

EDUCATIONAL AWAKENING (cont.)

Early African American Schools

Before the turn of the twentieth century, the urgent need to educate African American children increased faster than the availability of educational funds. Approximately thirty schools were established in Lunenburg County between the years of 1872 and 1899. These schools included Allenville, Asbury, Bethany, Brydie, Cool Spring, Davis, Evergreen, Flat Rock, Friendship, Gill Hill, Irby House, Kenbridge Graded, Lone Oak, Methodist, Mount Olive, New Grove, Nutbush, Oak Grove, Pleasant Oak, Reedy, Saint Matthew Lutheran Parochial, Smith, Springfield, Taylor's Chapel, The Baptist Church, Unity, Varick, Wattsboro, West End and West Hill.

The Friendship School was erected by members of the Friendship Baptist Church in 1877. It was a one-room frame structure built across from the church property. The patrons and citizens of the Friendship School community assumed the entire responsibility for the school except that of paying the teacher's salary.

The school was located approximately 1.5 miles on SR #610 (now Bacon Fork Road) south of Kenbridge, Virginia. It was deeded to the school board in 1900, and continued to operate until the late 1940s. The school was demolished some years later. →



All the schools, except Kenbridge Graded were one-teacher schools. Originally, a majority of them were constructed of logs, but later one-room frame structures replaced the log buildings. The average school term was five months for students in grades one to seven. The classes were usually overcrowded and advanced pupils often helped to instruct those in the lower level grades. Most of the first teachers were those who had completed the county's public school. For example, in 1885, there was only one African American teacher in the county who had training beyond that offered in the public school. There was no education offered beyond the elementary level because of the lack of a high school facility. In the early 1900s, a four-room frame school—three rooms for secondary and one for elementary—was constructed in Victoria, Virginia.

Each magisterial district of the county had its own school board. The condition of the school was determined by the amount of money provided by the board and contributions from private funds. For the most part, African Americans donated or purchased all of the land, contributed the materials, equipment, construction work and paid teachers' salaries. The school was often named in honor of the person who donated the land on which the school was constructed. Many of these schools began in churches, and later the members constructed a school on the church site. It was not unusual for the school to have the name of the church.

Selected Sources: Oscar Wood. *Development of Education for Negroes in Lunenburg County, Virginia 1870-1952* (1953); Photo courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives – Archie G. Richardson Papers, Johnston Memorial Library, Virginia State University, (1935); (2008; *A History of Public Education in Virginia*, Virginia Department of Education, (2003).

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.