

## Educational Awakening

In Virginia, improvements to education were made between the close of Dr. William H. Ruffner's administration and the end of the nineteenth century. Dr. R. R. Farr succeeded Dr. Ruffner as state superintendent (1882-1886), John L. Buchanan followed (1886-1890), and then John E. Massey (1890-1898). During these administrations, the number of pupils and teachers increased, and the patrons and citizens developed a greater confidence in the system. In 1898, Joseph W. Southall was appointed State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Dr. Southall aimed to improve and consolidate rural schools, increase state and local financial support for schools, provide higher salaries for teachers, and establish a State Board of Examiners to handle teacher certification.

After the Civil War and Reconstruction, an educational awakening occurred at the turn of the twentieth century. There was more interest in public education. Between 1900 and 1918 significant developments included the adoption of the Constitution of 1902, the "May Campaign" of 1905, and the movement to establish high schools. The citizens of Lunenburg County found schooling to be a primary goal for their children and enthusiastically supported it.



*2012 photo of Lunenburg's countryside by Shirley R. Lee*

Farming, home life, and church attendance were major activities in many communities of Lunenburg County. Except for the establishment of towns, rural communities remained agrarian—the same as they had been the century before. Public education became an integral part of society with the construction of many schoolhouses along the countryside.

Dr. Southall called a meeting of Virginia educators in July 1901 to make recommendations for constitutional provisions pertaining to public education. The new State Constitution, ratified to become effective in 1902 under the Governor Andrew Jackson Montague, gave a mandate for public education by providing that:

*"The General Assembly of Virginia shall establish and maintain an effective system of public free schools throughout the State."*

The Constitution authorized the board to divide the state into school divisions, each to contain not less than one county or city; and the magisterial districts within the counties retained their separate school boards.

In 1904, educational reformers in the state created the Cooperative Education Association of Virginia (CEAV). Their platform consisted of eight planks: nine months of schooling for every child, high schools within reasonable distance of every child, well-trained teachers, agricultural and industrial training, efficient supervision, promotion of libraries, schools for the defective and dependent, and the formation of a citizen's education association in every county and city.

### **YE Ole Necessary**



In the early 1900s as rural schools were established, the Virginia Board of Health required two out houses at each school—one for females and the other for males. Specifications included size, roof pitch, and depth of the pit. For sanitary reasons, out houses were not expected to be erected next to water sources such as a well or natural spring.

This 'ole necessary' for boys was constructed at the Camp School in the early 1920s. Still standing on its original site, it is located on Craig Mill Road (private property) approximately 12 miles south of Kenbridge, Virginia. 2014 photo by Shirley R. Lee

The CEAV undertook a statewide campaign, the "May Campaign of 1905," with a series of conferences aimed at improving public education in the South. Reaching into ninety-four counties, Governor Montague and others delivered 300 addresses at one hundred meetings within thirty days for the support of public education.

Joseph D. Eggleston Jr. (1906–1912), Dr. Southall's successor, was the first elected Superintendent of Public Instruction in Virginia. He worked hard for improvements in rural schools.

Records are incomplete and sketchy for the number of schools established in Lunenburg between 1900 and 1906. Traffic, New Court House, Kenbridge, Victoria, and the private schools of Flat Rock Academy, Mrs. Scott's Boarding for Young Ladies, and Rehoboth were among the schools established for whites. The teachers were often transient with no requirements to maintain school records, and many of these earlier schools only lasted a few years. The school year was about five to six months. Some schools had the advantage of a superintendent and financial backing from their district board or patron support. There are newspaper accounts of the school system beginning in 1913, and the Virginia Daily Attendance Registers and Monthly Grade Records as early as 1918 archived at School Board's Alternative Education Office.

### **Schools At Traffic**

A one-room frame building was constructed in the white populated area of the Traffic community in 1901. The citizens purchased one acre of land through the efforts of George Holloway (a prosperous farmer and landowner) and others at their expense. Later, in 1910, white citizens constructed another school in the African American community.

In this 1924 photo (below-left) Sarah Virginia Love was the teacher. Later, this school became the site of the Mount Olivet Church in Rehoboth, Virginia. In 1937, the Traffic School (below-right) for African Americans was deeded to the school board and therefore, supported from public funds. The teacher was

Alice Cousins whose salary was paid by the school board. Other teachers were Laverne Inge and Mattie Marable. The school closed in the early 1950s and the students were transported to the Lunenburg Training School in Victoria, Virginia. Presently, this old schoolhouse has been remodeled into a private residence. It still stands on its original site on Rehoboth Road approximately ten miles southwest of Victoria, Virginia.



Courtesy of Michael A. Tisdale



1937 photo courtesy of Johnston Memorial Library  
Special Collections and University Archives  
Virginia State University

We have documentation of many African American schools established at the turn of the twentieth century because of the research work completed by Mr. Oscar Wood in 1953. Among these schools were \*Central (1900), Traffic (1901), Rosebud (1902), Cherry Hill (1904), Gary (1905), and Mt. Level (1906).

Selected Sources: The Lunenburg Call, (1917), The Victoria Dispatch, (1925); Oscar Wood. Development of Education for Negroes in Lunenburg County, Virginia 1870-1952 (1953); Special Collections and University Archives – Archie G. Richardson Papers, Johnston Memorial Library, Virginia State University, (1937); A History of Public Education in Virginia, Virginia Department of Education, (2003); Gay W. Neale. The Lunenburg Legacy, (2005).

NOTE: This review is based on available information and may not include all facts related to public education in Lunenburg County from 1870 to 1970. \*The Central School mentioned here is not the current Central High School of Lunenburg.