court finding racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional, segregationists became even more determined to fight school integration with all their might, engaging in the “massive resistance” movement.<sup>73</sup> Many segregationists were willing to sacrifice library segregation to “save their strength” for the main battle over schools.<sup>74</sup> This sentiment can be traced through many newspaper editorials, articles, and letters to the editors from the 1950’s.

An editorial published in *The Blue Ridge Herald* and *The Richmond News Leader* in 1957 called “Silly Side of Segregation” opens with “Virginia and the rest of the South would have a far better chance of maintaining racial separation in public schools if it were not for such foolish and irritating incidents as that reported from Purcellville, in Loudoun County, last week.” After referencing Murray’s inability to borrow a book and the ensuing legal action, the writer states: “This sort of thing, we are bound to say, is simply asinine. The Purcellville library serves the entire community... It is the only library there is. Negro citizens of course should have free and fair access to it...” The writer goes on to opine that schooling involves a situation in which factors of intimacy and extended proximity are in place, whereas libraries and other public facilities do not: “Chance encounters of white and Negro in a public library, or on a bus or in a railway station or in an elevator, plainly do not involve relationships that are intimate, personal, or prolonged. This impersonal sharing of public facilities constitutes no danger to public morals.” The piece concludes: “It is sufficiently difficult to wage the fight as to schools, where racial separation can be justified; it will be impossible to win it if we seek to maintain segregation where segregation is silly.”<sup>75</sup>

A June 13, 1960, editorial in *Richmond Times-Dispatch* called “Keep the Libraries Open!” voiced a similar sentiment, decrying public libraries that threatened to close rather than integrate, but also putting libraries in a separate category from other facilities. After expressing opposition to integration of schools, swimming pools, hotels, and restaurants, the writer adds: “...libraries are in a different category. A library is a place where interracial contact is at a minimum, and where students and readers sit quietly and mind their own business.” The editorial reports that Virginia public libraries in Arlington, Charlottesville, Fairfax, Harrisonburg, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Richmond, Roanoke, Winchester had integrated. “Do the people of

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<sup>72</sup> Hopkins, Evans. *Life After Life: A Story of Rage and Redemption*, Free Press, 2005, p. 14-15.

<sup>73</sup> Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, p. 8-9.

<sup>74</sup> Exline, *We Have Been Waiting*, p.57.

<sup>75</sup> “Silly Side of Segregation”, *The Blue Ridge Herald*, reprinted from *The Richmond News Leader*, February 28, 1957.

Dansville and Petersburg wish to put themselves in a class apart, and to abandon the well-nigh universal practice of making wisdom of the ages freely available to all?”<sup>76</sup>

As library historian Wayne Wiegand puts it: “Sometimes public library integration was a sop to give the appearance of local progress on desegregating public accommodations, while whites continued to resist integration of institutions (like schools) they considered more important.”<sup>77</sup> Just as many segregationists accepted integration of public libraries while opposing integration of schools, some prominent library donors who lobbied to keep libraries segregated raised funds to establish “colored libraries” in attempt to forestall integration- and perhaps out of a desire to appear magnanimous.<sup>78</sup>

In short, the history of desegregation of public libraries in Northern Virginia, as with Virginia as a whole, is more complicated than it may first appear. Most public libraries were implicitly segregated at some time in their history even where it was not explicitly stated. Early bookmobiles provided valuable service when library buildings were still segregated. Typically, public libraries were desegregated before schools, but in some cases school libraries extended valuable services to residents where public libraries were absent or segregated. Black citizens-turned-activists made the final push to desegregate libraries in Virginia that remained segregated into the 1950’s and early 60’s. Their activism paved the way for more equitable library service in Virginia.

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<sup>76</sup> “Keep the Libraries Open!” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. June 13, 1960.

<sup>77</sup> Wiegand, *Part of Our Lives*, p. 173

<sup>78</sup> Exline, *We Have been Waiting*, p. 56.

## What They Say

# *Silly Side of Segregation*

from The Richmond (Va.) News Leader

Virginia and the rest of the South would have a far better chance of maintaining racial separation in the public schools if it were not for such foolish and irritating incidents as that reported from Purcellville, in Loudoun County, last week.

Samuel C. Murray, a Negro upholsterer in Purcellville, went to the town's public library to obtain a book on interior decorating. He was denied use of the library and was refused the loan of the book. A Washington attorney has threatened suit in his behalf.

This sort of thing, we are bound to say, is simply asinine. The Purcellville library serves the entire county. It was erected in part with private funds, but largely through tax funds; it operates on State, county and town funds in addition to private subscriptions. It is the only library there is. Negro citizens of course should have full and free access to it.

In this connection, it may be recalled that Richmond for many years denied Negroes the use of the Public Library. An effort was made, instead, to serve them through the Rosa D. Bowser Branch Library. But in the spring of 1947, restrictions were abandoned altogether. That was that, and things have progressed quite smoothly since then.

We have ventured this observation several times before, but perhaps it merits restating

again: Racial separation in public facilities can be defended and justified where its abandonment, in favor of integration, would result in a social relationship that is intimate, personal and prolonged.

It is apparent, when these criteria are examined, that the one place in which all of them come into play at the same moment is in the school system. Chance encounters of white and Negro in a public library, or on a bus or in a railway station or in an elevator, plainly do not involve relationships that are intimate, personal and prolonged. This impersonal sharing of public facilities constitutes no danger to public morals; it does not adversely affect the quality of public service provided either race.

This newspaper has devoted its full editorial energies toward defending first, the right of the States to maintain racially separate schools (which we believe is a power reserved to the States under the Tenth Amendment), and second, the desirability of maintaining such separate schools. We will continue to urge these points of view. But Virginians should realize that the battle must be won outside the South. It is sufficiently difficult to wage the fight as to schools, where racial separation can be justified; it will be impossible to win it if we seek to maintain segregation where segregation is silly.

Articles such as this suggest that public school segregation will be easier to maintain if public libraries, among other less "intimate" settings, are allowed to integrate.

"Silly Side of Segregation," *The Blue Ridge Herald*, February 28, 1957.



## **Appendix A: Timeline of Events Related to the Desegregation of Public Libraries in Virginia**

**(Fairfax County events in blue)**

**1894:** Manassas Industrial School for Colored Youth is founded by Jennie Dean, who was born into slavery in Prince William County. Originally private, it became public in 1937. Andrew Carnegie donated funds to build a library to serve Black students and community members in 1910. The school was in operation as Manassas Regional High School (serving Black students from several counties, including Fairfax and the City of Falls Church) until 1966.

**1899:** Mary Riley Styles begins a private library managed by the Library Committee of the Woman's Club of Falls Church. There are no records indicating it was explicitly segregated.

**1910:** A library for Black students and community members is built at Manassas High School, funded by Andrew Carnegie. In effect this was the first public library in Prince William County.

**1923:** Burdett Library opened as the first of Arlington's public libraries. It was for use only by White residents.

**1928:** The Southeastern Library Association policy recommends "library service to Negroes should be a part of every public library program," but as of 1935, 83% of the Black population still lacked access to public library services.

**1928:** The Sutherlin Mansion, built in 1859, opens as Danville Public Library, aka Confederate Memorial Library, for use by White residents only.

**March 1937:** City of Alexandria Library Board discusses the "question of a colored library" but takes no action.

**August 1937:** The Alexandria Library opens its Queens Street library, the only branch at that time, for Whites only.

**1938:** Purcellville Public Library in Loudoun County was founded for use by White residents. It was the only public library in Loudoun County at the time

**February 1, 1939:** The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors votes to establish a county free library system in Fairfax County. Fairfax County Public Library (FCPL) partners with pre-existing Whites-only community branches who will circulate their books on the WPA-funded bookmobile.

**June 19, 1939:** The ALA Council adopts the *Library Bill of Rights* (amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019).

**August 21, 1939:** A sit-in organized by Samuel W. Tucker at Alexandria Library protests the exclusion of Black residents from library services. It became a milestone of civil rights activism.

**September 11, 1939:** The FCPL Board of Trustees agree to maintain a segregated book collection between Blacks and Whites.

**April 24, 1940:** City of Alexandria opens a separate library for Black residents, the Robert H. Robinson Library, located at 638 North Alfred Street.

**July 22, 1940:** The FCPL Board of Trustees officially decide to offer service to Black residents in Fairfax County.

**October 1940:** The Fairfax County School Board creates a Memorandum of Agreement with the FCPL Board of Trustees to purchase books for adults and children of both races and will circulate them. Despite the specific language, Black students appear to have never been served under this agreement in the 1940s.

**November 19, 1940:** Arlington's Holmes Branch was seeded as a "volunteer organization and a small library in the George Washington Carver Homes project," although it did not officially open as a library branch until 1944.

**1940:** The library founded by Mary Riley Styles was gifted to the Town of Falls Church. FCPL documents from the early 1940's record only White customers receiving service at that time.

**January 1941:** The Fairfax "Colored" deposit station is established by FCPL, followed by the Falls Church "Colored" deposit station the following month. Black residents only have access to these two deposit stations while White residents can access multiple bookmobile stops, deposit stations, school library branches, and community library branches.

**June 25, 1944:** Arlington officially opens the Holmes Branch to serve Black residents.

**June 1945:** County Librarian Margaret Edwards acquires four books by Black authors and adds them to FCPL's collection.

**1945-46:** Bookmobile service to African American residents resumes after FCPL discontinued it between 1942-1945.

**1946:** The requirement that libraries receiving state aid serve all residents was passed into law as Chapter 170 of the 1946 Acts of Assembly. However, many interpreted this not as a mandate that library buildings be desegregated, only that some form of library service be provided to all residents.

**September 1946:** A branch library for the use of adults opens at the Vienna Colored School in Fairfax County.

**Summer 1947:** Through the sponsorship of FCPL, a library opens at the Bailey's Crossroads Colored School to be used by the Black community.

**1948:** Falls Church City becomes independent from Fairfax County.

**May 9, 1949:** Attorney William Hale Thompson appeals to the Newport News City Council to integrate the public library, resulting in the establishment of "Branch #1" - a separate library for Black residents above a community center.

**January 1950:** Unable to find another location for Holmes Branch, the Arlington County Manager approved "the use of all branches by all residents of the County",<sup>79</sup> effectively desegregating Arlington public libraries. This appears to be the earliest instance of a formerly segregated library desegregating in Virginia.

**February 1950:** FCPL's first library opens to the public. It is unknown if the library was accessible to Black patrons.

**March 27, 1950:** William Hale Thompson sues the city of Newport News over its segregated public library. A trial date was set in 1952, but before that date, the library announced it was desegregating, apparently caving to pressure from the lawsuit.

**1951:** Four segregated FCPS schools are serviced by the FCPL bookmobile.

**July 19, 1952:** The Newport News Public Library announces its reading room open to "all adult inhabitants of the city of Newport News," apparently under pressure from the lawsuit filed by Thompson. Some sources note this as the first formerly segregated library to desegregate in Virginia, but we found Arlington to predate them by over two years.

**1952:** Prince William Public Library was founded as a demonstration library project funded by the Library of Virginia. It was not explicitly segregated.

**1953:** Purcellville Public Library's board ignored a request from Principal of the Carver Elementary School (a segregated school for Black students) to provide library services.

**January 4, 1954:** FCPL's first branch, Thomas Jefferson Library, opens in Falls Church. It is the first documented FCPL library building which could be used by all county residents free of charge.

**May 17, 1954:** In *Brown v. Board of Education*, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson* and declared racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional. Segregationists react with a "massive resistance" movement.

**May 31, 1955:** With *Brown II*, the US Supreme Court orders that desegregation occur with "all deliberate speed." *Brown II* was meant to work out some mechanics of desegregation, but the

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<sup>79</sup> Judith Knudsen, Manager, Center for Local History, Arlington Central Library, email to author, April 28, 2021.

term "all deliberate speed," was vague enough to allow many states to stall the Court's order to desegregate schools.<sup>80</sup>

**1956:** Purcellville resident Samuel C. Murray, a Black upholster/interior decorator, sues the Purcellville Public Library after being denied library service due to his race.

**April 8, 1957:** The Loudoun Board of Supervisors votes 4 to 3 to desegregate Purcellville Public Library to retain state and local funding.

**1957-58:** Groundbreaking for Mary Riley Styles Library took place in August 1957 and the library building was opened to all in 1958.

**1958:** The biracial organization, The Friends of the Library Vienna, Virginia, is established to partner with FCPL to open a library branch in town that is open to everyone. The Whites-only Vienna Library Association, who maintained the existing Vienna Town Library, objects to these efforts.

**January 19, 1959:** The Virginia Supreme Court and a three-judge panel of federal judges separately ruled against the core Virginia "Massive Resistance" legislation, resulting in integration of public schools that had resisted Brown v. Board.

**February 1959:** Alexandria Library quietly integrated for Black adults and high school students. Black children continued to be served by the Robinson Library until July 1962.

**1959:** Manassas High School, aka Manassas Industrial Institute (formerly known as Manassas Industrial School for Colored Youth) closes due to integration of public high schools. For many decades it was the only high school available to Black students of Fairfax County. It was also the site of a Carnegie Library that served the Black community during segregation.

**1960:** The public libraries in Danville, Petersburg, and Portsmouth are legally compelled to integrate. However, it wasn't until 1963 that the Portsmouth Colored Community Library closed, when the formerly Whites-only Portsmouth Public Library moved into a larger building. Some Portsmouth sources refer to 1963 as the date the libraries were integrated, indicating that segregated library use continued to be the norm for a few years after the 1960 ruling.

**February 1961:** ALA adopts an addition to the *Library Bill of Rights*: "The rights of an individual to the use of a library should not be denied or abridged because of his race, religion, national origins or political views."

**1961:** Prince William County ends formal segregation of public schools<sup>81</sup> but some remain segregated until 1966. Many community members relied on segregated high school libraries for books in lieu of public library service.

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<sup>80</sup> National Archives. Educator Resources. <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/brown-v-board/timeline.html>. Last reviewed on August 15, 2016.

<sup>81</sup> "Historic Prince William". <https://www.historicprincewilliam.org/county-history/schools>. Accessed May 8, 2021.

**April 8, 1962:** The Patrick Henry Library opens in a storefront in the Town of Vienna after a community-wide fundraising effort. Its establishment leads to the eventual demise of the Whites-only Vienna Town Library.

**July 1962:** Alexandria Library becomes fully integrated to all Black citizens (including children) when the Robinson Library building closes.

**Summer 1963:** Janice Bragg becomes the first African American library professional hired by FCPL.

**1963:** Portsmouth Public Library (formerly Whites-only) moves into larger quarters in a renovated post office building and opens as an integrated library with an integrated library board and staff. The Portsmouth Colored Community Library closes.

**April 11, 1968:** *The Fair Housing Act* is signed into law, prohibiting discrimination regarding the sale, rental, and financing of housing based on race, religion, national origin, and gender. Prior to this law, housing discrimination was rampant, leading to segregated neighborhoods and contributing to the implicit segregation of many public libraries.

**1973:** Loudoun County Public Library was founded, open to all.

**September 19, 1973:** Vera Swann becomes the first African American member of the FCPL Library Board of Trustees.

## Appendix B

### Black Virginians Instrumental in Desegregating Virginia's Public Libraries<sup>82</sup>

#### City of Alexandria

**Samuel Wilbert Tucker** (1913-1990) was born in Alexandria. He graduated from Howard University and passed the bar exam a few months later without attending law school. He had to wait to begin practicing law because he was not yet 21. At age 26, he organized the 1939 sit-in that called attention to the Whites-only policy at Alexandria Library. His movement led to Alexandria building a separate library for Black residents, but he was not satisfied with this result because it was not full integration. He continued to work on behalf of civil rights throughout his life, battling school segregation and running for Congress twice to encourage Black citizens to vote. He served in the military during WW2 and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

**William “Buddy” Evans**, age 19, Alexandria Library sit-in participant, arrested on August 21, 1939. While quietly seated reading a book, he asked a police officer what would happen if the sit-in participants refused to leave the library: "What would happen if we don't leave?" When informed that would lead to arrest, he replied: "Well, we are staying."

**Edward Gaddis**, age 21, Alexandria Library sit-in participant, arrested on August 21, 1939.

**Morris M. Murray**, age 22, Alexandria Library sit-in participant, arrested on August 21, 1939.

**Clarence “Buck” Strange**, age 20, Alexandria Library sit-in participant, arrested on August 21, 1939.

**Otto Lee Tucker**, age 22, brother of Samuel Tucker, Alexandria Library sit-in participant, arrested on August 21, 1939.

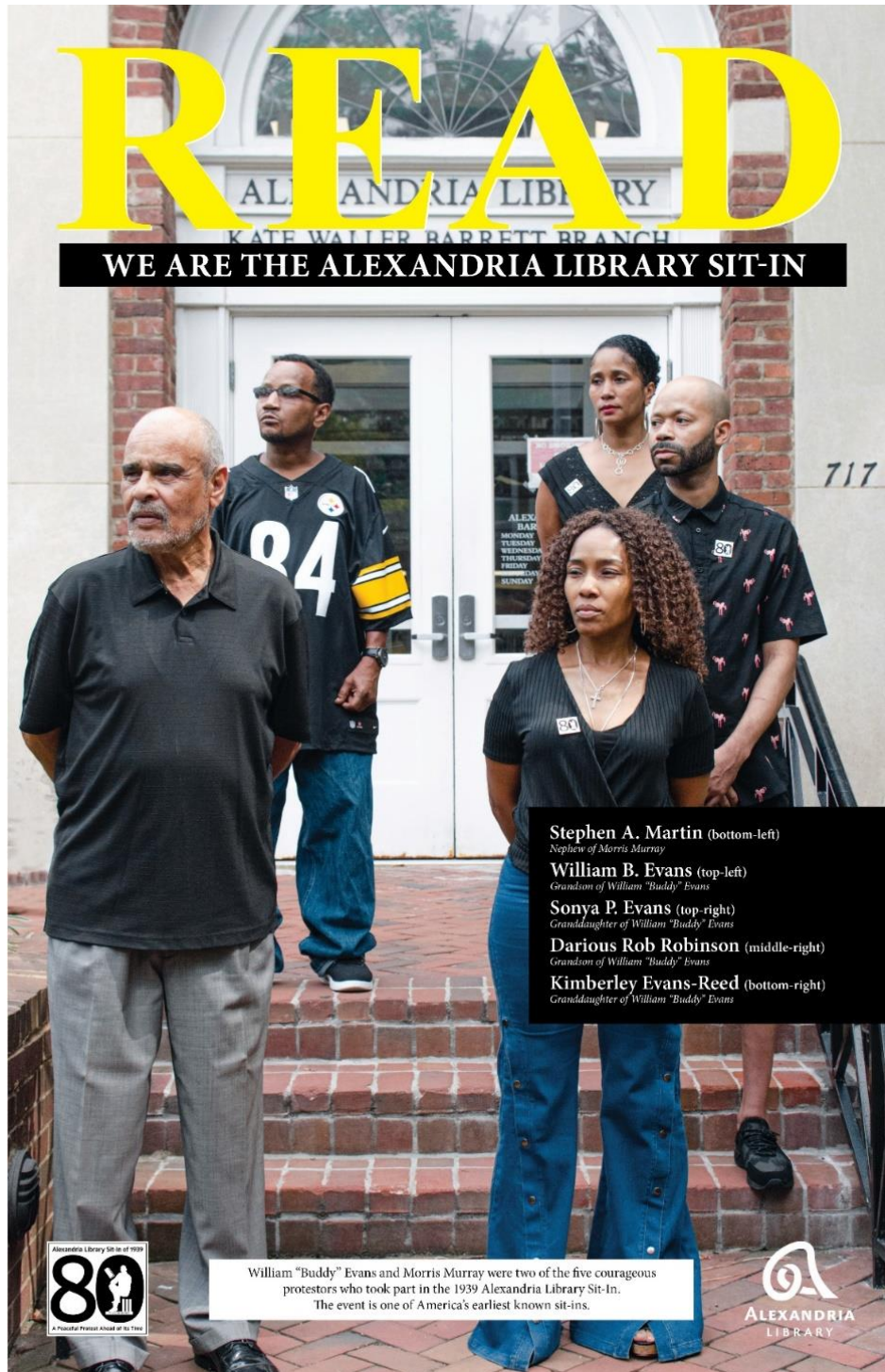
**Robert “Bobby” Strange**, age 14, served as the look-out during the August 21, 1939, library sit-in, running to alert Tucker when the police had been called so that Tucker could alert the press to record the events. His great-great-grandson Kenzo Evans appeared on a READ poster commemorating the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the sit-in.

**George Wilson**, a retired US Army Sergeant, and neighbor of Samuel Wilbert Tucker, joined Tucker to procure library cards in 1939. After he was denied a library card at Alexandria Library due to his race, Tucker filed a lawsuit on Wilson's behalf that spurred Alexandria to build a library for Black residents.

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<sup>82</sup> Compiled by Suzanne LaPierre using sources including Wiegand's *Desegregation of Public Libraries*, newspaper articles, and other sources referenced in the bibliography.





Descendants of William "Buddy" Evans and Morris Murray are featured on a poster commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Alexandria Library sit-in. (Alexandria Library)

## **Danville**

**Robert A. Williams**, 17, organized a group of students at his high school to protest segregation of the public library. "I was able to convince the other students and our adviser that the first attack we should have was against the public parks and the public library."<sup>83</sup> Williams and his father, an attorney for the NAACP, met with other NAACP officials to discuss legal aspects of the planned protests. Resulting protests and legal action eventually caused the Danville library to integrate in 1960.

**Jerry Williams**, father of Robert A. Williams, was an attorney for the NAACP and helped plan the protest.

**Chalmers Mebane**, a WW2 veteran, helped plan the protest.

**Inez Coleman**, 17, Danville high school student.

**Wayne L. Dallas**, 18, Danville high school student.

**James Dixon, Jr.**, 24, Danville resident.

**Gladys Giles**, 16, Danville high school student.

**Virginia G. Gunner**, 16, Danville high school student.

**Dennis Harris**, 16, Danville high school student.

**William Love**, 16, Danville high school student.

**Joe B. McNoir**, 17, Danville high school student.

**Chalmas W. Mebane** 23 (Note: This person is listed in Weigand's book as "Danville/ high school student", but may be a mix up with veteran Chalmers Mebane, above.)

**William E. Redd, Jr.**, 17, Danville high school student.

**Fred H. Vann, Jr.**, 16, Danville high school student.

**Sylvester Walton**, 16, Danville high school student.

**Barbara Watkins**, 16, Danville high school student.

**Jerry Williams**, 13, Danville high school student.

**Robert Williams**, 15, Danville high school student.

**Carolyn L. Young**, 18, Danville high school student.

## **Fairfax County**

**William McKinley Carter** (1897-1977) was a Vienna resident, charter member of the Fairfax County NAACP, and president of the Citizens Progressive Association of Vienna. He was also an officer of the Friends of the Library, Vienna, established during meetings in his living room. The Friends succeeded in procuring a branch of FCPL to serve as an integrated library in Vienna, which exists today as Patrick Henry Community Library. The former Whites-only Vienna Town Library ceased to exist shortly after the Patrick Henry branch opened.

**Lillian Carter** (1897-1968), along with her husband, William McKinley Carter, was honored for supporting the establishment of the Patrick Henry branch of FCPL in Vienna.

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<sup>83</sup> Wiegand, *The Desegregation of Public Libraries*, p. 90.

**Maurice Carter** (1924-2010), one of William and Lillian Carter's sons, was active in civil affairs and spoke at a Vienna Town Council meeting in 1955 on behalf of integrated library service. In 1958, working with the Friends of Library, Vienna, he introduced a resolution to change the charter of the Whites-only Vienna Town Library to permit its use by all citizens of Vienna.

### **Loudoun County**

**Samuel Cardoza Murray** (1915–1998), an upholstery shop owner and interior designer commissioned to design drapes for President Eisenhower's sister-in-law, Mabel Frances Moore, was denied use of the Whites-only Purcellville Public Library. He insisted that as a taxpayer he had the right to use the public library, which was the only one in Loudoun at the time. Mr. Murray also insisted on footed the cost of the lawsuit himself, despite offers of funding from an integrated progressive community group. The lawsuit forced the library to desegregate in 1960.

**Josie Cook Murray** (1920-2010), upholstery shop owner and interior designer, was also a party in the above events. She was the granddaughter and namesake of Joseph Newton Cook, who was a leader of the Loudoun Emancipation Society and helped build the town's first school for Black children. She outlived her husband and related her version of events to historian Eugene Scheel, details of which were published in *The Washington Post*.<sup>84</sup> According to that interview, she and her husband were asked by President and First Lady Eisenhower to create furnishings for their home in Gettysburg, PA because they were impressed with the draperies created for Mrs. Moore. Austrian style drapes (which is what the Murrays were researching when thwarted by segregation) can indeed be seen throughout the Eisenhower home, which is open to the public.

### **Newport News**

**William Hale Thompson** (1869-1944), an attorney and vice chairman of the Virginia NAACP's legal staff, pressured his home city of Newport News to expand access to the public library, resulting in the establishment of a small branch above a community center for Black residents in 1949. Thompson went on to push for full integration of the main library on West Avenue, filing a lawsuit against the city and the library board in 1950. Pressure from the lawsuit appears to have caused the decision by the library to desegregate on July 19, 1952. Thompson went on to work towards equality and integration of other facilities. He was a graduate of Hunting High School, Hampton Institute, and Howard University's law school. A mural honoring Thompson now stands in the Southeast Community of Newport News, on the side of Esquire Barber Shop near the corner of Jefferson Avenue and 25th Street- the former site of his law office. There is also a community room named after him in the Pearl Bailey Library nearby.

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<sup>84</sup> Scheel, "Couple Wrote First Chapter".



William Hale Thompson (*W. Hale Thompson, Jr.*)

### **Petersburg**

**Reverend Wyatt Tee Walker** (1929-2018) was 31 and pastor of Gillfield Baptist Church, state president of the Congress for Racial Equality, and president of the local chapter of the NAACP, when he instigated the desegregation of Petersburg Public Library. In June of 1959, he was refused service on the Whites-only main level of the library and told to go to the basement, which had a separate entrance for Black residents. Walker had anticipated this and had tipped off reporters, initiating protests he and his family also participated in. “If it will be necessary to go to jail, we will go to jail,” he told a *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reporter.<sup>85</sup> He was among those arrested for “trespassing” in the Whites-only part of the library on March 7, 1960. He refused to post bond and was among 5 of the 11 arrested who slept on the floor of the jail for two nights to draw attention to the injustice. Walker later served as Chief of Staff for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and was Executive Director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. In 1975 he earned a doctoral degree in ministry and became Dr. Walker. He published several books on gospel and other types of traditional music. During his lifetime, he was arrested 17 times for civil rights activism.

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<sup>85</sup> Gordon, Robert. “Segregation to Continue at Library.” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. March 2, 1960.



Wyatt Tee Walker became right-hand man to Martin Luther King shortly after his activism in Petersburg.  
(Dan Farrell, *New York Daily News*)

**Reverend R. G. Williams**, Petersburg Minister of Zion Baptist Church, participating in planning the protests and training sit-in participants in non-violent resistance. He was among those arrested for “trespassing” in the library.

**Reverend Milton Reid** organized a prayer vigil with 200 people on the courthouse steps while Reverends Walker and Williams other protesters were in jail. City officials ordered floodlights which usually illuminated the courthouse area turned off during the 35-minute service. Protesters, however, had come prepared with flashlights.

**Ernest Shaw** (1937 – 2020) was a civil rights activist and 1956 graduate of Virginia State University who assisted with preparations for the protest. He spoke to a reporter at *The Progress-Index* for an article about the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the protest: “We were practicing before we could participate, for we had people with high temper. If you wanted to go out there and participate, there were some tests you had to pass. There were certain things we had to take. Maybe someone might spit on you or blow smoke in your eye. They would cuss us out. We did that in the meetings, and if you couldn’t take those things, you couldn’t face the public... Walker and Williams wanted to make sure that the protesters would not fight back if provoked. If you went out there and you fought back, it would defeat the purpose... Our purpose was non-



violence. We were supposed to do it in a peaceful manner.”<sup>86</sup> Mr. Shaw went on to become the first Black Sportswriter with *The Progress-Index* newspaper and the first Black Sports Announcer with WSSV Radio Station.

### **College protest organizers:**

**Betty Johnson**, 19, college student.

**C. J. Malloy**, 20, a student at Virginia State College and one of the activists involved in the movement to desegregate the library, read a group statement at a city council meeting on March 1, 1960, after the library closed temporarily to avoid integration attempts. Part of the statement read: “Segregation as a part of the fabric of American life is dead. We stand on the threshold of America becoming her ideal.”<sup>87</sup>

**E. J. McLaughlin**, 20, college student.

### **Arrested for “trespassing” in the library on March 7, 1960:**

**Horace Brooks**, 17, Petersburg high school student.

**Edwin Jordan**, 19, Petersburg college student.

**Foster Miles Jr.**, 20, Charles City college student.

**Lillian E. Pride**, 20, of Hampton, VA, a student at Virginia State College. A photo of her being served with a warrant by Petersburg Chief of Police W. E. Traylor (while seated at a library table reading) appeared in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.

**Virginus B. Thornton**, 25, West Point college student.

**Cassie L. Walker**, 30, Petersburg beautician.

**Leon R. Walker**, 17, Petersburg high school student.

**Sandra Walker**, 19, Petersburg college student.

**Wyatt T. Walker**, 31, Petersburg minister of Gillfield Baptist Church.

**R. G. Williams**, Petersburg Minister of Zion Baptist Church.

**Robert W. Williams**, 24, Front Royal resident, college student.

### **Participants in civil disobedience not arrested:**

**Patrice Walker**, 8, Petersburg grade school student and daughter of Rev. Walker, was in the children’s area of the library with her mother during the protest in which her father and others were arrested. Due to her father’s arrest, Patrice was barred from attending the city’s public schools.<sup>88</sup> It wasn’t her first time being in the spotlight for civil rights, though: in the spring of 1958, a lawsuit was filed: “Ann Patrice Walker, the four-year-old daughter of Wyatt Tee Walker, and others, filed suit against the Petersburg School Board in the District Court for the Eastern

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<sup>86</sup> Schmidt, Markus. “The 50th Anniversary of the Petersburg Library Sit-in, the First of the Civil Rights Era.” *The Progress-Index*. Posted Feb 26, 2010. Updated Oct 27, 2015. <https://www.progress-index.com/article/20100226/NEWS/302269935>.

<sup>87</sup> Quote from a speech read by C. J. Malloy on March 1, 1960, on behalf of students united to desegregate Petersburg Public Library. Wiegand, *The Desegregation of Public Libraries*, p. 84.

<sup>88</sup> Schmidt, ““The 50th Anniversary of the Petersburg Library Sit-in.”



District of Virginia seeking desegregation of the public schools.” Public schools in Petersburg were not integrated, however, until 1963, when five black students were admitted to Petersburg High School.”<sup>89</sup>

**Theresa Ann Walker** (b. 1928) Petersburg civil rights activist, homemaker, and wife of Rev. Walker, she accompanied her own children and the child of another protester to the children’s area of the Whites-only part of the library during the planned “trespassing” event. “The city manager asked Ms. Walker to leave and said that her refusal to comply could lead to her arrest, but she responded, ‘I know that and I have come prepared.’ The city manager then told her that he would not humiliate the children by arresting her and that she could remain until the library closed.”<sup>90</sup> Walker and her four children were home alone two weeks later when someone threw a bottle containing an obscene note signed “KKK” at the window of their home. The next day, the family requested and received police protection. Theresa Ann Walker later became one of the Freedom Riders and spent a week in jail, before she and her husband were bailed out by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. As of this report, she still lives in Virginia and recently gave an account of her civil rights activism to *The Washington Post*.<sup>91</sup>

**Wyatt T. Walker, Jr.**, 6, Petersburg grade school student.

**R. Gilmore Williams**, 11, Petersburg grade school student.



**Theresa Ann Walker, 2019** (*Richmond Free Press*)

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<sup>89</sup> Tobias, Carl. “Untenable, Unchristian, and Unconstitutional”. *University of Richmond School of Law Scholarship Repository*. 58 Mo. L. Rev. 855, 1993.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Sinclair, Melissa Scott. “She Was a Freedom Rider, too.” *The Washington Post*. July 16, 2021.

## Portsmouth

**Dr. Hugo A. Owens, Sr.** (1916-2008), a dentist, requested a library card at the main branch of the Portsmouth Public Library on March 12, 1958. He was refused and was told he could instead use the Colored library. Owens claimed the library designated for Colored residents “totally inadequate.”<sup>92</sup> He began a letter-writing campaign and eventually filed a lawsuit on November 25, 1959, when his concerns were not resolved. The case dragged out but was eventually won, resulting in desegregation of the library in 1960. Owens played an active role in the civil rights movement in the 1940’s-60s. He served on the Board of Visitors at Old Dominion University (ODU) from 1990-1994, becoming the first African American Rector during 1992-1993. 1996, the Hugo A. Owens African American Cultural Center at ODU was dedicated, and in 1997 the Hugo A. Owens Middle School in Chesapeake was named in honor of him.



**Dr. Hugo A. Owens Giving a Speech, c. 1990-1999 (ODU)**

**Dr. James W. Holley, III** (1926-2012), a dentist, joined Owens in the above campaign to desegregate the main library on April 8, 1958. The two had previously joined forces to desegregate the local golf course in 1956. Active in the civil rights movement throughout the 1950’s and 60’s, Holley became the first Black mayor of Portsmouth, serving in office July 1984 – December 1987.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

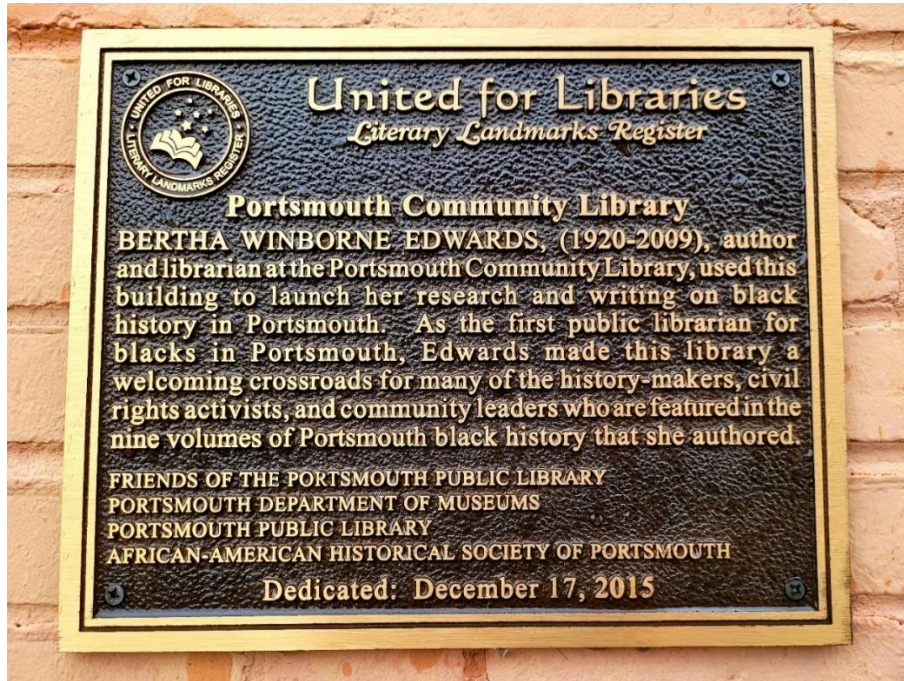


James Holley, pictured in a 2007 *Esquire* article about fashion at a Mayoral Convention.  
(Henry Leutwyler, *Esquire*)

**Bertha Winborne Edwards**, (1920-2009), was the librarian of Portsmouth Colored Community Library for its entire existence, 1945 – 1963, moving to the integrated Portsmouth Public Library in 1963 as part of an integrated staff. She went on to author nine books about Black history.



Bertha Edwards in 2015 (*American Library Association*)



**“Literary Landmarks Register” plaque honoring Bertha Edwards on Portsmouth Community Library (S. LaPierre)**

**Linwood Williams**, sheet metal worker, on March 1, 1960, became the first Black citizen to apply for, and receive, a library card at the newly desegregated Portsmouth library.



## Appendix C

### Existing Sites and Landmarks

#### Surviving Formerly Segregated Public Library Facilities, Historical Markers, and Commemorative Signage



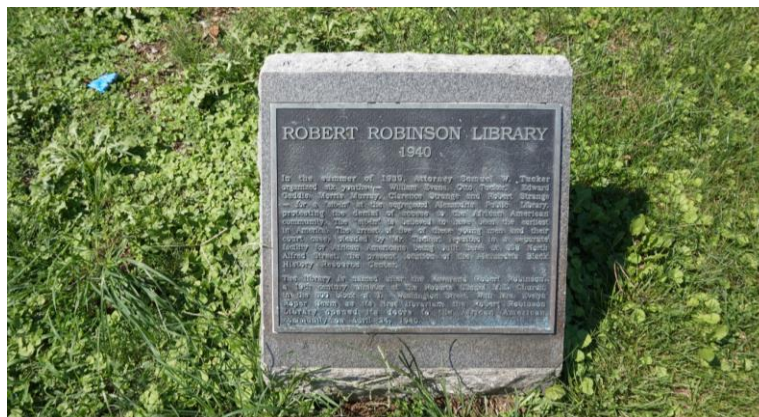
The original Robinson Library is now the Alexandria Black History Museum. *(Chris Barbuschak)*

### City of Alexandria

#### **Alexandria Black History Museum**

902 Wythe Street, Alexandria, VA 22314

Completed in 1940, the Robert H. Robinson Library was built to serve only the Black residents of the City of Alexandria. The library was fully integrated in July 1962. The building reopened as the Alexandria Black History Research Center in 1983. A plaque mounted on a concrete panel commemorating the Robert Robertson Library can be found on the museum's grounds at the southwest intersection of N. Alfred and Wythe Streets.



Commemorative plaque marking the location of the Robinson Library. *(Chris Barbuschak)*

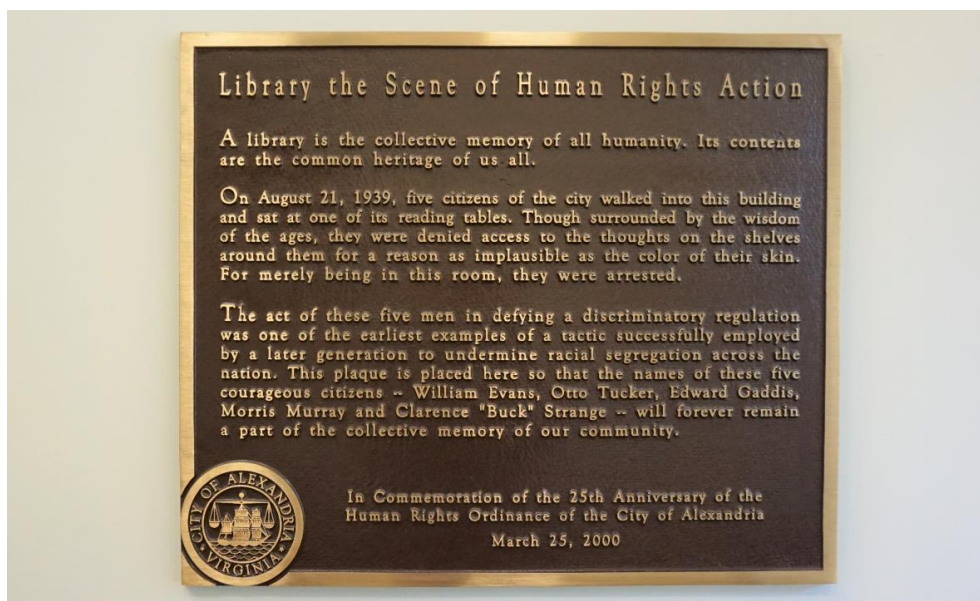


The Barrett Branch as it appeared in August 2021. *(Chris Barbuschak)*

### **Kate Waller Barrett Branch Library**

717 Queen Street, Alexandria, VA 22314

Built in 1937, the Barret branch was named in honor of Kate Waller Barrett. On August 21, 1939, five Black citizens led by attorney Samuel W. Tucker organized an unsuccessful sit-in to desegregate the library. The library was quietly integrated in February 1959. A plaque commemorating the 1939 sit-in erected in March 2000, can be found inside the library's lobby. An outdoor tabletop historical marker detailing the events surrounding the sit-in greets visitors across from the front entrance. In 2020, a state historical marker entitled "Alexandria Library Sit-In" was erected around the corner from the branch on N. Washington Street.



Commemorative plaque inside the Barrett Branch. *(Chris Barbuschak)*





Erected in 2020, this state historical marker is visible to passing motorists on N. Washington Street. *(Chris Barbuschak)*





**The Sutherlin Mansion is now the Danville Museum of Fine Arts and History. (Ron Zanoni)**

## **Danville**

### **Danville Museum of Fine Arts and History (formerly Danville Public Library)**

975 Main Street, Danville, Virginia 24541

Originally the Sutherlin Mansion built in 1859 for Major William T. Sutherlin, the house was the temporary residence (April 3-10, 1865) for Confederate President Jefferson Davis until news of Lee's surrender. It later became the site of the "Whites Only" Danville Public Library, aka Confederate Memorial Library, until civil rights activists succeeded in integrating the facility in 1960. Today the Mansion houses, along with other exhibits, a civil rights exhibition called "The Movement" which outlines the timeline of the Danville Civil Rights movement.

### **Site of Grasty Library**

320 Holbrook Street, Danville, VA, 24541

On Friday, July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021, a historical marker was dedicated commemorating the history of the Mary B. Yancey House and Grasty Library. The Yancey House was a lodging place for African Americans during the segregation era. The Grasty Library was a segregated library for Black residents prior to desegregation of the Danville Public Library. The Grasty Library, which once stood next door to the Yancey House, has since been torn down.



The original Forestville Library shelving still exists in the Great Falls Grange. *(Fairfax County Park Authority)*

## **Fairfax County**

### **Site of Forestville (Great Falls) Library (1938-1959)**

9818 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls, VA 22066

The Forestville Library opened in 1938 and operated out of the Great Falls Grange before moving next door to the Forestville School building in 1959. The library closed in 1961. As a partnering community library with FCPL in the 1940s, it only served Whites. Library shelving built to house the book collection can still be found inside the Grange, which is now owned by the Fairfax County Park Authority.

### **Site of Herndon Fortnightly Club Library (1927-1971)**

660 Spring Street, Herndon, VA 20170

In 1927, the Good Templars donated a lot and the Herndon Fortnightly Club constructed this building for their public library. As a partnering community library with FCPL in the 1940s, it only served Whites. FCPL leased the building in 1971 and opened the Herndon Fortnightly branch there on March 7, 1972. It operated in that location until a new Herndon Fortnightly Library opened on Center Street in May 1995. In 2021, this building is currently home to the Quaker community's Herndon Friends Meeting.



Huddleson Memorial Library is on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of Old Town Hall, seen here in August 2021. *(Chris Barbuschak)*

### **Huddleson Memorial Library**

3999 University Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030

Originally founded as the Fairfax County Library in 1930, this Whites-only library opened two years later. After a series of moves, the library permanently moved into Old Town Hall in 1938 where it still exists today on the second floor. The library was renamed the Town of Fairfax Library after FCPL was created in 1939, and again in 1962 as the Huddleson Memorial Library in honor of Nellie H. Huddleson.



The library collection surrounds the entire 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, now primarily used as an events space. *(IntangibleArts)*





The former Vienna Town Library, now the Little Library Museum in August 2021. *(Chris Barbuschak)*

### **The Little Library Museum**

164 Mill Street NE, Vienna, VA 22180

Built in 1897, the Vienna Town Library was segregated from the beginning. The building has been relocated twice (1912 and 1970). The museum is open 1:00-4:00 p.m. on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of every month and private tours can be scheduled. The museum contains a collection of original books from the Vienna Town Library and the original card catalog.

### **Louise Archer Elementary School**

324 Nutley Street NW, Vienna, VA 22180

In 1946, a branch library for the use of Black adults opened in the Vienna Colored School, later renamed the Louise Archer Elementary School. Members of the Whites-only Vienna Library Association helped organize its creation, although the enterprise was short lived. The segregated school was later serviced by FCPL's bookmobile in the 1950s. Louise Archer was of frame construction and opened in 1939. It has since been bricked over and has received several additions. The school has a section inside where part of the wall is cut away revealing the original clapboard siding.





The original Patrick Henry Library storefront now houses a Popeyes in August 2021. *(Chris Barbuschak)*

**Site of Patrick Henry Library (1962-1971)**

325 Maple Avenue East, Vienna, VA 22180

The Patrick Henry Library branch was the first branch explicitly established with the purpose of being open to all residents of the Town of Vienna. Prior to its opening in 1962, Vienna's Black residents were barred from using the only library around, the Vienna Town Library. Patrick Henry operated out of this storefront until moving into the current building at 101 Maple Avenue East in 1971. In 2021, the former library space currently houses a Popeyes restaurant.



FCPL's first branch, Thomas Jefferson, was in the back of the Family Barber Shop in the Graham Center. The storefront now houses a dentist office in August 2021. *(Chris Barbuschak)*

### Site of Thomas Jefferson Library (1954-1955)

7244 Arlington Boulevard, Falls Church, VA 22042

The first branch of FCPL made its home in the rear of Buck Carter's Family Barber Shop. When it opened on January 4, 1954, it became the first documented instance that an FCPL facility was open to all citizens. However, it is unclear how accessible the branch was to Black residents considering it was the rear of a White-owned business. The branch operated out of this location for a year, before moving to the Jefferson Village Apartments in 1955. In 2021, the former library space and barber shop currently houses a dentist office.



Access to the library was from a now boarded up entrance in the rear of the shopping center. *(Chris Barbuschak)*



The Purcellville Library as it appeared in 2018. (*Loudoun County Public Library*)

## Loudoun County

### **Purcellville Library**

220 E Main St, Purcellville, VA 20132

The Purcellville Library was built in 1935 and dedicated in 1938. The library was desegregated in 1957 after Samuel and Josie Murray, a Black couple who owned an upholstery shop in Purcellville, sued the library for access. As of 2021, Purcellville Library, now a part of the Loudoun County Public Library system, still operates out of the original building.



The original entrance of Thomas Balch Library in Leesburg. (*Dion Hinchcliffe*)

### **Thomas Balch Library**

208 W Market St, Leesburg, VA 20176

Subscription library service began in Leesburg in 1907 and moved into the present Thomas Balch Library upon its completion in 1922. The library is named for Thomas Balch (1821-1877), a Leesburg native, and its operation was supported by an endowment established by his sons. The library became a free public library in 1960, although it remained segregated until the mid-1960s. Today, the Thomas Balch Library houses the local history and genealogy branch of the Loudoun County Public Library system.



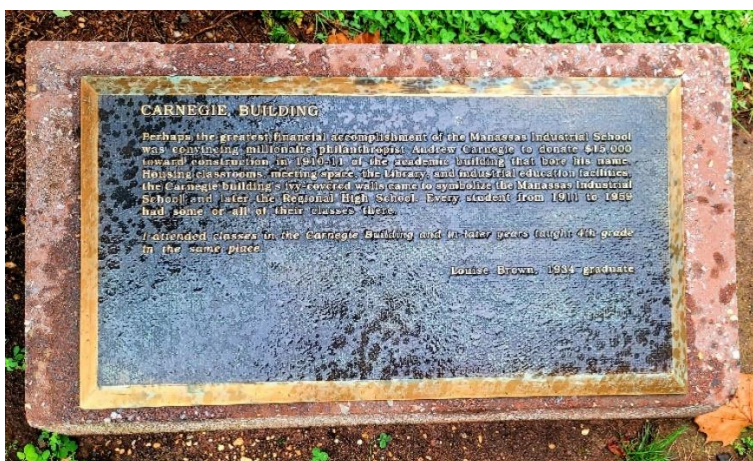


A statue of Jennie Dean and the Remaining Arch from the Carnegie Building (S. LaPierre)

## Manassas

### **Site of Carnegie Library (1910-1959) at Manassas Industrial School for Colored Youth** 9601 Prince William Street, Manassas VA 20110

A surviving arch and building footprint remain at the site of the Carnegie Building which housed the library of the Manassas Industrial School for Colored Youth, founded in 1893 by Jennie Dean, a former slave. There is also a 2020 bronze statue of Dean by artist Christopher Hill and a scale model of the building and campus. This was the only local high school available to Black students living in Fairfax County for many decades, until Luther Jackson High School opened in 1954. The library served members of the community, so it was essentially the first public library in Prince William County.



Above: Historic marker at the site of the Carnegie Building (S. LaPierre)

## Newport News

### **Huntington High School (Now Boys & Girls Club)**

629 Hampton Ave, Newport News, VA 23607

Huntington High School, once a segregated school for Black students, resided in this building beginning in 1936. In 1938, the Huntington High School library was recognized as one of the best in the state – it was the only school library in Virginia at that time with a full-time professionally degreed librarian. Unlike some high schools for Black students which focused on vocational subjects, Huntington offered a strong general education program, and many students went on to college. Community members and Choice Neighborhoods Initiative advocated to preserve the building, which is now a Boys & Girls Club.



**Huntington High School, now Boys & Girls Club, Newport News (*S. LaPierre*)**





**Pearl Bailey Branch Library, Newport News (S. LaPierre)**

### **Pearl Bailey Library**

2510 Wickham Avenue, Newport News, VA 23607

This branch's history stretches back to a 1949 library on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Doris Miller Recreation Building, founded in part as a response to attorney W. Hale Thompson's attempt to desegregate the West Avenue Library. The Miller Recreation Building was a segregated facility for Black residents, two blocks from the World War II Recreation Building for White residents. After the daily closing of the school libraries, this library was the only one available to Black students due to segregation. In 1985, Newport News Public Library opened the Pearl Bailey Library at its present location. The community meeting room is named after W. Hale Thompson. The same artist (Asa Jackson) who created a mural of Thompson at the site of his former law office also made the portrait of Pearl Bailey on the side of the library.



**Mural depicting Pearl Bailey by Asa Jackson on the Pearl Bailey Branch Library (S. LaPierre)**

## Mural of William Hale Thompson

Corner of 25<sup>th</sup> St and Jefferson Avenue, Newport News, VA 23605

In 2018, artwork bearing the likeness of W. Hale Thompson was unveiled in honor of his desegregation efforts. It graces a building that was once the site of Mr. Thompson's law office and is now a barber shop. The artwork was created by local artist Asa Jackson.



Artwork honoring Thompson on the building that was once his law office, now a barber shop. (S. LaPierre)



Signage at the Site of Thompson's Law Office in Newport News. (S. LaPierre)





The former McKenney Library on Sycamore Street. *(Kipp Teague)*

### Petersburg

**Site of the William R. McKenney Library (formerly known as Petersburg Public Library)**  
137 S. Sycamore Street, Petersburg, VA 23803

McKenney Library was originally a residence built in 1859 by Petersburg Mayor John Dodson. After the Civil War, former Confederate General Billy Mahone lived there, and Gen. Robert E. Lee stayed as a guest. In 1923, then-owner Clara J. McKenney donated the house to the City of Petersburg for use as a library in honor of her late husband, attorney William R. McKenney. Her deed specified that one floor should be available to “colored” residents and the other to White residents. The library opened in 1924, operating in this segregated manner for decades. In 1960, local Black ministers led an effort to desegregate the main level. Several protesters were arrested, and the library closed. Black community members met at Zion Baptist Church to plan further protests. Several months later, it opened as an integrated facility, one of the first in Petersburg.



Signage in front of the building commemorating the library's history. *(Kipp Teague)*

## Portsmouth

### **The Portsmouth Colored Community Library Museum**

904 Elm Avenue, Portsmouth, VA 23704

The Portsmouth Colored Community Library served Black residents from 1945 until 1962. Unlike other communities that had a segregated branch for Black residents, the Portsmouth Community Library had roots developed by members of the Black community, dating back to the efforts of St. James Episcopal Church Pastor M. B. Birchette in the 1920's. The 900 square foot, one-story brick building was originally located on South Street near Effingham Street. It has been moved twice and opened as a museum in 2013 on land purchased by community members of all races. Exhibits center around the 20<sup>th</sup> century history of segregation in America, particularly in Portsmouth, VA, as well as the history of the library itself and its librarian, Bertha Edwards. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



**The Portsmouth Colored Community Library, now a museum. (S. LaPierre)**



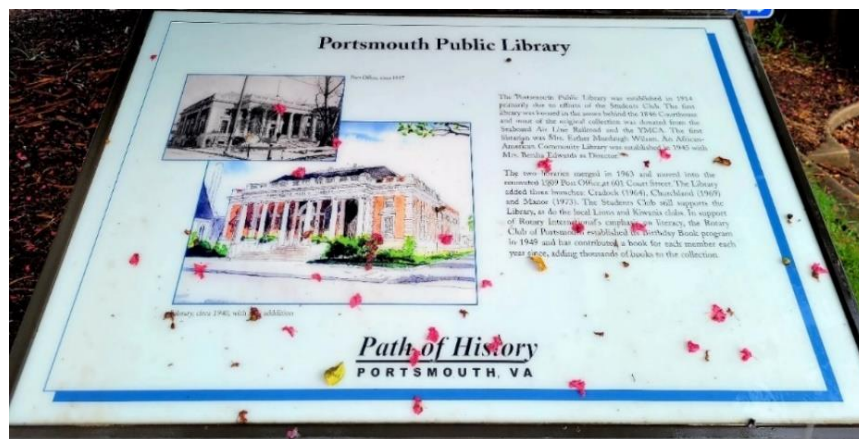


**Portsmouth Public Library, Portsmouth VA (S. LaPierre)**

## **The Portsmouth Public Library**

601 Court Street, Portsmouth, VA 23704

The Portsmouth Public Library opened to people of all races in this building, a former post office, in 1963. Although the library had been legally compelled to integrate after a federal civil rights lawsuit in 1960, it wasn't until 1963 that the two smaller formerly segregated libraries merged into this building with an integrated staff. Librarian Bertha Edwards, who had served at the Portsmouth Colored Community Library for its entire existence, moved onto the staff of Portsmouth Public Library when it opened. The original Portsmouth Public Library was established in 1914 in an annex behind the courthouse and was for Whites only.



**Signage at Portsmouth Public Library tells the story of its Integration (S. LaPierre)**



## Appendix D

### Black Librarians in Virginia Public Libraries, Fall 1947<sup>93</sup>

Mrs. S. Murphy Carr, Branch Librarian  
Robert Robinson Branch  
Alexandria Library  
Alexandria

Mr. Arthur McLaurin, Library Assistant  
Holmes Branch  
Arlington County Library  
Arlington

Mrs. Marie Louise Owens, Branch Librarian  
Holmes Branch  
Arlington County Library  
Arlington

Mrs. F.L. Pookrum  
Douglas H. S. Library  
(Negro Branch of Bristol Public Library)  
Bristol

Mrs. Jessie E. Moore, Librarian  
Blyden Branch  
Norfolk Public Library  
Norfolk

Adelaide F. Word, Branch Attendant  
Petersburg Public Library - Colored Branch  
Petersburg

Mrs. Bertha Winborne Edwards, Librarian  
Portsmouth Community Library  
Portsmouth

I. Belle Boyd, Branch Librarian  
Rosa Dowser Branch  
Richmond Public Library  
Richmond

Mrs. Virginia Y. Lee, Librarian  
Gainesboro Branch  
Roanoke Public Library  
Roanoke

Emma Jeannette Bryson  
Calfee Branch  
Pulaski County Free Library  
Pulaski

Mrs. Rosa K. James, Librarian  
Branch No. 1  
Salem Public Library of  
Roanoke County Public Library  
Salem

Mrs. Lena Sellers, Volunteer Worker  
Lucy Simms Branch  
Rockingham Public Library  
Harrisonburg

Mrs. Jeannette Clark  
Farmville Reading Room  
Farmville

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<sup>93</sup> "Negro Librarians in Virginia Public Libraries Fall 1947". Records of the Public Library Development Division of the Virginia State Library and Archives, 1920-1992. Accession 35467, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, Box 107, Folder 7.

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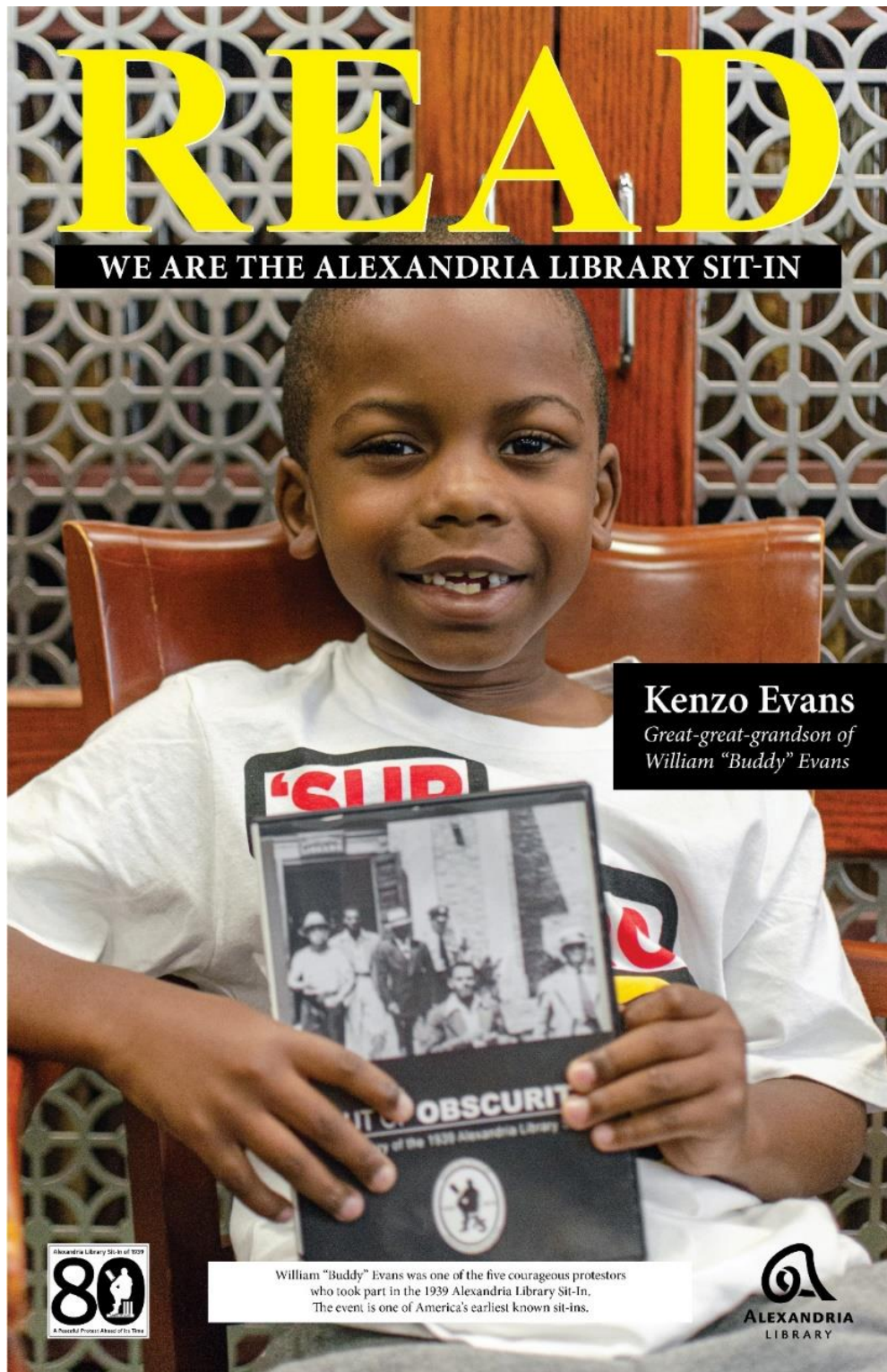
## **Appendix C. Surviving Formerly Segregated Public Library Facilities, Historical Markers, and Commemorative Signage**

"Highlights from the Portsmouth Colored Community Library". Portsmouth Colored Community Library Museum. <https://portsvafricanamericanheritage.com/online-learning/highlights-from-the-portsmouth-colored-community-library-museum/> Copyright, City of Portsmouth, 2016. Accessed August 3, 2021.



## **Appendix D. Black Librarians in Virginia Public Libraries, Fall 1947**

"Negro Librarians in Virginia Public Libraries Fall 1947". Records of the Public Library Development Division of the Virginia State Library and Archives, 1920-1992. Accession 35467, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, Box 107, Folder 7.



A Poster commemorates the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Alexandria Library sit-in, featuring Kenzo Evans, great-great-grandson of participant William "Buddy" Evans, who was 14 at the time. (Alexandria Library)