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Roses in December: Black life in Hanover County, Virginia during the era of disfranchisement

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Roses in December
Black Life in Hanover County, Virginia During the Era of Disfranchisement

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A Dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the College of William and Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Lyon Gardiner Tyler Department of History

The College of William and Mary
August 2007

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APPROVAL SHEET

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Jody Lynn Allen

Approved by the Committee, June 2007

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ABSTRACT

In 1902, Virginia’s revised constitution was proclaimed by the all-male, all-white delegates who had met in Richmond, the state capitol, for over a year. While they reviewed and revised the entire document, their main goal was to disfranchise black males. For the next seven decades, most black men, and, after 1920, black women found it difficult, if not impossible, to participate in the electoral process.

This dissertation looks at the effect of this event on blacks living in Hanover County, Virginia. Black Hanoverians steadily chipped away at the walls that enclosed them and limited their opportunities for success. First, they worked to determine their paths to freedom, and in doing so, set patterns of survival for their descendants. When their rights were being eroded, black Hanoverians, along with their compatriots in Richmond, deemphasized political involvement as the path to full citizenship and instead focused on self-help. Third, they responded to Jim Crow by fostering lives that ran parallel to those of whites. Fourth, in spite of the hardships of living in a racist system, black Hanoverians moved to play their part in overcoming the pressures placed on the country by the Depression and war. Finally, African Americans in Hanover drew on various traditions established by their ancestors to regain their civil rights.

In the end, black Hanoverians resisted the strictures of their “place” as defined by white people. Following Emancipation, the amendments to the federal Constitution, and the Reconstruction Acts, they had reason to believe that they would finally be accepted as citizens in the United States, a country that they and their ancestors had helped to build. They soon found that this would not be the case. Instead, they would have to seek citizenship via avenues of their own making. In the end, they have taught their descendants that citizenship asserts itself from within, and that it has proved to be something that no one can take away.
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DEDICATION

I offer this work in memory of my grandmothers, Daisy Wright Tobias and Bessie Fulton Ellis, who began this journey with me, but had to go on ahead, and in memory of my aunt, Gloria Allen Davis, who encouraged me to the end. I also honor my mother, Dorothy Tobias Parker and my aunt, Helen Tobias Walker. These five women have been my role models.
I recently had occasion to read the acknowledgements in Peter Guralnick’s book *Sweet Soul Music.* He begins by saying that “in writing a book over so long a period, one incurs debts one can never repay.” He goes on to explain that hundreds of people helped him to achieve his goal. Well, I do not know how many years it took Guralnick, but it has taken me twelve years to complete this doctorate, and I too, have hundreds, maybe thousands, of people to thank for helping me to reach my goal. While I am petrified of inadvertently leaving someone out, knowing that I will and regretting that, I must at least try.

First and foremost, I thank God and his angels for running interference for me at all times. I have learned a lot of history in the past twelve years, but I have also come to fully understand from whence cometh my help.

When I entered the College of William and Mary, I was a very green, budding historian. I came from an academic and professional background totally unrelated to the study of history, and for the first few months I felt, and surely sounded and wrote, like a fish out of water. I even secretly contemplated leaving and getting a job at a fast-food restaurant. Over the years, I became much more comfortable with the help of the faculty and staff of the department including: Melvin Patrick Ely, James Whittenburg, Carol Sheriff, Leisa Meyer, Kimberley Phillips, Scott Nelson, Cindy Hahamovitch, Judith Ewell, Roz Stearns, Betty Flanigan, Gail Conners, and the late John Selby.

I must now extend my appreciation to those who got me over the “Great Divide” also known as the dissertation. During the 2006-2007 academic year, I was able to focus totally on my dissertation largely because of a dissertation-year fellowship that was awarded by the Southern Regional Education Board. I am thankful not only for the monthly stipend which allowed me to stop working, but also for the support of the SREB staff, including Dr. Ansley Abraham, Bob Belle, and Robbie Oust, and Sandra Jowers, a SREB alum, who took me on as a mentee.

Now to my committee-extraordinaire: First, I thank my committee chair, Melvin Patrick Ely, who has read my work on several different continents as well as on various conveyances. We arrived at William and Mary at the same time, and I am thankful to call him teacher, mentor, and friend. Leisa Meyer, my second reader, thank you for your time, patience, and insistence that I expand my point of view even when the sources were not always cooperative. Kris Lane, my non-Americanist, and Theodore DeLaney, my outside reader, thank you both for taking on an unknown scholar. You, too, read my work in distant locations, and managed to give me thoughtful feedback. I appreciate you all for your guidance, feedback, and nudging. I feel that I have produced a better product and have become a better scholar because of you. I promise to pay it forward.

Most of my research and second year of writing took place at the Library of Virginia. In fact, I have spent so much time at the LVA that, like “Norm” on Cheers, I am known when I walk through the door. The staff has been phenomenal. They answered my questions, made suggestions, and at times simply brightened my day with a smile. They
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I have also spent a considerable amount time in the papers of Hanover County and
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ROSES IN DECEMBER

While still in the early writing stages, I did not have a title for the dissertation. The more I wrote, however, the more I felt that the title should reflect what I was learning about black Hanoverians. In short, it seemed to me that the women and men appearing on the pages before me were a tenacious, hard-working people who, despite their circumstances, seemed to be able to find the silver lining. About this time, I attended a Black History Month Program at the Ashland Public Library entitled “Growing Up Black in Ashland.” The panel included three participants—Inez Winston Gray, Alvin Jackson, and Frances Williams Jackson Jones. When discussing the challenges of growing up during the era of segregation, Jones shared how difficult it had been to obtain a textbook for school. She explained that she would have to borrow a book from a classmate, copy the assignment, and return it. Continuing, Jones asserted that while times were hard, she and her family always had good memories, and it was these memories that got them through. According to Jones, “God gave us memories so we could have our roses in December.”
PROLOGUE

On June 26, 1863, two young white boys in Piedmont Virginia, with more curiosity than good judgment, were excited about an impending Civil War battle in their very own neighborhood. They had long desired their own revolvers, and they figured/calculated/assumed that the only way to obtain these guns was from a dead Yankee. They expected to see a few dead Union troops that day.¹

Henry T. Wickham and his cousin, Frank Nelson, were sons of two old Hanover families, and they happened to be at Hickory Hill, the Wickham family plantation home, on the day that Colonel Spear of the Union Army led a raiding party into Hanover County, Virginia, in search of General Robert E. Lee. Arriving at Hickory Hill, Spear found Fitzhugh Lee, the General’s son, recovering from battle wounds. The younger Lee was taken into custody.²

Beyond seeking the older Lee, Spear was also charged with destroying the bridges that crossed the South Anna River about a mile from Hickory Hill. These bridges were guarded by a North Carolina company; Henry and Frank knew the Carolinians would defend the bridges at all cost. Thus, they expected that at least some of the Yankees would no longer need their revolvers after the dust cleared.³

When the sounds of battle ceased, young Henry and Frank decided to go to the bridge and see what they could find. Just as they were about to reach their destination,

¹ Henry T. Wickham, Address Delivered Before the Joint Session of The General Assembly of Virginia (Richmond, VA February 23, 1940).
² Wickham Address.
³ Wickham Address.
they heard the sound of a bugle and then the sound of a Minie ball whizzing by. "That sound is unmistakable, and once heard is never forgotten," Wickham would remember in his old age. The boys prudently left the revolvers for another day, and ran for cover. They ended up on the River Road, where they encountered what Wickham described as a large number of "our colored people seated on the bank." The boys joined the group and then witnessed a scene that was played out on an almost daily basis throughout the South. As the boys stood in wonder, they saw the Union Army leaving. First the advance scouts rode by, followed by the guard, and then soldiers on horses carrying their dead. This group was followed by the wounded in wagons that had been taken from the neighboring South Wales and Hickory Hill plantations. Then Henry and Frank witnessed the exodus of what he referred to as "our colored people"—black men, women, and children, with little more than the clothes on their backs, leaving with the Union Army.4

A similar scene must have been taking place across the river at North Wales, the home of William Carter, Robert E. Lee's uncle. The morning after the exodus witnessed by Frank and Henry, two black men arrived at Hickory Hill with a story of their own. Apparently, Spear had sent out a party of men looking for horses at North Wales. These Union soldiers did not know that the horses had been hidden by two enslaved men, Moses Napper and Scot Davis, who belonged to Charlotte, Carter's daughter. According to Napper and Davis, the soldiers, in their anger over not finding horses, beat Carter to within an inch of his life. When his family arrived they found him in bed being cared for

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4 Wickham Address.
by loyal "house servants." Family lore suggests that Carter was killed by the Yankees. This is probably accurate because he was 80 years old at the time of the beating.\(^5\)

While those enslaved individuals who worked in the Carter house may have been loyal to their master, many others were not, and, like their comrades from Hickory Hill and South Wales, they walked off the plantation to freedom with the Union Army. William Henry Winston was among the several who left that day. A boy of fifteen, he soon found himself at City Point, Virginia, and by December 1863 he was in Norfolk, where he enlisted in the 2\(^{nd}\) Cavalry, Company E, United States forces, commanded by Captain Tucker. In May 1864 Winston was on the road between Williamsburg and New Kent when his horse stepped on something, throwing Winston to the ground and then falling on him. He was excused from duty for two weeks. His next injury came the following September when he was part of a group making a charge from Deep Bottom toward Malvern Hill to the front of Fort Harrison. A Minie ball struck him near his left ankle, shattering the bone. This time he spent two or three weeks in the hospital at Bermuda Hundred.\(^6\)

By the time that Winston was released from the hospital, his company was in Petersburg. He remembered guarding the ammunition train in front of Richmond and Petersburg. After the fall of Richmond, his company went to City Point (now Hopewell, Virginia) and then took off for Fort Monroe. Company E was then sent to Fort Brazos, Texas, where Winston was eventually mustered out of the army.\(^7\)

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\(^5\) Wickham Address.
\(^6\) Pension file of William Henry Winston Deposition, December 5, 1889; Compiled Service Records, 68\(^{th}\) U.S.C.T. Records Group 94, Box 64, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).
\(^7\) Winston Deposition.
Undoubtedly, the end of the war brought relief and a good deal of happiness to the young Winston. He had left enslavement when the opportunity arose, and he had taken up a weapon in what he saw as the defense of his freedom and those he had left behind. Beyond this realization, Winston may have been as uncertain as the leaders of the victorious Union, who faced the task of reuniting the country. What was next? Winston wanted to get back to Hanover County and rejoin his family and friends and start his new life. The United States and Virginia had been dramatically altered. The previously unthinkable had occurred, the secession of eleven southern states had led to civil war and, the country, especially the South, found itself four years later in an emotional and physical shambles. Much of the social and economic canvas had been wiped clean, and the political picture shifted from one month to the next.

Both young men, Winston and Wickham, survived the Civil War, but both carried scars. Winston’s were physical, and for the rest of his long life, he would suffer with pain. On the other hand, Wickham did not see battle and was never physically harmed; his scars may have been emotional. He would be described by some black people as one of the meanest white men they had ever encountered. There is no clear way of knowing why Wickham was so hostile, especially to those in his employ, but it may have stemmed from what he viewed as the desertion of his “colored” people that day in 1863.⁸

In spite of their scars, these two boys grew up to be active and productive citizens in Hanover County. William Henry Winston applied and received a pension from the United States government as a result of his injuries; he married, had a large family and purchased land. He became a leader in his community and a deacon in his church, and

⁸ Winston Deposition; Hewlett Family Papers, Mss6:1, H4985:1, VHS.
when he died, his family was able to afford a tombstone to mark his grave, the only one marked in the small family cemetery where he was interred. Henry Wickham, by contrast, grew up wealthy and maintained that wealth as an adult. He, too, married and raised a family. He was elected to the state senate of Virginia and rose to the rank of president pro tempore of that body. He was interred in the family cemetery at Hickory Hill. There is no evidence that Winston or Wickham ever met, but they became prominent members of their communities, African American and white respectively. Those communities in Hanover struggled against one another even as they coexisted and sometimes cooperated in complex ways between 1865 and 1971.9

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9 John Morris Interview March 3, 2006; Wickham Address.
INTRODUCTION

It was November 8, 2005, election day. The weather was beautiful, and there was a steady turnout of people voting in Virginia’s most hotly contested gubernatorial campaign since 1989, when L. Douglas Wilder became the first elected African American governor in the United States. It was late morning in Ashland, in Hanover County, Virginia, and a black man in his late 70s or early 80s, leaning on his cane, was leaving the public library where he had just cast his ballot. As he approached a campaign volunteer distributing information for the Democratic Party candidates, he proudly pointed to the sticker on his jacket that read, “I voted.” The white campaign worker, who appeared to be his contemporary, beamed back at him and said, “You’re a good boy.” The man hesitated, and his already slow forward movement slowed even more. While he never stopped smiling, he remarked, almost to himself, that he was just remembering the old days when people used to call men boys. The campaign volunteer, noticeably embarrassed, hastily explained that she had not meant to be offensive. The man replied, “I know. I was just remembering,” and he continued on his way. The volunteer’s immediate response and red face indicated that she too, remembered—at least when events jogged her recollection.¹

The woman’s turn of phrase carried the man back to a time when his manhood was questioned by virtually an entire nation, especially by whites in the southern region. He remembered a time when legalized segregation and overt racism severely restricted the lives of African Americans. It was a time when he probably never heard black adults referred to or addressed as Mr. or Mrs. outside the black community. It was a time when

¹This incident was witnessed by author and her husband.

Note on terminology: Throughout this dissertation the terms black and African American are used interchangeably to avoid repetition.
most African Americans were not allowed to vote in elections—when public schools for 
black children, while prized by the communities they served, were substandard and 
lacked basic equipment. On the other hand, the old man could remember seeing black 
and white farmers sharing tools and equipment, and he had certainly witnessed black and 
white children playing together. The early twentieth century was a time when a white 
employer could weep sincerely at the funeral of a black woman who had worked for him 
or raised him but decline an invitation to join her family at her home after leaving the 
cemetery. It was a complex time. It is chiefly the time of this man’s earlier memories, a 
time known as the Jim Crow Era, that this dissertation will explore.

The focus of this study will be African American life in Hanover County, 
Virginia. It will examine the role that black people played in shaping their own destiny 
and will argue that, between Emancipation and the culmination of the Civil Rights 
Movement, black Hanoverians followed multiple paths to full American citizenship, 
forging a viable community through self-help, education, spirituality, work, socialization, 
and political involvement despite concerted efforts to curtail their progress.

Particular focus will be given to the Constitutional Convention of 1902 which led 
to the disfranchisement of African American men in Hanover County and the ultimate 
desegregation of the county’s in 1969. However, to fully understand these almost seven 
decades, consideration must first be given to the periods of Reconstruction and the New 
South. In the years between Emancipation and the onset of minutely codified 
segregation, black people experienced unprecedented access to political and economic 
opportunities and had reason to hope, for a couple of brief periods that these 
opportunities would lead to their acceptance as full citizens. This time—1865-1902—will 
be considered with the following questions in mind: How did black Hanoverians respond 
to freedom? How did they understand their role as citizens? What kind of lives did they
build as free men and women? How did black men and women respond to black male suffrage? The chapters beginning with 1902 will ponder the disfranchisement of black men by asking: How could disfranchisement have happened with the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution in place? How did black Virginians respond? Did they resist, and if so, how was their resistance manifested? Did resistance coexist with certain kinds of cooperation between blacks and whites? Insight into these questions and more will be sought through the lives of African Americans in Hanover County, Virginia, between 1865 and 1971.

With its geographic center located 18 miles north of Richmond, the state capital, Hanover today is the ninth-largest in population out of 95 counties in Virginia, and is often described as a suburb of the capital city. At the turn of the twentieth century and before, the county was almost completely rural, and the majority of its residents made their living off the land. Outside of sawmills and gristmills, there were no manufacturing industries. Hanover was chosen for this case study for several reasons. The first is the county’s proximity to Richmond. It is close enough to benefit from the city’s resources and market outlets, but far enough away to establish and maintain its own identity. Second, the county is home to Ashland, its only incorporated town, and this presents the opportunity to compare and contrast town and country living. A third reason is that, like most Piedmont and Tidewater Virginia counties, Hanover has always had a sizable African American population—in 1860 the black population was 9,730 or 56 percent; by 1900 the total number of blacks was 7,898, or 42 percent, and in 1970 the number of African Americans living in the county was 6,718 or 18 percent. Fourth, Hanover has largely been overlooked by scholars. In 1926, Rosewell Page wrote *Hanover County; Its __________________

History and Legends, which offers no analysis and presents only two paragraphs on African American life in the county. Many years later, in 1994, a very credible local history, Ashland, Ashland, by Roseanne Shalf, appeared, but it focuses on the town. The lack of scholarly attention to the county has left a rich vein of insight into the lives of African Americans in Virginia between the end of the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement untapped. The digging, however, is sometimes challenging.

The end of slavery brought both elation and confusion to African Americans. Elation at the prospect of being able to marry legally, legitimize their children, prevent the breakup of their families, earn pay for their work, and simply live as free men and women. Freed people were also confused and apprehensive, because they did not know exactly how freedom would affect them. By 1865 most of the black people in the South came from a long line of enslaved people, and while the peculiar institution sentenced African Americans to a life few people today can even imagine, in 1865, it was a life that was known, a life that was understood. There were roofs, albeit often questionable in their stability, over the heads of most blacks. There was something to eat, clothing of a sort, and because they were considered property, protection from those who would do them deadly harm. Once freed, these tenuous benefits disappeared. There was no longer the guarantee of a roof overhead or food on the table, and while working for pay was now an option, most potential employers had very little, if anything, with which to pay black workers. African Americans were no longer property, and therefore their value to their former owners had diminished.

No one knew what was to become of these formerly enslaved individuals, least of all the freedmen and -women themselves. In his autobiography, Up From Slavery,

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4 Rosewell Page, Hanover County; Its History and Legends (Richmond 1926).
Booker T. Washington describes a poignant scene in which, he noticed the blacks around him, after jubilantly celebrating their emancipation, settling down to grapple with the notion of freedom. Washington recalled that it seemed as though “the responsibility of being freed, of having charge of themselves, of having to think and plan for themselves and their children, seemed to take possession of them.”

Historian Leon Litwack asserts that few slaves celebrated the news of freedom with complete abandon. On the contrary, “the notion of a Jubilee, with its suggestion of unrestrained, unthinking black hilarity, tends to neglect if not demean the wide range and depth of black responses to emancipation.” Like the freedmen and -women Washington observed, most of the newly free were too shocked to celebrate in a carefree manner. They did not know what to expect, and few faced this uncertain future without some trepidation.

The lack of a concrete vision of the future did not deter most black people from tackling freedom head on. Following emancipation, the roads were packed with black men, women, and children as thousands left their former homes. Litwack argues that, for the newly freed, walking away from former masters was the “surest, the quickest way to demonstrate” that they were free. Some people wandered the towns and countryside looking for friends and family sold away during slavery. Others sought employment on neighboring plantations or farms, and still others pursued opportunities in urban environments.

Uppermost in the minds of most African Americans was finding a way to support themselves and their families while at the same time maintaining their liberty. To earn a living, some black people returned to their former masters, but this time they were setting the limits. They let it be known that they expected to be paid for services rendered,

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8 Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 305.
9 Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 297.
exercise control over their own lives and those of their kin, and leave if treated unfairly.\textsuperscript{10} They were concerned about setting boundaries that would allow them to maintain their freedom, and careful not to risk the loss of that freedom. Tera Hunter, writing about African American clothes washers in Atlanta, discusses their determination to resist the attempts of elite white women reformers to dictate the use of their leisure time.\textsuperscript{11} Another example of blacks' determination to maintain their freedom is found in Hanover County, where a Freedmen’s Bureau agent, concerned that blacks would turn to alcohol, worked diligently to get them to sign temperance agreements promising not to indulge in the consumption of alcoholic beverages. While some black men and women did join this effort, in one report, the agent wrote that his attempts to obtain signatures, even from the churchgoing black people in the community, were stymied; some, he said, though they did not drink, were reluctant to give up the right to do so.\textsuperscript{12}

Many black people never left the plantations where they had lived and worked before the war. For some African Americans, the notions of “our white folks” and “our home” were synonymous, and they may have felt a genuine connection with the white people who had enslaved them. On the other hand, feelings of this sort did not motivate all of the black men and women who remained with their old masters and mistresses. Some stayed on because it was their best alternative at the time. This may have been the case with America Denton of Hanover County. Initially, Denton decided to work for her former master, but they eventually parted ways over a disputed labor contract.\textsuperscript{13}

A few black people took on roles that challenged and empowered them as never before. Some even engaged in the political system and worked to establish a foundation

\textsuperscript{10} Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (FB) Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, (Reel 62), 1; (Reel 44), 89; (Reel 44), 592.  
\textsuperscript{11} Tera W. Hunter, \textit{To 'Joy My Freedom} (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997).  
\textsuperscript{12} FB (Reel 47), 560.  
\textsuperscript{13} FB (Reel 62), 1.
that would help the South to rise again, but without building its recovery on the backs of enslaved black men and women.

In 1865, shortly after the end of the Civil War, Andrew Johnson, Abraham Lincoln’s vice-president and successor, anxious to reunite the Union, instituted Presidential Reconstruction. While it may not have been his intention, under Johnson’s leadership, the South’s new white leaders, though perhaps friendly to the Union, held traditional ideas about the place of blacks. They sought to reassert control over their newly freed labor force, which the region needed in order to begin to rebuild. They understood that slavery would never be restored, but laws were made that severely limited the liberty of African Americans.

Presidential Reconstruction did not last long, and was followed by Congressional or Radical Reconstruction. It was during this period that the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments were added to the federal Constitution. These amendments defined citizenship to include all people born in this country and extended the suffrage to black men. Under Radical Reconstruction, if the states of the former Confederacy were to be readmitted to the Union, they were expected to embrace the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments and to write new state constitutions through conventions elected by black and white male voters alike.¹⁴

In 1868, Virginia called such a convention. One hundred and five delegates, 24 black and 81 white met in Richmond. The final product, known as the Underwood Constitution after the president of the convention, Judge John C. Underwood, was a very democratic document that set the stage for black inclusion in the state’s political life. The Conservative Democrats were not happy with the new constitution, and initially tried to block its ratification. This presented a problem because, without ratification, the state

would not be readmitted to the Union. In the end, the Conservatives acquiesced, and the new constitution was ratified, and in 1870 Virginia was welcomed back into the United States.\textsuperscript{15}

Acceptance of the Underwood Constitution on the part of Conservatives did not mark a change in their politics. Indeed, it was a means to an end; it was the first step in a plan to regain control of state politics. The Conservatives helped to ratify the new constitution so that Virginia would be readmitted to the Union. The removal of federal troops and the Freedmen’s Bureau began; Conservatives coalesced with one wing of the Republican Party in 1869 to elect a governor in 1870. In effect, Conservative rule had been restored in Virginia a mere five years after Appomattox and in spite of the Reconstruction Amendments.\textsuperscript{16}

The road ahead was not easy for the Conservatives, however. A split in the party’s ranks over how to deal with Virginia’s prewar state debt led in the 1870s to the formation of the Readjuster Party, a coalition of Democrats and Republicans, black and white. Promising enhanced education and social services and a downward readjustment of Virginia’s debt to make those policies possible, the Readjusters won power in the elections of 1879 and 1881. During their relatively short period of control, the Readjusters accomplished a great deal for black Virginians. In the end, the Readjusters were no match for their Democratic rivals who used fraud, fear, and legislative maneuvers to influence election outcomes. By 1884, the Democrats were back in control of the state house and the General Assembly.\textsuperscript{17}

Although they were now in firm control, the Conservative Democrats feel impelled to maintain their grip on power by committing fraud to ensure electoral victory

\textsuperscript{16} Shibley, 38.
\textsuperscript{17} Shibley, 117.
in many areas of the state. Hence they wanted more certainty that the threat presented by Republicans, blacks, and radicals was behind them once and for all, and they wanted to eliminate unseemly election fraud (committed by themselves). As a result, the Conservatives in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries constructed legal obstacles that black Virginians had not faced since the end of slavery. In 1884 and 1894, the Democrats enacted legislation aimed at limiting the impact of blacks and Republicans at the polls. These attempts at controlling the franchise met with some success, but in the end, the “threat” was not eliminated. Some Democrats began to advocate a constitutional convention that would allow them to get an even firmer grip on state politics. In 1889 and 1897, the citizens voted against a convention, seemingly fearful of raising the ire of the federal government, which still showed some signs it might be prepared to intervene in defense of black voting rights.18

The Democratic Party in Virginia was not alone in its efforts to find a way to permanently limit the number of voters. The era of disfranchisement and legal segregation, also known as Jim Crow, began slowly creeping across the South, from state to state, starting in 1890, when Mississippi amended its constitution to include a poll tax, a grandfather clause, and a literacy test or understanding clause.19 Between 1890 and 1910, most southern states used Mississippi as a model of how to disfranchise black men. Litwack suggests that the Democrats were so intent on their mission because they equated black men voting with black male assertiveness and with social equality, which in their minds would eventually lead to the white woman’s bedroom. In short, to purify

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the voting process was to maintain the purity of white womanhood, a major crutch in southern history that white men could lean on to control black men.\textsuperscript{20}

The era of Jim Crow was ushered into Virginia in 1901 when delegates from every legislative district in the Commonwealth converged on the city of Richmond to review and amend the state’s constitution. Conservative Virginians, especially those in Black Belt counties, where black males still outnumbered white males, had searched for almost twenty years for a way to cement their control over the state’s electoral machine without obviously violating the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. In June 1901, with the Mississippi constitution as its guide and the approval of the electorate as its mandate, the convention began. The delegates met for just over one year, and by the end of that time they had adopted a franchise clause that included a poll tax and an understanding clause. The adoption of these two voting requirements meant that most black men in Virginia and some poor white men had lost their most basic right of citizenship. These amendments would remain on the books until 1969, when the constitution would once again be amended, this time with the goal of incorporating the 1964 United States Supreme Court decision which determined the poll tax as a requirement for voting to be unconstitutional, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

This study encompasses several historical periods. Reconstruction, covered briefly in this work, has been thoroughly explored by scholars. William Dunning, who wrote \textit{Reconstruction: Political and Economic} in 1907, gave birth to an entire school of interpretation which suggests that the failure of Reconstruction lay squarely on the shoulders of blacks who were not prepared to handle the task of rebuilding the South. Additionally, Dunning school proponents assert that white southern conservatives tried

hard to reconstruct the South following the Civil War, but were stymied by corrupt
Republicans, black and white, and forced to use morally and ethically questionable tactics
to “redeem” the South.21

The Dunning school interpretation of Reconstruction was accepted and taught for
many years, until a group of revisionist historians, including Carter G. Woodson, W.E. B.
DuBois, John Hope Franklin, and Kenneth Stampp, challenged its interpretations.
Between 1922 and 1965, all of these scholars took on Dunning’s characterization of
African American men, taking them from buffoonish caricatures to hardworking and
responsible family men and citizens. Unfortunately, like the Dunning school, these men
largely ignored African American women. In 1979, Leon Litwack’s Been in the Storm So
Long: The Aftermath of Slavery does not attempt to place the blame for Reconstruction’s
failure, and does a better job of addressing gender by simply telling the stories of the
black men, women, and children at its center.22

Eric Foner’s Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, published in
1988, erases any remaining vestige of the Dunning school and asserts that the
Reconstruction Acts endowed black people with the sense that they were living at the
dawn of a new era which unified black communities and gave them the confidence to act
as agents of their own destiny.23 Here, Foner attacks a tendency in the years before his
book appeared to deprecate Reconstruction from the Left as a timid, perhaps self-
consciously conservative effort.

Recent works on Reconstruction have taken on Foner’s notion of unity in the
black community and expanded the field to encompass gender as a lens through which to

Inc, 1927); W.E.B. DuBois, Black Reconstruction in America, (New York: Antheneum, 1992); John Hope
Franklin, Reconstruction After the Civil War (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961); Kenneth
23 Eric Foner, 410.
consider the time period. Beginning in 1992, Joseph P. Reidy argues that, while black men and women may have been unified in their desire for economic independence, they were divided by gender on how to accomplish this goal. In 1997, Tera W. Hunter and Leslie Schwalm published *To 'Joy My Freedom* and *A Hard Fight for We*, respectively. Hunter studies domestic workers in Atlanta, Georgia, and their public protests such as the washerwomen's strike in 1881.\(^{24}\) Schwalm, looking at rural black women in South Carolina, explores the “conflict between black men and women when women resisted state-sponsored efforts to put black men in authority over women.” Like Reidy, Schwalm found intraracial conflict as well as interracial disputes.\(^{25}\) To a certain extent, both works build on Thomas Holt’s *Black Over White: Negro Political Leadership in South Carolina During Reconstruction*, which identified serious political fault lines within the African American community of South Carolina and attributed the fall of Reconstruction in that state party to these fissures.\(^{26}\)

Also, in 1997, Laura Edwards published *Gendered Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction*, where she investigates Granville County, North Carolina. Edwards argues that the public and private political lives of blacks, common whites, and elite whites in Granville County were not separate. For example, she suggests that the private interest in blacks marrying became part of the public political structure. Whites wanted blacks to marry, so black men would bear the financial burden of their children and not the state. White people saw this as a means control, but black men understood that marriage gave them authority over how their children would be raised. In 2003, Steven Hahn published *A Nation Under Our Feet*; like Foner, he sees more unity than disunity among black people. Hahn also asserts that the successes that freedmen and

\(^{24}\) Hunter, 3.
-women did achieve were due in part to survival skills learned during slavery. Hahn asserts that slavery “was not mere background or prologue; it was formative and foundational.” Enslaved black people were political beings who developed a political consciousness that enabled them to resist enslavement and also prepared them for freedom. As a result, postwar black communities formed the foundation for the development of a black nation.  

The work of the recent historians has been important in helping to locate Reconstruction-era Hanover County within the larger context of the post-Civil War South. The works of Reidy, Hunter, Schwalm, and Edwards, like this study, each focus on a specific location and offer detailed evidence about the everyday lives of blacks in those communities. This focus allows them to consider variables ignored by previous historians of Reconstruction and the New South such as gender. Often the available sources on Hanover County have not provided insight into gender relations in the county, and the work of more recent historians has helped to illuminate hidden opportunities. For their part, Foner, Litwack, and Hahn offer an overview of the region and the political and social realities of Reconstruction. All of these works have been an invaluable resources to this study by providing the broad picture of the period.

On the question of unity versus disunity, this study is more aligned with the work of Foner and Hahn. Undoubtedly, there were disagreements among African Americans in Hanover over how to approach this or that particular issue, but the sources suggest that blacks in the county were typically in agreement on what the issues were and on the need to address them. Additionally, Hahn’s argument that the lessons learned by enslaved African Americans played a role in the establishment of thriving post-war communities and beyond finds total agreement here.

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The period between the end of Reconstruction and about World War I has become known as the New South era. The notion of a New South began roughly in the 1880s, and was the work of southern journalists and politicians who wanted to paint a picture of a changed region, a region different from its prewar image, a region worthy of economic investment. In 1951, C. Vann Woodward took on the notion of a re-invented South in *Origins of the New South*. While he considers his work to be in support of the discontinuity theory, he also questions whether or not the so-called New South merits its name. After all, the South had not lived up to the image presented. It was still economically, politically, socially, and culturally backward. Edward Ayers wrote *The Promise of the New South* in 1992 that “the history of the New South was... a history of continued redefinition and renegotiation of unanticipated consequences of unresolved tensions.” Ayers diverges from Woodward’s path by including the voices of white women and black Southerners to a much greater extent.

The Jim Crow Era has long fascinated scholars, and lies at the heart of this dissertation. The earliest and perhaps best-known treatment of this era is *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* by C. Vann Woodward. Written in 1955, Woodward asserts that rigid and unbending segregation did not become the norm until the 1890s and later. He argues that the Reconstruction and the early New South years represent a time when racial lines were much more fluid; thus he suggests that segregation was not inevitable upon the end of slavery. The Woodward thesis has not gone unchallenged. In 1961, Leon Litwack published his study of the North prior to the Civil War suggesting that segregation was prevalent during the antebellum period. Three years later, Richard Wade

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investigated southern cities and argued that segregation was apparent in the antebellum South. Finally in 1965, Joel Williamson's work on post-Reconstruction South Carolina suggests that racial segregation was already well-entrenched before Reconstruction ended. By 1967, Howard Rabinowitz was writing on the subject in *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890* where he found evidence that blacks were excluded from events or places that would force interaction between the races on a social level. Ironically, Rabinowitz concludes that in many ways segregation marked an improvement in the treatment of blacks, opening doors, albeit on a segregated basis, that had been previously closed.31

This work will suggest that, while black and white people did interact in Hanover County during Reconstruction, and those interactions were often cordial, white people never desired anything other than a hierarchical relationship between themselves and black people. It may have been this type of attitude that initially led many African American congregations to separate from white churches. While separation was usually not forced by the leadership of white churches, blacks understood that they would never have a say in the operation of the white-dominated, biracial churches or in the style of worship and praise employed there.

In addition to segregated churches, the schools in Hanover as almost everywhere in the South, whether established by the Freedmen's Bureau, private organizations, or individuals, were segregated. Segregated schools may not have been mandated by the Bureau because on some of the early reporting forms, agents could indicate black and white attendance, but in practice, the schools were not mixed. In short, whether mandated or not, there were definite signs of racial segregation in Hanover from the time of

Emancipation on, and there were indications from white people in the county that they wanted nothing more from a relationship with black people than the opportunity to benefit from services and labor that blacks provided and—in some spheres, at least—to tell African Americans how to live. Indeed, Lt. Ed Murphy, the Freedman's Bureau agent serving the county in 1866, reported that “the feeling on the part of the whites toward the Freedmen was one of contempt rather than otherwise.” When contempt was not obvious, whites were likely to be paternalistic, and this was unacceptable to the newly freed men and women.

In 1989, Neil McMillen published Dark Journey, in which he tells the story of Mississippi from 1890 to 1930. He compares that state's social structure to South Africa's apartheid system and finds that conditions in Mississippi were so oppressive that blacks were never able to “develop a tradition of sustained, organized challenge to white dominance.” On the other hand, he argues that underneath black Mississippian’s apparent accommodationist posture was a mindset that did not allow the oppressor to define their spirit, and that this attitude helped to leave many blacks unscarred by the dehumanization of white domination.

In 1996, Glenda Gilmore published Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920, and she posited three main arguments. First, turn-of-the-century racial repression reordered southern society. Second, upwardly mobile white men were responsible for disenfranchisement and Jim Crow, but they blamed lower-class whites. Third, Gilmore asserts that, "as black men were forced from the political scene, the political underwent a redefinition, opening new space for black women" who became "diplomats to the white community" as they sought

32 FB (Reel 44), 811.
through their church and civic voluntary societies to gain "some recognition and meager services from the expanding welfare state."  

Gilmore's arguments resonate when considering Virginia and Hanover County in particular during this period. It was elite white men who led the charge for disfranchisement in the state and county. Like the women that Gilmore wrote about, black women in Virginia also organized and used the platform provided by their organizations and churches for the betterment of their communities. Sadly, while the names of their societies and churches remain, many of the names of the Hanover County women who did these things have been lost over time. By contrast, the names of many of the active black men remain in the record because of businesses they operated or churches they led. Also, the question of who survives in the written record was determined in part simply by individuals who submitted news to the local newspaper.

In more recent years scholars have continued to address the issue of segregation in this country. In Jumping Jim Crow: Southern Politics from Civil War to Civil Rights the editors bring together a collection of historians who address Jim Crow from various points of view, but as is stated in the introduction, "all turn on politics." The goal of this collection is to give voice to black participants, and to illuminate the idea that resistance to racism was a long-held and long acted upon value in the African American community. Like Jumping Jim Crow, African American Life in the Rural South, 1900-1950 is also a collection of essays. Edited by R. Douglas Hurt, this collection focuses on the rural South and tries to fill in historical gaps by covering the rise of tenancy, employment, race, and gender.  

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John Kneebone has taken a fascinating look at the southern liberal in his work on white journalists during the Jim Crow Era. He suggests that white liberals sought and found a way to address racial oppression and render it less jarring without ever jeopardizing the social barriers between the races. Kneebone looks at the idea of “vertical segregation,” a form of separate-but-equal which provided a means by which blacks and whites of similar class ranking could work together to eradicate racial injustice without raising concern among those white people who feared social mixing. Similarly, this study looks at black Hanover’s development of “parallel lives” as a means of survival during segregation. Vertical segregation and parallel lives both allowed for necessary interaction between the races, but neither required nor sought social equality. The difference is that the establishment of parallel lives originated in the African American community, whereas the notion of vertical segregation was the work of white liberals, sincere in their own way, who wanted to exercise their paternalistic tendencies but not eat dinner with black men and women.36

The final period to be covered here is the Civil Rights Movement, sometimes known as the Second Reconstruction. Bob Moses, a member of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and one of the organizers of Mississippi Freedom Summer in 1964, asserts that the movement has been written about mainly from two points of view. The first, “community mobilizing,” includes major events such as the March on Washington and the march from Selma to Montgomery. Telling the history from the community mobilizing perspective has typically meant that the story is told from the top down, placing people like Martin Luther King, Jr. and other men at the center.37

37 In 1964, college students, mostly white, from all over the United States, converged on Mississippi to help black citizens register to vote. This effort became known as Freedom Summer.
The second point of view, according to Moses, is through the lens of community organizing, which provides insights from the vantage point of those lesser-known men, women, and children who risked life and limb to gain access to rights already guaranteed them in the federal Constitution. Works such as David Garrow’s *Bearing the Cross*, Adam Fairclough’s *To Redeem the Soul of America*, Charles Payne’s *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom*, and John Dittmer’s *Local People* have all addressed the movement from the grassroots point of view.\(^{38}\)

On the surface, the Jim Crow era and the Civil Rights Movement in Hanover County and in the deep South have very little in common, but this attitude reflects a narrow point of view. The restrictions of the Jim Crow era and the need to fight for better conditions were deeply felt in the county, but the violence that marked the deeper South was absent, and therefore the Movement was different. While some blacks in the county participated in the March on Washington and picketed in front of the Thalhimers Department Store in Richmond, the county did not experience the same types of activities that were prevalent in other, more famous arenas of the Movement. There were no sit-ins at lunch counters, no picketers in front of the local movie theater in Ashland, and no boycotts. This does not mean that injustice was absent in the county, it means that in the 1950s and 1960s, black Hanoverians picked their battles. Like their ancestors, they believed that the answer to betterment lay in the classroom, and so they chose to fight for better education for their children. As in most places in the South, the county’s black schools were substandard facilities, there was never enough money for supplies, classrooms were overcrowded, and there was not even a high school for blacks until

1950. In response to these and other factors, black Hanoverians were tenacious and unblinking in their efforts to obtain better educational opportunities.39

This study spans a period of just over one hundred years, so that the full range of black perseverance and achievement in Hanover County, Virginia, can be appreciated. Like the people written about by Charles Payne and John Dittmer and others, the black people who will appear on the following pages are largely unknown outside this county, and generally do not think of themselves as heroes. They simply did what they felt they had to do. Unlike the individuals in Mississippi, most blacks in Hanover County did not face death threats or loss of life. Indeed, this was true in most of Virginia, where Jim Crow was just as insidious and pernicious as in the Deep South, but decidedly more “genteel.” This factor has meant that the Movement in Virginia has received far less attention than in other areas, or has been overlooked entirely. Within Virginia, this has been the fate of Hanover County. Many black people from within and outside of Hanover have failed to understand the role that the county’s black men and women played in securing justice for themselves and their families. Some African Americans have even gone so far as to label black people in the county as Uncle Toms, because they are perceived as having accepted the conditions under which they lived. Nothing could be further from the truth. Here, readers will learn that protest comes in many different forms, and that change can and does occur as the result of steady and unrelenting friction, not unlike the Colorado River eventually carving out the Grand Canyon.40

Five chapters will explore how black Hanoverians steadily chipped away at the walls that enclosed them and limited their opportunities for success. Chapter One covers

39 James Henry Interview (December 15, 2003); Margaret Washington Interview (May 14, 2004).
the period from 1865 to 1879. As Steven Hahn found, slavery was not an idle time, but a
time of learning that aided the first generation of freed men and women. Based on lessons
learned, black Hanoverians worked diligently to determine their paths to freedom, and in
doing so, set the patterns of survival for their descendants. The second chapter looks at
the steady erosion of black rights that led black Hanoverians, along with their compatriots
in Richmond, to begin to shift away from an emphasis on obtaining full citizenship
through political involvement and toward a focus on self-help.

The third chapter focuses on the first decades of legal segregation in the state and
how blacks responded to Jim Crow by fostering lives that ran parallel to those of whites.
Chapter Four will examine how, in spite of the hardships of living in a racist system,
black Hanoverians moved to play their part in overcoming the pressures placed on the
country by the Depression and war. Finally, Chapter Five will explore how black
Hanoverians drew on various traditions established by their ancestors to regain their civil
rights.

In Hanover County, Virginia, African Americans resisted the strictures of their
"place" as defined by white people. Following Emancipation, the amendments to the
federal Constitution, and the Reconstruction Acts, they had reason to believe that they
would finally be accepted as citizens in the United States, a country that they and their
ancestors had helped to build. They soon found that this would not be the case. Instead,
they would have to seek citizenship via avenues of their own making. In the end, they
have taught their descendants that citizenship asserts itself from within, and that it has
proved to be something that no one can take away.
CHAPTER 1
SETTING THE STAGE: WHEN FREEDOM CAME

While this dissertation focuses on the Jim Crow Era, exploring earlier days in Hanover County will give insight into how and why black Hanoverians were able to persevere in a time when their most basic right of citizenship was stripped away. Today, much of the awareness of these earlier times has been lost to the black community in Hanover. Some black people in the county and surrounding communities have accepted old stereotypes about African Americans and believe that passivity and cowardice characterized post-emancipation black Hanover.1 This chapter will challenge these assumptions by showing that, between 1865 and 1879, black Hanoverians worked diligently to determine their paths to freedom, and in doing so, set patterns for their descendants.

The Civil War in Virginia ended on April 9, 1865; the South was in a shambles. The infrastructure—roads, railroads, canals, and bridges—was severely damaged. Farmers’ fields—littered with human, animal, and material debris—looked like as though would never produce crops again. Sometimes, only chimneys remained where homes had once stood.

Refugees, black and white, roamed the countryside and cities trying to figure out what to do next. Whites awoke from a nightmare to discover that they had not been dreaming. Blacks, by contrast, realized that their dreams had come true, their prayers

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1 This statement is based on observations and conversations between the author and African Americans in Hanover County.
answered. Both groups wondered what freedom would mean for four million formerly enslaved blacks and their former masters.

The country’s leadership was also waking up to a harsh reality. No formal plan for Reconstruction existed at the end of the Civil War. Andrew Johnson, who became president after Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, tried to restore the South to the Union under a plan that became known as Presidential Reconstruction. This plan offered no real opportunities to black people or protection against the machinations of former slaveholders. It was understood that slavery would never be restored, but the white leadership that Johnson installed in the South was allowed to put in place laws aimed at reining in the actions and activities of blacks. Eric Foner writes that, “virtually from the moment the Civil War ended, the search began for legal means of subordinating a volatile black population that regarded economic independence as a corollary of freedom and the old labor discipline as a badge of slavery.”

The states of the former Confederacy established state and local ordinances defining where black men and women lived and worked, and how they raised their children. Virginia, too, enacted these laws, known as Black Codes, aimed at controlling the state’s labor force. Vagrancy and labor contract statutes were passed, as well as “anti-enticement” laws aimed at curtailing efforts on the part of employers to lure workers away from their present places of employment. In general, most southern whites wanted to maintain some approximation of the hierarchical structure that had been established during slavery. An article from a white southern newspaper, quoted in 1865 in the New York Tribune noted,

> We must keep the ex-slave in a position of inferiority. We must pass

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2 Eric Foner, 198.
3 Eric Foner, 198-216.
such laws as will make him feel his inferiority; and while we give him ample protection in his ‘person and property’ we are finally lost if we permit ourselves, by an abstract would-be philosophical reasoning to admit him [to] any position that [seems] of the slightest equality with the white man.¹

Some white northerners interpreted these sentiments as an indication that the former Confederates did not understand their place as the conquered party in the war. Northern Republicans and their congressional representatives questioned whether the South had really changed its ways.

After the elections of 1866, when the Republicans took veto-proof control of Congress, they wasted no time taking steps to overturn the effects of Presidential Reconstruction. First, they put forth a bill to extend the life of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands (the Freedmen’s Bureau), the agency created in March 1865 to give support to the newly freed blacks and white refugees.⁵ Second, the Congress submitted a civil rights bill to the president. This document conveyed citizenship to all people born in the United States and established that these citizens had the right to enter into contracts and lawsuits, and to enjoy “full and equal benefit of all laws and proceedings for the security of person and property.”⁶ These rights were to be rendered to all individuals without regard to race. Both bills were rejected by Andrew Johnson. The Congress overrode Johnson’s veto, and both bills were subsequently enacted into law.⁷

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¹ New York Tribune, November 15, 1865. Harrison B. Wilson Archives, Marvin Schlegel Collection, Norfolk State University.
⁵ The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen’s Bureau) was charged with providing rations and other types of relief to former slaves and white refugees; it was supposed to help smooth the transition from slave labor to free labor, and protect the rights of the freedmen and women.
⁶ Eric Foner, 243.
⁷ Eric Foner, 250.
Shortly after the civil rights bill became law, Congress approved the Fourteenth Amendment which, among other things, defined citizenship explicitly as the province of males for the first time. It was the rejection of this amendment by the southern states that propelled Congress into a full-fledged reconstruction of the South. Ten legislatures in the South rejected the Amendment for at least two reasons. First, by and large, most white southern voters were opposed to endowing blacks with equal citizenship, and the legislators reflected the views of their constituents. Second, the Amendment barred all men who had taken a loyalty oath to the Constitution before the war, but then aided the Confederacy by holding office under it. According to many white Southerners, this disqualified the best men from taking political leadership in the South.  

The Fourteenth Amendment was not a plan for Reconstruction; that task still lay before the federal legislature. In 1867, Congress passed the Reconstruction Act, which divided the South into five military districts. This Act stipulated that new governments, based on manhood suffrage, were to be established. Post-war legislation was a great disappointment to women, especially elite and middle-class white women. With the Fourteenth Amendment defining a citizen as male, and the Reconstruction Act requiring manhood suffrage, the white women who had worked diligently for the abolition of slavery and hoped that all women and black men would obtain the vote at the same time felt betrayed. Some, like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, began to promote female suffrage and “opposed granting the vote to black males and made many racist and anti-male remarks.”

As the country’s leaders muddled their way through a plan of Reconstruction, elite southern white women began rebuilding by taking on the task of rehabilitating white

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8 Foner, 268.
9 Foner, 276.
manhood. White men had returned home defeated, and in many cases, carrying mental and physical scars that would never fully heal. Historian Drew Gilpin Faust suggests that the women of the South became the chief rehabilitators of their former protectors. These women formed a variety of organizations including memorial associations, and organized Lost Cause celebrations, the goals of which were, as Faust asserts, to “reassure defeated Confederates about their honor, courage, and manhood and to bury the pain of failure by redefining it as noble sacrifice and ultimate moral victory.”

The elite women of Richmond, the former capital of the Confederacy, are good examples of this behavior. By April 1866, one year after the war had ended, work had already begun in Richmond to erase the devastation of the past four years, and replace it with a more positive vision that would be culturally acceptable to conservative whites. The first task was to provide a proper resting place for fallen soldiers. As was the case in most southern states, as Confederate soldiers had fallen in Virginia, many were buried quickly in the fields where they died. Some Confederate and Union soldiers who died near Richmond were buried at Hollywood and Oakwood cemeteries which had been established before the war. The business of death, like other southern businesses, did not escape the post-war economic decline. The owners of Hollywood in particular felt the pinch to such an extent that they overlooked regional affiliation when accepting bodies for burial. At the fall of Richmond, many wounded and sick Union soldiers were brought to the city. When they died the manager of Hollywood agreed to take them, 230 in all, with the condition that the Union Army furnish the name, company, and regiment of each man. The fee for these burials, $575 total, helped the company remain solvent during the first year after the war ended.

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The Hollywood Company also found basic upkeep of the cemetery difficult because of staff size. There was also a problem of vandalism of graves generally. Around the same time, the people of Richmond learned that the Congress had allocated funds for the upkeep of the graves of Union soldiers at Hollywood, but not those of the Confederate dead. The Richmond residents were outraged and shortly, a group of churchwomen met and formed the Hollywood Memorial Association of the Ladies of Richmond. By April 1866, the Hollywood Association had organized and was beginning the process of raising money to preserve these cemeteries. White solicitors went throughout the city to collect funds. The association received donations from individuals in New York, Nova Scotia, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri. Appeals were also sent to white southern women with the expectation that they would surely want to participate in the process to provide glorious resting places for the fallen heroes of the Confederacy.  

The women of Richmond were not alone in their efforts to begin rebuilding and moving forward. Hanover County, Virginia, and Ashland, its only incorporated town, also felt the need to honor the dead. Not long after the Hollywood Memorial Association was established, a similar organization in Ashland held a fundraiser, which according to the reporter covering the story provided some of the best entertainment of the season, to benefit the Ashland Memorial Association. The event, a series of tableaux or skits, drew a large group of Richmonders to the town. The reporter for the Richmond Daily Dispatch wrote that “the tableaux were well selected, and admirably gotten up. The statuary was thought to be particularly beautiful.” There were two charades, “Contest” and “Honor Among Thieves.” The three part closing scene—Virginia: her past, present and future—was said to be very pleasing to the audience. The past was represented by a happy old Virginia home. The present, and perhaps the most of the three, was represented by a

13 Mitchell, 64. Richmond Daily Dispatch July 3, 1866.
desolated hearth; in the background stood a depiction of the Freedman’s Bureau with the devil pointing at it and gloating. The future was represented by a banner emblazoned with Sic Semper Tyrannis (the state motto of Virginia, meaning, “Thus be it always to tyrants”), which waved over a land blessed with peace, prosperity, and liberty. After the tableaux there was dancing in the ballroom until after 3:00 am, when the partygoers took the train back to Richmond. Undoubtedly, these types of events were put on by and for the white elite and middle strata. They were the ones most likely to be able to purchase a ticket and train fare.

The depiction of the Freedmen’s Bureau as a gloating devil was a reflection of white attitudes across the South. According to Eric Foner, the Freedmen’s Bureau for many white Southerners was an emblem of their defeat; more specifically, the Bureau sought some semblance of equality for black people and this offended many white men and women in the region. The aristocracy of the former Confederacy resented having to negotiate and sign contracts with black people, and they disliked the Freedmen’s Court, which accepted the testimony of black men against white men. In general, they bristled at the installation of an intercessor between them and their former slaves. Former slaveholders believed that they knew best how to deal with blacks, and they resented any interference on the part of the Bureau’s agents. In short, most white southerners saw the Bureau as the embodiment of all that was evil in the military occupation of the land. Historian Tera H. Hunter concurs with Foner asserting that “many white Southerners resented the presence of the Freedmen’s Bureau as the Northern overseer of Reconstruction.” Another historian of the Reconstruction era, John Hope Franklin suggests that the Ku Klux Klan, a white supremacist organization, held a special

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14 Richmond Daily Dispatch July 7, 1866.
15 Hunter, 29.

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contempt for the Bureau because of the role it played in the establishment of Congressional Reconstruction and the political education of blacks.\textsuperscript{16}

While the Ladies' Memorial Associations developed after the war, the concept of elite white women working for the Confederacy was not new. Indeed, as Drew Gilpin Faust suggests, these organizations grew out of wartime groups of women who came together to sew uniforms and knit socks for the soldiers. Following the war, memorial associations like the ones in Richmond and Ashland emerged as a way for women to continue supporting the Confederacy, or at least the memory of it. Faust argues that, on the one hand, their wartime efforts allowed white women to step out of their prescribed position and assume independence foreign to their previous experience. While they could have built on this newly found liberty during the postwar period, they chose instead to subordinate themselves once again so that they could build up the defeated white southern man. They accepted the responsibility of turning the great loss into a victory of sorts: they eschewed the idea that the war had been fought to preserve slavery and championed the view that their men had fought to protect white southern women and children, a noble and heroic cause.\textsuperscript{17}

The success of the Ashland Memorial Association fundraiser harked back to the town’s pre-war days when visitors from far and near vacationed in the community. It was the center of Hanover County, and in many ways it was also vital to Richmonders as a place to get away to and relax.

Ashland literally grew out of the railroad. In the 1830s, in an effort to make the trip between Richmond and Washington, DC, less arduous for travelers, the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac (RF&P) railroad company bought up land along the way so

\textsuperscript{16} Eric Foner, 168; Hunter, 29; Franklin, 155.
\textsuperscript{17} Faust, 247.
that tracks could be laid to Fredericksburg; there, travelers would board the steamboat that operated between Fredericksburg and Washington. During this time, the area that would become known as Ashland was little more than a refueling station for the trains and was referred to as Adams Shanty. In 1845, the RF&P cleared land near what is now Randolph Macon College and built a facility where balls and picnics were held, called Slash Cottage. It was not long before a mineral spring was discovered, and by 1851 the budding resort boasted a mineral water company, two hotels, a bowling alley, a billiard hall, and a shooting gallery.

The discovery of mineral springs in the area allowed Ashland to join the ranks of prominent Virginia spas. In her dissertation, “Havens for the Fashionable and Sickly: Society, Sickness, and Space at Nineteenth Century Southern Spring Resorts,” Mary Gail Gillespie explains that the tendency to frequent mineral springs for rest and health were brought to this country from the Old World. By the early nineteenth century the planter elite were regular visitors to springs, and they may have spent months traveling from one to another, especially in the summer. The prevalence of the railroads by the mid-nineteenth century and the rise of a merchant and professional class opened the doors for greater numbers of people to take advantage of the healing springs.

Everything changed in 1861. During the Civil War, Hanover County became the scene of many battles, including Cold Harbor, Beaver Dam Creek, Gaines’s Mill, Hanover Courthouse, and Old Church to name a few. Lying between Richmond and Washington, DC, the County’s main roads were often filled with Union and Confederate

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18 Shalf, 19. Legend suggests that the first name for this stop was Adam’s Shanty. It may have been the name of the track construction foreman. Presumably, his name was Adams.
19 William E. Griffin, Jr. One Hundred Fifty Years of History: Along the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1984), 69-70.
troops on their way to or from combat. The town now known as Ashland also saw its share of transient soldiers and officers since the railroad and the Washington-Richmond Highway ran through the town proper. While Ashland was spared from any major battles and occupations, it was raided several times by federal troops intent on disabling rail lines or obtaining supplies. Many of the town’s homes and churches were used as hospitals for Confederate and Union troops injured in nearby battles.\(^{21}\)

Total war in the mid-nineteenth century involved attacking enemy resources on all levels including food, shelter, and infrastructure. This meant that, in addition to risking their lives in battle, soldiers also had to scavenge for supplies. This was the case when Hannah Johnson, an enslaved woman in Hanover County, encountered Union soldiers. Johnson and the white family who owned her had moved from Richmond to Hanover County, some three miles north of Ashland, after the war began. Early one morning, men attached to General Philip Sheridan’s forces knocked on the door and demanded the key to the smokehouse. According to Johnson, they took what they wanted and left a guard behind to keep the family out.\(^{22}\)

While Hannah Johnson may have been appalled at the actions of Sheridan’s men, taking provisions from homes throughout Hanover County was commonplace. If a battle was impending or taking place, the loss of food was the least of the landowner’s worries. Sometimes farm animals, tools, and even wood from house exteriors was taken by soldiers on both sides. While these losses might be categorized as acceptable or at least understandable during wartime, some instances of physical or material loss are not as easily comprehended.

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\(^{21}\) Shalf, 62.
Mildred Graves, an enslaved midwife during the war who lived on the highway that led from Washington to Richmond, had several encounters with northern soldiers. Graves had very long hair that she wore in a braid hanging low on her back. One day as she was working in the fields, "de [Yankee] soldiers was marchin', bout six o' 'em stopped an' took a razor blade and cut off my hair.... I kicked an' fit as much as I could, but I couldn' stop 'em."23 On another occasion, Graves and about five other young women decided to take a Sunday afternoon walk, when "some Yankees stopped us an' took razors an' cut our arms, legs, an' on our backs." On a third occasion, Graves was on her way to visit one of her "white chillun" when some Union soldiers stopped her and took the gold earrings that had been given to her by one of the young men with whose delivery she had assisted.24 Graves use of the word visit may not clearly indicate her purpose for the trip. It is unlikely that she was going for a social visit, but may have been on her way to bring another generation into the world or to help nurse someone in the family.

Mildred Graves accounted for her many encounters with soldiers as a consequence of living on the highway. Undoubtedly, Mildred's accessibility was an important factor in her experiences. An additional explanation might be the vulnerability of young black women, and the anger of northern white working-class men who were fighting a war to free the slaves—a cause that they may not have embraced. Few northern whites, after all, were abolitionists. Leon Litwack explains that members of the Union Army reflected a great diversity of opinion when it came to the war and why they were fighting. Indeed, "the typical Yankee was at best a reluctant liberator, and the attitudes and behavior he evinced did not always encourage the slaves to think of themselves as

23 Perdue, 121.
24 Perdue, 121. Mildred Graves was interviewed in 1937, by an African American woman name of Faith Morris.
free men and women."²⁵ W. E. B. DuBois wrote in *Black Reconstruction* of the average Northerner’s abhorrence of the idea of emancipation. DuBois asserts that “not one-tenth of the Northern white population would have fought for any such purpose.”²⁶ Mildred Graves alone or with female friends represented no real threat, but did present a real opportunity for stress relief for Union soldiers, and even perhaps became tangible objects to blame for the war, scapegoats of a sort. While Graves was treated badly, her testimony indicates that she may have escaped the fate of many southern black women and girls who were raped by their supposed deliverers. Litwack argues that “to debase black women, some Yankees apparently concluded, was to partake of a widely practiced and well-accepted southern pastime.”²⁷

The county and Ashland, its centerpiece, suffered a great many losses—human, animal, and material—during the war, and it was only natural that there was a desire after the war to make up those losses. The memorial association fundraiser, previously mentioned, was among other things a small effort to re-energize the area. Shortly after it took place, a notice appeared in a Richmond paper saying that the RF&P was changing its schedule so that excursions to Ashland could last two hours. This would allow Richmonders ample opportunity to escape the city heat and enjoy a cool glass of lemonade.²⁸ When it was learned that the Ashland Inn was to be renovated and reopened, the *Daily Dispatch* suggested that the RF&P once again retool the train schedule so that citizens could make even longer stops in Ashland.²⁹

By the summer of 1866, the town had built a 200-acre recreational park, and it became a major draw for Richmond Sunday school groups. The Second Baptist Church

²⁶ DuBois, 55.
²⁷ Leon Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 129.
²⁸ Richmond *Dispatch*, July 18, 1866.
²⁹ Richmond *Dispatch*, July 23, 1866.
of Richmond, for example, took an excursion to Ashland and hosted a baseball game between the Richmond and Ashland Clubs. Reportedly, hundreds were in attendance to see the victorious Richmond team.\textsuperscript{30}

At the end of the Civil War, many African American men and women tested their freedom by migrating throughout the South. For example, Tera H. Hunter, writing about black women in Atlanta, says that between 1860 and 1870 the number of African Americans in that city increased from 1,900 to 10,000. Most of the women who went to Atlanta did so to escape hardship in the outlying areas and to find work. Typically, they took jobs as domestics in private homes.\textsuperscript{31} While migration within the region was commonplace, migration out of the South during this time was minimal according to historian Jacqueline Jones. She suggests that the reason for this was the lack of employment opportunities in the North.\textsuperscript{32}

The out-migration pattern mentioned in \textit{To 'Joy My Freedom} was not reflected in the black population in Hanover. On the eve of the Civil War there were 9,740 blacks in the county. Of that number, 9,483 were enslaved. Whites were outnumbered by just over 2,000. In 1870 there were 8,562 blacks.\textsuperscript{33} A significant decrease certainly, but it is still apparent that the large majority of African Americans remained on the land they knew best. One reason the great majority of blacks may have remained in Hanover could be the county’s proximity to Richmond, which gave people access to the city without their having to move there. As will be discussed later, black men and women traveled between Richmond and Hanover regularly for meetings, church events, and socializing.

Some black Hanoverians did leave the county. Hannah Johnson and Mildred Graves, the women who related their war-time encounters with Union soldiers, are two

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{30} Richmond \textit{Dispatch}, July 8, 1867.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Hunter, 21.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Historical Census Browser.
\end{itemize}
examples. Johnson, who had been enslaved in Richmond, returned to the city after emancipation, and Graves moved to the city for the first time. Both found work and husbands in Richmond. The opportunity to find employment was a key attraction for these women and others like them. Like the women Hunter writes about, Johnson and Graves were employed as domestics.\footnote{Perdue, 120 &158.}

While white Hanover County was working to reestablish itself, black citizens were learning for the first time what it meant to be free, and they discovered that freedom came at a price. Generally white men and women in the county were predisposed to treat their former slaves with a measure of generosity at war's end, in part, perhaps, because of the need for their services. Some black men and women, especially the elderly and those with disabilities, found themselves with very few if any resources, and continued to be fed, for a time, by their former owners.\footnote{FB (Reel 44), 592.}

Freedom was an unknown, but the freed men and women willingly took up the challenge. Black Hanoverians, along with their counterparts across the South, generally saw the Freedman’s Bureau as a positive entity, but this was not always the case. Historian Tera Hunter points out that often Freedman’s Bureau agents were overworked and without sufficient resources. Sometimes they chose priorities that were not the best for the men and women they were supposed to be helping. For example, if an agent believed that a black man or woman could work, but was not inclined to find a job, the agent might force the laborer into a contract that was not beneficial.\footnote{Hunter, 24; Eric Foner, 142-153.}

Eric Foner suggests that freed men and women were not always complacent when it came to the Bureau. Instead, at times when they did encounter a Bureau agent who did not have their best interest in mind, black people would take action to neutralize the
effect of the agent on their lives. On occasion individual African Americans requested the removal of an agent and permission to pick their own.\textsuperscript{37} The success of the Freedmen’s Bureau as a source of support for the newly freed varied from place to place. Tera Hunter found the Bureau to be often overwhelmed and unable to carry out its basic functions. In her study of the South Carolina lowcountry, Leslie Schwalm found similar problems with contracts negotiated by agents on behalf of freed men and women. She also discovered that agents sometimes, in their zeal to begin rebuilding the South, resorted to measures that were draconian.\textsuperscript{38}

Based on monthly reports from Bureau agents, it appears that black Hanoverians encountered functionaries who were at least sometimes sympathetic to their needs and concerns. Ira Ayers, Jr., who was the Bureau’s Hanover agent in June 1868, reported an incident that he believed was an indication of unfair treatment of a black man by white Hanoverians. In this instance, Leroy Mallory, who was white, allegedly assaulted a black man who was not named in the report. Two white men who were part of the county court system, William Carpenter and Dr. Richard Berkley, heard the case, dismissed it, and assessed court costs against Mallory, the complainant. Ayers disagreed with the dismissal and sent the names and addresses of witnesses to the military commissioner in an effort to secure justice for the black man.\textsuperscript{39} The agent’s decision to pass on the case records to the commissioner may be an indication that he was a fair man.

There seem to have been three major concerns among Hanover’s newly free men and women: finding employment, establishing places of worship, and learning to read and write. Regarding employment, black men and women were now able to choose among employers based on financial reward and other benefits. By all accounts, the

\textsuperscript{37} Eric Foner, 168.
\textsuperscript{38} Schwalm, 170.
\textsuperscript{39} FB (Reel 61), 667.
freedmen and women were ready, willing, and able to work for a living. Many white residents believed that blacks would not work without the threat of punishment, but the Hanover Freedman’s Bureau agents regularly acknowledged a willingness on the part of blacks to work. While police work may have been non-existent, agricultural employment was plentiful. In February 1866 Lt. Ed Murphy, who was the Assistant Superintendent in the county for the Freedman’s Bureau, reported that there were few destitute blacks because they wanted to work and support themselves and their families. He went on to explain that the only problem was finding whites who did not want to “tyrannize” blacks. He fully believed that some whites would re-enslave blacks if they did not fear military intervention. Blacks seemed to know who these whites were, and they typically refused to work for them. Those who treated blacks fairly had no trouble securing workers.\textsuperscript{40} 

Often, with the help of a Freedmen’s Bureau agent, sound and fair contracts were entered into by blacks willing to work and whites willing to hire. On occasion, black men and women entered into contracts without assistance, and sometimes this led to conflict. In his monthly report for May 1866, Murphy lamented that the freed men and women would be fine if not sabotaged by whites. Since most blacks were illiterate, they were at the mercy of employers to read and explain contracts. Murphy regularly received complaints from blacks who believed that whites had misled them or lied outright when explaining contracts to black workers. Murphy was usually able to mediate, but when he was not successful, the case might be referred to the Freedmen’s Court.

On September 27, 1865, Orlando Brown, the Assistant Commissioner for the Freedmen’s Bureau for the State of Virginia, had issued a circular regarding the establishment of a body to settle civil disputes and criminal cases between white people and freed men and women, as well as controversies between black people. This body, 

\textsuperscript{40} FB (Reel 44,) 89.
which became known as the Freedmen’s Court, was to consist of three men. While the record does not explain how the men were selected in Hanover, it does provide the names of the men. The white citizens chose William C. Wickham, who was from an old Hanover family. Wickham had opposed secession, but when the war began he formed a cavalry company and served as captain of these Hanover troops.41 The freedmen chose Charles Morris. It is not clear whether Morris was black or white. There is a white Charles Morris listed in the 1860 census in Hanover County, but there is no Charles Morris listed in the 1870 census. The third man on the court was the Assistant Superintendent of the Freedmen’s Bureau, Lt. Ed Murphy.42

The labor disputes most likely to reach the Freedman’s Court involved black men and women who entered into contracts without the aid of an agent and where agreements were therefore reached orally. Such arrangements often led to non-payment of wages.43 This was the case with America Denton. According to Denton, she and two other women, formerly enslaved by William Lyme, remained in his service after the fall of Richmond. Choosing to remain on the plantation where they had been enslaved was not unusual for women. Jacqueline Jones writes about a Tennessee woman who remained saying, “I was given my choice of staying on the same plantation, working on shares, or taking my family away, letting them out [to work in return] for their food and clothes. I decided to stay on that way; I could have my children with me.”44 Jones went on to explain that “freedwomen with children found that economic necessity bred its own kind of slavery,” which forced them to take whatever work they could find.45

42 FB (Reel 62), 491; FB (Reel 41), 89. The Freedmen’s Bureau Circular establishing the Freedman’s Court does not mandate how the men were selected, and Murphy’s report simply mentions the names of those chosen.
44 Jacqueline Jones, Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow, 47.
45 Jacqueline Jones, Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow, 53.
As a result of their decision, Denton and the three women entered into an oral contract with William Lyme on April 3, 1865. This agreement called for each woman to be paid five dollars per month. When she had not been paid by September, Denton said, she approached her employer about payment for services rendered. Lyme, she said, told her that he had not promised to pay her and that her services were not worth any more to him than what he had paid her while she remained his property. While enslaved he had provided Denton and her co-workers with one dress annually, food, and medical care.46

Following Lyme's refusal to pay, America Denton left his farm. In April 1866, Denton's husband and the husbands of the other two women appealed to the Freedman's Court. It was decided that the cases would be heard separately, with Dick Denton being heard first. His testimony to the court was in essence that all he knew about his wife's contract was what she told him. When questioned by Lyme, who, like Dick Denton, acted as his own counsel, Denton admitted that he had also been in Lyme's employ and that Lyme had fully honored his contract. Lyme then asked America Denton how many times a day she left the field to feed her baby. He also questioned her about how much time she lost working compared with the other women. She responded that she worked as much and as hard as women who did not have children to feed. Lyme proceeded to call at least one other witness, Jesse Brown, a black man who also worked for Lyme, to ask his opinion of America Denton's work habits.47

After Lyme questioned Brown, Dick Denton cross-examined him; Brown testified that, when in the field, America Denton worked as hard as a man named George, but he clarified that America Denton did not come to the field as early as George. Dick Denton then asked Brown to compare his wife's time in the field with that of a woman named

46 FB (Reel 62), 1.
47 FB (Reel 62), 1.
Maria who also had a baby. According to Brown, Maria only left the field at
dinnertime and therefore worked longer hours than America Denton. Following Brown’s
testimony, Lyme rested his case. Curiously, Dick Denton did not call any witnesses other
than his wife. Theoretically, he could have called the other women to attest to Lyme’s
verbal agreement. After deliberations, the court found Lyme innocent of having violated
a contract with Denton. The record does not indicate the rationale for the court’s decision
in this case, nor does it offer an account of how the three men voted, but the lack of a
written contract, and the testimony suggesting that Denton did not put in the same hours
as other workers, may have convinced the court that Lyme was justified in not paying
her. Seeing the writing on the wall, the other two men withdrew their suits. In previous
instances, when Freedmen’s Bureau agents felt that black people were treated unfairly by
the court, they passed the evidence on to their superiors with the hope of finding justice
in that arena; however, this does not seem to have been a formal appeals process. Ed
Murphy did not do so in this case, which may be an indication that he believed a fair
decision had been made. 48

There are several issues that emerge from the Denton case. First, while all black
people were free, black women still had fewer rights than their male counterparts. This is
evidenced by the fact that America Denton and the other women were not allowed to
bring their cases before the court on their own behalf.

The Denton case raises questions about the judicial system as it concerned
women, whose legal status after the Civil War was complex. In general, married women,
regardless of race or class, had few rights that were not conveyed to them by men. Before
and, for a time, after the Civil War, married women in Virginia lived under the coverture
umbrella, which meant that, at marriage, their new husbands gained control of their

48 FB (Reel 62), 2.
property. This allowed men to buy, sell, encumber, and use as payment of debts, land brought into the marriage by their wife. While coverture may have been the law, the limitations of coverture were “neither complete nor permanent,” according to historian Jane Turner Censer.\textsuperscript{49} Even before the Civil War, some wealthy fathers had begun to will land to daughters, married or single, and some husbands left control of their assets to the wives they named executors. Often these men set up separate estates, either by a trust deed, marriage settlement or special bequest, which would ensure that their wives and daughters would be financially secure. During Radical Reconstruction new rights were extended to women. The rights afforded men and women were still not equal, but the new opportunities granted women were significant—such as the right of married women to own property in their own right known as the Married Woman’s Property Rights Act which Virginia adopted in 1877. These acts gave married women control over their property and earnings.\textsuperscript{50}

Class and race played a role in how women and the law interacted. The husbands and fathers of poor women, black or white, had no land to leave, so the question of landed property rights was moot. Like elite white women, poor women also had no vote, and thus had little to say about their own circumstances. Poor white women and black women were also less protected than their wealthy counterparts because while the men in their lives had the right to vote, they had relatively little economic power. A second issue raised by America Denton’s case surrounds the perception of black motherhood. Given Lyme’s line of questioning regarding Denton’s child, it is obvious that her responsibilities as a mother were seen as a detriment to her role as a worker. Denton testified that she cooked and cleaned for Lyme before going to the field after sunrise. She

\textsuperscript{49} Jane Turner Censer, \textit{The Reconstruction of Southern Womanhood, 1865-1895} (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 99.

\textsuperscript{50} Suzanne Lebsock, \textit{The Free Women of Petersburg} (New York: Norton, 1984), 84-86.
left the field two or three times a day, once for lunch, once between lunch and dinner, and sometimes between dinner and sunset to feed her baby. While in the field she hoed and grubbed, and "worked as hard as a man." While it is not mentioned in the testimony, it is highly likely that the men stopped once or twice during the day to eat and take care of other needs. For five months, Lyme had a hard worker who took care of his domestic needs as well as worked hard in the field, and she received no financial compensation at all, not even a partial payment.

America Denton's defeat in this case is not surprising for at least three reasons. Gender bias was written into the Bureau's labor policies, which instructed that black men and women were to receive compensation based on their sex and not their ability to work. This policy can be seen in action in Hanover in 1867, when black men typically earned $7-$10 per month, and the women earned $3-$4 per month for field work. Second, black women had been undervalued except for their ability to reproduce and add to the slave population. They had never been protected. Throughout slavery white men had used them as they saw fit without consequences. Few white men, northern or southern, saw black women as worthy of protection. On the contrary, white men typically believed that black women should work and give one hundred percent. Some ridiculed African American women if they decided not to work outside their home. The third reason that America Denton's loss in the Freedmen's Court is not surprising is that black motherhood had long been precarious, as women had been forced to neglect and even give up their babies on the whim of the master; thus it was not unusual for Denton to be penalized for wanting to feed her child.

51 FB (Reel 62), 7.
53 FB (Reel 46), 811.
Historian Leslie Schwalm, writing about women in South Carolina, found that many white men who hired African American women to work for them wanted the same type of output that those women had produced while enslaved. Anything short of this kind of labor was considered a sign of laziness. Many men found trivial the work that women, black and white, did in the home and family. Schwalm suggests that the notion of female laziness was “as concerned with the kind of work freedwomen were choosing to perform as with their rejection of field work for the planter.” So America Denton’s desire to feed her child was the problem, not her work when in the field—a desire that was seen as “natural” for white women, but not, by many white people, for black women.

Moreover, it is questionable whether or not the men who appeared before the court in the Denton case felt free to testify honestly and openly. Were they intimidated by having to answer questions directed to them by the well-to-do ex-slaveholder, Lyme? While Dick Denton was not then currently employed by Lyme, he may have wanted to keep the option open. This could certainly explain his rather tepid testimony on his wife’s behalf. Then, too, Dick Denton may have used this opportunity to establish some control over his wife—even, perhaps, as Lyme asserted his authority over Denton. Finally, it must be considered that Lyme may have intended to pay the women when they first struck their agreement. The postwar economy was still struggling, and Lyme may have been unable to pay. He may also have been unwilling to go hat in hand to his former slaves to explain his financial situation, and therefore handled matters as he would have had he still been their master. What he failed to realize was that these women, especially

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54 Schwalm, 205.
Denton, were no longer his slaves, and they now had the option of leaving or at least attempting to force him to honor his word.

There is no indication of what happened to America and Dick Denton after her case was lost. Since they were young and healthy, they most likely were able to secure employment elsewhere. Working was not an option for everyone, however. The old, the very young, and those with disabilities, if without family and friends to take them in, may have found themselves at the mercy of their former masters for food and a place to live. As mentioned earlier, many former masters continued to care for some of these people after the war was over. Within a year of the war’s end, however, this was beginning to change, and the Freedman’s Bureau agent Ed Murphy predicted a rise in destitution among blacks.\(^{56}\) His prediction was proven true; by June 1866 Murphy reported that the former owners were turning the old and infirm over to the agency, and that he was beginning to hand out rations.\(^{57}\)

Sometimes destitution was temporary. During the summer of 1866, some black men and women struggled to feed and clothe their families as they waited for the return on their crops.\(^{58}\) By that October, a good harvest had relieved the poverty of some families. For others, the suffering continued. There was a county alms house, but black residents responded with a sense of dread whenever it was suggested that they go there.\(^{59}\) The records do not hold a description of the alms house in 1866, but two years later the condition of the facility makes it clear why the poor would have wanted to avoid it at all costs. It consisted of several cabins of hewn logs with dirt floors and board windows. There was little no natural light, especially in the winter months. In 1866, there were twenty paupers in residence at the almshouse, and seventeen of them were white. The

\(^{55}\) FB (Reel 44), 592.
\(^{56}\) FB (Reel 44), 1011.
\(^{57}\) FB (Reel 45), 29.
\(^{58}\) FB (Reel 45), 644; (Reel 47), 524.
record does not indicate whether or not the poor were segregated by race, but they probably were, since prisoners were racially segregated.\textsuperscript{60}

If a poor person was moved to steal in order to procure food, he or she was in worse condition if placed in the county jail. There was never enough food for the inmates. The windows in the cells designated for black inmates had no glass, and smoke filled the rooms when the fireplaces were lit.\textsuperscript{61}

While finding employment may have been paramount in the minds of the newly freedmen and women, establishing an independent spiritual life was also very important. Scholars have long discussed the central role of religion in the slave quarters and in the homes of free blacks. As early as August 1866, the Colored Baptist Convention was taking place in Richmond at Ebenezer Baptist Church. A newspaper account explains that several northern white men were present, but they were not allowed much authority over the proceedings and none were appointed to committees. Indeed, at least one white minister was given the “cold shoulder,” and still another who “loved the [Negroes] better than any people on God’s earth” failed to make any real headway into the leadership of the assembly. The convention attracted many participants. In fact, there were so many that the sanctuary and the basement lecture room of Ebenezer had to be used in order to give communion. Additionally, many were baptized, signifying the expansion of the church in the community.\textsuperscript{62} The actions of the black leadership of this convention suggest that they saw maintaining control over their spiritual lives as vital to the maintenance of their freedom. There may also have been a connection between their resistance to white interference in the convention and memories of the white preachers

\textsuperscript{60} FB (Reel 49), 964.
\textsuperscript{61} FB (Reel 49), 964.
\textsuperscript{62} Richmond \textit{Daily Dispatch}, August 27, 1866. The term “church,” as used in this context refers to the membership and not the building.
they heard during slavery. Litwack asserts that the white preacher was perceived as a puppet of the master and capable of twisting God’s word into a justification for slavery.\(^6^3\)

The following year, the Colored Shiloh Regular Baptist Association of Virginia, an organization of black congregations, met at Manchester Baptist Church just across the James River from Richmond for its third annual gathering.\(^6^4\) At least one black church in Hanover, First Shiloh Baptist, was represented at the meeting.\(^6^5\) Each day began with prayer and singing followed by a sermon. Cold Spring Baptist Church of Southampton County sent a letter to this assembly, which the presiding officer read aloud; he went on to point out that Southampton County, located in southeastern Virginia, had been the place where Nat Turner “first struck for freedom.”\(^6^6\)

The Nat Turner comment caused great controversy in the white press. The editor of the Richmond *Dispatch* chastised the convention moderator, saying that he was misleading black people and that “Nat Turner’s massacre was the most barbarous and brutal of all human butcheries.” The editor went on to suggest that allowing these types of comments did nothing to bring blacks and whites together, indeed they served to widen the breach between Afro-Virginians and “those whose prosperity is theirs, and whose peace alone can give them repose.”\(^6^7\)

Like the refusal of the Colored Baptist Convention to allow visiting whites to act as leaders, the presiding officer’s decision to make the connection for the Shiloh Baptist audience between the location of Cold Spring Baptist Church and the site of Nat Turner’s rebellion, may have been an attempt to test the bounds of freedom to say whatever a person wanted to say. It may well also be that black people and white people had very

\(^{6^3}\) Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 24.

\(^{6^4}\) Although the names used in the newspaper for the gathering of black Baptists in Richmond were reportedly differently between 1866 and 1867, it is likely that they refer to the same organization.

\(^{6^5}\) Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, August 9, 1867.

\(^{6^6}\) Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, August 9, 1867.

\(^{6^7}\) Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, August 12, 1867.
different perspectives on Nat Turner and what his rebellion meant. Black people seemed to regard Turner’s actions as revolutionary, as opposed to the work of a “barbarian.”

Other convention business involved the discussion of several resolutions. On the second day of the assembly the members resolved to recommend that black churches remove the word African from their names “as we are not Africans, but Americans.” Another resolution required that each church take quarterly collections in order to help with the missions work of the forty-five churches in the Association.68

Perhaps the most telling resolution involved a special thank you which read:

Resolved, That the thanks of this Association be tendered to the 40th Congress of the United States for the [Reconstruction Acts] passed by them, enfranchising us as citizens and giving us protection in the exercise of all our rights and privileges and we earnestly advise all our brethren and friends to vote for righteous men to be put into authority, for the Scriptures say that ‘when the righteous are in authority the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people mourn.’69

This resolution offers insight into the political involvement of the leaders of the Association. It also suggests that the Baptists gathered understood and appreciated their rights and privileges as citizens.

68 Richmond Daily Dispatch, December 25, 1867.
69 Richmond Daily Dispatch, August 9, 1867.
The Association used six traveling male missionaries (preachers) to carry the gospel to the rural communities. These men made reports indicating that they were meeting with success. Among these six ministers was Burrell Toler, the first minister of Shiloh Baptist Church in Ashland. He had performed a wedding ceremony at Shiloh in December 1866, and he would go on to be elected as a delegate to the constitutional convention shortly after the Baptist convention ended. Before the convention closed, a treasurer’s report was given. The treasury held $100.07 when the convention opened. They collected $257.73, and paid out $312.93. This left $44.87 at the convention’s end.

There were between eight and ten black Baptist churches in Hanover County by 1870. Melinda D. Gales in her 1999 M.A. thesis, argues that “church building is one of the first tangible signs of freedom in rural areas.” During the era of slavery, blacks had typically worshipped under the auspices of their masters, or in biracial churches of their choosing (which, however, were led by whites), or in secret places on the plantations. In short, they had not been free to fully express their spirituality in their own way. This changed with the coming of freedom. By 1867, the vast majority of black worshippers chose to withdraw from white congregations, so that they would be free to worship in a manner that suited them and choose their own leadership.

For example, the minutes of the Mount Olivet Baptist Church in Hanover show that on December 3, 1865, the members resolved “that the colored members numbering about two hundred, be dismissed from that church and discharged from all obligations to the church as members thereof, and left free to act for themselves.” This group became Ebenezer Baptist Church of the Beaverdam section of Hanover County. Similarly, a

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70 Richmond Daily Dispatch, August 9, 1867.
group of thirty-two blacks withdrew from Taylorville Baptist Church in 1868 to form Jerusalem Baptist Church at Bothwell. Neither of these congregations had the benefit of a church building when it first formed. In most instances, black congregations first worshipped in brush arbors until land could be purchased and structures could be built.73

Shiloh Baptist Church of Ashland began worshipping in a brush arbor, but the membership was soon able to erect a building; like so many African American religious structures of the period, it was also used as a school.74 Next to finding work and establishing places of worship, blacks wanted an education. Many adults simply wanted to learn to read the Bible for themselves, but they also hoped education would bring a better life for their children. Widespread, state-supported public education began in Virginia only after adoption of the Underwood Constitution. Before the war, wealthy and middling whites had educated their children in privately supported schools or at home, believing that public education was a symbol of government interference. As William A. Link explains, “In the antebellum southern belief system, education remained a matter of private choice, and an area in which central, outside government had no place.”75

Organized education for blacks had been against the law. Some people violated that law, but for the most part it reflected the social reality of the period. This meant that blacks and the Bureau agents were starting virtually from scratch, and often working against the wishes of white residents who felt that educated blacks would not “stay in their place.” Historian Susan Youngblood Ashmore quotes one white South Carolinian who believed...

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73 A brush arbor was a structure made of branches that might only provide shelter to the preacher. According to the Shiloh Baptist Church history, founding members worshipped under a brush arbor.
74 FB (Reel 45), 251.
that "to educate a Negro is to spoil a laborer and train up a candidate for the Penitentiary."\textsuperscript{76}

Regardless of these obstacles, education did become a reality for many black people. While records are sketchy at best, we know that a school was opened at Ashland under the patronage of the American Baptist Home Society and housed at Shiloh Freedmen's Church in October 1866, and by December the school boasted 102 students.\textsuperscript{77} The Shiloh Freedman's Church employed a young black man, unnamed in records of the time, who formerly had been a teacher in Richmond. He charged each student fifty cents each month. The Bureau helped by supplying books at wholesale rates. Bureau agent Ed Murphy described the building as "new and very comfortable as well as very suitable for school purposes." Agent Murphy concluded his report by commending blacks for taking responsibility for their education, and expressed his belief that schools organized by local blacks themselves would meet with less hostility than schools organized by northern philanthropies.\textsuperscript{78} At the beginning of the following school year, agent Ira Ayers wrote to his superiors that the freedmen and -women continued to be interested in the "cause of education." He indicated that he was selling, at cost, books supplied by the American Tract Society, a nineteenth-century organization that printed and dispersed religious pamphlets to the masses. These books were being purchased by agent Ira Ayers and sold to the free men, women, and children at cost.\textsuperscript{79}

The challenges faced by black Hanoverians trying to obtain an education were similar to those of other African Americans across the state, but they were undaunted. In August 1867, the Reverend R. M. Manley, superintendent of the Virginia schools

\textsuperscript{76} Glenn Feldman, \textit{Reading Southern History} (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2001), 221.
\textsuperscript{77} FB (Reel 46), 221. In Bureau records and in the church history, Shiloh Baptist Church is sometimes referred to as the Shiloh Freedmen's Church.
\textsuperscript{78} FB (Reel 45), 251.
\textsuperscript{79} FB (Reel 45), 251.
operated with the support of the Freedmen’s Bureau, reported that much had been accomplished by black people across the state during the 1866-1867 school year. The average number of students enrolled during the year was over fourteen thousand, and Manley believed that the entire number of black students attending school during the year, including public and private schools, was over twenty-five thousand. He asserted that several thousand blacks across the state had been added to the ranks of readers. This he attributed in large part to dedicated and well qualified teachers, most of whom were associated with northern philanthropies such as the American Baptist Home Society and the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Efforts were also being made to train black teachers to teach black children.\textsuperscript{80}

Although the Ashland school was up and running, it was not easy to maintain the student population. One reason was the poverty of the students’ families. If parents were to pay the fee of fifty cents per child each month, they might have to do without warm winter clothes. In the winter of 1867, the Bureau agent requisitioned two hundred suits of children’s clothes for such families—and these were not the county’s truly destitute citizens. Without the proper clothing, the children would not have been able to attend school.\textsuperscript{81}

Between 1866 and 1870, eight schools for black children were organized throughout Hanover County. Some operated a few months annually for several years, while others lasted for much shorter periods due to lack of funding. Some schools were located in facilities owned by black people with the rent paid by the Freedman’s Bureau. Others were owned by whites sympathetic to the desire of African Americans to have access to education, or at least willing to accept rent money from the Bureau each month.

\textsuperscript{80} Richmond Daily Dispatch, October 12, 1867.  
\textsuperscript{81} FB (Reel 46), 423.
In some cases the freedmen wholly supported the school, meaning that they paid for the teacher and owned the building. In other instances, blacks were credited with partial support of a school, which sometimes meant that they boarded the teacher. Depending on the time of year and the fate of the crops, the freedmen might not be able to maintain their financial commitment to the school, which could pose a hardship to the teacher.\footnote{82 FB (Reel 46), 423.}

Many of the schools also received support from northern aid societies. In Hanover, the New York Friends and the American Baptist Home Society were the major contributors. While the records do not indicate where the teachers in those schools came from, they do suggest that many of the white teachers were from outside the area and probably outside the state. The teachers who opened day schools in the county typically also opened night schools; there adult pupils paid tuition, which helped to maintain the day schools. Sabbath schools were also very popular, sometimes enrolling as many as 370 students but at other times as few as thirty, depending on the time of year.\footnote{83 FB Records Of The Superintendent of Education for the State Of Virginia, FBSE Misc. Reels 3907-3926, LVA.}

The response of county whites to educating blacks varied greatly, based partly on the area of the county and the year. Throughout 1868, Julia Carter, the black teacher at the Ashland school, reported that the attitudes of whites in the area toward educating blacks were positive. The next year, she moved to the school at Hanover Junction, and throughout her tenure there she reported that the attitudes of whites were very bad. John Cooper and William French, both white teachers, took over the Ashland school after Carter left, in 1869 and 1870 respectively. Both men reported less than favorable attitudes toward educating blacks. The difference in the substance of these reports may boil down to the fact that Carter, a black woman, hesitated to report trouble at the Ashland school. As a black woman she was vulnerable, and may have felt threatened by
white people in the community, whereas Cooper and French as white males may have been freer to report the true state of affairs. Moreover, Cooper and French went to the Ashland school after the constitutional convention of 1868, when conservative whites were still reeling from the outcome of the elections and the proposed state constitution.84

Work, church, and education formed the path to survival after emancipation, but the franchise as elaborated in the federal Constitution and the Reconstruction Acts was the key to involvement in the governing process. By March 1867, Congress had enacted the Reconstruction Acts over President Andrew Johnson’s veto. News spread quickly among blacks throughout the South. Eric Foner asserts that, “Like emancipation, the passage of the Reconstruction Act inspired blacks with a millennial sense of living at the dawn of a new era.”85 By April, black Hanoverians were asking the local Freedmen’s Bureau agent about the acts. They wanted to know about their duties and privileges under the new laws. “The same concern in political matters is manifested upon the part of the colored people throughout the county,” reported agent Ira Ayers.86

There does not seem to have been an immediate backlash in the county after the passage of the Reconstruction Acts. For the most part, blacks and whites seemed to coexist on a fairly easy basis—yet this tranquility depended largely on blacks not doing anything that could be perceived by whites as “stepping out of their place.” This sentiment was indicated in a letter written in July 1867 to the Richmond Daily Dispatch updating readers on county news. Someone using the alias Ruta Baga wrote of the good weather and fine crops, especially the sandy soil that was great for melon growing. He also shared the news of a “rather singular matrimonial alliance.” According to Ruta Baga, the marriage took place between a nineteen-year-old black woman and a sixty-

84 FBSE (Reel 17); (Reel 19), 270.
85 Eric Foner, 281.
86 FB (Reel 47)52.
seven-year-old black man. Supposedly many blacks in the area felt that the “ebony damsel was tricked by the aged wooer.” Ruta Baga’s letter suggests that the blacks and whites in the area may have interacted on a friendly basis or at least followed each other’s doings. The writer added that “freedmen in this section, I am pleased to state, are working faithfully. The best feeling prevails between them and the whites, and I trust that the entente cordiale may remain unbroken.”

A month later, another letter was sent to a Richmond newspaper. This correspondent commended an impromptu speaker at Hanover Courthouse. Apparently a large number of blacks had gathered to hear an African American traveling preacher. The guest speaker was a no-show, but John Wallace, a native black Hanoverian, took his place. His words were probably soothing to the whites in the crowd. He admonished blacks to be polite, honest, industrious, and sober. The white writer explained that the speaker’s “plain, earnest, home-spun sentiments went right to their [black men’s and women’s] hearts.”

Not long after Ruta Baga wrote so eloquently of the desire to maintain the “entente cordiale,” at least two examples suggest it was crumbling. The first, in which race and class played a role, involved John Lewis, a black man murdered in July or August, 1868 by Robert Doswell, who was white. Lewis was sixty-five or seventy years old and a servant of the Doswell family. Lewis gave instructions to some workers, and Doswell believed that the black man had overstepped his bounds. Lewis and Doswell had words, after which Doswell picked up a shovel and hit the older man in the back of the head, killing him instantly. The coroner determined that Doswell had killed Lewis.

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87 Richmond Daily Dispatch, July 18, 1867.
88 Richmond Daily Dispatch, August 12, 1867.
without malice or premeditation. Doswell was arrested and bail was set at $2000. By December, the courts had determined that Doswell was insane, and he was acquitted.\textsuperscript{89}

In a similar incident, Robert Rice, a white man, shot Jacob Powell, who was black, also in the summer of 1868. Both men were laborers on the same farm. Rice and Powell, along with two other black men, were in the kitchen for breakfast. According to testimony, Powell joked that he could knock down any man in the room. Rice approached Powell and the two men struggled with Rice ending up against the wall. Rice was enraged and grabbed an axe to hit Powell, but the other two men stopped him. Rice left briefly and returned with a brick that he threw at Powell. Rice left again and this time returned with a shot gun. He shot Powell in the eye and blinded him. He also shot one of the other men in the kitchen by accident. Rice went straight to the justice of the peace and turned himself in.\textsuperscript{90}

At the trial, Rice’s attorney took advantage of the racism of the jury. He pointed out that Rice was an ex-Confederate Soldier, a Virginia gentleman, and a white man. Powell was simply a “nigger.” In the end, Rice was found guilty of unlawful shooting and sentenced to twelve hours in jail and fined one penny.\textsuperscript{91} Both cases were heard by the county court, and in both cases the local Freedmen’s Bureau agent believed that the decision was unjust, and he reported the outcome to his superiors, but there is no indication that the cases were reviewed. Blacks understood that the injustice of slavery was not behind them, and these cases served as a reminder that political power would be the key to bettering their lives.

Under the Reconstruction Acts of 1867, Virginia became military district number one. In order to comply with the requirements of the Acts and rejoin the Union, Virginia,

\textsuperscript{89} FB (Reel 59), 35.
\textsuperscript{90} FB (Reel 59), 58.
\textsuperscript{91} FB (Reel 59), 58.
along with nine other states of the former Confederacy, had to hold a constitutional convention. The idea of amending the state constitution was not alien to the citizens, for it had been done in the past. In 1830, the state had established a more equitable basis for assigning representation in the General Assembly. In 1851, a new constitution was adopted removing property restrictions on the franchise, which allowed all white males to vote. Thomas Jefferson had even written that regular review of a document such as the Constitution was vital to the life of the document and of the country. What was novel was that black men could now participate in the political processes of the state.

Black men in Hanover were ready for the challenge of participating in the political process of the county and state. Reportedly, black people in general were becoming more and more distrustful of white politicians; at the same time, however, the Freedmen’s Bureau agent believed that black men would unite behind loyal (Unionist), intelligent whites who supported the Reconstruction measures. By June 1867, the voter registration process had begun with 329 black men registered in Hanover County compared with 307 white men. Reportedly the process went smoothly, with black men returning to work after registering. As of July 27, 1867, 1,398 black male Hanoverians were registered to vote.92

On September 21, 1867, a Republican mass meeting was convened at Ashland for the purpose of nominating men for the positions of delegate and floater to the constitutional convention.93 The elections were scheduled to take place simultaneously in October 1867. Colonel William James and John B. Crenshaw, a Quaker—both white—were nominated unanimously by the mostly black electors, but the story of the selection

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92 Richmond Dispatch, July 27, 1867.
93 Delegate selection was based on population, which meant that a county would get one delegate per a selected number of residents. If adjoining counties had more than enough residents for one delegate, but not enough for two, they could be combined to elect one additional delegate (a “floater”) between them. This was the case with Hanover and Henrico counties.
of delegates was far from over; more than a little drama would be revealed before the final votes were cast.\textsuperscript{94}

William James was an attorney by training and the federally appointed Collector of Internal Revenue for Virginia in 1865. He was an interesting figure, described in at least one newspaper as "disreputable." In 1866, he was embroiled in a story of love, infidelity, and lost honor, but as an accessory rather than as a principal figure. In November 1865, Edward A. Pollard, a well-known writer, admitted to having been unfaithful to his spouse. Apparently Pollard could not face his wife and children, so he contacted James and asked him to tell Mrs. Pollard he was leaving her since he saw no other solution as he was "overpowered" by his feelings for an unnamed married woman. In short, Pollard asked James to inform Mrs. Pollard that he was leaving her for another woman. The record is not clear as to why Pollard contacted James.\textsuperscript{95} It is doubtful that James would have been viewed as disreputable because of this request.

It is more likely that the characterization as "disreputable" arose from James's work as the Collector of Internal Revenue for the third district, which included Richmond and surrounding counties. Newspaper accounts suggest that William James was accused of taking a bribe, but the amount was not specified and the accuser was not named. James pled not guilty, and his case was heard by a jury of four whites and eight blacks. Apparently the position of Collector of Revenue was quite attractive, because before the outcome of the case had been determined applicants were lining up for James's job.\textsuperscript{96}

According to the prosecution, the bribe had been given to someone on James's staff. The briber was reportedly in the distilling business and wanted James to look the other way on a particular matter. The defense argued that James was the holder of a

\textsuperscript{94}FB (Reel 48), 1.
\textsuperscript{95}Richmond \textit{Daily Dispatch}, July 26, 1866.
\textsuperscript{96}Richmond \textit{Daily Dispatch}, August 13, 1867.
patent on a separator—a device used to determine the proof of whiskey. According to
his attorney, James sold the use of the separator to the distiller, and that was the only
money that he had taken. James’s attorney also pointed out that, if James were convicted
of this crime, the required jail sentence would amount to a death penalty given James’s
advanced age; he was in his eighties. The defense must have been convincing, because
the jury took only moments to find James not guilty, but this verdict did not protect
James’s job. President Johnson removed him from his position as Collector of Revenue
by mid-September. The reason for his removal is not clear, and his wife was displeased
enough to write Judge John C. Underwood, who presided over the case, to ask for his
assistance with helping her husband regain his appointment. If Judge Underwood tried to
help James regain his position, he was unsuccessful.97

The voters at the initial mass meeting that took place in Ashland on September
27, 1867, nominated John B. Crenshaw, husband, father, and Quaker minister for the
position of floater.98 Crenshaw’s daughter wrote a memoir describing him as a friend to
black men and women in the community; she suggests that, before the Civil War,
Crenshaw, who lived in Hanover County, had raised money and sometimes used his own
funds to help enslaved black people purchase their freedom. After the war, Crenshaw
helped open an orphanage in Richmond for black children. He was an eloquent speaker
for the rights of blacks, and apparently appreciated as such by black residents and white
Republicans in Hanover County, for he was nominated unanimously.99

Both James and Crenshaw expected to run unopposed by other Republicans. This
was not to be the case for Crenshaw, however. Shortly after the meeting at Ashland,
Crenshaw learned that he would be running against Burrell Toler, the first pastor of

97 John C. Underwood Papers, Brock Collection, Misc reel 4596, LVA.
98 Society of Friends. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Book Committee (Quaker Biographies, Series
99 FB (Reel 48), 1.
Crenshaw was familiar with Toler, who had declined to run for either delegate or floater at the mass meeting citing his lack of education and preparedness to hold either position. Indeed, Toler had thrown his support behind Crenshaw. Undoubtedly surprised to hear that Toler had agreed to run against him, Crenshaw believed that certain Hanover Republicans had urged Toler on because Crenshaw had expressed disapproval of William James. Indeed, Crenshaw believed that, since James had been removed from government service, he was not fit to “represent the interests of the people of that noble old county.”

A few days after this turn of events, Crenshaw wrote a letter to the voters of the district encompassing Hanover and Henrico which he was running to represent in the constitutional convention. He explained that he had been reluctant to accept the nomination, but that, since he had accepted, he planned to follow through. Not one to give up easily, Crenshaw went on to explain the real purpose of his letter. There was an upcoming meeting of the Unconditional Union Men of Henrico County, and he expected this group to nominate him for the position of floater. Due to church obligations, Crenshaw was not able to attend the meeting, so he accepted the nomination in his letter. This meant that Crenshaw was nominated by two separate Republican groups.

Crenshaw’s opponent, Burrell Toler, was not without some standing in the community. According to the 1870 census and his son’s marriage registry information, Toler was born in Hanover County. Since his name does not appear on any of the property tax lists under the heading ‘free negroes’ from the 1840s through 1865, he was probably enslaved in the county. The 1870 census indicates that he was also a Baptist

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100 Burrell Toler attended the Baptist association meeting in 1867.
101 Richmond Daily Whig, October 12, 1867.
102 Richmond Daily Whig, October 2, 1867.
preacher and carpenter.\textsuperscript{103} By March 1867, Toler was listed by the Freedman's Bureau as one of the “prominent citizens” in the county, respected by black and white residents alike.\textsuperscript{104}

In the fall of 1867, ballots were cast across the South, and some 265 black delegates were elected to represent their districts at their respective states' constitutional conventions. Some of the black delegates were educated; others had learned life lessons on farms and plantations. The African American delegates were ministers, artisans, farmers, and teachers. Many had been enslaved, though some, like George Teamoh, had spent all or part of their lives as free men in the North. Teamoh, who was born enslaved in Norfolk, lived in Virginia, married and raised a family until his wife and children were sold away. Heartbroken, Teamoh ran away in 1853 and lived in the North until after the Civil War. While living in the North, Teamoh secured an education and learned the clothes cleaning trade. After the Civil War, he returned to Virginia and reunited with his wife and one daughter. In 1868, Teamoh was elected as a delegate to the constitutional convention and served as a Virginia state Senator from 1869 until 1871, when his name disappears from the record.\textsuperscript{105}

Hanover County voted in favor of the convention. Just over 1400 black men and sixty-three white men voted to hold the meeting. Only two black men voted against the convention along with 1003 white men. Virginians elected 105 convention delegates, twenty-four of whom were African American men. William James and Burrell Toler garnered 1460 and 1338 black votes respectively. Crenshaw was out of the running,

\textsuperscript{103} U.S. Census Hanover County 1870; Hanover County Marriage Registry, 1899; James Douglas Smith, “Virginia During Reconstruction, 1865-1870: A political, economic and social study” (master’s thesis, University of Virginia, 1984); Richard Lee Morton, “The Negro in Virginia Politics, 1865-1902” (master’s thesis University of Virginia, 1918.)

\textsuperscript{104} FB (Reel 67).

receiving ten black votes and 1057 white votes. The Conservatives received a total of three black votes. Conservative white men voted against the convention because they understood that black men would receive suffrage in a new constitution; that alone repelled them, and they said they feared that the next step would be social equality. As discussed earlier, some white people in the county believed that black and white residents were getting along well and hoped to see this type of cooperation continue. Following the referendum on the matter of the convention and the election of delegates to that gathering, these feelings of goodwill diminished greatly. White conservatives were very displeased with the black citizens. Indeed, they were completely dismayed by the almost complete unanimity of black voters. They could not understand why black men “should have refused to support those who, when they had the power, ground them down under the worst form of oppression,” the Freedman’s Bureau agent noted sarcastically. The agent reported that blacks neither professed nor manifested any ill will toward their former masters, but neither did they trust them; that, he asserted, was demonstrated in the voting. To add insult to injury, Conservative whites also had to come to grips with Republican victory on the national level when General Ulysses S. Grant and Schuyler Colfax were elected to the presidency and vice presidency of the United States.

The result of the election caused at least one Hanoverian to put pen to paper. Writing to the editor of the Richmond Enquirer and Examiner, the author, calling himself “A Citizen,” applauds the editor for asserting in a previous editorial that whites could and would live without blacks. Continuing, he adds that he had hoped that the former slaves could be made into useful members of society, but by their votes they had “proved themselves traitors to their own interests, and prefer to be led on to utter degradation and

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106 Richmond Daily Dispatch, October 25 1867; and Election of Delegates to the Underwood Constitutional Convention, Ms Election Records, No. 427, LVA.
107 FB (Reel 48), 50.
want by men who, with oaths and threats, and for a counterfeit twenty-five cent note, will lead the whole race into utter ruin and damnation.” The citizen concludes by saying that the residents of Hanover were raising money for “old Jack Bias,” a black man who had voted the Conservative ticket of his own accord; “in honor of his high appreciation of the white man and his fidelity to his friends, this fund is being raised,” the writer reports. Peace and quiet would [reign] if all were Jacks.” Bias may have been one of the three black men who voted for the Conservative ticket. There was an African American man named John Bias listed in the 1870 census. Another possibility is that Jack Bias may have been invented by the writer to make a point.

Most black men were not harassed or harmed because of their vote. The exception that made it into the record involved Broadneck, another name for North Wales, the plantation where William Henry Winston had been enslaved. There were many black renters at Broadneck, and shortly after the election they were told that they would have to leave at the end of the year. Thomas Moncure, who apparently rented the land from William F. Wickham, told the residents that they had no business voting the way they had. The renters had heard rumors that they were to be turned off the land without warning just before Christmas, but since Moncure had not given them written or legal notice, the Bureau agent believed that he was just trying to scare them, and in the end would allow them to stay. This was not the case.

The Reverend James Weatherless, who had also been enslaved at Broadneck, had been a renter there since the fall of Richmond. On December 22, 1867, even though

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108 Richmond Daily Enquirer and Examiner, October 30, 1867.
109 Richmond Daily Enquirer and Examiner, October 30, 1867.
110 U.S. Census Records, Hanover County 1870, LVA.
111 FB (Reel 48), 368.
112 James Weatherless had also been enslaved on the Carter plantation and knew the young William Henry Winston. He offered a deposition in support of Winston’s request for a pension. He was also a Baptist minister. See Weatherless Deposition in William Henry Winston Pension file, NARA.
his name had appeared on the Bureau’s list of prominent citizens respected by whites and blacks alike, Weatherless received a letter from Moncure saying that “it will not be in my power to supply you with a house next year.” When confronted by the Freedmen’s Bureau agent, Moncure responded that he rented the land from William F. Wickham, and that Wickham was calling the shots in this situation. The agent wrote Moncure a letter of warning, but the record is silent as to the outcome of this situation. Incidentally, William F. Wickham had run against William James for the position of delegate to the constitutional convention. Exactly two blacks had voted for him, and he may well have felt bitter over that result.

Regardless of the circumstances surrounding Toler’s election to the position of floater, he went on to participate actively in the convention in Richmond. He served on at least two committees, including the committee on Taxation and Finance and the Committee of Thirteen, which was established to set up the operating procedures of the convention. Toler also presented two resolutions. One involved the institution known as the Eastern Lunatic Asylum, which was located in Williamsburg. At the time the facility was run under the auspices of the military. Toler’s resolution called for the Committee on Public Institutions to “inquire into the status, funds and present management” of the hospital with the idea of turning it over to civilian control as soon as possible. The second resolution put forth by Toler was referred to the Committee on Internal Improvements, charging its members to look into funds allocated some years earlier for a railroad line that was to extend from Fredericksburg to Gordonsville. The work on the line had been stopped because of the war, and the resolution Toler put forth

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113 FB (Reel 48), 368.
114 Richmond Daily Dispatch, October 25, 1867.
116 Debates of the Convention, (1867-1868), 103.
asked the committee to ascertain the amount of state funds already spent, whether the investment was justified, and whether the public was still committed to the project.\footnote{117}{Debates of the Convention, (1867-1868), 60.}

Toler’s role at the convention presents interesting questions. There is little doubt of his dedication and commitment to his job. He was present for every vote, and while his vote often matched his colleague’s from Hanover, this was not always the case.\footnote{118}{Debates of the Convention, (1867-1868), 1.} The questions that arise center around Toler’s background and ability. Considering his self-proclaimed lack of experience and training, and the obvious sophistication of the resolutions presented, was Toler under the guidance of someone else? Of course, there may have been clerks charged with the responsibility of translating all resolutions into the appropriate legal language.

Even if this were the case, questions remain. For example, why was Toler so concerned with issues that did not apparently affect his constituents directly—constituents who, just out of slavery, might have more pressing concerns? Were these the issues that were important to the blacks who elected him? The issues of the poll tax and the whipping post would seem to have been more relevant for Toler’s constituents. The record does not show Toler’s level of participation beyond his various votes, and it may never be clear what his role was on committees or in debates. Historian Eric Foner suggests that, for the most part, the backgrounds of most of the black delegates left them poorly prepared for the complicated matters put before them. “They had ‘little to say’ during debates, and sometimes allowed white delegates to take advantage of their inexperience.”\footnote{119}{Eric Foner, 319.} While some, perhaps many, of the black delegates may have been lost in the complexities of the process, Foner notes; they rallied around the issues of civil rights and education, both fundamental to the advancement of their constituents.\footnote{120}{Eric Foner, 319.}
The convention of 1867-68 produced a document that became known as the Underwood Constitution.\textsuperscript{121} It was a very democratic document. It outlawed slavery, gave equal civil and political rights to all citizens, provided for state-funded public schools, enacted the secret ballot and annual legislative sessions, and established townships with the hope of increasing the number of local elective offices, which in turn was supposed to put the people closer to their government.\textsuperscript{122}

This constitution would become the bane of many white Virginians. It gave black men the franchise, free and clear, and in those counties where African Americans made up a significant portion of the population, conservative whites feared they would be ruled by white Republicans and their supposed black puppets. The Conservatives were desperate to regain political control of the state. Since the Republican Grant had replaced Andrew Johnson in the White House, the Conservative Democrats were no longer able to hope for rescue from that quarter. If the Conservatives were going to regain political control, they would have to rid the state of the occupying military force. To do that they needed a constitution that would be acceptable to Congress. The Underwood constitution fit the bill, and so the Conservatives voted to ratify the new constitution even though it was described by at least one contemporary as “the liberal [arm] of a bi-racial General Assembly that was...composed in measure, of aliens and strangers.”\textsuperscript{123} With the

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\textsuperscript{121} Smith thesis; This document was named for Judge John Curtis Underwood, one of the delegates from the city of Richmond. He was elected president of the convention. Underwood was somewhat notorious among southern Democrats—a northerner by birth, and southerners might add, also by sentiment. He settled in Virginia in 1832 after college, but soon returned to the North where his antislavery sentiments were more acceptable. After the war, Underwood served as a federal [?] judge in Virginia, and it was in his court that Jefferson Davis, former president of the Confederacy, was indicted and refused bail. According to Lyon Gardiner Tyler, a historian representing the conservative white southern point of view, Underwood was “bitterly denounced in the South on account of his violent and unbecoming partisanship...” Tyler, vol. III, 291. The General Assembly of Virginia 1619-1978. Compiled by Cynthia Miller Leonard, published for the General Assembly by the Virginia State Library, 1978. 504.


\textsuperscript{123} Brenaman, 1.
\end{flushright}
ratification of this radical constitution, then, the Conservative plan ironically was well underway.

Even before the Congress had welcomed Virginia back into the Union in 1870, the Conservatives had begun to plan their takeover of the state government. In 1869, the Conservatives decided to make a serious attempt to win the governorship. To do so they withdrew the Conservative candidate, and backed a moderate Republican slate, and thus split the latter party’s vote. The moderate, Gilbert C. Walker, won in a landslide, thus opening the door to allow Conservatives to take back local and state offices.124 One year after the Conservatives' success of 1869, the United States Congress voted to restore Virginia to the Union, thus ending Radical rule in the state and beginning the removal of the federal Army.

When Reconstruction ended in Virginia, the Conservatives of the Commonwealth breathed a sigh of relief. They believed that the dominance of Yankee “carpetbaggers,” southern “scalawags,” and most of all blacks would disappear and at last, southern society would be put right again. The carpetbaggers were northerners who moved south after the war to make their fortunes [translated by southerners as to “exploit the downtrodden”]; they helped rebuild the region economically, politically, physically, and socially. A scalawag was a southern white person who joined forces with Republicans and black people during Reconstruction.

The new constitution’s most significant contribution to the state was the establishment of public schools for black and white children. Education was seen by black men and women as a key to their freedom and their acceptance as citizens in the United States. In Been in the Storm So Long, Litwack begins a section with the following exchange between two men, in which a white citizen told a freedman, “Charles, you is a

free man they say, but Ah tells you now, you is still a slave and you lives to a hundred, you'll STILL be a slave, cause you got no education, and education is what makes a man free!"125

These words stuck with Charles Whiteside for the remainder of his life. Like Whiteside, many black people had gotten the message even before the end of slavery that education was an important part of freedom. That is why many enslaved individuals were willing to risk punishment to learn to read and write, and this desire only increased with the advent of freedom. John Hope Franklin writes that "it is difficult to exaggerate the eagerness of blacks at the close of the war to secure an education."126 Black Hanoverians understood that education was one of the paths they could take to real freedom and full citizenship. As has been discussed previously, schools that were opened immediately following the war were typically set up by the freedmen and -women themselves or with the assistance of the Freedman’s Bureau and northern missionary societies. These schools were never adequate in number, and they were heavily in demand. By the end of Reconstruction in Virginia, the new state constitution mandated public schools for all school age children.

In 1870, the first year education was made available to all Virginians, more than 130,000 students enrolled, and Republican-Conservative Governor Gilbert Walker declared that the issue of public education for everyone was no longer a debatable topic. J. B. Brown, a white man, became the first superintendent of the Hanover public schools in September 1870. The county was divided into five school districts: Beaverdam, Allen’s Creek, Ashland, Clay, and Henry. That year there were 5,260 students in the county schools, and 2,668 of those were black. There were more black than white

126 John Hope Franklin, 107.
students in the county, but there were twenty-eight schools for white students and sixteen for blacks. There were twenty-eight white teachers and seventeen teachers for black students. Salary breakdowns based on race are not available, but the record does indicate that male teachers earned $26.06 per month on average, and the female teachers earned $26.90. This was the only year that the female teachers earned more than the males. Nothing in the record explains this unusual pay scale.127

At the end of the first school year, a report was made by the Virginia superintendent of public instruction, and he declared the year a success. The average length of the sessions was just under five months. Statewide, the expectations were high, with school officials predicting that there would be at least two thousand schools in the state by April 1871 for black and white youths. Yet the education of black and white children in Hanover County and across the state would never be equitable. Annual (and later, biennial) reports from 1870 to the end of the century consistently show that white schools and teachers outnumbering those for black children.128

Throughout the 1870s, the Hanover superintendent reported success in the schools despite financial hardships. Indeed, Brown lamented that a lack of funds was all that kept the school system from flourishing. Even the negative attitudes of white people toward public schools in general, and toward educating blacks specifically, seemed to improve. By 1873, Superintendent Brown was reporting that “few intelligent persons offer any opposition to the public school system; and where we find one opposed to it, such opposition is confined to whispered insinuations among his especial friends and admirers.”129

127 Virginia School Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1870-1871 (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing), LVA.
128 Richmond Daily Dispatch, January 1871.
129 School Reports 1872/1873-1873/1874.
The following year, the teachers reported that the schools continued to grow in popularity. Brown suggested that the biggest detriment to the schools was the "threatened passage" of what was known as the "civil rights bill." The 1874 elections were landsides in favor of the Democrats. Two-thirds of the South's seats in the House of Representatives were won by Democrats. In general, it was felt that large numbers of Republicans had declined to vote or had voted for Democrats because of concern over the impending passage of a civil rights bill which included a provision for integrated education.\textsuperscript{130}

The Civil Rights Bill of 1875 was highly controversial. It was instituted by Republicans who feared that as the Democrats gained more and more power, they would eradicate all that remained of Reconstruction policies. A program was developed that included the "Civil Rights Bill, a new Enforcement Act expanding the President's power to put down conspiracies aimed at intimidating voters and including the right to suspend the writ of habeas corpus, a two-year army appropriation (to prevent the incoming House from limiting the military's role in the South), [and] a bill further expanding the jurisdiction of the federal courts . . . ."\textsuperscript{131} The Republicans eliminated the most controversial part of the Civil Rights Bill, integrated schools, in an effort to gain support. The Civil Rights Act did pass, but without the Enforcement Act and the army appropriation provisions.\textsuperscript{132}

School superintendent Brown, of Hanover, remarked that the Civil Rights Bill had done more to retard our work and weaken the hold of the schools upon popular affection, than all other causes combined. It has caused many of the staunchest friends of popular education to hold their tongues and abate their zeal. Let us remain free to govern the

\textsuperscript{130} Eric Foner, 550.
\textsuperscript{131} Eric Foner, 553.
\textsuperscript{132} Eric Foner, 556.
schools by our own laws, and give us money, and we will work out a glorious future for the public schools of Virginia.133

Two years later, budgetary concerns continued to plague the Hanover system. The report of the state’s superintendent of public instruction suggests that Hanoverians had thoroughly discussed the possibility of losing public education, and had determined that “popular education [was] a public necessity.”134 When the eighth annual report was written in 1878, it was apparent that the financial situation in the county’s public schools was still a problem. Brown wrote that “at no time in the history of the free schools have they been so popular in this county. At no period in their history have we been so entirely without the means of fostering this popularity.”135

The financial difficulties experienced by the Hanover schools, and other schools across the state, can be directly traced to the General Assembly and that body’s struggles over the state debt. Prior to the war, Virginia had taken on a large amount of debt in order to expand its system of railroads and canals. While this was a good investment, the war stopped all work and led to the destruction of much of the infrastructure that was already in place. The state’s economy was in a shambles after the war, and Virginia found itself in the unenviable position of having more debt than revenue.136

For many Conservatives, the repayment of prewar debt was a matter of honor, and they were committed to settling the state’s accounts. In 1871, Governor Walker, the moderate Republican whom the Conservative Democrats had helped to elect, signed the Funding Bill into law. In theory, this bill was intended to help Virginia move back into good standing with creditors, but in reality, it turned out “to be the most disastrous piece

133 School Reports 1874/1875-1877/1878.
134 School Reports 1878/1879-1880/1881.
135 School Reports 1880-1881.
136 Moore, 15.
of economic legislation in Virginia history. The state continued to incur large amounts of debt because it was unable to pay the interest on the prewar loans. Some Conservatives gradually came to realize that they would have to repudiate some or all of the debt if the state were to survive. This realization caused a split in the Conservative Democratic party into two parties, the Funders and the Readjusters. The Funders were those individuals who were determined to repay the full debt. The state, they said, was benefiting from the railroads and canals, and failure to pay "would violate the basic principles of Christian ethics and economic orthodoxy." On the other hand, the Readjusters were in favor of negotiating the state debt down. Initially, the Funders held the power and were intransigent. They would not budge from their notions of property holders' rights, but the tighter they held on, the farther the state fell into a financial black hole. The Readjusters were becoming more and more attractive to ordinary Virginians—white and black people of all classes and occupations who were paying the highest taxes but losing services while wealthy individuals and corporations were finding loopholes in the tax law. Mental hospitals were shutting down and the patients were either being discharged or moved to the jails. Professors at the state colleges were suffering pay cuts, the prisons were overcrowded, and prisoners were being leased out to railroads, where many were worked to death or died from disease and exposure.

The public schools suffered. In 1876, the General Assembly appropriated $443,000 for the schools, but this number dropped by almost half just two years later. This drastic cut resulted in school closings. The superintendent of the state's schools accused the Funders of siphoning off monies to pay interest on the debt. In response, Governor James Lawson Kemper asserted that schools were a luxury that the state could not afford. The economic situation was dire, with public institutions suffering and the state in debt. The split within the Democratic party reflected the broader economic and social challenges faced by Virginia in the late 19th century. 

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137 Moore, 16.
138 Moore, 18.
139 Moore, 22.
no longer afford, and state Senator John W. Daniel remarked that he would rather see
the schools burn than fail to pay the prewar debt. These types of comments angered the
increasingly popular and expanding Readjuster coalition.140

Meanwhile, during the political turmoil and strife of the 1870s, Hanover
continued to grow and mature as a county. This was especially true of Ashland. By 1868
Ashland had become the home of Randolph-Macon College (RMC), an all-male
Methodist institution. Formerly located in Boydton in Southside Virginia, the college had
been on the decline because transportation to and from the campus involved a lengthy
and cumbersome journey. This would not be the case in Ashland, with its easy access to
the railroad.141

For black men and women just a few years out of slavery, the times were
interesting and challenging. As a group, they were determining for themselves exactly
what it meant to be free and to function as citizens. They knew that their conservative
white neighbors were not inclined to make their new lives easy. In the face of continued
hostile attitudes on the part of some white people, most black men and women continued
to push forward and take advantage of the services offered as any citizen might. In doing
so, they were setting an example for future generations.

While the Freedman’s Bureau was declining in visibility by 1870, the Southern
Claims Commission remained important.142 On July 4, 1864, a Congressional act
provided for the reception of claims from loyal Unionists who had lost property during
the war in states not in rebellion. In the late 1860s, these southern Unionists began to file
claims, but it was not until 1871, when the power of northern Radicals had begun to

140Moore, 22.
141 James Scanlon, History of Randolph-Macon College: A Southern History, 1825-1967
142 The Freedman's Bureau was dissolved in 1872. National Archives of the United States,
wane, that an act was established to replace losses incurred by loyal Unionists in states that had seceded. Three commissioners were appointed by the president; they investigated each claim and reported their findings to the House of Representatives. The House would then vote to approve the claim or not, and appropriate funds to pay. The congressmen usually went along with the recommendation of the commissioners. Eleven Hanoverians applied for aid under this commission. There were two African Americans among them, Peter Storrs and Frances Coleman.\footnote{Southern Claims Commission Reports and Depositions, SCC (Reel 48186), LVA.}

In his deposition to the Southern Claims Commission, Peter Storrs explained that he had been an enslaved shoemaker, largely allowed to live on his own and paying his master a certain amount while keeping fifty dollars a year for his personal use. Over time, Storrs had saved enough money to buy land, which he put in the name of his wife, Amy Dustry, a free African American, since as a slave he was not allowed to own land. Storrs and Dustry had not been able to marry because he had been enslaved. Storrs eventually saved enough to purchase his freedom before the war, and he and Dustry set up housekeeping. They built a two-story, four-room house, and acquired the necessary tools for running a successful farm. They seemed to have built a comfortable life. This all changed in June 1864 when the Union Army camped on the Storrs land.\footnote{SCC (Reel 48186) Peter Storrs Deposition.}

One Sunday evening, Storrs later recalled, Union troops crossed the Pamunkey River; the next day, they came to Storrs’s place and stacked their arms in a line a few paces from his house. The captain told Storrs that the house was between the lines of the two opposing armies, and that he expected to be attacked immediately. The captain explained that he could not let Storrs and his family pass to rebel lines and that if they tried to cross into Union lines the rebels would probably try to shoot them. Storrs and his
family had no choice but to hide in the potato cellar, and soon the firing began; it lasted about half an hour. When the Storrs family came up from the cellar, the rebels had been pushed back. The Storrses left the area in the company of the Union soldiers.145

There was little reason for the Storrs to remain in Hanover County after this skirmish. The Union army, in need of provisions, had taken his horse, mule, flour, hogs, corn, a cart, and all of the farming utensils. According to Storrs’s application for compensation, the soldiers had also torn down much of the family’s home and used the wood to build batteries. The Storrs family ended up in Washington, DC, where they remained until after the war. Amy Storrs died of unknown causes during the family’s exile.146

The application for reimbursement required that applicant explain any actions on his or her part that appeared to have aided the Confederates. Storrs admitted that he had been compelled by the Confederates during the spring of 1864 to work as a shoemaker for about three weeks. He went on to say that, during the war, he had traveled to Richmond on several occasions to deliver or pick up shoes. At these times he had to get a pass—the same kind of pass he had carried while enslaved. Storrs said he had not taken an oath to obtain the pass, and he had always been a loyal Union man. When given the chance, Storrs insisted, he had done all he could to help the Army of Generals McClellan and Grant. He had cooked for them, helped with the sick and wounded, and given any information he had to the Union troops.147

In support of Storr’s application, three others gave depositions. One was a black man named Richard Dandridge. He testified that Storrs was a Union man and always believed that if the North won he would get his rights. Dandridge went on to explain that,

145 SCC (Reel 48186) Peter Storrs Deposition.
146 SCC (Reel 48186) Peter Storrs Deposition.
147 SCC (Reel 48186) Peter Storrs Deposition.
since obtaining the right to vote, Storrs had always voted Republican and was an officer in the Union League, an organization affiliated with the Republican Party that encouraged black men to register to vote, offered protection to black people, and supported Republican Party candidates. Regarding the items taken by the Army, Dandridge claimed to have been present when the soldiers removed the items in question. After all was destroyed, he went, along with Storrs family, to Washington. He returned with them in May 1866, and they found that the land was as “naked as your hand.” Dandridge signed his deposition with an X.148

A second deposition was provided by another black man, Taylor White, who said that “he [Storrs] believed, like all of us did, that the North would set us all free.” The final deposition was given by B.C. Burnett, a white man who reported that he had known Storrs all his life. He explained that Storrs had belonged to someone named Truehart, and that as long as Storrs made a certain number of shoes every two weeks he could keep any extra money. Burnett explained that he thought that Amy Dustry had bought Storrs about 1858. Shortly after Storrs became free, Burnett added, he had bought a horse, which he kept until it was taken during General Philip Sheridan’s raid. Storrs’s application claimed that he had lost $1,145 in property. He was awarded $115.149

Similarly, Frances Coleman encountered Sheridan’s Cavalry, commanded by General George Armstrong Custer in the spring of 1865. In some accounts, Coleman was described as a freeborn woman and a widow at the onset of the war. At other times she was said to have been freed by Charles Crenshaw, who sold her twenty-six acres of land. Likewise, some accounts suggest that she owned twenty-six acres of land in her own right, while others indicate that Nathaniel Crenshaw held the deed until after the war.

148 SCC (Reel 48186) Richard Dandridge Deposition.
149 SCC (Reel 48186) Investigator’s report on Peter Storrs.
According to Hanover County deeds, Coleman purchased the land from John B. Crenshaw, and his wife Judith, who had been willed the land by one Nathaniel Crenshaw. The purchase was recorded in November 1868.\textsuperscript{150}

Regardless of her circumstances before the war, Coleman insisted afterward that she had been a loyal Union woman who took pride in the fact. She declared that she did not know exactly what the war was about, but that she had always felt that the northern people were her friends. This belief may have been fostered by her Quaker employer, Nathaniel Crenshaw, who sent deserving free blacks north if they wanted to go and if not, he employed them. Whenever Union the army came through Hanover, Coleman said, she provided assistance. She did laundry and cooked for the men when she had food to cook. On the occasion when Custer and his troops stayed on her farm, Coleman was forced to sacrifice far more than she had in the past. She lost food and supplies, her mule, and all of the rails that had enclosed her twenty-six acres, which the soldiers used as firewood.\textsuperscript{151}

George Coleman, Frances’s 33-year-old nephew, offered a deposition on her behalf. He explained that during the war he lived on her place and saw her daily. They both worked for Nathaniel Crenshaw. George said that his aunt was a strong Union woman, and that she had often spoken of hoping the Yankees would win so that she and her people could have their rights. Her “whole prayer” was that the Union would win. Frances Coleman claimed $597.75 and received $278.\textsuperscript{152}

She and Peter Storrs may have exaggerated their pro-Union activities in order to gain government compensation. It is possible, too, that such activities were not typical of Hanover’s blacks during the war; that only two African Americans filed claims in effect defines those individuals as atypical. Even so, Storrs’s and Coleman’s stories suggest

\textsuperscript{150} The John Crenshaw who inherited this land from Nathaniel Crenshaw was the same man who sought the floater position during election of constitutional convention delegates.

\textsuperscript{151} SCC (Reel 48186) Francis Coleman Deposition.

\textsuperscript{152} SCC (Reel 48186) George Coleman Deposition.
that pro-Union sentiment and even activity existed among Hanover's blacks—a suggestion that resonates with Booker T. Washington's reminiscences from western Virginia.

Farming is a cyclical endeavor. The farmer needs draft animals to prepare the land for planting, and again at harvest time to collect and transport the crop. The money earned pays debts and buys supplies for the next season. For all intents and purposes, the Union Army took Storrs's and Coleman's livelihood. Their attempt to obtain restitution is an indication that they understood themselves to be citizens, and as such felt entitled to take advantage of opportunities enjoyed by citizens.

It is difficult to say whether the treatment of these two people, first by Union forces and later by the claims commission, was in any way racially motivated since, as stated earlier, obtaining provisions was a key to soldiers' survival, and necessary provisions had to be obtained wherever they might be found. In all there were eleven applicants to the Southern Claims Commission from Hanover County. The dollar amounts awarded to Frances Coleman and Peter Storrs seem very low, but on the surface they do not appear to be inconsistent with awards given to white male applicants (there were no white female applicants). For instance, of the eleven applicants, seven, including Coleman, received half or more of the requested amount. William Timberlake, a white man, received less than a third of the funds requested, and Peter Storrs requested almost ten times more money than he actually received.153

The difference between the amounts asked for and subsequently received by Peter Storrs is explained by the investigator, who begins his report by saying that he had talked to three white men who had known Storrs for a while. While B.C. Burnett, a white man, explained Storrs's circumstances and how he had acquired the money, the agent believed

153 SCC (Reel 48186) Hanover County File-General.
that since Storrs had been enslaved up until just before the war, it was questionable that
he would have had property valued at over a thousand dollars. Also, Storrs did not
actually own the mule he claimed, but he was merely in possession of it when the Union
soldiers took it. Storrs did receive $100 of the $125 he asked for the horse that was taken
and $15 of $26 he requested for three hogs. Surprisingly, he did not receive any money
for his house, fence panels, or farming tools. There is no explanation of why these items
were not allowed, especially since fencing was allowed for others, including Frances
Coleman.\footnote{154 SCC (Reel 48186) Hanover County File-General.}

While the amount of restitution may not have been racially motivated, racism may
have been a factor in the attitude of the investigator. The first sentence of the
interviewer’s report on Peter Storrs says that the investigator had spoken with three white
men, and although he did include the depositions of two black men in the final report, he
takes the word of the white men, who were not on the scene, instead of accepting the
black men’s accounts.\footnote{155 SCC (Reel 48186) Investigator’s report on Peter Storrs.}

Like Storrs and Coleman, many blacks understood the value of land, but unlike
those two, most did not have the opportunity to purchase real estate until after the war.
William Henry Winston, who had walked off William Carter’s plantation in 1863,
purchased land in October 1866, presumably not long after returning to Virginia in the
wake of his service in the Union Army. Winston bought five acres for fifty dollars.\footnote{156 HCCO (Land Deed Book 1), 360.}

Two years later, Winston and his wife Agnes partnered with Joseph Tinsley and his wife
Jane, also black to purchase 25 𝛼 ½ acres in Hanover County’s Henry District. The two
couples held this land until 1883, when they split it—the Tinsleys, who had paid one-
third of the price for the land, received 8 ½ acres, and the Winstons, who had paid the remaining money received 17 acres.¹⁵⁷

William Clarke and his wife Eliza were among early postwar African American landowners in Hanover County. County land records show that the Clarkes bought one hundred acres of land from a white couple in 1867. One year later Clarke and three others inherited land from a woman named Amy Winston. Winston’s relationship to Clarke is unclear, but the others named in her will all had the surname Winston. Amy was listed in the tax register for 1842 as a free black. Over the next decade she is listed alternately as owning two to four slaves and one to two horses. At least two of the slaves were minors, possibly her children. In fact, it may well be that all of those listed as enslaved were family members; by not formally freeing them, Winston could preclude their being required to leave Virginia, as a law of 1806 ostensibly required of blacks freed after that year. In 1868, Winston bought eighty five acres of land, the acreage that she would later leave to Clarke and the others.¹⁵⁸

Burrell Toler, the former constitutional convention delegate, purchased 25 acres of land in Hanover in 1871, shortly after his service at the convention ended. He bought the land from William James, his white colleague at the constitutional convention.¹⁵⁹

Records indicate that Toler and his wife Sally sold two acres of land to another black couple, John and Sarah Ellett, in 1873.¹⁶⁰ Later, Toler on two occasions borrowed money using the remaining land as collateral. He successfully repaid the initial loan, but he

¹⁵⁷ HCCO (Land Deed Book 15), 563.
¹⁵⁸ HCCO (Land Deeds Book 3), 192. Winston’s will was contested by a white couple who owned land adjoining hers. The deed had been destroyed, and the couple argued that the land had never belonged to Winston. Anne Snead, white, was still alive and she informed the authorities that Winston had purchased the property from her for $800. The land was awarded to the heirs.
¹⁵⁹ Richmond Dispatch, October 2, 1867.
¹⁶⁰ HCCO (Land Deeds Book 6), 316.
failed to repay the second loan and the land was auctioned off in 1881. Toler
disappears from the public record after the loss of this property.

Elizabeth Hogg, later Elizabeth Tinsley, described in a post-war deed as a free
woman of color, was also a landowner of some note. While the records are
incomplete, it is apparent that Hogg had acquired land before the Civil War. During the
conflict, she sold 104 acres of land to a white man for $4500. While her land transactions
were signed with her mark, it is evident that Hogg was not ignorant of the ways of
business. In 1874 she sold land to the black Shiloh Baptist Church in Ashland, held notes
on mortgaged lands, and even took the board of the Mutual Building Fund and Dollar
Savings Bank to court. By the time this institution declared bankruptcy, some of Hogg’s
land had somehow become entangled in the bank’s dealings. In an effort to regain her
land, Hogg sued the bank, but lost her case in the Hanover Circuit Court. She went on to
petition the District Commissioner of the United States for the Eastern District asking to
join in with A. Cappell and Company v. the Mutual Building Fund and Dollar Savings
Bank of Richmond. While she had to pay lawyers’ fees, she got her land back.

Elizabeth Hogg is a woman mystery and intrigue. She was a pre-war landowner,
but unfortunately, the prewar land records were burned in Richmond during the
evacuation fire of April 1865, where they had been taken for supposed safe keeping.
What is known provides a fascinating picture. She was a landowner, she was uneducated,
and she was bold enough to take on a group of white men in court to obtain what she
believed she was owed. Hogg’s actions may be a sign of the confidence she attained as a
free woman of color during the antebellum period. She may have always assumed the
system was open to her when she had a grievance. At the same time, according to the

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161 Although several Hoggs appear on the list of free blacks of pre-war tax records, neither
Elizabeth Hogg nor Elizabeth Tinsley is listed.
162 HCCO (Land Deeds Book 13), 81.
stories that have been passed down through the generations, Hogg was extremely light-skinned and could have passed for a white woman.\textsuperscript{163} This may have meant that Hogg had a white father in the community, someone whom she had learned from, and possibly even someone who was powerful enough to shield her. He may have also been the source of the land she owned\textsuperscript{164}.

The path to citizenship for most black Hanoverians was not economic. There was very little manufacturing in the county. Indeed, according to the 1870 census, there were thirty-nine “manufacturing establishments” employing one hundred and one individuals. Just under $13,000 a year was paid in total wages in manufacturing. over two million dollars was paid in manufacturing wages in Henrico County, Hanover’s neighbor to the south. Over $130,000 was paid in agricultural wages. Hanover was decidedly rural and it is safe to assume that most people, black and white, earned their living off the land.\textsuperscript{165}

Many black people, like America Denton, worked on the plantation where they had been enslaved. This was true of most of the laborers at Hickory Hill, reputedly one of the largest and most beautiful plantations in Hanover County before the war. Hickory Hill encompassed 3,360 acres located three miles from Hanover Courthouse, and was famous for its four-acre garden. After the war, the Wickham family, its owners, found itself with limited means, but eager to move forward. The Wickhams wanted to maintain their labor force, so they began paying their former slaves following Emancipation. Until around 1870, they paid the men $7.00 and the women $2.50 per month, and offered the former slave quarters as housing. In order to make sure that the workers remained all year, the

\textsuperscript{163} Inez Winston Gray Interview (April 23, 2004).


\textsuperscript{165} Historical Census Browser.
Wickhams only paid two-thirds of the wages for each quarter and then paid the remainder at the end of the year.\textsuperscript{166}

Many black women across the South initially stopped working outside the home after the war, and this led contemporaries and many historians to assume that black women were “playacting” and trying to be like white women. Historian Leslie Schwalm has found that black women did not universally withdraw from the fields, and that, when they did, it was not to “play lady.”\textsuperscript{167} Freedom meant being able to take care of one’s own family, and black women who left the fields of white employers did so in order to do just that. This often meant working in their own home gardens, washing, cooking, cleaning, and taking care of farm animals.

According to the Hewletts, an African American family that lived on the Hickory Hill plantation in Hanover before and after the war, many of their female relatives stopped working on the plantation after Emancipation so that they could focus on taking care of their own children. Safety was another reason that many women, along with their husbands, decided to remain in their own homes. Women who did choose to, or have to, work outside the home typically found employment in the homes of white families cooking, cleaning, and doing the laundry. They worked long hours for little pay, and often had to put up with the unwanted advances and sometimes outright assaults of the white male heads of households and their sons. This was a phenomenon across the South and one that black women had little means of controlling other than by avoiding such work altogether.\textsuperscript{168}

It was during this time that a remarkable phenomenon began to take shape in black communities throughout the South. Indeed, it began to gel almost as soon as

\textsuperscript{166} Hewlett Family Papers.
\textsuperscript{167} Schwalm, 174.
\textsuperscript{168} Hunter, 51-52; Litwack, \textit{Trouble in Mind}, 36-37.
slavery ended. Thousands of self-help societies were organized by former slaves, sometimes in conjunction with their formerly free black neighbors. Often these organizations were formed among friends, family, and church members who had known each other before emancipation. People banded together to relieve need and promote members’ welfare, a trend that had been evident throughout slavery and would continue through Reconstruction and the era known as Jim Crow.169

Evidence of black people finding strength in numbers and in organization can be found in the records of the Freedmen’s Bank in Richmond, which was the financial institution resorted to by countless blacks, and in the annals of black beneficial societies. Historian Tera W. Hunter asserts that mutual aid organizations “with antebellum roots in many Southern cities, rivaled churches in their popularity.”170 The names of some of these organizations, such as the Soldiers Aid, Laboring Mechanics, and the Sewing Circle, suggested their purposes and their membership. Many of these societies were founded by churches or at least had strong religious leanings. Examples of religiously affiliated organizations were the Sons of Simeon, the Sons and Daughters of Wrestling Jacob, the United Order of Tents, Daughters of Zion, Soldiers of the Cross, and the Christian Call of Love Society.171 Black men and women in Hanover were aware of the benefits of organizing. Burwell Toler, the former delegate to the 1868 constitutional convention, opened an account at the Freedmen’s Bank in the name of the United Sons of Love of Ashland. He was the president of the organization.172

In many instances, these societies acted as insurance companies. Individuals would contribute monthly dues in return for a decent Christian burial when the time

169 For more on African American organizing see: Peter Rachleff, Black Labor in Richmond, 1865-1890 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Hunter.
170 Hunter, 70.
171 Freedmen’s Bank Records, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, CD-ROM.
172 Freedmen’s Bank Records.
came. As these organizations evolved, they also endeavored to teach men and women proper hygiene, attire, eating habits, and public demeanor; in short, they taught their members how to take care of themselves, their families, and their homes. A phenomenon that historian Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham has dubbed the “politics of respectability” took shape. She suggests that black people believed the reason whites worked so hard to keep them down was that blacks did not know how to conduct themselves properly—they were not articulate enough or neat enough, they had unruly children, they spat on the sidewalk, they dressed inappropriately. Higginbotham argues that blacks concluded such behavior needed to be brought in line with normative definitions of “respectability” as constructed by the white hegemony and dominant white gender norms. Those who adhered to this philosophy believed that full acceptance would come with acceptable behavior on the part of black men, women, and children. Generally, it was the role of the women to acquire proper etiquette learn how to take care of their homes and families. It was then the woman’s role to make sure that black men understood how to maintain proper decorum in public and at home.173

The Baptist women in Higginbotham’s study worked with their families and neighbors to fight negative racial stereotypes of black men and women. This was not simply a matter of wanting to be liked by white people; it was a question of survival. White people’s stereotypes of black sexuality were used as weapons, a platform from which to attack and limit the power of black men and women who might be tempted to step out of “their” place. Many white people saw black men as a threat to the purity of white womanhood, and used that canard to rationalize the phenomenon of lynching—when in fact most individuals lynched had not even been accused of a sexual infraction. Black women, perceived by many white people as oversexed and unable to control their

lust, were being raped and sometimes lynched by white men, typically without recourse. They were victims of what historian Deborah Gray White has called the Jezebel image—the woman "governed almost entirely by her libido" —which had its roots in slavery and represented the exact opposite of the Victorian lady.\footnote{White, 29.}

While black Hanoverians continued to work to establish themselves as free men and women, the political climate in the state continued to bubble with uncertainty. By the end of the 1870s, the Funders were losing their grip on Virginia’s government. Failure to listen to the masses, and an atmosphere of “mistrust, jealousy, and intrigue” fueled by nepotism and backroom deals, left the Funders vulnerable to the Readjusters’ challenge. Not a group to give up without a fight, the Funders began a campaign of fear. They warned white voters that, if they did not stick together as a race, they would find themselves under Negro rule. In addition to this tactic, the Funders were not above election tampering and bribery. They also instituted a poll tax and reduced popular control of the government, cutting the size of the House of Delegates and moving from annual legislative sessions to biennial sessions. The Funders gerrymandered county lines to reduce the impact of the black vote, and they “abolished the democratic township system of local government and gave every indication that they intended to restore the aristocratic prewar political structure in it entirety.”\footnote{Moore, 25.} These tactics on the part of the Funders, however, succeeded mainly in pushing more of the electorate into the arms of the Readjusters, who won control of the General Assembly in the elections of 1879.

In the years from 1865 to 1879, Virginia experienced a good deal of political and social upheaval. White Conservatives struggled to hold on to some semblance of the state they had known before it was torn asunder by war. They understood that the era of
slavery was over, but they believed that there must be some way to rein in their former slaves, if not by the whip then by the law. The conservatives had not bargained for a population of blacks who would not be easily subdued. In particular, they had not counted on black people's interest in politics. They had expected a docile labor force, lost without the firm hand of the master. What they found instead was a labor force with a mind of its own, and a will to succeed.

Black men and women in Hanover County and elsewhere wanted to work, worship, and learn on their own terms, and for a while they accomplished this feat, with more than a little help from federal authorities, despite all the measures lined up against them. Black men voted, and black men and women participated in civic life, and in general began the process of building lives as citizens of the county, state, and country. They became, and remained, a force to be reckoned with.
CHAPTER 2
AN UNEASY CITIZENSHIP
THE PATH TO DISFRANCHISEMENT

From 1880 until 1884, the Readjusters, supported by the votes of black men and many whites, accomplished a good deal that helped to improve the living condition of black Virginians, but by the mid-1880s, the political scene had changed in favor of Conservative Democrats who were not inclined to offer many benefits to the state’s black population. As a result, black Hanoverians, along with their compatriots in Richmond, began to shift away from an emphasis on advancement through political channels and concentrated their efforts in the area of self-help through large-scale formal organizations and other avenues established at the end of slavery.

The Readjusters, an odd coalition of whites, blacks, former Conservative Democrats, and Republicans, supported the civil and political rights of blacks in the state in exchange for the black vote. During the Readjuster period, there were thirteen African Americans in the General Assembly, and they, along with their colleagues, provided a mental health facility in Petersburg for blacks, banned the whipping post as a punishment for crimes, and repealed the poll tax.1 While the Readjusters experienced electoral success in 1879, the Funders, who received only 42% of the vote that year, continually nipped at their heels. Two years later, in 1881, the Funders garnered 47% of the vote, but their numbers were still too low to overthrow what some of them viewed as the “middle class ‘riff raff’ that had taken charge of the government.” The Funders stepped up their efforts to regain control of the state government.2

1Morton, 234.
2Moore, 109.
By 1882 the Readjuster Party had begun to lose its tenuous grip on state politics. The fabric of the improbable coalition was beginning to show signs of wear and tear, however, the Readjusters went on to accomplish perhaps their greatest achievement on behalf of black Virginians. In 1882, the Readjuster legislature passed a bill which established a state college for blacks in Petersburg. The bill was proposed by Alfred Harris, an African American elected to represent Dinwiddie County near Petersburg. Harris had a reputation as a great debater, and it may have been this skill that helped carry the fight for the school during a lengthy debate in the legislature. Regardless of the obstacles, the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute (today known as Virginia State University) opened in October 1882.

While unsuccessful at stopping the establishment of a state-supported college for blacks, the Funders were not deterred. By 1883, the year the black college opened, the wear that had been apparent for some time became a rip in the fabric of the Readjuster coalition. Many factors played a role in splitting the party, including the unease of some white Virginians with what they perceived as too many benefits being awarded to black Virginians. Another source of tension was the Readjuster Governor, William Cameron, who appointed blacks to the Richmond school board; this move raised anxiety for conservative white people who feared that the next step would be mixed schools, which they saw as leading to miscegenation, and finally to social equality and the end of white supremacy.

When the split finally came, one faction of the Readjusters allied themselves with the Funders, and together they tied up the legislature and worked to finish off the

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4 The year that Virginia State University was founded is sometimes noted as 1883 and at others as 1882. The official college website marks the year as 1882. http://www.vsu.edu/pages/3881.asp.
5 Moore, 105.
Readjusters once and for all. The Funders were determined to continue to attract wavering Readjusters, and to this end the Conservative Democrats or Funders decided to revise their platform and change their name. The new and improved Democrats promised a government marked by its honesty and sound financial management and support of public education. With this new strategy in hand, the Democrats were ready to take back power, but they decided to add one more element to their efforts. They began a campaign of fear and intimidation.\(^6\)

In 1883, the Democrats warned white voters that, if Virginians were not careful, there would be a return of Radical rule in the state. Blacks would be in charge and mixed schools, social equality, and miscegenation would be the order of the day. This type of propaganda stirred up conservative white people across the state, including Hanover County where, according to historian Ronald Shibley, black men were threatened and stoned to keep them from the polls during the 1883 elections.\(^7\) The city of Danville was used as an example of the chaos that would supposedly run rampant all over Virginia if the Readjusters (understood as African Americans) were in power. Indeed, according to the Democrats, Danville had black policemen, merchants, and black citizens who were so insolent that they refused to give way on sidewalks to allow whites to pass—a direct assault on the race-based etiquette of the time.\(^8\)

Shortly before the elections of 1883, the racial tensions in Danville escalated into a riot where four blacks and one white were killed. The Democrats played up this “race war” in the newspapers, and the result was a large voter turnout, with the Democrats receiving 53% of the vote—enough to win back the General Assembly. Two years later, the Democrats took the governorship. While the Readjusters did not completely disappear

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\(^6\) Moore, 25.
\(^7\) Shibley, 113.
from the scene for another twenty years, the 1883 election was the death knell for the party.\(^9\)

Finally back in power, the Democrats still hungered for the complete eradication of the Readjusters, Republicans, and the general threat they associated with the black franchise. Concerned about the security of their position, the Democrats continued to engage in the practice of election fraud—by this time seemingly a Virginia tradition. Vote tampering was widespread—bribes of cash and whiskey were made at the polls, and threats of physical harm were not uncommon. A favored form of fraud took place through the use of the "tissue ballot." Prior to the advent of uniform official ballots published by one source, districts or even precincts printed their own ballots, which led to inconsistency and easy manipulation. In the case of the tissue ballot, the names of candidates were printed on very thin white paper, so several marked ballots could be placed inside a folded regular ballot and dropped in the box. Once the polls were closed, the ballots and the names on the actual list of voter names were counted. If these numbers did not match, an election judge would be blindfolded, and he would remove ballots from the box until the number of ballots on hand was the same as the number of names on the list. The feel of the tissue ballots made them easy to discern, so they would remain in the box while legitimately cast ballots would be removed.\(^{10}\) These practices discomfited some elite white Virginians who took pride in their reputations as ladies and gentlemen.

Conservative white people wanted to curb the black vote, but they wanted to do so legally and honorably. The first to tackle this problem from an ‘ethical’ perspective were William Alexander Anderson and J. Marshall McCormick. William Alexander

\(^9\) Moore, 109-118.
\(^{10}\) Shibley, 62.
Anderson was born May 11, 1842, in Botetourt County, abutting Virginia’s Blue Ridge Mountains. The son of a justice of the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals, Anderson left Washington College in Lexington to fight in the Confederate Army. Wounded early on, he was discharged on December 14, 1861. He went on to earn a law degree at the University of Virginia, and began a lucrative career as an attorney and politician. In 1884, during his first term in the General Assembly, Anderson teamed up with a member of the state senate, J. Marshall McCormick. McCormick, a lawyer like his colleague, was well-known for his work as the attorney for the Norfolk and Western Railroad. He served as a state senator from Clarke County, located west of the Blue Ridge Mountains in the Shenandoah Valley from 1883 to 1887.11

The Anderson-McCormick Law of 1884 was a set of amendments to the franchise clause of the state constitution which at least one historian has called the “most significant legislation drafted during the decade which followed the Democratic resumption of control.”12 Specifically, under Anderson-McCormick, the General Assembly appointed a state electoral board, which had complete control over all election personnel. This gave Democrats control of the election machinery, including the registration of voters and establishment of voting districts and precincts. Contemporaries touted Anderson-McCormick as a way to put an end to election fraud, but in reality it was “designed to give control of elections to the Democratic Party and thereby cripple the coalition of Readjusters and Republicans— the result was widespread voter fraud” rather than the promised purification of the process.13

Anderson-McCormick was not without its challengers. Governor Cameron vetoed the bill, declaring that its freeholder qualification—which required voters to be

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11 Tyler, (III), 241-244.
12 Shibley, 118.
landowners—was unconstitutional. The veto was overridden. In response, the presiding Readjuster election officials refused to turn their books over to the incoming Democratic officials, and a lawsuit followed. The Virginia Supreme Court, in agreement with Cameron, ruled that the law’s freeholder qualification for some election officials made it unconstitutional. The Democrats removed the freeholder qualification, and Anderson-McCormick became law.14

Penalties related to the Anderson-McCormick Act were supposed to make election tampering riskier and not worth the negative consequences, but in reality the consequences for violating election laws were negligible. For example, the members of the boards of elections which were appointed by the General Assembly for four-year terms were required to select a three-judge panel for each precinct. The panels were supposed to include at least one minority member, in this case a Republican. The three judges were typically all Democrats. While this panel configuration was a violation of the Act, failure to appoint a Republican did not void election results. Indeed, the General Assembly ignored or rarely, if ever, prosecuted the offending electoral board for what was only a misdemeanor anyway.15 All in all, the penalties were not much of a deterrent.

While there was no direct reference in the Anderson-McCormick law to blacks, Republicans, or uncooperative Democrats, the legislation provided election officials with the tools to deny the right to vote to anyone they believed unsympathetic to their platform. They could do this by rearranging voter precincts at the last minute and declaring individuals ineligible because they had not registered in the “proper” precinct, in the “proper” manner, at the “proper” time.

14Shibley, 119.
15Shibley, 119.
The Anderson-McCormick Law did not completely eliminate the black or Republican vote. Records, including election results, that clearly indicate the direct effect of the law are not available, either for Hanover or for other places. One reason for this is that Democrats carried Hanover elections throughout the struggle between the Funders and Readjusters, so a drop in the number of Republican votes might simply represent a discouragement with the political process on the part of Hanover Republicans. The limited records that do exist show that in November 1876, prior to Anderson-McCormick, 1,396 Republicans voted in Hanover. In 1883, 1,641 Coalitionists (Republicans and Readjusters) voted—an increase of 243 voters. The number of Republicans voting in 1886, two years after the new law was enacted, did decrease to 1,346, but so did the number of Democrats. In 1883, 2,138 Democrats voted as compared with 1,522 in 1886.16 The large number of Democrats voting in 1883 may have been the result of the race-based fear campaign. The increased number of Coalitionists in the same year may have been a reflection of the never-say-die attitude of some Readjusters and Republicans, and of their fear they would lose control of the state in that election. The decrease in Republican voters in 1886 may be a reflection of Anderson-McCormick, and the decreased number of Democrats voting might reflect their awareness that the Republicans were not a threat.

Since the Anderson-McCormick law limited the black and Republican electorate, but did not eliminate it completely, conservatives continued to contemplate ways to achieve this feat. The surest way to disfranchise blacks and their allies was with a constitutional amendment, but that was more easily said than done. Many among the Democratic leadership rejected the idea of a constitutional convention, because they

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16 Virginia Business Directory and Gazetteer (Richmond: Chataigne 1884-1885, 1888-1889). Political parties during this era changed names several times. In this instance, Coalitionists referred to Readjusters and Republicans.
feared that opening the possibility of amendments to the constitution might endanger the progress they had made toward total control of the state's election machine. Others, however, believed that the successes of the Democrats since 1883 showed that the time was ripe to put before Virginia's voters the question of whether or not to call a convention. In spite of resistance from the Democratic leadership, the General Assembly voted to ask the electorate, "Shall there be a convention to revise the Constitution and amend the same?" In May 1889, seventeen percent of the men of voting age cast ballots, and answered the question with a resounding no, 63,125 to 3,698. Republicans, especially black men, understood that the primary purpose of calling a convention was to take away the suffrage. At the same time, many white conservatives, concerned that they would not be able to disfranchise black men within the limits of the federal constitution, were afraid of incurring the wrath of the federal government.

Later in 1889, the Democratic candidate for governor soundly defeated the Republican, finally eliminating the Republican threat, but there was still a constant source of conflict looming on the horizon. While the Democrats regained control of state politics, they were not completely secure. On the political front, black men continued to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the Fifteenth Amendment and the Underwood constitution when they could. No black men in Hanover County were elected to office for decades after Burrell Toler represented Hanover and Henrico Counties at the 1868 constitutional convention. There were black men in other areas of the state who continued to serve in the General Assembly and in local governments, however; some held office until the late 1890s. According to historian Luther Porter Jackson, there were

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17 Shibley, 130-131. In 1886 the Republicans won six of ten Congressional seats. This was a short-lived resurgence.

18 Brenaman, 81; Acts (1887), 268.
black men in isolated instances who held office as late as 1925.\textsuperscript{19} The mere fact that some whites in the state were being governed in part by black men was unacceptable to conservatives; they concluded that the black vote would have to be eliminated.

Despite the stated goal of the Anderson-McCormick law, fraud in Virginia elections continued, and the general public and many politicians became increasingly frustrated with the regular lawlessness at the polls. At least one Virginian believed that the fault and the cure lay within the realm of the federal government. In an 1893 paper given before the Virginia State Bar Association meeting at White Sulphur Springs, A.P. Thom, a Norfolk attorney, read a paper he titled, “The Inevitable Adjustment of the Law,” in which he discussed the three amendments to the federal constitution that followed the Civil War. He found little to argue with in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments, but he regarded the Fifteenth Amendment as the cause of Virginia’s poor conduct at the polls. He explained that the need to maintain white supremacy led “[offenses] against the ballot to be condoned, if not approved. Every repetition of this [offense] weakens the moral sense of the people and is a blow at the safety of our institutions.” Thom argued that the “purity of the ballot [was] the safeguard of republican institutions,” and that the only answer to the present dilemma was a “statesman-like and patriotic reexamination” of the Fifteenth Amendment.\textsuperscript{20}

Rather than take on the federal government, some Democrats believed that action initiated on the state level could calm the citizenry. The Democratic leadership, which was still resistant to the idea of a constitutional convention, did support a change to the Anderson-McCormick Law. By 1894, another Democrat, Senator M. L. Walton, from Shenandoah and Page counties, had decided to take on the task of reforming the electoral

\textsuperscript{19} Jackson, vii.
\textsuperscript{20} Alfred Pembroke Thom; “The Inevitable Readjustment of the Law” (paper Virginia Bar Association White Sulphur Springs August 3, 1893), 22-23.
system in such a way as to limit the franchise and thus bolster Democratic control without attracting opposition from the federal government. The Walton Election Bill opened the door for even more fraud.21 A special constable was appointed to each precinct who could help the blind and illiterate, but this meant that blacks and whites who could not read and write were at the mercy of a Democratic constable who could tell them anything he wished. The most positive change brought about by the Walton Bill was the requirement that the state take over the printing of the ballots to assure consistency, and the ballots were to include only the names of the candidates and not their party affiliations. On Election Day, the voter was to indicate his choice by drawing a line three-fourths of the way through the name of the candidate he did not want. If the line did not extend far enough, it could have been counted as invalid. The determination of each ballot’s legitimacy was up to the election judges.22

As damaging to black and Republican voters as this law was, the goal of totally eliminating the effect of their votes had not been achieved, so the desire for Democrats to secure their positions remained. Despite all talk of reform and purification, politics in Virginia became more and more corrupt. Whites began using unethical tactics against each other when in the past these practices had been concentrated against black opponents. As J. N. Brenaman, the assistant secretary to the constitutional convention of 1901-02, remarked, “the negro as a political factor and as the balance of power in politics [has] provoked these tendencies, and the only hope of pure politics and the abandonment of these practices... [is] the elimination of the negro from the arena of politics.”23

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21 Acts (1894), 865.
22 Shibley, 158. The General Assembly also stipulated that the possible punishment for anyone found guilty of violating this law—was to be no less than $500 and no more than $1000 and a six-month jail term.
23 Brenaman, 82.
Although the political picture for black Virginians became increasingly murky throughout the 1880s and 1890s, they continued to pursue avenues that they believed would eventually lead them to full citizenship with all its rights and responsibilities. While the vote continued to be a valued indicator of citizenship, the paths to upward mobility that were more firmly controlled by blacks themselves had not altered much since the early days of freedom. They organized, worked to increase their economic strength by buying land and establishing financial security for future generations, opened businesses, educated their children, and leaned on their spirituality for strength and for answers.

Black people continued to believe that self-help through organizing was the key component to being accepted in America and for making better lives for themselves. According to historian Ann Field Alexander, self-help was the philosophy that "black Americans have traditionally resorted to when other avenues have been closed." 24

African Americans were not the only people to recognize the value in organizing. On the contrary, immigrants from Ireland and Italy for example, organized to help take care of each other in this country. According to historian Hasia R. Diner, there were many mutual aid and benefit societies aimed at making the transition easier for Irish immigrants. Like the black organizations, some offered insurance benefits, some offered a level of protection for women, and some would even pay to send a homesick girl back to Ireland. 25 Italian Americans also formed mutual aid societies, but they were not as strong as they might have been because they were typically based on Old World connections or rivalries, which limited their growth and ability to raise funds. At the turn-of-the-century there were over two thousand Italian mutual aid societies in New York

24 Alexander, 143.
City. Richard Juliani argues that the fraternal organizations founded in that city by elite Italians became the political voice of the Italians who arrived at the turn of the century. African, Italian, and Irish Americans all organized as a way to improve their situations in this country, but the results were not the same. In some cases, immigrants were able to use their organizations as stepping stones into the larger society, so that by the second or third generation, their descendants were a part of the majority. By contrast, while such organizations helped black people build better lives within their own communities, persistent racial prejudice prevented membership from leading to full acceptance in the larger society.

The situation was not the same for all immigrant families. Some arrived to find a hostile environment, and this remained true for several generations. According to David Roediger, many new immigrants, especially those of a darker skin tone, were considered to be not much better than black Americans. In some cases, this led to a camaraderie between blacks and the immigrants and to a rebuff, on the part of immigrants, of the pursuit of "whiteness" as defined by the stereotypical white Americans old-stock citizens. Eventually, fear that immigrants and blacks would unite may have encouraged white Americans to embrace the immigrants, but this did not occur overnight, nor was it an easy process.

In the 1880s, black men and women believed that political avenues were closing to them, so they augmented their efforts to gain citizenship through formal associations. Sometimes they organized into lodges or secret societies that pursued individual and

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28 See Roediger; Beito.
group uplift; this they defined as improving their condition through learning and teaching acceptable modes of behavior and dress, saving money, establishing businesses, and hard work. Members of black organizations established membership rosters, paid dues, and carried out their work. One society in particular, the United Order of True Reformers, which was open to men and women, rose to prominence in Richmond and Hanover County, and soon across the United States.29

While many of the details of the founding of the Order are unclear, it appears that the True Reformers began in Kentucky under the auspices of the Right Worthy Grand Lodge, Independent Order of Good Templars, a white lodge.30 There were True Reformers in Richmond as early as 1877, but the Order came into its own in the city under the guidance of William Washington Browne, who moved to the state’s capital from Alabama in 1881. This order, like many of the organizations mentioned in chapter one, was founded on the premise that black uplift depended upon the black community. Like the self-help organizations mentioned previously, the True Reformers also offered death benefits to members to assist with “good Christian burials.” However, Browne envisioned a broader mission than insurance. He believed that the Order would be “a great corporation by the Negro, not only for mutual aid, but also for mutual employment, by which thousands could obtain livelihood and the organization hold a commanding position in the mercantile world.”31

In order to recruit members, Browne spent much time talking to blacks in shoe shops and barber shops. It may have been in one of these establishments that Browne met Clinton Winston and R.T. Quarles from Ashland in Hanover County. Eventually Browne was invited to speak in Ashland, probably at Shiloh Baptist Church, where Winston was

29 D. Webster Davis, The Life and Public Experiences of William Washington Browne (Richmond: Mrs. M.A. Browne-Smith, 1910); Field, 143-156.
30 Alexander, 144.
31 Davis, 60.
an active member. After Browne's appearance, Winston and Quarles were so impressed by him and the mission of the True Reformers that they founded Fountain number four, the Mt. Zion Fountain of Ashland. Fountains were the local chapters or lodges of the True Reformers. The Mt. Zion Fountain became the largest branch of the young Order in Virginia, boasting some of the "leading Colored people of the community."32

By June 1881, there were fourteen Fountains encompassing one hundred and fifty members in Richmond and its surroundings. In October 1881, the first session of the Grand Fountain, the parent Fountain of the True Reformers, met in Richmond. R.T. Quarles and C.F. Tinsley represented Ashland's Mt. Zion Fountain. William W. Browne was elected the Grand Worthy Master, and R.T. Quarles of Ashland was elected the Grand Worthy Vice Master of the Grand Fountain, a position of national leadership.

As was stated previously, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, African Americans had begun to embrace modes of building a stronger black community outside the political arena. While black leaders such as Ida B. Wells, a nationally known African American journalist and activist and William Washington Browne along with thousands of black men and women touted the value of organizing for economic empowerment, they also believed that a unified front was important. This posture was not always possible. This is evident in the problems that developed among the True Reformers.33

In its second year, the national Order ran into problems often associated with growing pains. In a continuing effort to expand, Browne reorganized the group and developed new plans. His actions meant that some individuals lost leadership positions in local Fountains. This was not agreeable to many of the members who believed that Browne was trying to move them out and bring in people of his choosing. Many of the

32 Davis, 65.
unhappy members were part of a department of the True Reformers known as the Encampment. The Encampment consisted of past officers. Initially, Browne believed that the Encampment was good for the Order; he was pleased with the group’s performance, and he offered them the “right hand of fellowship and led them forward.” The shift in the good feelings between Browne and the past officers occurred when the new rules made the Grand Fountain supreme. Previously, the Grand Fountain and the Encampment had been equals. This change meant that the Grand Fountain was the sole governing body, thus taking power away from the past officers. The members of the Encampment decided that their group outranked the Grand Fountain and therefore did not have to follow the new rules.

Browne was not deterred. While some members were trying to overthrow his leadership, he continued to work in the field to expand the membership. He spent a lot of time in rural areas helping to organize Conventions, the precursor to the Fountains. Once all members in the Conventions had met their financial obligations to the Order, the Convention could become a Fountain.

By the time of the second Grand Session, which took place in Richmond in October, 1882, the internal conflict had turned into a full-fledged battle. Members of the Encampment took the floor in an effort to convince the members at-large that, even though they had belonged to the Order since the beginning, Browne was going to turn them all out. While the rebels were unsuccessful at the Grand Session, they continued meeting and eventually decided, among themselves, that Browne was no longer the leader of the True Reformers. A committee was appointed and asked to visit Browne for

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34 Burrell and Johnson, 48.
35 Burrell and Johnson, 54.
36 Davis, 69.
the purpose of obtaining all documents related to the business of the True Reformers. When approached, Browne refused to turn the items over to the delegation.

The members of the Encampment then hired an attorney to sue Browne. The complaint against Browne stated that he had entered the home of Harriet Watkins, a True Reformer and member of the Encampment, and removed the books, papers, and paraphernalia that belonged to the Grand Fountain. Browne explained at a meeting with the Encampment’s lawyer that he had boarded with Watkins and that, when he moved out, he had taken the things that he had brought with him, including the records of the True Reformers. He reiterated that he would not turn over the information. Browne was summoned to Richmond Police Court in March 1883 to answer all the charges against him. Browne represented himself in court and brought a convincing group of witnesses on his behalf. In the end, the judge ruled in favor of Browne.

Not long after his day in court, Browne called for an extra session of the Grand Fountain to discuss the actions of the rebel members. It was determined that the session would take place in Ashland at Shiloh Baptist Church. On March 26, 1883, representatives from both factions took the train from Richmond to Ashland. During the ride, supporters of the respective sides exchanged barbs, which provided a preview of the meeting to come.

Once the assembly of Reformers and spectators had gathered in the church sanctuary, a committee on grievances, which included R.T. Quarles of Ashland’s Mt. Zion Fountain and five other men, was appointed. Browne read a statement outlining his charges, thirteen in all, against the Encampment and its supporters. According to

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37 Davis, 72.
38 Davis, 75. In his book, Davis includes a picture of the church where this meeting took place. It is labeled Mt. Zion Baptist Church, but the church pictured is actually Shiloh Baptist Church.
39 Burrell and Johnson, 57. Information on how this committee was selected is not provided.
Browne the violations included: calling a meeting of the Fountains; discussing Grand Fountain business; and falsely representing four Fountains, including the Ashland Fountain, without the consent of the membership. The ten violations that took place during the meetings included voiding a death payment and having the Grand Worthy Master arrested.40

At one point the proceedings became so heated that a recess was called to avoid bloodshed. Once tempers calmed down and the committee selected to review the charges was ready to report, the group reassembled. The Committee on Grievances found Browne innocent and found those members who had tried to unseat Browne guilty. The committee recommended that the guilty parties be dealt with as the Order's constitution provided. Mayhem broke out in the room. Reportedly a three hundred pound woman and Browne had a tug of war over one of the books. While Browne succeeded in obtaining the book, he narrowly escaped a lighted lamp that was thrown at his head. At this point, the meeting was adjourned. Within a few months of this incident, William Washington Browne took steps to have the Grand Fountain of the United Order of True Reformers incorporated. The rebels incorporated under the name Grand United Order of True Reformers.41

This story suggests that the True Reformers of Hanover were intimately involved with the Grand Fountain in Richmond. It also illustrates, to put a positive construction on the events, that black men and women were very serious about their efforts to organize and were willing to challenge each other when it appeared that steps were being taken that would harm rather than help the race. African Americans practiced citizenship within the parameters that they had been relegated to or, to put the matter more optimistically, had created for themselves; a problem was perceived and the members proceeded to find

40 Burrell and Johnson, 60.
41 Burrell and Johnson, 67-68.
a solution and the majority carried the day. In this instance, this example fits in with post-Foner work such as Reidy and Schwalm who found more disunity than unity within the African American community. On the negative side, the True Reformers’ schism provides a vivid example of how intraracial issues that may have been petty and personal limited black uplift.

The True Reformers weathered this storm and continued to grow, adding several new departments including one focusing on new members. Browne added the Rosebud Fountain which he believed would produce children who would “ultimately bloom into sweet manhood and womanhood to be the strength and stay of the Order, [and] a blessing to their communities.” Browne believed that the women of the Order would be perfect to help develop these young “blossoms.”

Women had been members and even a part of the leadership of the True Reformers since its inception. Indeed, in 1881 the Order’s first year under Browne, Julia Fauntleroy served as the Grand Worthy Mistress. The following year Eliza Allen of Petersburg, Virginia, became the Grand Worthy Mistress, and served on the Board of Directors. It is somewhat difficult to discern the exact role of the Grand Worthy Mistress, but it appears that they traveled to different areas of the country to help “to get the soil in readiness to plant the seed of True Reformerism.” Presumably, Browne came after to reap what the women had sown.

On the surface, it appears that William Browne may have trusted and respected women and their skills enough to give them the opportunity to represent the Order on a national level, but his explanation for why he put women in charge of the Rosebuds, suggests that he saw women as useful mainly in their traditional role. In particular, he

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42 Davis, 97.
43 Davis, 91-99.
44 Burrell and Johnson, 400.
explained that he chose Eliza Allen to be the Grand Worthy Governess of the Rosebuds because she was an “ideal woman, motherly, kind, gentle, patient, with a natural fondness for children.”45 This leaves one to wonder if he used the Grand Worthy Mistresses to act as ambassadors because he believed their nurturing personalities would draw in new members. While he was comfortable with women as recruiters, he does not seem to have found them able to be the final word when it came to making decisions about the Order and its various components. This is evident in the fact that he appointed himself the General Superintendent of the Rosebuds, not a woman.46 This gave him the final say over the “ideal woman.”

The establishment of the Rosebuds came in response to the need to provide training for black youth. The Order wanted to impress upon its children the need to save and plan for the future and not to spend all one’s money on candy and toys. They also wanted to “teach them to live united and love one another, [so] they [would] not grow up with petty animosities in their hearts, finding delight in working contrary to each other, by talking, plotting and planning against the other.”47 This goal may have arisen as an antidote to the conflict between the Encampment and Browne. Rosebuds were also encouraged to remember the Divine commandment to “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself; and do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” 48

By 1885, the True Reformers had become an established presence in Hanover, and they were working to expand. The Rev. C. H. Phillips, a True Reformer and pastor of Union Baptist Church in Beaverdam in Hanover County, invited William Browne to speak at his church. This was the beginning of a major recruiting effort in the county.

45 Davis, 98.
46 Burrell and Johnson, 74.
47 Burrell and Johnson, 77.
48 Burrell and Johnson, 78.
After Browne’s appearance at the church, he and Phillips spent days going from house to house in Hanover telling farmers about the True Reformers and giving them tips on farm management. Ironically, neither man realized that they had already gained perhaps their most valuable recruit, William Lee Taylor, before they ever left Union Baptist Church.

William Taylor’s was an interesting story. He was born into slavery in Caroline County, just north of Hanover. By the early 1870s, he was living in Hanover County. In 1874, during revival week at his church, Taylor accepted the call into the ministry. The following year, he married Rachel Waller in Beaverdam, and together they worked as sharecroppers. They met with some success, enough to be able to afford to buy their own cow, but Taylor wanted more. He desired an education, so that he would be better able to preach the Gospel. To this end, he and his wife sold their personal belongings, including the cow, and by 1876, Taylor was studying theology and music at the Richmond Institute. After his first year there, he received a scholarship. While Taylor’s wife financed his educational pursuits and worked to support the family for three years, the need to work and raise the children took its toll, and Taylor had to leave school before completing his studies. Initially, the family returned to farming and this time earned enough to buy two cows. Taylor also taught music at Union, Jerusalem, and Bethany Baptist churches in Hanover. He was hired to teach in the Hanover Public Schools in 1883.

49 Gertrude Woodruff Marlowe, *A Right Worthy Grand Mission: Maggie Lena Walker and the Quest for Black Economic Empowerment* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 2003), xxxii; Alexander, 121. The evolution of the name of the theological schools in Richmond is somewhat murky. At least one source suggests that the Richmond Theological Seminary began at Lumpkin’s Jail, a former slave holding area, in 1865 under the auspices of the American Baptist Home Mission. This school evolved into the Richmond Institute, which later combined with Wayland Seminary to form Virginia Union University. A second source refers to the Richmond Theological Seminary as the name of the institution that would later merge with Wayland Seminary in Washington and Hartshorn Memorial College (for women) to become Virginia Union University. For information on Taylor’s marriage, see Burrell and Johnson, 377. 50 Burrell and Johnson, 379-380.
Two years later William Lee Taylor, a member of the Union Baptist congregation, heard William Browne speak and was sold on the True Reformers. Taylor began working almost immediately on behalf of the Order and soon had organized the Beaverdam Fountain at Pin Hook in Hanover. Soon Taylor, working with the Rev. R.F. Robinson of Hanover Junction, met with such success that he was authorized to organize Fountains wherever he found the opportunity. Taylor’s star was on the rise. His approach to building success for his family and later the True Reformers reflects his conviction, shared with the black community at large, that education, spirituality, and financial stability were keys to the attainment of citizenship. His career also shows that the city was not always the source of innovation and vibrancy, but that sometimes, the leadership flowed from the county to the city.51

In the meantime, nothing had changed with the Democrats’ determination to secure political control of the state, and they continued to resort to various means to ensure victory. They gerrymandered districts, threatened, bribed, and cajoled to make sure that their man won in any given election. One example of the lengths the Democrats would go to can be found in the story of John Mercer Langston.

Langston became the first president of the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute (VNCI) in 1886. The recognized son of a wealthy white Louisa County, Virginia planter and an African American mother, Langston himself became wealthy by an inheritance from his father. He used the money to obtain the best education he could, at Oberlin College in Ohio eventually reading for and passing the Ohio Bar. During his time in Ohio, Langston also became involved with an anti-slavery group and thus began a lifetime of work on behalf of black Americans.52

51 Burrell and Johnson, 375-386.
Langston’s term at the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute was short. He may have left simply because of his commitment to improving the condition of African Americans in a wider arena. He may also have given up his position out of frustration because when the Democratic legislature took over the General Assembly in 1883, it replaced the school’s black trustees with white trustees. Whatever the impetus for his leaving, Langston decided to run for the House of Representatives from Southside Virginia’s Fourth District. At the time, eleven counties in the Black Belt, counties with black majorities, made up the district. Petersburg, the largest city in the district, was 54 percent black. A Republican convention was held at Farmville in 1888, and Langston won the nomination.\(^53\)

After the votes were counted, Langston was in second place by fewer than one thousand votes, so he challenged the results before the Republican-controlled House of Representatives Committee on Elections. The review process began in January 1889. Attorneys for Edward C. Venable, the Democrat of Petersburg who had been declared the victor in the election, took twenty-three days to interview only two of Langston’s two-hundred and eighty-four witnesses. Several individuals were questioned, including Matt Lewis, a member of Langston’s legal staff, who was interrogated for thirteen days. Once all the testimony was collected, it was forwarded to the Committee on Contested Elections of the House of Representatives. On September 3, 1890, eighteen months after the initial hearings began, the House committee rendered its finding that John Langston had been elected from the Fourth District, but the Democrats boycotted House sessions for the next twenty days which delayed the vote of the full body. Finally, on September 23, the speaker of the House declared that a quorum was present and the final vote was

taken declaring Langston the winner. He took his oath that day and became, in the waning days of his two-year term, the first African American elected to the House of Representatives from the Commonwealth of Virginia.54

While the state political scene may have been volatile and unpredictable, black men and women never stopped looking for ways to establish themselves as citizens of the commonwealth. The True Reformers, under the leadership of Browne and with the assistance of Taylor and Robinson, continued to make themselves a voice to be reckoned with in the state. In the late 1880s, Taylor quit his teaching position in Hanover to work full time for the Order. By the end of the decade Taylor was a member of its Board of Directors.55

Outside of formal societies, blacks looked for other ways to establish themselves as citizens. Historian Fitzhugh Brundage suggests that one way blacks achieved some semblance of citizenship was to periodically take over public spaces for picnics, parades, speeches, and recitations. He argues that these events tended to disturb local whites who understood that, at their celebrations, blacks were teaching and learning worldviews that ran counter to the Lost Cause narratives in the white community that glorified the Old South and the Confederacy. In this way, blacks conveyed their cultural memories to the younger generation in spite of the problem of illiteracy. Indeed, “postbellum blacks, no less than whites,” asserts Brundage, “appreciated the power that flowed from the recalled past.”56

This transference of historical knowledge may have been what the organizers of the first National Emancipation Day had in mind when they began planning. Organizers, including executive committee member True Reformer William Browne, pointed out that

54 Alexander, 77; Shibley, 138-139.
55 Burrell and Johnson, 382.
a great oversight had been allowed to occur and that black Americans needed to take
steps to rectify the situation. While individual communities celebrated Emancipation,
there was no national holiday recognizing the end of slavery. A national holiday would
mean that whites would receive an annual reminder that blacks had not been content with
enslavement. The planners argued that there needed to be a national day of Thanksgiving.
A committee of black men from across the country came together and determined that the
first national observance should take place in Richmond on October 15-17, 1890.57

Notices went out telling of the big event and asking blacks to bring items
illuminating slavery and Emancipation, such as old clothes and other artifacts. They were
promised fair compensation for these items, which were to be used in exhibits during the
three-day event and eventually housed in museums. Event organizers also promised to set
up an information bureau to help blacks find relatives sold away during slavery. Black
Union soldiers were scheduled to conduct reenactments, and the singing of old plantation
songs and hymns was included on the agenda. It appears that women did not have
leadership roles in this event, but they did participate as presenters. For example, men
and women were invited to present poems, essays, orations and addresses to demonstrate
the intellectual progress of the race. Societies were asked to parade in their formal
regalia, and boys between the ages of ten and sixteen were asked to wear blue stockings
and belts in Union colors.58

While celebration and thanksgiving were important goals of this event, organizers
also planned to ensure that the national observance of Emancipation would become a
regular event on the calendar, a national holiday. To this end they asked for delegates to
be selected from each city and county to participate in a meeting that would take place on

57 Richmond Planet, August 16, 23, 30, 1890.
58 Richmond Planet, August, 16; 1890.
the second day of the festivities. The task of this group would be to determine a permanent date for Emancipation Day celebrations. Blacks in Hanover County met at Hanover Courthouse and selected eleven delegates and alternates to participate in this process. Once at the gathering, the delegates had to choose from several possible dates for a permanent holiday: September 22, 1862, when the Emancipation Proclamation had first been announced; January 1, 1863, the day that it took effect; April 3, 1865, the fall of Richmond; or April 9, 1865, the day Robert E. Lee surrendered. The debate was probably quite lively, since some delegates believed that the January 1 date was not relevant since so few were actually freed on that day. At least one practical businessman wanted the celebration to take place on January 1, however, because he was already closed for business that day. While the rationale for the selection is unclear, the businessmen won out. January 1 was selected as the annual date for National Emancipation Day.59

According to the Richmond Planet, an African American newspaper, the first celebration was a great success. The white-owned Richmond Dispatch also covered the event, and, while that paper played down the success of the first day, saying that only three hundred attended, it reported that thousands attended on day two and were treated to the longest parade of blacks in Richmond's history. The three-day celebration ended with a formal ball.60

The reporting of this event represents an example of the different shapes a story could take depending on who was relaying the information. The Dispatch, a conservative newspaper, may have genuinely considered the first day a failure because the number of actual participants did not live up to the predictions. On the other hand, the Dispatch may also have wanted to put in their place black men such as True Reformer and bank

59 Richmond Dispatch, October 18, 1890.
60 Richmond Dispatch, October 18, 1890.
president William Washington Browne, the Honorable William Gray, former Mississippi State Senator, the Rev. E.A. Randolph, of the Richmond Theological Seminary, and Professor G. W. Hayes, of the Virginia Normal and College who had taken on the leadership of this event and predicted that thousands would be in attendance.61

By contrast, the Planet reported that each day, including day one, had achieved success. Of course, John Mitchell and other African Americans wanted and needed this to be a successful occasion and could have continued to exaggerate as they had in the planning stages. Success would illustrate their ability to organize—a key factor in the uplift of the race. One of the many speakers at Emancipation Day pointed out that blacks "would in no other way receive the respect and liberties which were rightly theirs" if they did not organize.62 Success was also apparent in the sheer number of blacks who could be rallied, which might impress upon white people that black men and women were a force to be reckoned with. Brundage suggests the importance simply of taking over public spaces in Richmond and ending African Americans' "historical exclusion from 'ceremonial citizenship.'"63

While the National Emancipation Day Celebration represents organizing on a grand scale, blacks just as often organized on a smaller scale and around a local need. One example of this is the group of concerned citizens who met and organized around the goal of finding a doctor for blacks for the eastern end of Hanover County. Those present selected a chairman, clerk, and someone to offer prayer. It was decided that the Richmond Planet was the best advertising medium. While the success of the group's efforts is unknown, a notice advertising the position ran at least four times.64 Deciding to

61 Richmond Planet, August 30, 1890; Richmond Dispatch, October 15, 1890, October 16, 1890.
62 Richmond Planet, October 18, 1890.
63 Brundage, 60.
64 Richmond Planet, June 13, 1891.
discontinue the ad after four weeks may mean that a physician was hired. It could also reflect the financial limitations of the group.

Throughout this period William Taylor's star continued to rise in the True Reformers and in Hanover County. By 1891, he was the Grand Worthy Vice Master and worked closely with William Browne. On a personal level, he and his family bought a farm in Doswell in Hanover County. The following year he became the pastor of Jerusalem Baptist Church, also in Doswell. According to his biography and church history, he was instrumental in erecting a new, modern church edifice during his tenure at Jerusalem.

While a major leader in the Grand Fountain, Taylor must also have been an influential figure for the Hanover Fountains. Ten years after the volatile meeting in Ashland, the True Reformers continued to thrive in the county. In 1893, the Planet reported that several men, some from Ashland and at least one from Hanover Courthouse, had paid their endorsements or membership dues to the Grand Fountain. Later that year, the True Reformers collected funds to be donated to residents in Clarksville, Virginia, the site of a major fire and home to a large number of Reformers. The entire business district had been destroyed. Four lodges in Hanover donated a total of $10.95. That same year death benefits were paid to the family of Waddy Dabney of Ashland.

In the summer of 1894, William W. Browne, the Grand Worthy Master, visited Ashland to see the organization's new building. The Order had purchased 1 ¾ acres of land the previous February. A twenty- by fifty-foot deep, six-room, two-story building had been erected. A twenty- by thirty-foot storeroom and four tenant rooms occupied the first floor. The second floor was the site of the 24- by 51-foot meeting room with a

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65 Burrell and Johnson, 382.
66 Burrell and Johnson, p. 380.
67 Richmond Planet, August 26, 1893.
vestibule and anteroom. The rooms on the first floor were rented to tenants, and the hall
on the second floor was used by various Fountains for public meetings.\footnote{Richmond \textit{Planet}, June 30, 1894.}

Throughout the early 1890s, William Browne remained busy with the True
Reformers, but he was also very involved with the National Emancipation Day
Celebration movement. Indeed, in the early 1890s, he was president of the organization.
It was the hope of organizers of the 1890 Emancipation Day celebration that black
Americans would pick up the banner and make the celebration an annual event in their
communities. It is not clear how consistent these national celebrations became, but the
record does indicate that Hanover County blacks celebrated the occasion in January 1893.
At that time, it was reported that the celebration was observed \textit{as usual} in the county.
This is an indication that celebrations likely took place in the intervening years since
1890. The 1893 commemoration was held at the Sons and Daughters of Zion hall near
Peaks Station in the eastern section of the county. Over four hundred people gathered to
pray, hear a reading of the Emancipation Proclamation, and sing songs such as “Come
Kind Friends to Greet You,” “Slavery Chain Was Broke at Last,” and “Come, Come
Away.” They were also treated to speeches by some of the “best young men and ladies.”
William Henry Winston, the boy who had walked off the North Wales Plantation and out
of slavery with the Union Army in 1863, was now a grown man and the president of the
Sons and Daughters of Zion.\footnote{Richmond \textit{Planet}, January 14, 1893.}

The following year, no report was given of the Hanover celebration, but in all
likelihood, organizers saw the December 1894 letter from William W. Browne
admonishing blacks to remember and plan a special event for January 1, 1895. In his
letter, which appeared in the \textit{Planet}, Browne appealed to black men and women to
remember the joy of the freedom to worship God “according to the dictates of their [conscience].” He suggested that they meet in their churches and give thanks, and reminded them to tell their children and the “young and thoughtless of the Goodness of God in freeing [them].” According to Browne, righteousness [was] the right way to success, peace, happiness, and prosperity, and he told his audience, “in your speeches teach self-reliance, and exhort to industry, and economy in speech, money, and conduct.”

The efforts to establish an Emancipation Day celebration and the other work of blacks show that they were not waiting for white people to plan out their future. Blacks were taking matters into their own hands. As some, like Peter Storrs and Frances Coleman, had done even before the end of slavery, they continued to try to secure their economic future and to educate their children; they built social lives; and they continued to work out their souls’ salvation.

Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, blacks continued to pursue a living. According to the censuses of 1880 and 1900, there were a few black men in Hanover who earned a living as craftsmen—bricklayers, carpenters, stonemasons, wheelwrights, and plasterers. A small number worked as preachers, teachers, ferrymen, cooks, and messengers. A few black men who lived in districts close to the railroad found work as porters, trackwalkers, or brakemen. At least one black man was listed in the 1900 census as a horse jockey. He may have ridden or trained horses that raced at the Ashland racecourse. Jockeying was not an unusual occupation for black men. According to historian Jacqueline Jones, black men dominated horse racing from the end of the Civil War until the dawn of the

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70 Richmond Planet, December 15, 1894.
71 U.S. Census Records, Hanover County 1900.
Jim Crow Era. In contrast, black men had difficulties finding work in urban areas such as Richmond, but their wives typically found work as domestics and laundresses.

Married black women in Hanover in the 1880s and 1890s present an interesting contrast to their urban sisters, in that most did not work for whites. Most married African American women in the county, like most married white women there, were characterized in the census as “keeping house,” which is differentiated from housekeeping. “Keeping house” meant that the woman was what today might be called a “homemaker” or “stay-at-home-mom.” Housekeeping was an indication that she worked outside the home. In most cases in Hanover, the husband was the breadwinner; whether he was a skilled craftsman or a laborer, on only rare occasions did his wife work outside the home. This did not mean that wives did not put in a full day of hard labor cooking, cleaning, taking care of children, and working their gardens.

Some married black women in Hanover County did work as laborers, cooks, and domestics, but they were few and far between. Exceptions included the wives of Frank Watkins and Richard Venable, who worked as cooks. Ellen Brackett, who was married, was one of very few black women who worked as seamstresses. The rarity of this occupation among black women in Hanover may be traced back to the fact that the freed people’s schools in the county never offered sewing classes, even though sewing was part of the stated curriculum. According to agent reports from Hanover County, they were never able to find anyone to teach sewing. Another explanation might be that most enslaved black women worked in the fields and did not learn the skill of sewing. Since sewing was often passed down to girls from female relatives, it is quite possible that there

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74 FBSE (Reel 13).
were very few older women in the late nineteenth century who could teach their
daughters or nieces the skill.

Daughters in black Hanover, in contrast to their mothers but like so many urban,
mixed black women, typically worked outside the home. For instance, the teenage
daughters of William and Polly Braxton worked as laborers, and nine-year-old Emily
Spurlock, who lived with a white family, served as a nurse. They often found
employment as cooks, laundresses, nurses in white families, domestics, milkmaids, and
occasionally as laborers. It was not uncommon for these women to reach a level of
economic success. Matilda Derricott, Lelia Wingfield, and Isabelle Jones were all listed
as washerwomen, and they all owned their homes.

Most black Americans in the latter 1800s lived in the South, and “more than eight
out of ten lived in rural areas.” The large majority of black families supported
themselves off the land; a relative few were owners, while most were tenants. There were
two basic tenant systems in Hanover County. Under one arrangement, the landlord
supplied land, draft animals, food, and necessary tools. In return, he would receive one-
half of the crop yield. Some tenants made a deal with landowners who furnished land and
paid for one-quarter of the fertilizer; at the end of the harvest, the landlord would receive
one-quarter of the yield. Usually the tenant lived rent-free, often in a former slave cabin.
Regardless of the agreement between the landlord and tenant, the tenant usually ended
the year in debt—sometimes as a result of bad weather and poor crop yields, but just as
often because of trickery on the part of the landlord. Either way, tenants frequently found
themselves in a cycle of debt with no end in sight. Most sharecroppers were not as

75 U.S. Census Records, Hanover County 1900.
76 U. S. Census Records, Hanover County 1900; See Loren Schweninger, Black Property Owners
in the South 1970-1915 (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1990), 78 for a discussion of the number of
unskilled free blacks who purchased land in the South during the antebellum period.
77 Jacqueline Jones, American Worker, 316.
successful as William Taylor and his wife; most never acquired their own land or farm animals. Indeed, “for most rural black southerners, the line between freedom and neo-slavery was an exceedingly narrow and fragile one.” Unfortunately, the census does not provide race-based statistics on tenancy in Hanover for this period.

In at least one instance, individuals banded together to overcome the financial obstacles to land ownership. A group of fifteen Hanover County blacks formed a partnership known as the Hickory Hill Club in 1886. The group purchased 85 ½ acres of land located between Ashland and Hanover Courthouse. The land was to be divided among the members based on the dollar amount each contributed.

Hickory Hill is the name of the Wickham plantation just east of the Ashland town limits. The members of the Hickory Hill Club had grown up on that plantation and were either former slaves or the children of former slaves. They pooled their money and bought land. Unfortunately, the sellers of the land, Charles Winston and David Hewlett, died intestate before the deeds were properly completed. In addition to the problems encountered when an individual dies without a will, the club members also had to deal with the fact that Winston’s and Hewlett’s wives had not yet signed on saying that they agreed to the sale. At this time, when land transactions were recorded, the wives were taken aside and interviewed by the clerk or a notary public. They were asked whether they knew of and agreed to the sale of the property. The response was noted and certified in the deed book. Since this step had not taken place, an additional legal challenge was presented to the club. As a result, the Hickory Hill Club was forced to take the heirs of Charles Winston and David Hewlett to court to try to obtain full rights to the land. The

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79 HCCO Chancery Court Records (EF 88 1891-015 ).

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case of *James Shelton, Jr. v. Ella D. Hewlett, etc.* was finally settled in 1891 when the wives acknowledged that the land belonged to the Hickory Hill Club.

It is intriguing that this group decided to name their club after the plantation where they had lived and worked as slaves. Could this be nostalgia? Not in the sense that they longed for the days of old, but perhaps an acknowledgement of the idea that, no matter what the circumstances, home is home. It might also be an oblique proclamation that they had transcended slavery and could have their own Hickory Hill. Finally, "Hickory Hill" may have evolved into an ordinary geographic term denoting the neighborhood surrounding the plantation of the same name.

Black women and men understood that land was wealth, and they wanted to build wealth. Charles Clarke was the married thirty-one-year-old son of William Clarke, who was mentioned in the previous chapter; he probably learned from his father’s example. The elder Clarke began purchasing land not long after Emancipation. In February 1891, Charles Clarke became a landowner. He and his brother Garland bought just over 151 acres of foreclosed land for $682.62. Sadly, Charles’s tenure as a landowner was short-lived. He died of a malarial fever on January 6, 1892. Since he died intestate, the land went to Clarke’s father, thus expanding the older man’s landed wealth. The record does not explain why Garland, who outlived Charles by a number of years, or Charles’s wife did not get the land. The record does indicate that William Clarke sold the land to his youngest son, Alexander, who lived in Pennsylvania, for the greatly reduced price of $240.80

Land ownership was not simply important because it provided a place to live and put down roots. It represented a way to make a living, to feed families, and pass on wealth. Hanover was largely rural during the period studied here, and most African

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80 HCCO Land Deeds (Book 11) 603; (Book 3) 190; Hanover County Death Registry, LVA.
Americans who lived in the county worked the land. This was not an easy or cheap way to earn a living. Tools and draft animals were expensive, and they were necessary for success. As a result, farming was not a solitary endeavor. Black farmers in Virginia were not without support. The Colored Farmers Alliance of Virginia was part of a national movement of farmer’s at the end of the nineteenth-century to improve conditions and opportunities in agriculture. In 1891 the Colored Farmers Alliance of Virginia held its second annual meeting in Richmond. Most Virginia counties, including Hanover, sent a delegate to the national meeting of the Colored Alliance in Richmond in 1891. This two-day gathering featured George Williams, Jr., the president of the black Virginia Industrial, Mercantile and Building Association, as its keynote speaker. Williams began his speech by first invoking the Bible verse that exhorts one to “first seek ye the kingdom of Heaven and all things shall be added unto you.” He then added a charge to his listeners also to seek wealth so that other things would be added. He pointed out that “irresponsible, dependent, thriftless people cannot demand anything, politically, materially, and but a very little intellectually, regardless of their number.” Williams asserted that blacks could not depend on politics alone for their salvation; they also needed money. He charged them to launch their “boats out into the seas of industry and trust God to steer them aright.”

Williams shared with his audience the Virginia Industrial, Mercantile and Building Association’s plan to bring wealth into the black community. The group intended to raise money from blacks to establish stores and other businesses in Virginia and throughout the country. They would employ the thousands of young blacks who were graduating from schools but unable to find work. Williams presented to the crowd a

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81 Richmond Planet, August 15, 1891. F.G. Stokes represented Hanover County at the meeting.  
82 Richmond Planet, August 15, 1891.
model for what blacks needed to do to become a “nation.” In response, the Colored Farmers Alliance resolved to work with Williams and his group to help put the plan into action.\(^8\)

A few black men ran their own businesses in Hanover. William Wright was listed as a merchant in the 1880 census, and T. Major Lightfoot was also operating as a merchant by 1900. In the 1897-1898 Virginia State Gazetteer and Business Directory, three blacks, including J.C. Bagby & Company, and True Reformers R.T. Quarles and Clinton Winston, advertised as “general merchants” in Hanover County. Winston was also listed as an undertaker. It is not clear whether Winston was born enslaved or free. Family lore suggests that he was the son of a white doctor in the county, and his appearance clearly indicates that a very recent ancestor had been white. Winston was a successful blacksmith, and by 1887 he had purchased land on which to build a shop and his home on Hanover Avenue in the town of Ashland. He kept his caskets on the second floor of his shop. It was in this area that he prepared bodies for burial, and then returned them to their homes where they could be viewed by family and friends. When indigent people or prisoners died, Winston was sometimes hired by the county to build their coffins at approximately $2.50 per unit. Between 1894 and 1896, he built at least seven coffins for the county government and was paid $17.50. Winston also rented out a room to Charlie Long, who operated a barbershop.\(^4\) In 1896, Winston and his wife were mentioned in an article in the *Planet*. In the article, two unnamed male visitors to Ashland noted that they had stopped by to see Mr. Winston, and that they were impressed to see “his wife is pulling along with him; while he is striking upon the anvil, she is just a few yards from him conducting a grocery.”\(^5\)

\(^8\) Richmond *Planet*, August 15, 1891.
\(^4\) Gray Interview; Shalf, 102.
\(^5\) Richmond *Planet*, October 3, 1896.
While Clinton Winston did not make his living as a farmer, he did understand the value of land, and he worked to acquire enough of it so that his descendants would be able to build good lives for generations to come. During his lifetime, Winston owned at least twenty-five acres of land in Hanover not including the six lots he held in the town of Ashland. Some of this land he purchased in the conventional way; he received other real estate in payment for burials when the families were cash-poor.  

Education continued to be viewed as a vital component to the advancement of African Americans. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s the number of public schools and students continued to grow. In Hanover, by the 1881-1882 school year, there were 726 black students enrolled in twenty schools with an average monthly attendance of 576. There were 998 white students in thirty-two schools with an average monthly attendance of 691. The discrepancy between enrollment and attendance in rural areas was generally the result of family needs. Children were often a labor source for rural families and, during planting and harvesting times, students were often kept at home to work in the fields. The fact that such large numbers enrolled is an indication that, while not able to always keep their children in school, rural parents desired to educate their offspring.

The rural mode of life also led to erratic school terms. The state required that schools operate a minimum of three months per year, but beyond that period, it was up to local officials and often up to the parents to determine how long the school year lasted. At times, children spent so much time out of school that they had forgotten much of what they had learned by the next session. The average session in Hanover County was just under six months in 1880, up from just under five months in 1870.

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86 Gray Interview. Family copies of deeds show that Winston began buying land in 1882.
87 School Reports 1881-1882.
88 School Report 1880; According to historian William Link, sometimes parents requested that a session begin during the growing season if the children were mostly female or very young. William Link, A Hard Country and A Lonely Place (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).
Staffing rural schools was not easy, and salaries were typically low. In Hanover County during the 1881-1882 school year, there were seven black teachers and forty-five white teachers, a much greater discrepancy than the modest difference in numbers of black and white pupils would justify. Teacher salaries varied slightly from district to district, but white males consistently earned the most. During the 1882-1883 school year, the Henry District paid the highest salaries at $27.93 per month for white men, $27.89 for black men, $27.05 for white women, and $25.01 for black women. Salaries were contingent upon numbers of pupils in attendance, so teachers were also recruiters.\textsuperscript{89} During the 1883-1884 school year, the number of students remained about the same, as did the number of white schools, but the number of black schools increased from twenty-seven to thirty. The number of white teachers decreased from fifty to forty-four, but the number of black teachers increased from twelve to twenty-one. The Henry District remained the highest-paying district—white men earned the most at $33 a month; white women earned $30.62; and black men earned $32. Black women lagged far behind the other groups, earning a mere $22.50.\textsuperscript{90}

Throughout the period studied here, there were obvious disparities between schools, but it is not always obvious whether these disparities were based on race. For example, during the 1884 school year, there were four graded schools in the county—two for whites and two for blacks. (Graded schools contrasted with schools in which multiple grades were taught in a single room.) Each of these four schools offered two grades, and all had the same number of teachers. The two schools in the Atlee community, one black and one white, had a six-month term. The white school that was within the Ashland town limits offered only a five-month term. The black school listed as “near” Ashland offered the longest term of all, eight months. The available records do not indicate the reasons for

\textsuperscript{89} School Reports 1881-1882.  
\textsuperscript{90} School Reports 1883-1884.
these differences, but they do suggest that in Hanover, educational opportunities were not always skewed in favor of white students.91

By 1890, all the county’s schools were still frame or log buildings, and the number of students housed within had increased. There were fifty-seven teachers, forty-eight schools, and 2,200 classroom seats in the county for 1,713 white students. There were twenty-six teachers, thirty-five schools, and 1,700 seats for 1,892 black students. Students attended school for just over five months a year, and 113 black students received assistance from the school district in the form of textbooks, as compared with only 29 white students. Race-based data for teacher salaries are not available, but for men the average salary was $25.19, and for women the average salary was $24.19.

By the end of the century, the number of students attending school in Hanover had increased significantly. Of the 6,900 children eligible for school, black and white, 3,400 enrolled, and of that number an average of 2,600 actually attended on a given day. There were 3,510 black children of school age and forty-seven percent were enrolled in school as compared with fifty-one percent of white children. The number of white schools and teachers continued to outnumber greatly those for black children, however, which yielded substantially greater class sizes for African American pupils; herein lay the clearest disadvantage black students faced.92 In the 1900-1901 school year, there were sixty-two white schools and thirty-seven black schools. The county employed sixty-six white teachers and only thirty-three black teachers. The average monthly salary for white men was $30.36; black men, $20.00; white women, $23.55; black women, $20.46.93 There appears to have been a substantial reduction in salary for black men and white women teachers from just a few years before. The record does not account for the salary

91 School Report 1883-1884.
92 Historical Census Browser; School Report 1900-1901.
93 School Report 1900-1901.
cuts, but they could be due in part to how the information was gathered and handled from year to year. For example, in the early 1880s, the salary reports were given for each district, but by the end of the century, the averages were based on the entire county. So while the salaries were definitely lower for the 1900-1901 school year, some of the difference may have been simple arithmetic.

In his introduction to the 1900-1901 school report, the state superintendent of public instruction lamented the condition of the state's rural schools. He pointed out that many of the country schools were uninhabitable, and that the school terms were so short that students were not able to retain the information needed to build on for the next term. He also deplored the inadequacy of teacher pay and preparation, white and black. From 1890 until the turn of the century, black children and teachers in the Hanover County public schools continued to operate at a disadvantage. There were consistently too few seats and teachers, but this did not stop black parents, teachers, and students from making the most of the resources that were available.

Where the Virginia School Reports generally give a broad view of the county, the local newspapers often carried items of special interest from the schools. For example, every year the *Planet* published notices of commencement activities. These ceremonies not only recognized the graduating students but also the teachers. Often a dinner, prepared by the parents, was served. Sometimes the school news focused on the teachers, such as the time a notice appeared announcing that Samuel B. Steward had passed the public school exam and received a first class certificate from the Hanover superintendent.

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94 School Report 1899-1901.
95 Richmond *Planet*, April 28, 1894.
96 Richmond *Planet*, September 2, 1893.
Like education, religion also played a key role in black life. In the *Planet’s* issue of June 7, 1890, John Mitchell wrote, “If the Negro had one half as much money as he has religion he’d control the financial centers of this country.” Much as they had during slavery and the early days of freedom, blacks continued to depend on God to help them overcome obstacles. Religion permeated almost every aspect of black life. Gatherings, formal and informal—meetings, conventions, festivals—all began with prayers and sometimes hymns. Sixteen black churches were established in Hanover County alone in the years between 1865 and 1890—fourteen were Baptist and two Methodist. According to the 1890 census, the Baptist church buildings were valued at over $9000, with a total seating capacity of 3,550, and two Methodist church buildings were valued at $500. There were approximately 2,319 black Baptists and 99 African Methodist Episcopal congregants. One of the churches, Pleasant Grove Baptist, was established in 1876 by Ebenezer Baptist Church, one of the largest and most influential black churches in Richmond. In 1881, the short-lived *American Guest*, an Ashland newspaper, reported that an association of blacks had met in town. Its goals were to spread the Gospel, promote fellowship, exchange ideas, and encourage the intellectual and moral advancement of the members.

Much of the news reported in the *Planet* was from or about churches or religious leaders. For example, in the issue of March 1, 1890, Robert Taylor of Beaverdam reported that he had been tried by his church and that the congregation had found nothing to hold against him. He implored the reader not to believe any of the rumors he or she

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*97 Richmond Planet, June 7, 1890.*
*98 U.S. Census. 1890.*
*99 “70th Anniversary of Ebenezer Baptist Church Richmond Program” The Maggie L. Walker Papers, National Historic Site Richmond, VA; Evans and Rose White, 16.*
*100 Ashland American Guest, August 15, 1881.*
might have heard about his conduct.\(^{101}\) One year later, Mt. Salem Baptist Church, a
black congregation in the county, was crowded for the ordination service of two new
deacons.\(^{102}\)

Occasionally service organizations with a religious affiliation met at one of the
Hanover churches. This was the case with the Working Sons of Hope. They held what
was referred to as an "annual protracted" meeting at Jerusalem Baptist Church in 1893.
The meetings were conducted by three well-known but unnamed ministers. According to
the newspaper account, this organization was known for its meetings, and for always
providing a pleasant time.\(^{103}\)

By the 1890s, many of the black ministers in Hanover had been educated at the
Richmond Theological Seminary, a privately funded Baptist institution. A letter
appeared in the \textit{Planet} on April 7, 1894, announcing an upcoming meeting of the
school's alumni association. The letter, signed by the pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in
Ashland, invited the alumni to participate and to show their love and appreciation for the
school by sending in their annual dues. Also by the early 1890s, a local Ministers'
Conference had been established. This group met at least once a month in Richmond.
While details of the meetings are not available, a regular order of business was for each
minister present to give an account of the Sunday services at his church, which included
time and regularity of Sunday school and morning worship services. Shiloh of Ashland
was an active member, even sending a substitute when they their minister could no
attend.\(^{104}\)

By the end of the century, the Hanover churches founded soon after Emancipation
were well established and able to mentor new churches. Rockhill Baptist Church,

\(^{101}\) \textit{Richmond Planet}, March 1, 1890; Taylor never explained why he was tried.
\(^{102}\) \textit{Richmond Planet}, November 28, 1891.
\(^{103}\) \textit{Richmond Planet}, September 2, 1893.
\(^{104}\) \textit{Richmond Planet}, June 7, 1890; June 24, 1893.
founded in 1866, participated with the group of churches that determined in 1894 that New Bridge Baptist Church, also in Hanover, was indeed “a regular Baptist church.”\(^{105}\) Church members did not confine their interests to worship experiences. The people of Shiloh Baptist in Ashland threw a surprise party for their pastor in 1895. Reportedly the table in the home of the Rev. T.M. Allen was “loaded down with towels, handkerchiefs, socks, cuffs, collars, shirts, neckties, pillow cases, and other useful articles.”\(^{106}\)

While earning a living, educating one’s children, and worshipping God were all of paramount importance, so was a social life. Often African American community life centered around church or fraternal picnics, plays, and other forms of entertainment. Evening church services provided a chance to spend time with friends and neighbors. These events might take place inside the church building, outside on the grounds, or at a recreational venue. Wherever the location, the church was also a social outlet for the black community. For example, in 1892 advertisements for Bothwell Park, located at a village of the same name near Doswell, began appearing in the Richmond \textit{Planet}.

Located twenty-four miles from Richmond, near the junction of the Chesapeake and Ohio and the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac railroads, Bothwell was said to be the only black-owned park in the area. The ads touted its good water and swings which, readers were told, made it a great place for excursions, picnic parties, and especially Sunday school outings. Black men, women, and children continued to take advantage of this park at least throughout the late 1890s.\(^{107}\)

Black people maintained an active social life as the movement against their civil rights unfolded. They were not unmindful or unconcerned about what happening in

\(^{105}\) Richmond \textit{Planet}, September 8, 1894.

\(^{106}\) Richmond \textit{Planet}, February 23, 1895.

\(^{107}\) Richmond \textit{Planet}, July 2, 1892.
the political arena, but they did not allow the maneuvers of powerful white men to control every aspect of their existence. They were free to have social lives. In 1896, an article appeared in the *Planet* titled, "Old Hanover Heard from Again." The story described a social event that took place in Bothwell, which started at 5:00 pm and lasted until the next morning. The available details are limited, but guests arrived in carriages and buggies. The next year "An Evening of Pleasure" in Goodalls, Virginia, was reported in the *Planet*. Described as a "grand social event," the gala began between 7:00 and 8:00 pm, when "by the bright moonlight could be seen groups of fair young ladies and gentlemen, winding their way toward the residences of Matilda Green." As at Bothwell the previous year, the group socialized throughout the night. All-night parties attracting well-behaved guests had become a staple of black social life in Hanover County.

An organization known as the BPS Club organized regular socials for its members and friends. As reported in the *Planet* in March 1898, a party was given the previous Friday night at the Bachelor's Headquarters at 7:30 pm. The article does not elaborate on the exact mission or nature of the BPS Club, but the name of the Headquarters suggests that it was probably some type of social club for men. According to the reporter, "Vehicles could be heard and seen coming from different directions with the gentlemen bringing in their lady friends, while in spite of the inclemency of the weather many could be seen wandering their way on foot, and at 8:30 pm the Bachelor's Headquarters was packed from pit to dome and everyone was enjoying themselves to the full extent of their hearts desire." The revelers partied until midnight and then ate; at 2:00 am they played games and talked; at 4:00 am they had dessert before going home at 6:00 am. The exact nature of the BPS is unclear, but the news item makes it clear that its activities were

108 Richmond *Planet*, April 25, 1896.
109 Richmond *Planet*, February 20, 1897.
considered respectable; the story included a list of the names of those present. The respectability of the event is further supported by the presence of an out-of-town visitor, who attended the party and remained in the area long enough to offer a message at the Sabbath school on Sunday. The reporter concluded by complimenting the club saying, "Much credit is due to the B.P.S. Club for the manner in which they conducted such a grand entertainment." 110

These events suggest that there was a rather sizable black middle class in Hanover, or at least that the county offered social events that attracted blacks from surrounding areas. They also suggest a possible legacy to these black men and women from their ancestors. Enslaved blacks typically worked from sun up to sun down and therefore had very little free time. As a result, it has been well documented that the enslaved persons on most plantations found time in the wee hours of the morning for socializing. Perhaps by the late nineteenth century these types of gatherings had represented a cultural heritage from slavery. 111

While blacks were moving forward in many categories, they were still vulnerable to political attacks. The Walton Election Law of 1894 had not succeeded in disfranchising a significant number of blacks, so corruption was still the order of the day where elective politics was concerned. As a result, the General Assembly in 1897 decided once again to ask the electorate, "Shall there be a convention to revise the Constitution and amend the same?" 112

In response, black male Virginians formed the Negro Protective Association of Virginia. A notice appeared in the Planet on May 4, 1897, calling for a meeting of black men who would come together to organize against political attacks. The notice explained

110 Richmond Planet, March 19, 1898.
112 Brenaman, 82; Acts (1897).

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that "one reason why the Negro is so badly treated, is because he has no organization. Organization will beget for us that consideration which nothing else can."\textsuperscript{113} This gathering drew the attention of white Republicans who believed that its purpose was to organize against the Party. At least one of the speakers at the convention referred to this white Republican response, calling it mean and malicious and an attempt to "weaken the adherence of Negroes to Negroes." This speaker explained that the organization was simply a means of "self-preservation." The goal was not only to bring an end to white oppression, but also to help each other by clearing the streets and alleys of gambling boys, to protect black women, and to curtail black prostitution. To this end, the race needed more black colleges, newspapers, businesses, and schools of literature.\textsuperscript{114}

The meeting was held at the True Reformers Hall in Richmond on May 18, 1897, just a few days before the referendum on calling a constitutional convention was to take place. First, a "soul stirring" prayer was rendered, and then William Browne addressed the room with a speech noted for its "sagacity and wisdom." Next, letters were read from men who were not able to attend the meeting, but who supported the establishment of the organization. Speakers pointed out that blacks had always been loyal to the Republican Party, but they had been "wounded in the house of [their] friends" and "snubbed by those he had elevated politically." These things could only be corrected through organization, and no one else could represent the black man like the black man himself. These appeals to racial solidarity, of course, came in response to a weakening in black Virginians' political position through the distancing of the local and national Republican parties from black causes.\textsuperscript{115}

After all the speeches, those present resolved that:

\textsuperscript{113} Richmond Planet, May 4, 1897.
\textsuperscript{114} "Proceedings of the Negro Protective Association of Virginia Pamphlet" Library of Virginia (Richmond: The Association, 1897).
\textsuperscript{115} Negro Protective Association Pamphlet.
-Blacks had the right to sit on juries so that the federal constitution could be fulfilled.
-Blacks should appeal to county officials for black high schools and for longer school terms in order to combat illiteracy and ignorance.
-Blacks should abhor the crime of rape and the injustice of lynching.
-Blacks supported the establishment of a Negro Reformatory for Boys and Girls in Virginia.
-Blacks supported race enterprises that were honest and equitable.
-Blacks were Republicans and did not plan to leave or be driven out of the party, but racial interests came before party affiliation.
-Blacks were against the calling of a constitutional convention for economic reasons. They believed the state to be in a bad financial condition, and since the legislature had the power to amend the constitution, it should go that way instead of spending the money on an election.\textsuperscript{116}

This last point is a bit puzzling in that blacks had little reason to trust the General Assembly, by then all-white and conservative-dominated, to rewrite the state constitution fairly.

The Negro Protective Association argued that there were several reasons, in addition to being unorganized, that black men were not making more progress. Blacks needed political power—not a political role granted them by benevolent white allies, but rather power that they themselves had earned. Those at the meeting believed that this would lead to material, educational, and political advancement. The group went on to assert that blacks were not respected by whites because they did not stick together. They

\textsuperscript{116} Negro Protective Association Pamphlet.
were too quick to accept a bribe for their vote. The Association went on to offer the following ultimatum to those who would sell out the race: “If such a creature be found to be in our midst, now or hereafter, let him be pursued and hounded with ostracism, exposed to censure and overwhelmed with hate, marked as was Cain, and every Negro man, woman and child’s hands be against him—that he find no place socially, no asylum religiously, no refuge politically among us.” The proceedings of the meeting were printed for distribution. The back cover of the pamphlet featured a picture of the American flag and a smoking cannon. The caption read, “Our First Gun. We Mean Business.”

While the audacity of this association is notable, it also provides an example of the fact that the struggle for rights and citizenship by African Americans, as measured by political action, focuses primarily on black male participation. There is a possibility that women were at least present at this meeting, since it took place at the True Reformers’ Hall, and there were female Reformers, but since the notice appealed to black men, it is probably safe to assume that women were not included in the leadership. However, it may also be that, when the group referred to “the Negro,” they meant women as well as men, if only in a general sense.

The Richmond Dispatch did report on the meeting, giving many of the same details found in the proceedings publication, but never mentioning the pamphlet. It is possible that the pamphlet had not been printed before the story was written. Where the Dispatch strays from the report is in its assertion that the Association’s plans would never be accomplished because of the dissension within the black community. Indeed, by this time there was a rift between two of the most vocal black leaders, True Reformer William W. Browne and John Mitchell, the editor-publisher of the Richmond Planet, formerly a member of the True Reformers and loyal supporter of Browne. Mitchell had resigned

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117 Negro Protective Association Pamphlet.
from the True Reformers in 1894 after a disagreement with Browne. Both men preferred being in charge, so their split probably did not surprise those closest to them. Over the years, the discord between the men had become increasingly public, with each carrying his case to the press.\textsuperscript{118}

The longevity and success of the Negro Protective Association is unclear. Since Browne was a supporter of the group, Mitchell may have chosen not to write about the organization’s activities. Browne’s paper, \textit{The Reformer}, which he founded after his split with Mitchell, may have published information about the NPA, but very few issues of that paper still exist. Regardless of the fate of the NPA, the referendum on calling a state convention did take place on May 27, 1897. Once again the electorate voted “no” to a constitutional convention—83,453 to 38,326—but the results clearly indicated a change in attitude among the voting public, or at least a change in thinking among some of the Democratic poll workers since 1889. The significantly increased number of affirmative votes meant that the matter of amending the constitution was not dead. Indeed, it would soon rise again.

On March 5\textsuperscript{th} 1900, the General Assembly once again passed an act providing for a referendum that replicated the one in 1897.\textsuperscript{119} Black male leaders spoke out against the idea of the convention that they understood was being called to disfranchise them. Perhaps the businessman with the loudest voice was none other than John Mitchell, the editor of the Richmond \textit{Planet}, who took on the much larger Richmond \textit{Times}, chastising that paper for changing its stand, along with the Democratic leadership, and ultimately supporting a convention. He suggested that the \textit{Times} had fallen prey to the manipulative forces advocating the convention. If the educated among white men could be controlled

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{118} Alexander, 148.
\textsuperscript{119} Acts (1899-1900), 835.
\end{footnotesize}
and manipulated, Mitchell asked, “what must be said of the illiterate whites, who see
a Negro in every wood pile and race prejudice upon every sand-bank?”120

Five days after this editorial appeared in the Planet, the Democratic Party of
Virginia met in Norfolk for its convention. The Democratic leadership, no longer fearful
of losing control of the party or the state’s electoral machinery, decided to back the call
for a constitutional convention, but there were two conditions: the first required that
“there would be no disfranchisement of any person, or his descendants, registered prior to
1861”; the second qualifier was that the new constitution would be submitted to the
voters for ratification. The latter condition became known as the Norfolk Pledge.121 The
election was held on the fourth Thursday in May 1900, and the final count was 77,362 in
favor and 60,375 opposed to the convention.122

On July 14, 1900, a notice appeared in the Planet. The headline read “Wake Up
Colored People! Your Rights Are at Stake.” It was an invitation to all blacks, men and
women, to attend a meeting at the True Reformers Hall in Richmond. It said, “If you
want liberty, peace, happiness and protection come to this meeting.”123 The meeting was
called by the National Constitutional Rights Association and represents one of the few, if
not the only, time that women were directly addressed as also having a stake in the
outcome of the planned constitutional convention.

The constitutional convention began in Richmond on June 12, 1901, and ended
on June 26, 1902. It took place in the hall of the House of Delegates and included one
hundred delegates. Eighty-eight of the delegates were Democrats, including Hill Carter,
who represented Hanover, and Roger Gregory, who represented Hanover and King

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120 Richmond Planet, April 28, 1900.
121 Shibley, 219.
122 Brenaman, 83.
123 Richmond Planet, July 14, 1890.
The convention lasted for just over one year and reviewed the entire constitution, not simply the question of the franchise. One area that was closely evaluated was public education in the state. While the selection of textbooks and teachers and the management of facilities were discussed at great length, the topic that was as important to blacks as the question of voting rights was the financing of the public schools. At the time, the tax money of blacks and whites was combined and distributed among schools for both races. That system was already inequitable, as evidenced by discrepancies in class sizes for white and black pupils in Hanover County and elsewhere. Now, some delegates proposed to skew the system even further in favor of white students by mandating that the tax dollars paid by whites be allocated to the white schools, and the funds paid by blacks—a much poorer population—be used to operate the black schools.

A committee representing the Negro Business League of Virginia and the Baptist State Convention of Virginia petitioned the Committee on Education of the constitutional convention of 1901 to be allowed to speak to that body regarding educational opportunities for black children in Virginia. The request was granted, and Giles Jackson, an attorney in Richmond and secretary of the business league, spoke on behalf of the petitioning organizations on July 24, 1901. Describing the segregation of school funds as “[impracticable] inexpedient, unwise and unjust,” Jackson went on to say that “such a proposition should not find lodging in the hearts of Virginians, because it [was] the equivalent to the closing of the public school against the colored race.”

One of the arguments in favor of segregated tax proceeds was that education was supposedly harming black children more than it was helping them. White leaders argued

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124 Brenaman, 83.
125 Giles B. Jackson, speech before Committee on Education of the Constitutional Convention of Virginia in Session, Richmond, VA, 1900.
126 Giles Jackson, 2.
127 Giles Jackson, 2.
that educated black men and women did not always accept their place in society, so it was better to keep black children uneducated and comfortable with their inferiority. Evidence of this sentiment had been apparent as early as the 1884, when Absalom Koiner of Augusta County presented his resolution proposing the establishment of reservations for blacks. Koiner's document stated that in the “best educated and more intelligent of the negro population of this country, [lingered] a deep and increasing feeling of discontent with their present relations in the government, with the white race, growing out of their social inequality, and its attendant consequences, of jealousy and distrust, developing an irrepressible antagonism.”

Giles Jackson's responded by asserting that the idea that blacks did not benefit from education “should not be reiterated, not even by an escaped lunatic. And we will not insult the intelligence of your committee to further discuss this proposition, hence we dismiss it in silence.” Jackson apparently spoke at this convention without negative consequences. This suggests that for all the abuse black men and women took in Virginia there was still freedom to protest.

Giles Jackson articulated and related the concerns of his constituents with style and with carefully researched substance. Recognizing that whites did own more land in the state than blacks, he nevertheless pointed to the indirect taxes paid by blacks. He used the example of the tenant farmers in the state. He explained that a homeowner who intended to rent his property calculated that rent so as to cover his full costs, including taxes to be paid. As a result, the tenant (often a black person), not the owner, paid the taxes on that land. In 1900, there were almost one thousand black farmers in Hanover, and almost one-half owned their own farms. One-third of the blacks who earned a living

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128 The Senate of the Commonwealth, December 5, 1883.
129 Giles Jackson, 2.
130 Giles Jackson, 3.
farming were either cash tenants or sharecroppers and thus, by Jackson’s definition, indirect taxpayers.

Throughout his presentation, Jackson was careful to offer compliments to his audience, reassuring the white convention delegates in the room that he was not attacking them personally. He attempted to appeal to their sense of decency and honor, but if that did not work, he was not above shaming them. He pointed out the great strides that black men and women had made in the thirty-five years since the end of slavery, in spite of having been “turned loose without a dollar or one foot of land.” Jackson added “that our white friends owe us at least a debt of gratitude for the 250 years of valuable services rendered them by us and our forefathers in clearing up the forest and tilling the soil as fast as the white man drove the Indians back and for the faithfulness and fidelity of the Negro towards the white man during the four years of war.”

Jackson’s assertion that segregating the taxes would have been tantamount to closing the black schools was exaggerated, yet the scheme would indeed have damaged the black schools in Hanover County. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, the capitation tax revenues, used for the support of education, for black citizens of Hanover were always significantly less than those for whites. In 1880 whites paid $2,098 and blacks $1,489. In 1893, whites were taxed $2,046, while blacks paid $1,401. Blacks consistently paid fewer taxes, but sent somewhat more students to school. There were already too few black schools in Hanover. Segregated funds might well have meant that some of those schools would have closed, and teachers certainly would have been let go. This would have been devastating for people so intent on improving the condition of their children through education.

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131 Giles Jackson, 26.
132 Giles Jackson, 28.
133 Auditor of Public Accounts, Hanover County, Virginia Land Tax Records, LVA, 1900.
Jackson performed skillfully before the Committee on Education. According to historian Ann Field Alexander who was an adherent of Booker T. Washington, had a reputation as a talented speaker known for getting what he wanted from white people. He had begun life enslaved in Goochland County; after the war, he had moved to Richmond and proceeded to move up steadily with the assistance of white men and women, eventually passing the bar and practicing in the capital city. He referred to himself as a white man's "nigger," which made him unpopular with some blacks, but also recommended him to potential black clients who needed to navigate the white-dominated court system. Jackson was articulate, but would shed that persona and speak in black dialect if the need arose. This may have been what he was doing in an 1890 hearing that was reported in the *Democrat*, a Richmond newspaper. The article portrayed Jackson as an ignorant bumpkin after he reportedly responded to a letter that was relevant to his client's case, by saying, "There aint nuffin' in dis, not a thing." The paper also referred to him as a "sleek-headed, saucy... [ebony] lawyer." Most likely, however, Jackson spoke in this way in order to obtain some benefit for his client.\(^{134}\)

This type of disrespect for an educated black man was not unusual for the *Democrat*. The same year that the paper ridiculed Jackson, it also took aim at John Mercer Langston, the former college president and Congressman. Referring to Langston's successful challenge of the Congressional election results in his district, the paper called him a "coon statesman."\(^{135}\) Ridicule had become a means to reiterate white supremacy even over educated black men.

When whites were not openly insulting blacks, they were often paternalistic. One example of this was William Anderson's, co-author of the Anderson-McCormick Act, attitude regarding black disfranchisement. He explained it best when he said, "Now let

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\(^{135}\) Richmond *Democrat*, September 25, 1890.
me be understood. I have no prejudice whatever against the negro race. I have the
kindest feelings for the people of that race. Those of them whom I have known have been
and are to-day my friends, and I am their friend. I appreciate and value the good traits of
the race, and they possess many good traits. But capacity for self-government is not as
yet one of them.\textsuperscript{136} Along the same lines, Richard McIlwaine, a constitutional
convention delegate from Prince Edward County, boasted of his ability to get along with
black men and, like Anderson, proclaimed that he counted many as friends. At the same
time he believed in the "absolute social and domestic separation" of the races.\textsuperscript{137}

On some level, Anderson and McIlwaine may have believed that they had the best
interests of black people in mind, but both still professed to think of grown men as too
childlike to participate in the political process or interact with whites from an equal point
of view. In fact, it may have been the assertiveness of black Virginians rather than their
purported lack of sophistication that most worried influential whites. Precisely because
black people worked hard to educate themselves, earn a living, and shape their destiny as
Virginians, their participation in the electoral process represented a threat to white leaders
and white control that had to be eliminated. White men and women all over the South had
come to view black people as a menace, as part of an epidemic. Indeed, black men in
politics became a "cancer" that had to be removed.\textsuperscript{138} This was especially true of the so-called "new-issue" Negro—those African Americans who had never known slavery
personally, and therefore had not learned the "proper" way to behave around white men
and women. These were black people who expected to be treated with respect. Simply

\begin{footnotes}
\item[136] William A. Anderson "Virginia Constitutions" speech before Virginia Bar Association (Ft.
Monroe, VA 1900).
\item[137] Richard McIlwaine Address to the Democratic Members of the Constitutional Convention,
Richmond, VA, 1902.
\item[138] Litwack, \textit{Trouble in Mind}, 215.
\end{footnotes}
put, the "new-issue" Negro did not know his or her "place" and was not interested in learning it if it meant kowtowing to white people.\textsuperscript{139}

It took a year for the convention delegates to review and amend the entire state constitution, and to make the changes they desired. When the work was finished, J. W. Daniel, said to the convention, "I believe, Mr. President, that it is the best Constitution ever framed for the Commonwealth of Virginia. I think that it will promote the happiness and best interests of our people."\textsuperscript{140}

Contrary to Daniel's proclamation, the new constitution did not come into being without controversy. Indeed, what made the constitution contentious even among white Virginians was not the changes it embodied, but how those changes were to be instituted. There were two choices. The document could be submitted to the people, who would vote to accept or reject it; this would have fulfilled the Democratic Party's Norfolk Pledge. The second choice was for the delegates simply to proclaim the document they themselves had written to be the new constitution of the Commonwealth of Virginia, bypassing any popular referendum.\textsuperscript{141}

The debate over how to adopt the new constitution had been going on since the early days of the convention. On September 5, 1901 Carter Glass, a prominent white delegate from Lynchburg, addressed the convention in a speech he titled, "A Conclusive Argument Showing Why We Should Submit the New Constitution to the White Electorate." He believed that the convention was moving slowly because the body had failed to determine how the final product would be handled.\textsuperscript{142} Some of the delegates

\textsuperscript{139}Litwack, \textit{Trouble in Mind}, 214-216.
\textsuperscript{141}Brenaman, 91; Shibley, 239-242.
\textsuperscript{142}Richmond \textit{Dispatch}, September 6, 1901. The Alabama convention, which had assembled at almost the same time as the Virginians, had completed their efforts to disfranchise blacks and retired to their respective homes by the end of the summer.
proposed putting the constitution to the vote of those who currently held the franchise. Still others knew that, if the existing electorate voted, the constitution would probably not be confirmed, because voters—blacks and some whites as well—might fear their own disfranchisement under the new charter.

In answer to this concern, a suggestion was made that the vote on the constitution should be given to those who would have the vote based on the new constitution. This would have eliminated the supposed black threat. Also, allowing at least the white citizenry to vote would have assuaged the guilt of those not comfortable with the notion of proclaiming the constitution in effect. This was the choice of Carter Glass. He argued that the new constitution should be submitted to whites only. After all, why allow a portion of the population already declared unworthy of the privilege of voting to do just that? Indeed, Glass said he had promised his constituents that he “would never...under any circumstances vote to permit 146,000 illiterate blacks to pass upon the work of a body of Virginia gentlemen.” At this statement, the audience broke into applause.143

The final decision was not made in September, 1901, however. Indeed, the question had not been settled even at the end of the state convention. Delegates continued to argue that taking the new constitution to the current electorate would mean its demise, since black men were still a part of the electorate. Delegates Richard McIlwaine of Prince Edward and Hill Carter of Hanover held this point of view. McIlwaine argued that the delegates at the Democratic Convention had overstepped their power when they adopted the Norfolk Pledge. He went on to say, “This is a reductio ad absurdum, and I therefore assert, without fear of successful contradiction, that the dictum of that Convention has no more legitimate force on this

143 Carter Class “A Conclusive Argument Showing Why We Should Submit the New Constitution to the White Electorate” speech before Virginia Constitutional Convention, Richmond, VA, 1.
Like Mcllwaine, Hanover County’s own Hill Carter rationalized the decision not to allow the public to vote on the constitution. He believed that if the new constitution was good for the people, then its proclamation by the delegates was more than acceptable. He certainly felt that he had the approval of his fellow Hanoverians to proclaim the new constitution; indeed he described their support as “almost unanimous.” The “almost” was likely a backhanded recognition that there were still black and Republican voters living in the county.145

In the end, the new constitution was put into effect by proclamation of the convention, and no Virginian white or black, outside those attending the convention, had the opportunity to cast his vote in favor of or against the new document. In truth, if the final document had been brought before the people, it probably would not have passed without the usual fraudulent tactics employed by the Democrats. Most black men would have voted against it, and so would most white Republicans. In response, John Mitchell of the Richmond Planet invoked the names of the country’s forefathers. He suggested that the tendency of the Democrats to “ape Patrick Henry and imitate Thomas Jefferson was amusing and alarming, because they were ‘championing the very principles which these distinguished Virginians abhorred.’”146

In 1928, historian Ralph Clipman McDanel would write about the 1901-1902 constitutional convention with the advantage of hindsight. He argued that there was at least one unintended consequence that accompanied the disfranchisement of black men.

We may conclude by saying that the suffrage provisions

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144 Mcllwaine, 11.
145 Debates, (1901-1902) 170-173.
146 The Richmond Planet, June 1902.
of the constitution of 1902 have resulted in eliminating
the negro; that the elimination of the negro has brought
a feeling of security and an attitude of indifference among
the whites; that the predicted independence of thought and
action among the white voters, relieved of the negro menace,
has failed to materialize; and that, as a result, the State lacks
a real party of opposition, is still solidly Democratic, and
has delivered itself into the hands of less 10 [per cent.] of
its citizens.\footnote{Ralph Clipman McDanel \textit{The Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1901-1902} (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1928), 58.}

For years, conservative white Virginians had argued that they were forced to vote
as a bloc in order to maintain white supremacy. While they had differences among
themselves, they could not give free rein to those differences for fear of splitting their
ranks and losing power. They argued that, once the black vote was no longer an issue,
they would then be free to debate issues freely among themselves. In reality, once the
black male vote was eliminated, Virginia became a one-party state, as did the rest of the
South. Poll taxes and other impediments not only excluded blacks, but also discouraged
white men of modest means or of little education from voting, and the lack of political
competition promoted voter apathy. Voter turnout in Virginia became perhaps the lowest
of any state in the country—those who still voted constituting the ten percent Ralph
McDanel referred to—and so it would remain chronically until well after World War II.

During the period from 1880 to 1901, the leadership in the black community
championed, louder than ever, the need to organize and build from within. One effort
toward this end was the campaign of black men including William Browne and William
Taylor to build up an organization that would serve not only as an insurance agency, but
also as a foundation on which the black community could stand. This struggle, which
aimed to organize blacks throughout the South and even beyond, took shape largely in
Richmond and in Hanover. Similarly, blacks in and beyond Hanover County planned an annual national celebration of Emancipation. On the local level, they invested energy in neighborhood-improvement efforts, such as the search for a doctor to serve a Hanover community. Black Hanoverians built homes and churches and fought for the best education they could give their children.

Building from within did not mean living in a cocoon. Black men and women worked hard to stave off white racism, but they did not succeed in preventing the ultimate loss—that of the franchise. While the threat that whites perceived when they contemplated black voting had been quashed by 1902, the very real threat that blacks themselves faced took on an entirely new dimension. While blacks were no longer enslaved, neither were they full citizens.

While this did not bode well for black men and women, their setbacks also seem to have motivated them to a new level of resistance and survival. Contrary to the Planet editor's fear that black people would lose their will to participate in the civil life if they lost the vote, black men and women rallied. Even as whites lost interest in politics, ironically, blacks awakened to the challenge. They seemed to take on oppression with the notion that success was the best revenge.

While black Hanoverians did not protest in the streets, black women and men steadily acquired land, built homes, churches, businesses, and schools. They did not cower or flee, but rather took full advantage of the rights and privileges that remained available to them. They built lives for themselves and their children/progeny that in many ways unfolded separately from those of their white neighbors. They established living situations that ran parallel to those of whites. The old Christian admonition "to be in the world, but not of it" might help to explain the black way of life during the first years of the twentieth century. Black people of that time were in the white-dominated world, but
they were only partly not of it. In short, they established a pattern of self-help that would hold for decades to come. As the old spiritual puts it, “They made a way out of no way.”
CHAPTER 3
JIM CROW: THE FIRST GENERATION

By the summer of 1902, Virginia's state constitutional convention had adjourned. The new constitution had been proclaimed, a celebratory banquet held in Richmond with all the required speeches, acclamations, and awards, and an oak sapling given to each convention delegate to plant in honor of their accomplishments. Hill Carter proudly planted his oak in the front yard of his Ashland home. The press, black and white, had moved on to cover other stories, and black men and women across the state continued to pursue avenues to improve the living conditions, opportunities, and standing of the race outside the political arena.¹

Part of the inspiration for this dissertation topic stems from comments heard in recent times among African Americans in Hanover County. Some black Hanoverians believe that their ancestors simply accepted the change in their political situation without a mutter back in 1902. This assumption practically begged to be investigated. It is true that the demonstrations that marked the Civil Rights Movement during the mid-twentieth century were not seen locally at the dawn of the twentieth century, but neither did black Hanoverians at that time withdraw with their tails tucked between their legs. That response would have been alien to their and their ancestor's mode of operation.

The response of blacks in Hanover to disfranchisement was not unique to the county; African Americans across the South drew together as they had always done in the face of adversity and found the strength to survive and thrive. Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton argued in 1967 that, "before a group can enter the open society, it must first

¹ Hanover Herald Progress May 14, 1959; Richmond Daily Dispatch, June 27, 1902.
close ranks and build its own institutions."² This method has been used by every group that entered this country, and black Americans were not different in their inclination. They opened businesses, small and large. They built their churches, fraternal organizations, banks, and insurance companies. The comparison ends at the juncture where other groups were able to merge into the mainstream within a generation or two, while African Americans were not able to overcome the racism that blocked them from gaining any significant sources of power outside their own communities. So, instead of moving into the larger society, black Hanoverians lived with Jim Crow by building lives that ran parallel to those of white people.

When it was necessary, beneficial, or unavoidable to interact with white people, they did so, but at other times they built lives separate and apart from their white counterparts. James C. Scott, a political scientist, takes a close look at the idea of blacks existing in two worlds. He suggests that there are public and private transcripts, which indicate the way that members of the subordinate group communicate with each other and the ways they interact with the dominant group. He considers this a type of performance in which "subordinates collude to create a piece of theater that serves their superior's view of the situation but that is maintained in [the subordinates'] own interests."³ A different way to describe the way of life that blacks in Hanover County established might be to consider the old Christian idea of living in the world, but not being of the world.

When the constitutional convention ended in June 1902, black Hanoverians did not mark the loss of the franchise in any noticeable way. In fact, life in the county

reflected its usual calm for most of the summer, until the night of August 30, 1902, two months after the convention concluded.

ALMOST A RACE RIOT, TROUBLE AT ASHLAND, THE TROUBLE AT ASHLAND. These headlines appeared, respectively, in the Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, on August 31, 1902, and September 2, 1902, and in the Richmond *Planet* on September 6, 1902. There is no obvious connection between the Ashland riot and the disfranchisement of Virginia's blacks, but it may be a reflection of the tension caused by the actions of the people John Mitchell referred to as the "negro-hating element."5

The story of the riot begins a few days before the end of August, and at its center was a well-worn motif underlying much early twentieth-century violence against African Americans—a white person had allegedly been assaulted by a black person. There are two accounts of what happened: In an interview conducted in the 1980s, Charles Stebbins II, who was fifteen in 1902, recalled that the riot was caused by an attack on a young white girl. A contemporary newspaper account reported that a white man had been badly beaten by a black man in Ashland. The contemporary account is probably accurate; however, in this instance, either version of the story would have been enough to raise the ire of southern white people and instigate talk of lynching.6

An unnamed black man was arrested sometime prior to August 30 and placed in the Ashland jail. White people in the town were outraged by the man's alleged crime, and soon rumors of a gathering lynch mob began to circulate among the townspeople, most likely, blacks as well as whites. Word quickly reached the general store and tying lot owned by Charles Stebbins I, who was assisted by his son.7 According to the younger

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4 Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, August 31, 1902 and September 2, 1902; Richmond *Planet*, September 6, 1902.
5 Richmond *Planet*, September 6, 1902.
6 Nancy Hugo, a white woman, interviewed, Charles Stebbins II, but date is not given on the transcript. The interview probably took place in the 1980s. See also Shalf, 171.
7 The tying lot was an open space next to the store where individuals could tie their horses.
Stebbins, white Ashlanders were “terribly upset,” and talk of lynching was heard among the customers in his father’s store. Stebbins recalled that the Commonwealth’s Attorney for Hanover, George Haw, asked him what he thought about the rumors. Stebbins replied, “I’ve heard some talk, but I think it’s mostly students. I don’t believe anything is going to happen.” Stebbins’s reference here to students is unclear and perplexing. He could have been referring to Randolph-Macon College students, or the fifteen-year-old Stebbins may have been referring to comments that he had heard made among his classmates at school. He may also have recalled incorrectly.\(^8\)

Stebbins changed his mind the next day when he noticed more “country people” than usual coming to town and securing their horses in the tying lot. Once again, Haw conferred with the younger Stebbins, but this time, Stebbins recalled, he advised Haw to move the prisoner to Richmond. Accordingly, Haw arranged for the train to stop just before the Ashland depot which was close to the jail, and the man was moved without incident.\(^9\)

The tension did not abate with the removal of the prisoner, however, and the little town came to a boil on the night of August 30. There was a black-owned saloon directly across the railroad tracks from the train depot. On the evening of the riot, a group of black and white people, probably mostly male, but the newspaper accounts do specify, faced off across the tracks. A newspaper account reported that someone from in front of the saloon threw a rock toward the depot, hitting a white man in the head just as a train was coming into the station. Though heavily armed, the white men in front of the station were not able to retaliate because the train blocked their path.\(^10\)

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\(^8\) Stebbins Interview (Hugo).
\(^9\) Stebbins Interview (Hugo).
\(^10\) Richmond Daily Dispatch, August 31, 1902; Stebbins Interview (Hugo).
When the train left the station, the white men crossed the tracks, but the black crowd in front of the saloon had dispersed. According to Stebbins II, the white men crossed the tracks with guns pulled and ready for a fight. At the same time, James Morris, a black man, walked out of an alley, apparently unaware of what had taken place earlier. Stebbins believed that Morris, who he described as “one of the best colored fellows around here. Didn’t have a thing in the world to do with anybody,” was shot and killed by a town policeman, Bill Trevillian, who, according to Stebbins, was untrained and probably agitated because of the rock-throwing incident. According to Roseanne Shalf, at that time the town had one policeman, the town sergeant. When additional assistance was needed, he hired temporary policemen. Bill Trevillian was one of these temporary and untrained officers. It is quite possible that Morris, who was reportedly walking home, happened on the scene after the rock throwing, and was mistaken for one of the rowdier bunch who had been in front of the saloon.

The day after the shooting, August 31, the mayor and acting coroner of Ashland, Edward L. C. Scott, wrote to the Governor of Virginia, John Hoge Tyler, notifying him of the riot, which had produced one death, and asking for help. As the mayor explained to the governor, “The killing was unjustifiable and as a consequence, his people [the dead man’s] are greatly incensed and wrought up.” The mayor asked for the state militia to be dispatched to the town, because he believed that the police were unable to handle the challenge presented. Governor Tyler responded by sending one company, about 131 men, of the 70th Infantry to Ashland.

When Captain C. G. Bossieux and the company arrived in the town, the mayor asked them to patrol the streets, disperse any crowds, and suppress any violence they

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11 Shalf, 121-122.
12 Stebbins Interview (Hugo).
came across. Bossieux and his troops toured the town and surrounding areas, and reported that, despite rumors among whites that the town was to be destroyed, they found no evidence that blacks were plotting any such activities. The troops did come across what Bossieux described in his report as two camps of black people, one above the town and one below, but he had no trouble dispersing those gathered.\textsuperscript{14}

After receiving Bossieux’s report, the mayor informed the Captain that the troops would be needed in the town until after the verdict of the coroner’s jury. Scott feared that the verdict, if not to the liking of black residents, might lead to a disturbance. The coroner’s jury, which began the inquest on September 1 and was described by the Richmond \textit{Daily Dispatch} as consisting of “the best citizens of Ashland,” concluded that Morris died from two buckshot which entered the right side of his head about one inch from his ear. They interviewed twenty-one witnesses and determined that the shooting was a random act, and therefore, they were unable to determine who actually pulled the trigger.\textsuperscript{15}

Following the coroner’s verdict, Morris’s body was released to his family, and he was buried without incident. The troops left the town on September 5. The Richmond \textit{Daily Dispatch} reported that “the colored people are very reticent, and refuse to discuss the affair at all or to express any opinion as to the killing of Morris.”\textsuperscript{16} The town’s black citizens were in a precarious position; whether they agreed with the verdict or not, they had already seen what could happen if they struck back openly against a system they believed to be unfair. Perhaps, like Stebbins, black people in the town believed that Bill Trevillian killed Morris, but thought better of crossing the police. They probably also

\textsuperscript{14} Report of the Adjutant General, 45.
\textsuperscript{15} Report of the Adjutant-General, 45; Richmond \textit{Daily Dispatch}, September 2, 1902.
\textsuperscript{16} Report of the Adjutant-General, 45; Richmond \textit{Daily Dispatch}, September 2, 1902.
believed that, even if the police had killed Morris, neither Trevillian’s colleagues nor the white townspeople were going to testify against him for killing a black man.

Finally, the reticence observed by the reporter might have arisen because he was trying to interview black Ashlanders who were not part of the crowd in front of the saloon. Possibly he was trying to talk to individuals who would never have frequented the saloon, or try to address issues of concern with a rock. John Mitchell asserted that those involved in the incident, both white and black, were from the “lower elements of both races.” He went on to point out that James Morris, a good man, which Mitchell defined as a black person who handled himself in a way that elevated the race, was lost, while many who would not have been missed were still “alive and kicking.”¹⁷

The Ashland riot presents an interesting opportunity to take a closer look at the connections and misconnections between history and memory. As is often the case with these types of events, the details of the riot vary, in small and large ways, depending on the storyteller. William Chenery, who grew up in Ashland and went on to become the editor of Colliers Magazine in Chicago, wrote in his memoir, So It Seemed, that this riot took place in the 1890s. He explained that when black farm hands, mill hands, and lumber camp workers came to town on Saturday afternoons they were tired after working twelve hour days and often became “very obstreperous” after a few drinks. According to Chenery, “Out of a few such incidences our race riot was born. One innocent Negro man was killed by a white man who shot into a crowd. State troops at once were called out and restored order.” There is no evidence of any incident vaguely resembling a riot in Ashland or elsewhere in the county in the 1890s, but Chenery’s account does contain similarities to the events of August 30, 1902.¹⁸ It is quite possible that, by the time he wrote his memoir, he could remember narrative details, but not the time period.

¹⁷ Richmond Planet, September 6 1902.
Charles Stebbins’s account also warrants a closer look. First, there is a discrepancy between Stebbins’s account of what instigated the riot and the contemporary report. Stebbins’s recall of a young girl being attacked may simply have been the result of his remembering the most common reason given by white men at the time for the eruption of violence between black and white people.

Second, although many of Stebbins’s assertions are supported by the militia’s reports, his memory regarding the Commonwealth’s Attorney is suspect. Would the attorney really look to a fifteen-year-old boy for advice on how to deal with a potential lynch mob? Is it more likely that Haw conferred with Charles Stebbins I as the younger man listened and maybe even offered a few suggestions? In the 1980s, when Stebbins told his story, he may have been recounting it for the first time in eighty years, or it may have been a regular part of his story-telling repertoire. If the former was the case, lack of retelling could have caused the younger Stebbins to forget certain details, and if the latter was true, he may have told his version so many times that it had become the truth as he knew it.

There may also be another factor playing itself out in Stebbins’s memory of the riot. As times changed in the latter twentieth century, and racial dividing lines became less rigid, many white people were reluctant to share the truth about their attitudes and actions during the period of segregation. The Stebbins name was an old and revered one in the town. The first Charles and his wife had moved to Ashland, the site of their summer home, from Richmond, during the Civil War. They opened Stebbins Store in the 1880s, and until the 1960s it was a favorite gathering place for townspeople. Charles II served on the Ashland Town Council for many years. Stebbins Street, named for this
family, is still home to his descendants. Indeed, if Charles II found that his actions were not as honorable as he would have liked them to have been in retrospect, or in comparison to the attitudes of the 1980s, he may have wanted to defend his "good name"—to keep his image in the eyes of his neighbors and of society in general, free of any public shame. In 1902, when most whites believed black people to be inferior, there was no dishonor in sharing that opinion publicly, but for an esteemed public figure to harbor those same opinions and act on them publicly would have been perceived as inappropriate in the 1980s. If Stebbins did invent his role as consultant to the attorney, his actions would have been in line with historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall’s argument that “we are what we remember, and as memories are reconfigured, identities are redefined.”

Perhaps Stebbins did not want to be the person he remembered.

The differences between the Stebbins and Chenery accounts do not lessen the importance of the event. Indeed, when considered together with contemporary accounts, they shed additional light and fill in a few holes. For example, Chenery’s version lends insight into the background of the individuals who might have been hanging out in front of the saloon.

By September 5, a week after the riot, the troops had left Ashland, the town reverted to its usual quiescence, and the State was preparing to pay the bill. In all, it cost $652.34 for the troops to guard Ashland. This amount covered long distance phone calls between Ashland and Richmond, train fare for the troops to and from Ashland, rent to Charles Stebbins I for quarters, medicines from the Hanover Pharmacy, and payroll. The attention of Hanoverians, regardless of race, during the week of August 30–September 6,

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1902, was undoubtedly focused on the riot and its aftermath, but once the dust had cleared, the new reality of disfranchisement remained.20

During the political campaigns of the 1890s, white people had split over their political differences, and by the turn of the twentieth century, southern white leaders were interested in finding a way to bring the white population back together. C. Vann Woodward argues that the only way for the South to fully overcome the divisiveness of the 1890s campaigns between white conservatives and white radicals was to enlist the "magical formula of white supremacy." The first step was the "total disfranchisement" of black men. When looking for examples of the success of this campaign, Woodward points to Louisiana, which accomplished disfranchisement in 1898. In 1896, 130,334 black men were registered to vote in that state; that number had dropped to 1,342 by 1904.21

The real impact of disfranchisement in Virginia—significantly fewer ballots being cast—would not be fully felt for a few years. In 1901, when black men still voted fairly freely in Hanover County, 1,821 votes were cast for governor. This number decreased to 782 votes cast in the 1905 gubernatorial election.22 Even stronger evidence lies in the county voter registration records of 1903. Each locality in Virginia was required to submit an official count, by race, of all its registered voters in 1903. While comparable information for the pre-convention period is not available, the impact of the constitutional change is readily apparent throughout the state. For example, in Prince Edward, a black belt county, there were 1,083 white registrants and 186 black registrants. In Dinwiddie County the disparity was similar: 1,327 whites and 208 blacks. In Hanover County, where white people slightly outnumbered black people only 327 African Americans were

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22 Commonwealth Election Records, LVA.
registered compared with 1,857 whites. In the town of Ashland, sixty black men were registered compared with 477 white men. These numbers represent a marked decline in black participation in the political process when considered in relation to the number voting in 1868. This decline was felt across the South.\(^{23}\)

In spite of the significantly smaller number of black men registered to vote in the South, the complete elimination of the black vote still required a bit of chicanery. This was certainly true in Hanover County, where some black men were able to pay the poll tax and pass a literacy test when administered fairly. To deal with these individuals, voting officials continued to commit fraud. William Chenery, author of *So It Seemed*, was one such official. In 1904 Chenery was asked to serve as the clerk of elections for Ashland. He recalled that he and his fellow functionaries "committed no overt sins, but I was given an intimate and disquieting picture of how elections were conducted so that white supremacy was maintained."\(^{24}\) According to Chenery, an election judge would read a portion of the Constitution and ask blacks attempting to register, "You don't understand that, do you?" The answer was generally no. White men were read the same or similar passage, but the question put to them was, "You understand that, don't you?" To this query, the answer was typically yes. Chenery admitted that "not more than three or four Negro voters were registered during my term of employment."\(^{25}\) This testimony agrees with Leon Litwack's assessment of this time when he says, "the dominant race would prevail, largely through the ways in which white registrars used their powers and examined potential black and white voters."\(^{26}\)

There were several ways in which black people and sympathetic white men and women could have responded to disfranchisement. The Negro Industrial and Agricultural

\(^{23}\) Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, 224-226.
\(^{24}\) Chenery, 21.
\(^{25}\) Chenery, 21.
\(^{26}\) Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, 224.
Society of Virginia (NIAS) pursued judicial redress. Chartered in February, 1900, this Society first met in August 1900 in Charlottesville. The NIAS decided to buy farmland, build an industrial school, and plan a fair, according to historian Ann Alexander Field, who argues that these plans were probably a diversion to hide the organization's real purpose, which was to set in motion plans to fight disfranchisement. 27

In May 1902, the NIAS operation began. First, the group distributed a circular on May 31 which condemned the constitutional convention for disfranchising 140,000 black male Virginians, and announced its intention to challenge the new constitution. The circular went on to announce that the NIAS had organized the state, employed lawyers, black and white, and was now trying to raise enough money so that it could take its case all the way to the United States Supreme Court if necessary. 28 Organizations and churches across the state held fundraisers. 29 Just as they had in the past, black Virginians put their funds together to finance a court battle that indeed, did go to the United States Supreme Court.

While there may have been several lawyers involved in preparing the case for court, the two main attorneys were James Hayes, who was African American and listed on the circular as the organizer and solicitor of the organization, and John Sargeant Wise, a native white Virginian and Republican who was based in New York at the time. 30

James H. Hayes began his professional life as a Richmond Public School teacher, and was appointed a school principal under Richmond's Readjuster school board in 1883. In 1884, when the Democrats regained control of the board, Hayes lost his position, and

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27 Richmond Planet, August 23 1902; Richmond Dispatch, August 19, 1902, 3.
29 Richmond Daily Dispatch, August 31, 1902.
30 Henry Wise, father of John, served as governor of Virginia from 1856 to 1859. He signed John Brown's death warrant, one of his last official acts.
he left Virginia, temporarily, to attend law school at Howard University. After returning to Richmond, Hayes became a reporter for the newly established Richmond Planet. Hayes had already been a victim of the Democratic-controlled General Assembly, and now, armed with his legal training, he felt he had the tools to fight for not only his rights but the rights of all black Virginians.31

While Hayes’s motivation might seem obvious, Wise’s, on the other hand, is not so evident. John S. Wise was the son of an old Virginia family, and specifically of a Confederate hero. His father, Henry Wise, rose through the ranks of Virginia politics to become governor. John Wise’s, Sarah Sergeant, was Henry’s second wife and the daughter of a well-known Philadelphia family.32

Like his father, John was a political conservative during the antebellum period and was appalled by the actions of John Brown at Harper’s Ferry. After the war, however, John Wise found himself at odds with his fellow Conservatives. Virginia needed to move forward, adopt new ways of doing business, and repudiate at least part of the prewar debt. Eventually, the younger Wise became a Mahone Republican (William Mahone having led the Readjusters into a fusion with the Republican Party). Wise had for a time opposed giving the vote to black men, especially those who were illiterate, under Reconstruction, because he feared that they would be easily corrupted, thereby corrupting state politics, but Wise accepted black suffrage when it became fact.33

Wise soon learned that he was right to be concerned about corruption in state politics, but he was wrong about the source. He was appalled by the tactics employed by Conservatives in the name of white supremacy. Their actions seem to have run against the grain of Wise’s sense of fair play. While he was not interested in any type of social

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31 Alexander, 22-23, 30.
equality for black people, he believed that the delegates to the constitutional convention had wrongfully limited the suffrage which was protected by the federal constitution. Perhaps this is why he took the case opposing disfranchisement.\textsuperscript{34}

Wise and Hayes first sought relief in the Circuit Court of the United States for the Eastern District of Virginia. The plaintiffs petitioned for a writ of prohibition stopping the canvassers, who were responsible for verifying and certifying election results before candidates were formally qualified as elected officials, from

considering, canvassing, counting, determining upon, or certifying or otherwise acting upon, any returns or abstracts of returns in the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Virginia, purporting to be returns of election held in the State of Virginia, Tuesday, November 4, 1902, for representatives in Congress from the State of Virginia, or in any wise dealing with or certifying the results of said returns as returns of a lawful election, held in Virginia on the date aforesaid.\textsuperscript{35}

Wise and Hayes argued that, as citizens of the United States, the state of Virginia, and the third Congressional District, African Americans had wrongfully been denied the right to vote in the congressional election on November 4, 1902. The attorneys indicated that when black men had tried to register, they had been denied that right. Hayes and Wise argued that, since the new constitution of Virginia had not been submitted to the people of the state for approval, it was unconstitutional. The Circuit Court found that the case had been brought before the wrong court, however, and therefore denied the writ and dismissed the petition.\textsuperscript{36}

Next the cases, Jones v. Montague and Selden v. Montague, were taken to the United States Supreme Court. The state of Virginia offered a motion to dismiss the cases,

\textsuperscript{34} John S. Wise, \textit{The Lion’s Skin} (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1905) 237, 299.  
\textsuperscript{35} Jones v. Montague, 194 U.S. 147 (1904).  
\textsuperscript{36} Jones v. Montague.
and the court agreed. Mr. Justice David Brewer, who wrote the opinion, explained that “everything sought to be prohibited has already been done” and could not be undone by the court. Brewer was referring to the fact that, by the time the cases reached the Supreme Court, the canvassers had already determined and certified the victors, who in turn had been declared elected representatives to the Congress from Virginia. The case was dismissed without cost to either party.

According to his biographer, Ann Alexander Field, “John Mitchell responded to the news of the court challenge with a surprising lack of enthusiasm.” Indeed, many who knew Mitchell and his career were perplexed at his lukewarm response. What had happened to the man whose anti-lynching campaign had forced him to wear two pistols as he traversed the state? Where was the “Fighting Editor?” John Mitchell shared his response to the loss of the vote and the subsequent court case in an editorial, “Another Decision Against Us.” He admitted that he had always thought the Jones and Selden cases weak, but he conceded that any case would have met the same fate because the court and the country had an “anti-Negro agenda.” Mitchell told his readers that a change would come, but they would first have to weather the storm of conservatism. He lamented that this meant the temporary sacrifice of principles in order to accomplish a greater goal. He predicted that a “war” would be the result of pent up frustration, yet he ended by saying that, “the colored people can afford to wait. A race of people that withstood two hundred and fifty years of galling oppression can live in the midst of fifty years of milk and water freedom.”

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37 Andrew Jackson Montague was the governor of Virginia from 1902-1906.  
38 Jones v. Montague.  
39 Jones v. Montague.  
40 Alexander, 117.  
41 Richmond Planet, April 30, 1904.
Mitchell’s words and admonitions must have come as a shock to many. Field suggests that, while the disfranchisement battle was being waged in the court and in the press, Mitchell was in the midst of his own personal adversities. His brother died during this period, and historian Ann Alexander suggests that Mitchell may have been thrown into a kind of personal crisis as a result. Also, Mitchell was caught up in a controversy at First African Baptist Church in Richmond, and perhaps his attention was focused on that situation.\textsuperscript{42}

Beyond his own personal struggles, Mitchell’s comments were more than a little prescient: although there would be modest court victories for blacks over the decades, it did take almost exactly fifty years for the United States Supreme Court to shake off the “anti-Negro” cloak and to deal the first smashing blow against Jim Crow in \textit{Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas},\textsuperscript{43} which declared the separate but equal doctrine unconstitutional. The editor’s prediction of an impending war, at first observation, seems a little outlandish, but perhaps this reference was metaphorical. He may have been predicting the struggle he thought would have to take place before white people conceded any real civil rights to black people.

Other factors aside, Mitchell’s somewhat defeatist editorial may have been a sign that his energies were directed elsewhere. Around the same time that disfranchisement was being debated, so was the question of segregated transportation. In 1900 and 1901 respectively, passenger trains and steamboats were segregated. While discussion of segregated streetcars arose in the 1890s, no action was taken on the matter. By 1900, the issue was once again placed on the front burner when John J. Peters, a Richmond city

\textsuperscript{42} Alexander, 119.

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Brown v. the Board} was the 1954 Supreme Court decision that overturned \textit{Plessy v. Ferguson} by determining that separate but equal was an unconstitutional doctrine. For further discussion of the \textit{Brown decision} see Charles Ogletree, \textit{All Deliberate Speed} (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 2004); Lewis A. Randolph & Gayle Tate, \textit{Rights for A Season}, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003).
councilman, proposed separate streetcars. The notion of separate cars was opposed by black people and by the owners of the streetcar company who realized that running two cars along every route would significantly increase their overhead.\(^{44}\)

The Virginia General Assembly entered the debate on segregated transportation in January 1904 when it passed the Public Transportation Act, which outlined all of the measures taken to date to address segregation in transportation. It included a provision which allowed, but did not require, the streetcar companies to separate white and black riders. This act did not contemplate separate cars, but provided for riders to be separated within the same car. Three months later, on April 20, the Virginia Passenger and Power Company in Richmond instituted segregated travel. Maggie Walker, a prominent leader in the African American community and president of the Independent Order of St. Luke, a fraternal order, advocated a boycott of the line, as did editor John Mitchell. As planning began, black men and women supported the boycott and the black banks in the city also endorsed the endeavor. In the beginning, many black men and women in Richmond adhered to the boycott, but by the heat of the summer, most had succumbed and gotten on the cars. That fall, Mitchell noted an increase in the number walkers again, but the boycott had lost momentum. In addition, the streetcar company ignored the boycott, never really feeling enough of a financial strain to make a change. By 1906, the General Assembly took the choice away from the company by instituting a new law that required segregated cars.\(^{45}\)

Black Richmonders were not the only black Southerners to resist segregation in public transportation. From 1892 until 1906, African Americans in Atlanta protested with a series of boycotts and were persistent enough in the early 1890s to move the streetcar company to yield to their demands. By 1900, the city leaders had enacted

\(^{44}\) Alexander, 133; Marlowe, 93-94.

\(^{45}\) Alexander, 141; Marlowe, 93-94.
legislation that removed the option of running integrated cars from the company owners. Streetcar boycotts occurred throughout the South. Blacks in twenty-five cities took a stand against the humiliation of the back of the car. The boycotts lasted from a few weeks to three years but met with very limited success.

One question that arises from the effort to resist Jim Crow streetcars in Richmond is: Why were black people, including John Mitchell, who seemed so defeated after disfranchisement, willing to fight so hard to stop segregated streetcars? One answer might be that, initially at least, fighting Jim Crow on the streetcars did not require a fight with the all-powerful, white-controlled state government. Appealing to the financial bottom-line of a company may have been seen as something black people could accomplish. Another factor may have been that, while the vote was important, its loss did not affect black men and women on a daily basis. This was not true of the streetcars, which were the major form of transportation to and from work, meetings, family, church, and so on. Every day, black men and women would have to suffer the indignity of sitting in the back of the cars because whites believed that something was wrong with them, that they were inferior. This daily reminder may simply have been too much to tolerate without a fight.

Another reason that ordinary black people may have chosen to respond to segregated street cars with boycotts but not to fight disfranchisement with the same vigor was that a legal battle, while needing the financial support of the community, does not lend itself readily to mass action. Finally, it may be that the push for segregated streetcars took the black community by surprise, while the loss of the vote was expected. According to Field, the provision allowing for segregated cars was buried in the transportation act,

46 Hunter, 99.
47 Litwack, Trouble in Mind, 242-243.
and many blacks, including Mitchell, were probably unaware of it until the streetcar company announced that cars would be segregated beginning late April 1904.48

On the other hand, by the time the constitution was proclaimed, it was old news. As discussed in chapter two, conservative white Virginians had been working toward eliminating the political threat of blacks and white Republicans and securing white supremacy since at least 1884 with the Anderson-McCormick law. Indeed, the seeming acquiescence of the Democrats to the inevitability of the Underwood Constitution in 1868 had been part of a larger plan to rid the state of the federal army and Freedmen’s Bureau, thereby clearing the way for the Democrats to regain political control of the Commonwealth.49

In the end, most blacks seem to have taken John Mitchell’s advice on the political front and waited. Waiting was something that blacks understood because many of them saw God in waiting. Their ancestors had waited for freedom on earth or in heaven, and they would wait for full citizenship. This does not imply that they were not concerned, that they did not resent the loss of their rights as citizens. It does mean that they did not let their circumstances circumvent their plans. Indeed, blacks did resist. Sometimes this resistance meant a verbal or written response, but most often it meant ignoring their oppressors and moving on with happy, healthy, and productive lives set apart from and in spite of their oppressors.

From the days when Virginia transformed itself from a “society with slaves” to a “slave society,” blacks began forming a culture within a culture. This subculture allowed them to be present and participate in the larger culture, but also to have a separate cultural identity. Sometimes enslaved people resisted the master’s proclivity to mold or block the development of their culture; but they also took advantage of the master’s indifference to

48 Alexander, 134.
49 Shibley, 55.
that development when it tended to keep things calm on the plantation or farm. In essence, they lived lives that ran parallel to those of the master class. They lived one way in front of whites and another way in the slave quarters. Enslaved black people had family lives, spiritual lives, and social lives that were separate from and to a great extent unknown to the master class.  

This way of living did not die with Emancipation. It had become an entrenched survival tactic and served well the first generation of African Americans who lived with Jim Crow. Like their enslaved ancestors, black Virginians moved in and out of contact with whites on a daily basis; they forgot neither that there were limits placed on them, nor that they had some power to bend and shape and sometimes even take advantage of those limits. At home in their own neighborhoods, they could relax and recharge for another day. They socialized, they maintained their homes and families, and they worshipped in their churches.

Blacks moved on after disfranchisement, but ironically, whites could not or would not. Even with the franchise now safely under their control, white people continued to spend a good deal of time concerned with the so-called “Negro problem.” One of the selling points of disfranchisement had been that, once the black vote was eliminated, white Virginians would be able to focus on other issues such as the economic future of the state. W.B. Walton, editor of the Hanover Weekly Herald, pointed out the fallacy of this belief in 1904. He maintained that, even after disfranchisement, the “supreme” issue of the South was still the “negro question.” He suggested that the notion that the debate over economic issues could begin with the removal of blacks from politics was ill

conceived. According to Walton, the question of the black man was the economic question of the day. He wrote that “the prosperity of our section, the weight of our power, the foundations of our social system, and the security of our homes are wrought up in it.” Walton believed that black men and women’s willingness to work for lower wages and sell their produce at cost or below made them a threat to the economic stability of all white people. Walton’s answer was to vote the Democratic ticket in the upcoming presidential election. He warned that a vote for the Republican, Theodore Roosevelt, “would embolden the vicious, and increase dangers already patent and growing.”

While Walton was concerned about the economic impact of black people on white people, others never stopped worrying about the maintenance of the social system. Keeping black and white people separate except under the most controlled circumstances was paramount to the maintenance of white supremacy. Whites in positions of leadership seemed to believe that, if white and black people ever came to know each through venues such as school, church, shopping, club meetings, etc. they would begin to realize that there was really nothing to fear; they would begin to socialize and eventually intermarry. This would weaken the white race, but more importantly it would weaken white control over society.

One example of white vigilance in this area that was reported in the Hanover Herald involved military exercises that were scheduled to take place at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, in 1910. A reporter, possibly for a Richmond paper, saw the blueprints that outlined where the troops were assigned to set up camp. It appeared to him that Virginians, black and white, would be sharing the same space. This was not acceptable, and the adjutant general of Virginia contacted the United States Secretary of War, a former Confederate soldier. The general’s fears were calmed once he discovered that the

51 Hanover Weekly Herald, October 28, 1904.  
52 Hanover Weekly Herald, October 28, 1904.
maneuvers were to take place over a period of one month, and that the black and white soldiers would never be in the camp at the same time.°

Controversies such as the one about the military encampment support to W.E.B. DuBois's argument that the question of race was still the driving force in American society at the turn of the twentieth century. Black and white Hanoverians rarely came to blows over the race question. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, they typically managed to co-exist comfortably in their separate spheres, except when economic necessity or paternalistic relationships brought them into contact. One example of the paternalistic nature of many white people in the county involved Hill Carter, the Hanover delegate to the 1902 constitutional convention. William Chenery, Carter's cousin, wrote that Carter, an attorney, was sometimes moved to represent blacks who he believed were being treated unfairly. This was the case when Carter decided to represent Lucien King against Watkins Leigh Wickham.°

King, who was black, and Wickham, who was white, entered into an agreement over a piece of land that King wanted to buy. In a deposition dated April 29, 1908, Wickham explained that King had approached him about buying some land; Wickham in turn had sold the black man one hundred acres with a building which was in very bad repair. The deal specified a price of $8 an acre with a $200 down payment. Wickham allowed King to clear and sell trees on the land with the understanding that the money would be turned over to Wickham as payment on the land. Wickham continued, saying that he had warned King that he would be surrounded by white land owners and that whites and blacks did not mix well. He cautioned King, saying to the black man that he would "have to do [his] part there to make yourself a good neighbor to live with those

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53 Hanover Weekly Herald, July 8, 1910.
54 HCCO Chancery Court Records Lucien King v. Watkins Leigh Wickham, 1908-038.
people in peace.” According to Wickham, King responded by assuring him that he had lived around whites all his life and did not expect to have any problems getting along with his neighbors.55

In his own deposition, King indicated that, when he and Wickham had transacted their deal the agreement was read to him, and he signed it and paid the $200. He was in Wickham’s house for about twenty-five minutes and stood the entire time. Rosewell Page, Wickham’s lawyer, asked him why he had not sat down, and King said that he had not been invited to sit.56

C.S. Luck, a white man and the owner of a sawmill, was deposed by Hill Carter, King’s attorney. Luck explained that he had agreed to buy timber from King for $40, after conferring with Wickham, who confirmed his agreement with King. Luck was told to bring the money to Wickham. The conflict arose when Wickham refused to accept the money from Luck on the grounds that he, Wickham, had decided not to sell King the land. Confused, Luck brought King and Wickham together to try and mediate the situation. According to Luck, Wickham was “unmercifully” abusive to King, but King had accepted the abuse without retaliation until he just could not take anymore. At this point, Luck kept King from striking Wickham.57 In this instance, both King and Luck acted outside the norm for blacks and whites. King’s daring to contemplate striking Wickham and Luck’s willingness to give a deposition favoring a black man make this incident exceptional.

At some point, Wickham picked up a crowbar with the intent of hitting King. Luck took the crowbar, and Wickham picked up a stick. Luck then grabbed Wickham and physically restrained him. Luck sent King out to his wagon to cool off, but King retrieved

55 King v. Wickham.
56 King v. Wickham.
57 King v. Wickham.
a chain and re-entered the house with the intent of striking Wickham. Wickham responded by saying, “Please let me kill that damn nigger. You can get another nigger to drive your wagon—let me kill him.” King responded saying, “turn him loose, Mr. Luck and let him come.” According to Luck, Wickham was so angry he cried—“mad till he was crazy almost, and I nearly tore his [shirt] off trying to hold him.”58

The outcome of the situation between King and Wickham would be considered atypical by most observers today. In many instances, one presumes, an influential white man would have succeeded in his efforts to keep the money that a black man had paid him. But southern history yields no shortage of exceptions to racial norms that today appear to have been absolute. In this instance, Wickham failed to take into account the paternalistic nature of southern society, or to realize that some white men, like Hill Carter, might believe in justice above all else. That said, Carter’s role in disfranchising black men must be taken into account. Could he have believed that disfranchisement was just? The facts suggest that he did. The state constitution had been amended without challenging the power of the federal constitution, and Carter had argued, apparently in good conscience, on behalf of proclaiming of the constitution without a referendum, thereby disfranchising the population of which Carter’s client, Lucien King, was a member.

The record does not afford the opportunity to fully discern Luck’s motivation. Given the times and King’s eventual response to Wickham’s abuse, Luck might have chosen to turn on King because he was being disrespectful to white man. It appears that Luck and King had a friendly relationship. King did work for Luck as a wagon driver, and he apparently was viewed as a good employee, and perhaps as a good man. Luck may simply have been a fair-minded person, who decided to stand up for an employee.

58 King v. Wickham.
who had been wronged. Maybe King’s situation tugged on Luck’s paternalistic nature and led him to help out a “good Negro.” Finally, Wickham was known to Luck, and it is possible that Luck found Wickham to be a hard and unfair man in general. It is also possible that in reneging on his agreement with King, Wickham had lost honor, his good name, in Luck’s eyes—in the same way that white men who attempted to kidnap and sell free blacks had been viewed as beneath contempt in the South before Emancipation.59

One of the most telling events in the town of Ashland’s quest to maintain control over blacks in the community happened in 1911 and involved residential segregation. According to C. Vann Woodward, residential segregation became the main method of controlling black movement in the second decade of the twentieth century. In Baltimore, Atlanta, and Greenville, South Carolina blocks were designated as black or white. A law was passed in Virginia empowering city councils to prohibit blacks and whites from living in the same districts. The city of Richmond adopted a plan that was copied by the Town of Ashland.60

On September 11, 1911, the Ashland Town Council held a called meeting to discuss a new ordinance submitted by E.W. Newman, a member of the council. The proposal was titled, “An ordinance to secure for whites and colored people, respectively, the separate location of residence for each race,” and it spelled out restrictions that forbade whites or blacks from living in proximity to members of the other race. Two exceptions were made: servants who worked and lived where they were employed, and black and white people who already lived in proximity to each other, were allowed to remain. The ordinance was immediately referred to the ordinance committee, which was

59 King v. Wickham; Ely, 274.
60 Woodward, Strange Career of Jim Crow, 100; ATCM September 11, 1911.
prepared to offer a report the next night, September 12, at a second called meeting. At this meeting, the ordinance was unanimously adopted by the council.\footnote{ATCM September 12, 1911.}

An ordinance of this type may have been enforceable in larger cities like Richmond, but it must have quite difficult to regulate in a small town like Ashland. Since the end of slavery, there had been black enclaves, but there must have also been some integrated neighborhoods, which necessitated the stipulation in the ordinance which stated “that nothing in this ordinance shall affect the location of residences made previous to the approval of this ordinance.”\footnote{ATCM September 12, 1911.}

Ashland’s residential segregation ordinance was challenged at least once. A little over a year after the council adopted the policy, councilman Hall Canter offered a resolution to hire attorneys to represent the town in defense of the segregation ordinance, which was being challenged by John Coleman, a local black businessman.\footnote{ATCM November 16, 1912. Records of John Coleman’s case have been lost.} Town Council minutes indicate that Coleman lost his case in the mayor’s court, and any appeal that Coleman may have filed with the county is not in the available record. Regardless of the outcome of the Coleman case, all residential segregation ordinances were declared unconstitutional in 1917. However, this did not mean that residential segregation ended. On the contrary, covenants were written into deeds that restricted whom homeowners could sell to. This effectively carried on segregated neighborhoods, North and South, for many years. In 1948, these covenants were also declared unconstitutional; this “decision made relatively little impression on the actual structure of segregated housing,” however.\footnote{Woodward, \textit{Strange Career of Jim Crow}, 141.}
Clearly, race, or more specifically, the maintenance of white supremacy, was never far from the minds of white Hanoverians. By 1919, the local weekly, The Herald Progress, had begun to publish words of wisdom from a fictional black man named "Dumb Buck, the Philosopher of the Slashes." Dumb Buck regaled readers with sayings like, "Some folks says thar ain't no heben nor no hell. 'Spects I don't know. Maybe 'tis, maybe taint. No one eber come back to tell but as far as for dis por ole nigger—ain't taken no chances a-tall. De strait and narrow path is good 'nough for me. Safty first my moter." Buck’s creator was just as sexist as he was racist. For instance, in one paper he shared “the difference twixt a umbrella and a ‘oman is dat you kin shut up de umbrella,” and another time he offered, “A mouty little ‘oman kin start a mouty big row sometimes.”

Dumb Buck, which appears to have been generated locally, was initially just text, but by 1920 he was pictured as a hunched-over, elderly black man dressed in an overcoat, top hat, and cane and accompanied by a little dog.

Cartoons depicting black people in stereotypical ways were not uncommon in the early decades of the twentieth century. According to Joshua Brown, cartoonists in the antebellum North often used their art to ridicule members of the free black elite. Brown argues that “the rise of abolitionists and other political activism twisted such visual attacks into even more virulent forms.” When northern white women began to take a stand for abolition and women’s rights, these cartoons began to suggest that abolition was going to lead to miscegenation. With these techniques already in place, cartoonists in the postwar South had a model to use to institute their own method of control of black people who might be inclined to step out of their place.

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65 Hanover Herald Progress, April 25, 1919; August 8, 1919; March 6, 1925.
66 Hanover Herald Progress after September, 1920.
The weekly Hanover *Herald Progress*, used the pre-Civil War tactics of northern white newspapers with “Dumb Buck,” whose formally attired but bedraggled appearance may have been aimed at caricaturing the black elite, the people who might have been perceived as stepping out of the boundaries drawn around the black community. A cartoon like Dumb Buck in essence said, no matter how much money, education, and status you attain in your community, you will always be Dumb Buck to your white neighbors.68

The intersection of race and gender raised important questions in the early part of the twentieth century. Although, Ida B. Wells found that in only a minority of the cases was a supposed offense against white womanhood mentioned as the reason for lynching, the maintenance of the purity of white women was often cited to rationalize the murder and persecution of black men. When white women overtly opposed the oppression of African Americans, white men viewed them, too, as a threat. One example was the attitude of the editor of the *Herald Progress*. While attending the Republican National Convention in Chicago in 1920, he sent back an editorial which addressed his concerns with the convention. First, he was offended by the behavior of some of the white women at the gathering, who passed out flyers that indicated their opposition to two possible vice-presidential candidates. They challenged one of these candidates because he believed that all black men should be railroad porters. Another candidate, Hiram Johnson69 of California, was problematic because the women feared he would segregate blacks just as he had the Japanese in California.70 The editor considered it “unladylike”

69 Hiram Johnson was a progressive Republican senator from California. He was nominated for the Republican presidential ticket at the 1920 convention. His name remained in the running through the tenth ballot. He then became a candidate for the vice-presidential nomination.
70 Hanover *Herald Progress*, June 18, 1920.
for women to be so vocal with their beliefs, and it definitely was inappropriate in the eyes of this white male Southerner for a white woman to champion the cause of black men.

The editor also disapproved of the attitudes of white people in Indianapolis toward black people. Indianapolis had a population of 340,000, and 100,000 of them were black. Although the typical neighborhood was segregated, this had happened by chance, and editor Walton feared that without formal Jim Crow laws, the opposite could also happen, meaning that white and black people might choose to start living in the same neighborhoods. The final straw for Walton was that white and black children attended school and church together; he believed that, without intervention, they would soon begin to intermarry.\(^{71}\)

Another factor that helped keep race an issue of concern in Hanover was the county’s peripheral relationship to the Ku Klux Klan. For all intents and purposes, the Klan had been dissolved through federal intervention in 1871, but the seed remained dormant in the hearts and minds of white supremacists. World War I and its aftermath presented an opportunity for the Klan to re-emerge.\(^{72}\) In 1915, *The Birth of a Nation*, a film depicting the Klan as the protector of southern civilization and white womanhood, was released. This time around, the Klan worked to change its image from one of a violent hate group to that of an organization simply interested in maintaining America for white people and defending morality in general. This time the organization was aligned with Protestants who were responding to changes in theological doctrine by becoming more religiously fundamentalist. Also, the Klan, according to historian David Roediger, appealed to “real whites” and promised to maintain racial purity against the onslaught of

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\(^{71}\) Hanover *Herald Progress*, June 18, 1920.

non-Nordic immigrants. For these and other reasons, the Klan once again became a force to be reckoned with in the country.

Hanover had little overt Klan activity during this period, but the *Herald Progress* kept its readers apprised in a neutral manner of the activities of the organization outside the county. Additionally, there was the interesting emergence of something called the Kenwood Kountry Klub in 1921. This club sponsored regular social events, speakers, and other activities. Sometimes a story about this group was headed with KKK. The Kluck Kluck Klub represents another interesting use of the KKK monogram. An article, originally printed in a Richmond paper, appeared in the *Herald Progress* in 1921. It began by saying that the “Kluck Kluck Klub is mobilizing in force over Virginia to fight TB [tuberculosis].” The idea was to encourage people to buy Christmas Seals using chickens as the currency. This effort was supported by John Hutchinson, director of the Extension Division of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, who wrote a letter to all Farm and Home Demonstration agents asking them to support the drive by cooperating with the Virginia Tuberculosis Association. They hoped that the result of this drive would be movement toward the end of the White Plague, another name for TB.

It would be a gross assumption to say that either the tuberculosis fundraisers or the members of the country club had connections to the Klan. The names of both organizations could simply represent the use of alliteration. On the other hand, it is reasonable to consider their choice of monogram. As stated earlier, the activities of the

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73 Roediger, 139.
74 James Ridgeway, *Blood in the Face* (New York: Thunders Mouth Press, 1990); Brundage, *The Southern Past*. The resurrection of the KKK was not the only outgrowth of *The Birth of A Nation*. According to Brundage, African American historian Carter G. Woodson was moved to found the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History because he wanted to counter the “pervasive ignorance about black history.”
75 Hanover *Herald Progress*, July 8, 1921, August 5, 1921, August 26, 1921.
76 Hanover *Herald Progress*, November 18, 1921.
77 Hanover *Herald Progress*, November 18, 1921.
Klan were regularly reported in the area newspapers, so the letters KKK and what they stood for were well known. Why would two groups with admirable missions so cavalierly associate themselves, even implicitly, with an organization known for its various hatreds? There could be several reasons. First, while most white Virginians may not have agreed with the Klan’s methods, many did agree with the Klan’s stated goal—maintenance of white supremacy. Second, to be sensitive to the feelings of blacks was not a prime concern for most whites. The KKK, perceived by blacks as a threat, may have been viewed frivolously and even snickered at by whites in the county. Apparently, casual or informal association with the Klan was not considered detrimental to either organization or cause.

The Klan may not have been seen as a violent body because of its own self-promotion. In 1921, *The Story of the Ku Klux Klan* by Colonel Winfield Jones was published. According to a publisher’s note, Jones, who was said not to be a member of the Klan or a Southerner, was “one of the ablest and most experienced of the Washington journalists.” These attributes suggested to the publisher that Jones had written a fair and impartial account of the resurging Klan, which was said to have been gaining new members at a rate of 1000 a day.\(^7\)\(^8\) The publisher explained that the new Klan was the focus of the book, but the discussion of the new KKK does not begin until halfway through Jones’s book. Up to that point, the focus is on the post-Civil War Klan, which the author credits with helping to “recover political liberties that had been lost by the collapse of the Confederacy.”\(^7\)\(^9\) One of the more interesting sections of the book is near the end and titled “Varied Activities of the Klan.” Here, the author lists several philanthropic pursuits of the new Klan, such as donating $125 to a Christmas fund for former slaves;

\(^7\)\(^9\) Winfield Jones, 5.
helping widows; and guarding the property and lives, for three days and nights, of the African American community of Winter Garden, Florida, after a race riot in 1921. Perhaps most relevant to the Kluck Kluck Klub is the donation a Klan group made to a man with TB.80 These and other stories may have convinced the white public that the new Klan was a good organization.

During the 1910s and 1920s Hanover’s black community was not dormant. The idea of self-help through organizational development continued to thrive. At the turn of the century, Hanoverian, William L. Taylor was still the Grand Worthy Master of the True Reformers, and it appeared that the Order was thriving, but the truth would soon be evident. A banking division was added to the State Corporation Commission in 1910. With a young reformer, Charles C. Barksdale, at the commission’s helm, vigorous investigations into the health of banks across Virginia began. In less than a year, Barksdale determined that the Savings Bank of the True Reformers was financially unviable, and he closed the institution for good. Like the Order, the True Reformer bank was a highly respected institution among blacks, and many African American businesses, churches, and individuals trusted that their funds would be safe in its care. Sadly, many of the investors lost their savings in what was known in Richmond’s African American community as the “downfall of Africa.”81

According to the receivers, the bank’s questionable financial decisions in the 1890s, even before William Browne died, led to the downfall of the bank, but this fact was not known in September, 1910, when the True Reformers held a Grand Session in Richmond. The financial outlook of the Order was bleak. Death benefits were in arrears, and it was determined that funds that had been intended for the use of the Order had been

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80 Winfield Jones, 88-89.
81 Alexander, 177.
channeled to the bank, which was a separate entity. Members of the Order and the state commissioner of insurance believed that mismanagement on the part of Taylor had led to this problem. Taylor did not agree, and he attended the session with the intent of fighting any attempt to remove him as Grand Worthy Master. In the end, he came to understand that, if he did not leave the position, he would be held responsible for all of the bank’s problems. In September 1910, he decided to retire.\footnote{Richmond \textit{Planet}, September 17, 1910.}

Just over a month after Taylor was ousted, the Richmond \textit{Times-Dispatch} ran the following headline: “True Reformers Involved in Ruin.” The Order’s license was suspended by the state, and the bank filed for bankruptcy, acknowledging the inability to pay its debt, never to rise from the ashes. Even so, there was hope of saving the organization. In February 1911, the Grand Fountain prepared a broadside stating that $37,000 was needed to pay the past due death benefits. The Order planned to tax itself, but also asked for donations of any size from its friends. The money was not raised by April 15, but the license was restored because the bank and the Order were separate financial entities. The investigation of the bank was headline news throughout the spring and summer and into the early fall.\footnote{Richmond \textit{Planet}, October 27, 1910; Broadside 1911, United Order of True Reformers, Richmond, LVA.}

While the True Reformers may have been on a downward course during the first decade of the twentieth century, the Independent Order of St. Luke (IOSL) was on the rise thanks largely to the leadership of Maggie Lena Walker, who was elected the Right Worthy Grand Secretary in 1899. Founded shortly after the Civil War, the IOSL was in dire financial straits in 1899. When Walker took over, the Order’s assets totaled $31.61, and its debt was $400. There were just over one thousand financial members and fifty-seven councils or chapters. The juvenile division, which had been headed by...
Walker, until she became the Grand Secretary, included 1600 children.\textsuperscript{84} One year later, at the order's national convention, Walker proudly reported that the membership had grown to 3,830 in 89 councils.\textsuperscript{85} Maggie L. Walker was a force to be reckoned with at the turn-of-the-twentieth-century. She focused on the needs of African American women, and she was unabashedly committed to their uplift. She believed in gathering strong, hardworking women around her to get any job done. At the same time, she understood, as black women understand today, that "only a strong and unified community made up of both women and men [can] wield the power necessary to allow black people to shape their own lives."\textsuperscript{86}

Historian Elsa Barkley Brown argues that Walker also took black women into the political sphere. Evidence of this is the IOSL's support of the streetcar boycott in Richmond. In addition, the \textit{St. Luke Herald}, the Order's newspaper, also spoke out "against segregation, lynching, and lack of equal educational opportunities for black children."\textsuperscript{87} Like the black women in North Carolina about whom Glenda Gilmore writes, Walker understood that black women and men could enter the political realm even without the vote.

African Americans in Hanover County embraced the IOSL. Records indicating the order's presence in the county prior to 1917 are not available, but from 1917 to 1927, there were nine adult councils operating in Hanover, and eight juvenile circles. Based on death benefits paid during this time, it appears that many of these councils did exist prior to 1917.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{84} Marlowe, 46.
\textsuperscript{85} Marlowe, 81.
\textsuperscript{87} Brown, "Womanist Consciousness," 618.
\textsuperscript{88} Maggie Lena Walker Papers, Maggie L. Walker Historical Site, National Park Service.
Like the True Reformers, Walker and the IOSL enlisted blacks from the "country" to take part in the leadership of the order. By 1917, James R. Ware, a literate railroad worker with no formal education and a resident of the Hewlett section of Hanover, had become an organizing deputy in the IOSL. Ware’s complete tenure with the organization is unknown, but he served as an officer at the state level until at least 1927. Like the True Reformers and many other fraternal organizations of the time, the IOSL paid death benefits to the families of members. For instance, between 1918 and 1921, the order paid benefits to the families of five juveniles in Hanover.89

Walker and the IOSL also worked for the economic independence of the black community. The leadership strove to communicate good money management to members. In 1903, the IOSL opened the St. Luke Penny Savings Bank. In 1917, the Order’s fiftieth anniversary bulletin included the following notice:

Dimes make Dollars!!!
Start an account with St. Luke Bank
$1.00 opens an account
The bank pays 3% on all savings accounts
Get the Bank Book Habit
Save! Save!! Save!!!90

The leadership of the IOSL believed that investing strengthened the individual, the family, and the order. As a result, organization funds were invested in several entities, including the town of Ashland. As early as 1919 and as late as 1927, the IOSL reported owning bonds in the town and getting a 5-percent rate of return on their investment. Records indicate that the bonds were consistently worth over $3000. The relationship between the town of Ashland and the IOSL is very interesting. The town was willing to accept money from a black fraternal organization, but the council members would not

89 Walker Papers.
90 Walker Papers.

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have eaten a meal with the order’s leadership. This financial connection is also illustrative of the pragmatism of Walker. If the order was to maintain its economic grounding, it would need to have income in addition to the membership fees paid by members. A town was a more stable investment than a business, especially a black-owned business in those times. In general, this relationship is a good example of the notion that money knows no color.91

Maggie Walker also sought expanded educational opportunities for black children, and black Hanoverians concurred, but they fought an uphill battle all the way. While the taxes to pay for education had not been segregated in the Virginia constitution of 1902, very little money was allocated to the black schools in Hanover, even for essentials. Most of the black schools were one-room; many were little more than shacks with a wood-burning stove that was maintained by the older children. As a result, parents and teachers were compelled to raise funds on their own in order to keep the schools open. According to Inez Winston Gray, the daughter and granddaughter of Johnny and Clinton Winston, the County-Wide League was organized by black citizens for this purpose. The adult league worked to raise funds for the schools. There was also a junior league, which included school children and prepared them to take over for the next generation.92

In the early 1920s, there was still no high school for black children in the county, which meant that, unless their families could afford private education, most black

91 Walker Papers. Alice Walker, an African American novelist, is credited with coin ing the term “womanist” to help explain the different ideas expressed by black and white women when discussing the aims of the women’s rights movement. In her article on “Womanist Consciousness” published in 1989, historian Elsa Barkley Brown applies the term womanist to the study and understanding of the life of Maggie Walker. She asserts that the “concepts, perspectives, methods, and pedagogies of women’s history and women’s studies have been developed without consideration of the experiences of black women.” She argues that race plays a role in defining the opportunities black and white women encounter.
92 Gray Interview.
children had to leave school after the seventh grade. At a meeting of the school board in April 1923, superintendent J. Walton Hall reported that blacks were coming together to raise money to match the county in order to get a training school, which would provide for education for blacks beyond the elementary level.\(^9\)\(^3\)

The County Training School Movement began in 1911, and the John F. Slater Fund is credited with its origination. The Slater Fund was founded in 1882 by John Slater, a wealthy philanthropist from Norwich, Connecticut who wanted to help support the development of newly freed men and women, by providing them with a good Christian education. In 1911, the Fund was approached by a black school principal from Mississippi with a request for funds to hire an industrial teacher for girls. From this idea grew the Fund’s call for better secondary education opportunities for black youth. The stated goal of the training schools was to prepare black teachers for the elementary schools and offer education to rural black youth beyond elementary school.\(^9\)\(^4\)

Early in the summer of 1924, the State Supervisor of Negro Education in Virginia, sent a letter to the school board stating that, if a training school was established in Hanover, the Slater Fund would contribute $500 toward teacher salaries. On July 31, 1924, a check from the County-Wide Committee of Colored Citizens for $400 was presented to the board.\(^9\)\(^5\) In 1924, the Hanover County Training School for black students opened.\(^9\)\(^6\) Students from across the county attended, and since transportation was not provided, students walked for miles in all types of weather. Some came from Mechanicsville in the eastern section of the county, others from as far away as Doswell,

\(^9\)\(^3\) HCSB July 31, 1924.


\(^9\)\(^5\) Donald Makosky, Carolyn Hemphill, and Kate Neckerman *One and Two Room Schools*; HCSB July 31, 1924; I have seen this organization referred to as the County-Wide League and the County-Wide Committee.

\(^9\)\(^6\) Makosky, et al.
which was at the northern end. Inez Gray recalled that some of the Doswell students rode
the train to Ashland; sometimes in the afternoon they were locked out of the waiting
room, even the side designated for black people. This meant that they had to stand on the
platform in all kinds of weather waiting for the train home.\footnote{Gray Interview.}

While the school board did contribute financially to the establishment of the
schools, the racism still played a major part in the education of black children. The
County-Wide League continued to operate and every year raised $400 to pay for the
operation of the school. There is no evidence of white parents having to take these steps;
indeed, there were three accredited high schools in the county for white students. The
training school was not accredited, and graduates received a certificate instead of a
diploma.\footnote{Gray Interview.}

By 1925 the school year still had not been equalized. The white schools in
Ashland were open for nine months a year. The black school session in the town was
scheduled for seven months by the superintendent, but there was an allowance in the
budget for “matching the colored people dollar for dollar for the three teachers for an
eighth grade” but not for the principal, whose salary came from the Slater Funds and
funds raised by black parents.\footnote{HCSB March 23, 1925; February 29, 1927.} The schools outside the town, Vontay, Rockville,
Gilman, Greenwood, Wickham, Newton, Brown Grove, and Elmont, were open only five
months of the year. There were eleven white schools in Beaver Dam: five were open for
nine months and six were open for seven months. By contrast, the six black schools in
Doswell, Beaverdam, and Bethany were open for only six months. In the end, then, no
matter how much or how little time the white children spent in school, the black
children spent less.¹⁰⁰

Teachers also actively participated in bringing in funds to maintain the black
schools. In 1923, for example, black teachers pledged to raise $800 for the Colored
Training School in Ashland. Around the same time, the supervisor of the Colored
Training School reported that a fundraiser had been held at Shiloh Baptist Church. An
offering was collected and deposited in the bank. This money was to be used to add a
basement to the school.¹⁰¹ Another site of fundraising was the Training School itself. The
facility was sometimes used to show “moving pictures.” On one occasion in 1925, Dr.
F.L. Day, (race unknown) presented a movie, after which Dr. R.E. Blackwell, president
of Randolph-Macon, spoke. An offering was once again collected for the basement at the
Training School.¹⁰²

While fundraising was an important part of the black teacher’s life, preparation
was also crucial. Many of the teachers were not formally educated beyond the public
school level, and what is now known as in-service, or on-the-job, training was important
to their success. Throughout the 1920s, the local paper reported on the training
opportunities at the black school. In 1925 the Hanover County Colored Teachers’
Institute was held at the Training School. The sessions included methods for teaching
arithmetic, reading, English, and geography.¹⁰³

A similar event took place the next year, but this time Hampton Institute, the
historically black private college on the Virginia Peninsula, was in charge. The paper
reported that the organizers expected a big turnout and hoped that local residents would
participate. The organizers also shared their belief that education was the only thing that

¹⁰⁰ HCBS April 1, 1925; School Reports 1924-1925.
¹⁰¹ Hanover Herald Progress, January 23, 1925.
¹⁰² Hanover Herald Progress, January 23, 1925.
¹⁰³ Hanover Herald Progress, February 13, 1925.
would solve the racial problem, and that Hampton had been doing its share for fifty years. The article notice indicated that whites were invited.\textsuperscript{104} In 1927, the speaker for this gathering was Professor Eliot V. Graves of the State Board of Education. By this time there were 2500 black students in Hanover.\textsuperscript{105} It seems that the local white establishment (such as the newspaper) was prepared, sometimes maybe even eager, to take black aspirations seriously and praise black achievements. It is difficult to say exactly why this was the case. It appears that as long as black people remained in their place, white Hanoverians were willing to support their efforts. This begs the question, could the South have reformed itself racially in time? Probably not because as history shows, African Americans would not stay in their assigned place forever.

The public schools also served other functions. At times, they became health facilities. For example, the Code of Virginia required that all teachers and students for the 1923-1924 session receive a smallpox vaccination.\textsuperscript{106} As a result, nurses from the County Public Health and school nurses visited all the schools in the county. Jean Folly remembered the day in 1923 when the nurse arrived. She laughs as she recalls a pact that no one would cry, but remembers that some did.\textsuperscript{107}

By the middle of the nineteenth century, reformers had begun to introduce a new type of school to the educational landscape in the United States. Reformatories or industrial schools were established to provide an opportunity for youthful offenders to be treated less like hardened criminals and more like redeemable members of society. Prior to this time, juveniles had been housed with adult criminals. By the turn of the century, there were sixty-five reformatories in the United States committed to rehabilitating

\textsuperscript{104} Hanover Herald Progress, February 10, 1926.
\textsuperscript{105} Hanover Herald Progress, October 12, 1927.
\textsuperscript{106} Makosky, et al.; School Reports 1923-1924.
\textsuperscript{107} Makosky, et al., Jean Folly Interview, November 9, 2001.
youthful offenders; remarkably, two of them were located in Hanover—the Hanover Reformatory for Negro Boys and the Industrial Home School for Colored Girls.  

Near the end of the nineteenth century, the Virginia General Assembly established the Prison Association of Virginia and empowered it to assume custody over minors "charged with any crime or being vagrant or a disorderly person or incorrigible." Initially, these minors were committed to adult prison for an indeterminate amount of time. The length of the sentence was left up to the judge hearing the case. The constitution of 1902 addressed the matter of what to do with juvenile offenders and mandated that the state could, "in its discretion, make appropriations to non-sectarian institutions for the reform of youthful offenders." In this instance, "youthful offenders" translated as male because two schools were opened—The Laurel School for white boys and the Hanover Reformatory for Negro Boys which was maintained by the Negro Reformatory Association of Virginia neither of which addressed the needs female offenders.

Two issues become immediately apparent—one involving gender and the other race. First, young girls who found themselves in trouble were still imprisoned with adult women. Second, the names of the two male institutions set the young men up for two possible reactions from the public. The Laurel School gives one the impression of a private institution located in a picturesque location, and laurel garlands are associated in western culture with distinction and victory. The school for African American boys, alternately referred to as the Virginia Manual Labor School or the Hanover Reformatory

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109 Acts (1889-1890), 131.
110 Virginia Constitution of 1902, section 67.
111 Administrative Survey, 4. The Negro Reformatory Association was founded at the turn of the century by John Henry Smyth, an African American man who served as the minister to Liberia from 1878-1885. Through this Association, Smyth opened the boys school in Hanover County.
for Negro Boys, says to the observer immediately that this was an institution for “bad” boys.

The school for African American boys opened in 1897, but the earliest available biennial report was written in 1912. It reported that the Hanover boys school housed offenders found guilty of crimes ranging from stealing to rape. It also noted that in the two preceding years a chapel had been completed, and a blacksmith shop added to the campus. In addition to various trades they could learn, the boys attended an eight-month public school session. Throughout the 1910s and 1920s, the facility continued to expand to include a school house, cottage, and hospital. By 1914, the school had formed a marching band that would, over the coming decades, be featured in local parades held by black Hanoverians.\(^{112}\)

Religious training was also seen as an important factor in the success of the boys living at the school. In fact, all schools of this type included religious teaching in their curricula. Religious education was considered one way to encourage straight living. Some privately controlled schools had a denominational affiliation, and for them, establishing a program of religious studies was straightforward. In state-supported schools, the staff might not have any particular training to teach religion. To overcome this obstacle, “provision [was] always made for preaching, religious services, and religious teaching, usually by ministers and others not connected with the school.”\(^{113}\) This was the situation with the reform school in Hanover, where chapel services were held weekly under the leadership of a local white clergyman.\(^{114}\)

\(^{112}\)Virginia Manual Labor School of the Negro Reformatory Association of Virginia, Biennial Report (1914-1915), LVA.
\(^{114}\)Boys School Report (1914-1915).
By 1919, the school was well established, and community support was evident. The officers of the Negro Reformatory Association of Virginia selected a committee of women to prepare a holiday dinner and gifts for the boys. A newspaper article explained that more than fifty dollars had been allotted and that sandwiches, hot chocolate and over 200 bags of nuts, oranges, and apples were distributed. The president of the school suggests that these types of gifts and the thoughtfulness of the association go a long way toward instilling a sense of belonging in the young men.\footnote{Richmond Planet, January 10, 1920.}

William Layton grew up at the boys' school. His father, William, Sr., taught blacksmithing at the facility, and he and his family lived on the grounds. The younger man recalled that Dr. John H. Smyth, an African American and former United States Minister to Liberia, founded the facility when he realized that so many young black boys were being incarcerated alongside hardened adult male prisoners. The elder Layton soon rose to the position of disciplinarian, and by 1927 he was the superintendent.\footnote{William Layton, Layton Looks At Life (Washington, DC: W.W. Layton, 1996), 6.}

Hanover was also the site of the Industrial Home School for Colored Girls which was founded in 1914. This facility was founded under the auspices of the Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, but the board of trustees consisted of prominent women and men, black and white, from around the state. This body included Maggie Walker, who was a major supporter. She often contributed to fundraisers for the school, such as the time she gave $10 toward the purchase of a "moving picture machine."\footnote{Maggie Walker Papers, Diary entry, January 4, 1918.}

The school for girls was part of a national movement initiated by women across the country to provide structure for young girls who had not lived up to societal expectations. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women's organizations
began to open homes to “rescue” and “redeem” unwed mothers. White evangelical reformers portrayed themselves as “sexually pure and refined and their predominantly white charges as redeemable, even as their declarations of a cross-class sisterhood obscured the racial homogeneity of that proposed sorority.”118 As a result of the “racial exclusivity of the homes, African American women opened settlement houses, schools, homes for the elderly, and community centers…to fill in the gaps in such services that widened with the expansion of Jim Crow segregation in the South and racism in the North.”119

Janie Porter Barrett, who was born in Georgia but as an adult moved to Hampton, Virginia where she had attended college Hampton Institute, was the driving force behind, and the superintendent of, the school for black girls for over two decades. According to The History of the Virginia State Federation of Colored Women’s Club’s, Inc., a young girl from the city of Hampton, Virginia, was confined to jail after committing a minor offense in the early 1900s. There was nowhere else to send her. Barrett and the other women of the Federation decided that something had to be done. They set out to raise funds and eventually bought a 147-acre farm in Peaks, Hanover County Virginia, sometimes referred to as Peakes Turnout.120 When the school opened in 1914, it housed 28 girls ages eleven to eighteen in an old farmhouse.121 By 1916, a new “up-to-date” brick building had been completed, and according to Barrett, this facility included all of the modern conveniences except lighting.

In her report to the board of trustees in 1916, Barrett explained the procedures that a girl went through as she was processed into the school. First, she was cleaned up and

119 Kunzel, 13.
121 Hanover County Industrial Home School for Colored Girls, pamphlet, 1914, LVA.
given a clean bed. Next, her name was written on a clean page in the record book, and she was told that the blank page represented a new beginning, and it was up to her to keep a clean record. Third, the girl was expected to tell Barrett her entire story as soon as she was able. Next, a new enrollee was admonished not to dwell in the past. Finally, each girl was “made to feel that it was in her power to be one of the best women in the world if she really wanted to be.”

When the girls were eligible for parole, some would return to their families, but most of the parolees were placed in the homes of families not related to them, for whom they worked; this was sometimes problematic. Black domestics were often preyed upon by the white men in the households. Barrett understood the pitfalls of placing young black girls as domestics in white homes, and was very selective regarding the placements. She did not hesitate to remove a girl who she thought was being misused. Since she could not be with the parolees, she placed them under the informal guardianship of Federation members who lived in the respective areas where the girls were assigned. Also, Barrett solicited the promise of black clergymen in the area to visit the girls and invite them to join their churches. She believed that this, too, would provide a measure of protection.

Black girls and women had been at the mercy of white men since slavery, and Emancipation had not fully alleviated the problem. While working as domestics in white homes, black women were sometimes assaulted by the men of the house. The problem was prevalent enough to explain why black fathers and husbands might work several jobs to keep their daughters and wives out of the homes of white men. Leon Litwack explains that, while a black man might be lynched for smiling at a white woman, black daughters

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stood at risk from whites who feared no punishment for sexual misconduct. Tera Hunter also found evidence to support the idea that “a black woman’s body, in slavery and freedom, was treated as though it were not her own, nor even the conventional prerogative of her father or spouse.” In many instances, black women had little choice but to work in the homes of white people, but according to historian Jacqueline Jones, after generations of living with this problem, black women had developed strategies for protecting themselves against the “worst abuses of a system that evoked the days of bondage.” For example, black women chose not to live in the homes of their employers, formed mutual aid societies, and refused to work for anyone who had a reputation for being nasty and abusive. They took advantage of the shortage of “good help,” often leaving an employer in the knowledge that they would soon have another job.

In order to prepare the girls to leave the school eventually and to serve in private homes, the staff at the school stressed religious study, academics, domestic duties, and farming. The students were never allowed to be idle; they were taught that no work was beneath them if it was done well. Throughout the early days, Barrett struggled to find a clergyman to conduct weekly services. Barrett said, “We realize that if these girls are to be changed and made safe members of society it must be by developing Christian character, so all work and play are planned with that in mind and the aim is to put our religion into everything we do.” Eventually, the school was able to conduct weekly services every Sunday, a midweek Bible class, and Sunday school. The ultimate goal was that each girl would accept Christ before leaving the institution.

124 Litwack, Trouble in Mind, 36.
125 Hunter, 106.
126 Jacqueline Jones, American Work, 330.
Of all the things Janie Porter Barrett fought for, academic classes for her girls were perhaps the most important to her. While the girls learned basic home-making skills to prepare them to work in private homes, Barrett also wanted them to be prepared to enter high school, if it was available in their new community, when they left her care. They would have to obtain schooling through the eighth grade and acquire the prerequisites for further study. To accomplish this, two teachers were needed, an industrial teacher and a literary teacher. For many years, this request for a literary teacher went unanswered, while the industrial program was advanced; the board of trustees may have felt that academic preparation for these young women was less important than training them in the arts of cooking, cleaning, sewing, and raising food.\footnote{Girls School Report, (1916).}

In her report for 1918, Barrett stated that a year-round school was needed. This would insure that the girls who missed classes when working on farms would have the opportunity to make them up. Barrett went on to say that she hoped “that we will soon have a well-equipped school occupying the important place in our institution that it should…because…education is opportunity.”\footnote{Girls School Report (1918).} Barrett wanted to educated the girls at the school, not simply warehouse them like prisoners. Her desire for a well-equipped school was stated after Barrett had pointed out that she did not have the proper equipment to conduct a school; she lacked blackboards and other tools. The books used at the school were hand-me-downs from Kilbourne Farm, the reformatory for white girls located in Bon Air, Virginia, southwest of Richmond. She also pointed out that her school had not had a teacher during the first part of the preceding school year. It must be noted that, when teachers were not supplied, Barrett and the head matron, Mrs. Griffith, taught the classes in addition to carrying out their regular responsibilities. In 1919, the school was
placed on the agenda of the State Board of Education, and finally received a literary teacher and an industrial teacher at state expense.\textsuperscript{131}

The white and black neighbors of the school were not always happy with its presence, and according to Barrett had protested the school’s being placed in Hanover. Barrett tried to allay people’s fears by appearing useful to the community. She had the opportunity to do this during World War I. In 1918, when harvest time arrived, labor was scarce. Men were either overseas or in military training camps. Realizing what this shortage of labor would mean to the farmers in the area, Barrett offered the assistance of her girls. Initially the offer of aid was declined, because the farmers thought that the girls would trample and ruin the crops and generally tear up everything they saw. In the end, Barrett was able to convince her neighbors that their fears were unfounded. She explained to the girls that this was their opportunity to prove that they were worthy and valuable citizens. They harvested for black and white farmers that year, and there were no complaints. Some of the farmers shared their crops with the school, but Barrett was not concerned with those who did not. She explained that she was simply grateful for the chance to show what her girls could do.\textsuperscript{132}

In 1920, the boys’ and girls’ schools were turned over to the state. At that time, the girls’ school became the Virginia Industrial School for Colored Girls.\textsuperscript{133} While Barrett does not mention this change in status in her report that year, the president of the board, Ann Schmelz, does. Schmelz indicated in her report to the board that “special mention should be made of the fine spirit of the colored women in the matter of this transfer. The farm which they had bought, all of their subsequent contributions of money, materials, and sacrifice—with joy and pride they made the gift of their State, to our State,

\textsuperscript{131}Girls School Report (1919).
\textsuperscript{132}Girls School Report (1919).
\textsuperscript{133}Girls School Report (1920 and 1921).
to the State of the white and colored citizens.”\textsuperscript{134} It is worth noting that, the following year, Schmelz begins to talk about the problems that came with the transfer to the state. According to Schmelz, the black women who had formerly supported the school had stopped giving—no clothes, food, or general supplies. She says Barrett tried to explain to them that, even though the state had taken over, the assistance of the Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs was still crucial to the survival of the school.\textsuperscript{135}

This is a very curious turn of events. It raises questions about the willingness of the black women to turn over their land and the school to the state. There is no mention of any exchange of money for this land. Could that have been a bone of contention? Also, these women may have resented the fact that any control they may have exercised over the school had been effectively removed from the hands of blacks and put, ultimately, into the hands of the all-white legislature. It is hard to believe that simple naiveté about the school’s needs led these women to withdraw their support.

Whatever the impetus for the Federated Women’s Club’s withdrawal of the support for the school, the organization soon came back on board. In 1925, Walker attended the graduation exercises at the school. She wrote in her diary that she talked seven carloads of Richmonders into driving out for the event, which included a pageant on the lawn which featured cooking, sewing, laundry work, feeding and attending horses, chickens, pigs, serving the table and house cleaning. She concludes by saying that “every activity at Peakes in a day was demonstrated.”\textsuperscript{136} The Federation often had executive board meetings at the school, such as the one in February 1928, during which a seven-course dinner was beautifully served in the dining room.\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{134} Girls School Report (1920).
\textsuperscript{135} Girls School Report (1921).
\textsuperscript{136} Walker Diary, June 18, 1925.
\textsuperscript{137} Walker Diary, February 11, 1928. The Federation Board consisted of black women, but the board for the school was mixed by race and gender.
While the education of black children proceeded, their parents were trying to find ways to feed, house, and clothe their families. As Chenery explains "Few, very few in Ashland, were regarded as rich. The great majority were poor and poorer. The people I knew were absorbed in a daily struggle to secure some kind of respectable living from the uncertain jobs available." While Chenery was talking about his white neighbors, black people also fit into the category of poor and poorer, and unless they were lucky enough to own a business or land, they had precious few opportunities to improve their economic condition. This is apparent in Chenery’s statement that “boys and Negroes were happy to work for much less, presumably, than white men. This meant that black men did not earn much more than their young sons, and that moving out of the ranks of the poor was challenging to say the least. Occasionally a notice would appear in the classified section of the paper like the one placed by Arthur [Green] of Ashland: “Situation wanted—by colored man as working manager for small farm or shares.” Other times the newspaper would include notices for white or black workers, but more often the ads specified the race of the person the advertiser wished to hire: “Wanted—a white man with small family as farm hand. Good wages and house.”

Farming remained a major source of employment for blacks and whites in the county. According to the 1910 census, there were exactly 2000 farms in the county operated by owners, and of this number 832 were owned by blacks and other non-whites. The latter number was up from 457 in 1900. There were 151 black and non-white tenants in 1910, which represented a slight increase from 1900. In 1920, 860 farms were owned by blacks and other non-whites, which was a slight increase over 1910. The number of

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138 Chenery, 4.  
139 Chenery, 5.  
140 Hanover Herald Progress, February 14, 1919.  
141 Hanover Herald Progress, February 21, 1919.
black and non-white tenants increased insignificantly, to 163, in 1920. In the early decades of the twentieth century, following disfranchisement, it appears that black people in Hanover County were making definite inroads into the farming business. The census records suggest a steady increase in the number of black farm owners from 1900 to 1920.\textsuperscript{142} The census does not offer information on the size of farms by race, but most likely, the black-owned farms were fairly small.

By 1926, conferences aimed at teaching black farmers how to improve their output were taking place. One such conference took place at Brown Grove Baptist Church in Hanover County. At this time, the black people in the county did not have a farm extension agent, so J. C. Stiles, the white county agent and the nurse attended. In addition, L. C. White, a member of the Negro Organization Society, one Mr. Jeter of Hampton Institute, and J. L. Charity, the district agent, were all scheduled speakers. They also planned culinary demonstrations by the black 4-H cooking club of Ashland. Refreshments were to be sold, and “all colored farmers and tenants of the county are asked to attend this conference.”\textsuperscript{143}

Work opportunities in Ashland, the only incorporated town in the county, were quite limited. Many black women had no choice but to work in the homes and offices of whites, cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children. These women were often the primary caregivers to the young children. As a result of this closeness, many young white children felt a very real love for these black women. This love might translate into a lifetime connection, but this connection ordinarily did not in turn evolve into a real feeling of equality among the individuals. When those white children grew up, they often adapted a paternalistic relationship with the women who raised them. As William Chenery recalled, “We absorbed with our mother’s milk, or with that of our wet nurse if

\textsuperscript{142} Historical Census Browser June 2005.
\textsuperscript{143} Hanover \textit{Herald Progress}, April 21, 1926.
we had one, even though she might be a Negro, the Southern belief in the segregation of the races. Nobody questioned the desirability of keeping and defending impenetrable social barriers. The whites assumed that they were superior. I was long past boyhood before I realized that to everybody that assumption was not self-evident.\footnote{Chenery, 8.}

Lillian Smith also writes about the relationship between black women and the children they helped to raise in her 1963 memoir, *Killers of the Dream*. She discusses the black woman’s role as caregiver and the bond that developed between that woman and the child she tended. Smith describes these relationships as real and significant but acknowledges that at some inexplicable point in the child’s youth, he or she began to learn that the black woman was different, and that she could not be more to him than his “mammy.” Eventually he accepted his “whiteness” and the privileges that came with it, and the bond with his loving mother figure was broken. “From now on, his gifts to his old nurse will be little presents, not of esteem and love, but a linen handkerchief or a check at Christmas and birthday, and all his life long, tears when old spirituals are sung.”\footnote{Lillian Smith, *Killers of the Dream* (New York: Norton), 133.}

A 1919 obituary offers an example of the assumption to which Chenery refers. On June 27, 1919 the following obituary ran in *The Herald Progress*:

> Aunt Marie Dead. Aunt Marie Lataney, one of the best known of our colored citizens, died at her residence on lower Railroad Street on Sunday morning. She was one of the oldest citizens in Ashland and had been associated with the best families in Ashland ever since the Civil War. Her funeral took place from Shiloh Baptist Church of which she had been a member for many years.\footnote{Hanover *Herald Progress*, June 27, 1919.}

The thank-you note that followed the death notice also supports Chenery’s revelation that the assumption of superiority was not evident to all, at least not to the...
Latney family. The week after the obituary ran in the paper, the family of Maria Latney sent a general thank you note to all "colored and white" who offered sympathy at the passing of their mother. Special thanks were offered to the Rev. T.M. Allen and undertaker Winston for his excellent service.147

The difference between these two notices is evident. In the first, "Aunt Marie" is not granted the dignity of her correct given name or her surname in the heading. She had been a "mammy" to some of the best white citizens, but these citizens did not know her correct name or how to spell her last name. The thank-you note expressed appreciation to only two persons, and they were black men, not members of the "best [white] families." The Latneys took the opportunity of the notice in the paper to assert their mother's dignity by using her correct name.

Taking control of one's own name had been a battle fought by black people since slavery. White men and women rarely employed the title of Mr. or Mrs. before the name of a black person. As a matter of fact, when race is not attributed to individuals in the public records of the time, determination of race can often be made by how the person is addressed in the meeting minutes and other official records. In lieu of the accepted terms of address that indicated respect among whites, white people might add "Uncle" or "Aunt" in front of a black man or woman's name. This can be seen in the obituaries of "Uncle Sam," Samuel Harris, the beloved janitor at the white high school, or "Uncle Robert," Robert Lightfoot, the bell ringer at Randolph-Macon.148 Black people did not use these terms unless addressing their family members, and they always used Mr. or Mrs. when talking about those called Uncle and Aunt by white people.

In the white world, black people had very little control over how they were addressed, but there were instances that show that sometimes they were able to take

147 Hanover Herald Progress, July 4, 1919.
148 Hanover Herald Progress, December 30, 1925; August 1, 1928.
charge. In her memoir, *One Woman's Army*, Charity Adams Earley, an Alabama native and the second highest ranking African American woman in the Women's Army Corp, addresses this issue. She asserts that black men and women could buy anything if they looked as though they could afford it and if they "did not expect to be addressed as Mr., Mrs., or Miss."149 She went on to describe an incident that took place at her family's home shortly after she had begun her teacher career. Earley's father purchased a health insurance policy for her, and the white insurance agent came to their home asking for to speak to "Edna." Earley's father replied that there was a Miss Edna Adams there. The agent replied, "I can't call her Miss, because I have to call colored people by their first name." Earley's father told the man to cancel the policy and never step on his property again.150

John Morris of Hanover County relates a story about a time when some white men came to his home when he was a young boy. He clearly remembers white people coming to the house and referring to everyone as aunt and uncle. He laughs and says, "I'll never forget one day, one of them came to the house looking for my grandfather and asked if Uncle Pic was there. Mama called out, 'Hey, Papa, your niece is out here.'" Clearly, the practice of white people calling black men and women aunt and uncle sometimes irritated Morris's mother and, in her way, she made her point to the visitor.

Many African American parents did their best to shield their children from the realities of segregation for as long as they could, but there came a time always when children had to learn so that they would be able to survive. Charity Earley writes that "as we grew older there came a gradual awareness of a black social order and a white social order, each interdependent but separate and unequal." While everyone knew the rules,

150 Earley, 5.
these sometimes changed seemingly overnight.\textsuperscript{151} This is what happened to Robert Grimes. As a young teenager, Grimes worked at the five-and-ten-cents store owned by the Flowers family in Ashland. His co-worker was a young white girl about the same age. They would arrive at work early and study together. They developed a friendship of sorts. One day, Mrs. Flowers approached Grimes and told him that, since the girl was about to turn 17, he would have to start calling her Miss Stanley. Robert replied that he would call her Miss Stanley when she called him Mr. Grimes. Flowers said she would have to tell her husband; Robert said that she could tell anyone she wanted, and he walked out. Mr. Flowers was not as concerned about the situation as his wife, or he found the young man to be too good a worker to let go, so he talked him into coming back.\textsuperscript{152} Grimes never did refer to his co-worker as Miss Stanley.

Similarly, Beryl Thompson Carter recalls her grandmother's encounter with a white man who called her Aunt Edna. Carter's grandmother was a well-known midwife in the county and provided services to black and white families. She also worked as a domestic on occasion for one of the wealthiest white families in the county. Thompson remembered that her grandmother's relationship to this white family remarking that they "just loved my grandma. The sun didn't set on her because there was nobody like her," but they still called her grandmother by her first name and expected to be addressed as Mr. or Mrs.; "That never went away."\textsuperscript{153}

Thompson, who describes her grandmother as self-assured and feisty, found her grandmother's interactions with the white people she knew and worked for a little confusing. Her grandmother was always subservient to the whites she worked for but not to white people she did not know and who did not know her. Thompson recalled the time

\textsuperscript{151} Earley, 5.
\textsuperscript{152} Robert and NaChay Grimes Interview, April 23, 2004.
\textsuperscript{153} Beryl Thompson Carter Interview, June 6, 2006.
a white man drove up into their yard to ask for directions. He called her grandmother “Aunt Edna [and] she gave him where to go and get off this property kind of talk.” “Didn’t matter whether they had nothing and you had something. You still were aunt somebody.”154

Beryl Carter’s father and grandfather also managed to exert some control over how they were addressed by white people. Both men used their first initial only. Carter always believed that this was because they did not like their first names, but as an adult, she learned the real reason. Like Grady Powell’s father, the Thompson men used their initial as a way of not giving white people the ammunition with which to insult them. White people did not like it when they used the initial. Carter remembers that whenever she was with her father and he had to sign something, he would sign J. Conroy Thompson; the white people would always want to know his first name, and he always replied, J. Even during the Jim Crow era, when white people thought they were in control, that was not always the case.155

Returning to the topic of viable employment, some black men were lucky enough to find work on the railroad, which was considered a good job for a black man, no matter what the position. This was the case with Beryl Carter’s grandfather. “Grandpa had a little more status because he was a railroad man.” His regular route took him from Hewlett to Clifton Forge, Virginia, near the West Virginia border. He would stay there for as long as ten days and then return home. Carter’s grandfather also farmed his own land, but he did not earn enough from farming to support his family.156

One “town” occupation that seems to have been limited to black men was that of “scavenger.” Today, these men are known as garbage men, but during this period in

154 Carter Interview.
155 Carter Interview.
156 Carter Interview.
history they not only picked up trash, they also emptied privies, or outdoor toilets. One man who worked as a scavenger was Henry Dabney. He is first mentioned in the town minutes in 1923, and by 1925 he had agreed to remove trash from residences for twenty-five cents per house.\textsuperscript{157} Regardless of the nature of the business, the fact remains that Dabney was an entrepreneur who negotiated contracts with the town and operated his business his way.

Of course, there were some black entrepreneurs in the town who conducted more prestigious businesses. One such person was Judson Coleman. He owned Coleman’s Barbershop where he catered to a white clientele. His shop was state-of-the-art and included showers, which were a special treat at the time. His ads ran regularly in the \textit{Herald Progress}.\textsuperscript{158}

In 1925, Coleman’s brother John built a hotel for black tourists in Berkley Town, a black neighborhood in Ashland. John Coleman was described in the \textit{Herald Progress} as a “popular tonsorial artist”; his hotel, known as the “Community Inn,” was said to have cost approximately $10,000 and held five bedrooms on the second floor. Expecting many tourists during the summer season, Coleman explained, “we ain’t much on travellin’ in the cold weather.”\textsuperscript{159} When referring to “we” Coleman probably meant black people. His remark may be an indication of how comfortable he was talking to whites about race, but it is more likely that he was playing up to his white interviewer by stereotyping his own people.

Another popular black businessman of this time was William M. Sullivan. While pinning down the exact year he opened his cleaning and pressing shop is difficult, ads first appeared in the Hanover paper in 1919. As with barber Coleman, most of Sullivan’s

\textsuperscript{157} ATCM July 2, 1925.
\textsuperscript{158} Hanover \textit{Herald Progress}. Coleman advertised in the Hanover paper steadily throughout the early 1920s and then they taper off, until the late 1930s, when I much smaller ad appears.
\textsuperscript{159} Hanover \textit{Herald Progress} May 7, 1925.
clients were white. Sullivan not only ran a brisk business; he also appears to have been devoted to improving his community. He founded and directed a black marching band which was also appreciated by the white community. First appearing in the local paper in 1919, the band is lauded for a fine performance on Easter Monday. They were in new uniforms and looked “spic and span.” Later that summer Sullivan’s Band, as it was known, participated in a parade of blacks on July 4th. In the section of the newspaper called “Our Colored Friends,” the article explains that “the colored citizens of Ashland did themselves proud on the 4th by a nice parade, headed by Sullivan’s Band—twenty odd strong. Our colored citizens assembled at the high school, and with ‘old Glory’ flying high formed a most commendable parade and marched through the principal streets out to Shiloh Church where a most enjoyable day was spent.”

In December 1919, the Herald Progress praised Sullivan’s Band with a front-page article, a rare tribute to a black man during this time. The writer suggested that Ashland as a whole could be proud of Sullivan and the other “energetic young colored men of our town.” This time they had marched through town on Thanksgiving Day in the spotless uniforms. The writer ends by saying that “the best part of this band is that their uniforms and instruments are all paid for.” Sullivan’s Band also led parades of fraternal orders through town. This was the case for a society of black women known as the Sisters of Damon. While it is not clear what they were celebrating, the women were dressed in uniform and marched in 1921 to martial music from Berkleytown to Union Baptist Church. As mentioned in the previous chapter, these types of displays represented one way that African Americans could claim civic existence, and even citizenship. William Sullivan’s community spirit did not end with his band. In 1921 he

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160 Hanover Herald Progress April 25, 1919, July 11, 1919.
161 Hanover Herald Progress, December 5, 1919.
162 Hanover Herald Progress May 20, 1921.
founded a Young Men’s Christian Association for black men, which was housed in Ashland, but open to all young men in the county. He rented a house on James Street to be used as a headquarters. It is not certain how long the organization lasted, but in 1923 the group held something called a-wide-awake meeting on Sunday afternoon in Sullivan’s Auditorium. Mr. William Davenport of Richmond was the speaker. It appears that this meeting was held at least partially to recruit members. Reportedly a good number of new men joined, “but the club hopes to have every right thinking man of the community on its roll before the New Year.” The notice in the paper invited the men to come and bring a friend. They had a little more than one month to accomplish their goal.163

Clinton Winston, a blacksmith who began his business in 1892, was still operating successfully in the early part of the twentieth century. In the three decades following the virtual loss of citizenship for blacks in the state, Winston worked actively at his trade. During this time he was paid by the town to repair street lamps and street tools. He built coffins at the request of the county. In 1920, he sold several acres of land that would become the Woodland Cemetery, one of the county’s white cemeteries.164

Winston’s entrepreneurial spirit was passed on to his son, Johnny Clinton Winston. The younger Winston took over his father’s businesses in the 1920s. He continued to do business with the town and county for the next thirty years. Johnny Winston was also politically minded. In 1905, at the age of twenty-five, Winston registered to vote. He was one of very few black men in Ashland who registered after the 1902 took effect. His daughter, Inez Winston Gray, says that her father was always interested in politics. She remembers that he and her aunt, Ethel Winston Hicks, spent a

163 Hanover Herald Progress, November 8, 1923.
164 Gray Interview. The Gray family holds paperwork for this transaction.
good deal of time discussing current events. While Gray does not have a recollection of her father’s response to specific incidents, she believes that he voted.

Record of Winston’s registration is not available. According to records, a total of sixty black men were allowed to register. This brings up the question of why was Winston, and the other black men, allowed register? Could it have been because he was a well-known and respected businessman in the community? Like his father before him, Gray remembers that her father was trusted and respected in the community by white as well as by black people. Like his father, he performed work for the town and county. Of course, as a successful businessman, Winston could afford to pay his poll tax. Also, he was literate and could have passed a fairly administered literacy test, but as Chenery has suggested, the test was not typically administered without prejudice to black men.165

Winston was a religious man, and this could have added to his stature in the community. He was a leader in Shiloh Baptist Church, the oldest black church in Ashland. As a church leader, he was instrumental in the church’s survival and growth during this era. His daughter, Inez Gray, remembers that church lasted all day, and that often her father and some of the other men never made the walk back home between services. This was especially true in the winter when someone had to keep the wood stoves burning. As important, she also recalls her father and other men standing on the corner near the church discussing the issues of the day, even as they tried to find a way to pay all the bills.166

All of the entrepreneurs mentioned above—Dabney, the Coleman brothers, Sullivan, and Winston—represent a small but interesting component of the Hanover business community. With the exception of Dabney and John Coleman, all had white

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165 Chenery, 22; Gray Interview.
166 Gray Interview.
customers and one, Judson Coleman, dealt primarily with white men. What was it about these men that attracted and maintained a white clientele? It could simply have been that they provided a good service at a reasonable price. It may have happened because Ashland was a small town and everyone truly did know each other and have a history together. There may also be an element of "place" involved in this scenario. These black entrepreneurs, while they probably carried themselves with dignity, presumably understood their place and remained in it. But this explanation is not absolute: John Coleman stepped out of his "place" when he challenged the residential segregation ordinance. Also, Judson Coleman, Sullivan, and Winston each provided a service, and white people were accustomed to black people providing a service.

There is at least one other example of white people in Hanover stepping out of the box of racism to embrace a black man. In 1926, George Washington Carver visited Randolph-Macon College. He was lauded in the newspaper as a credit to his race—language that typically implies that one is an exception to the rule. The *Herald Progress* article that reported the visit said that Carver offered an interesting lecture on the 202 products made from the peanut. The reporter ended his story by saying of Carver that, "as a chemist, he has few equals possibly no superiors," high praise indeed from whites for an African American man in 1926. At least publicly, Carver was welcome in the town. When he returned to Tuskegee, he sent a note to the college thanking his hosts for an enjoyable visit. Carver was accepted as a scientist and a scholar, and perhaps it was his genius that enabled white people to overlook his race. This largesse was not extended to black residents in Ashland: according to Dorothy Jones, who was a white high school senior in the audience for Carver’s talk, black people in the county were not allowed to attend the RMC lecture.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Dorothy Gardner Jones Interview, October 26, 2005.
The lack of voting privileges and the indignity of being kept away from George Washington Carver did not deter blacks from speaking up. Indeed, they still expected elected officials to work for them. They were not shy about going to the town council or the county board of supervisors when they found it necessary. In 1918, black people asked the county board to allocate funds for a black farm demonstration agent. These agents were assigned to rural areas to teach the farmers how to get the most out their land. They taught cultivation techniques, crop rotation, and business skills. There was already a white agent, but he did not readily work with blacks. Indeed, the agent, J. C. Stiles, had to be courted strongly by the white trustees of the girl’s school before he agreed to act as a consultant for the agricultural program at the school. In the end, the application for a black farm agent was denied because the “County finances do not at this time justify an appropriation for this purpose . . . .” This topic would not be discussed again by the board of supervisors until the 1950s.

Interestingly, a few months later, in August 1918, the board asked the commonwealth’s attorney to find out how many Confederate veterans wanted to attend the reunion taking place in Tulsa, Oklahoma, that September and the approximate cost. At the September 3 meeting, the board allotted $400 to the Confederate veterans. Apparently the board did feel that this expenditure was justified, but not the expenditure to help black farmers raise healthier livestock and crops in order to make a better living.

In 1926, black county residents Judson Coleman, William Sullivan, and Willie Buckner petitioned county supervisor W. H. Davis for relief from the bad roads in Berkleytown, the black community just north of Randolph-Macon College. The road out of Ashland, Henry Street, which led to the black school, about one thousand yards in all,

\[168\] HCBS (January 17, 1918), 85.
\[169\] HCBS (August 5, 1918), 135, (September 3, 1918), 140.
was typically impassable during the winter months. Berkleytown included $50,000 in taxable homes, stores, a hotel, and public school. The road needed grading, draining, and a top coat of gravel. The property owners offered to pay for half the expenses in hopes of getting some relief from the county. In 1928, Linwood Henderson, a deacon at Shiloh Baptist Church, went before the Ashland Town Council to request that a waterline be constructed to his property, which was located in the rear of the Porter Estate. Unfortunately, the record does not include information on the outcome of these requests.

The board seemed reluctant to offer blacks assistance to better their lives, but they were at times quite generous when they could exercise their paternalistic views toward blacks. For example, they readily cared for the sick and indigent. In 1922, the board agreed to give Mary Johnson three dollars a month for three months in provisions, “it appearing that the said Mary Johnson is sick and incapable of earning a living and without any other means of support.” The board committed Tom Coleman to the Poor House because he is “old and [infirm] and has no viable means of support.” In 1927, three years after Coleman was committed, the board authorized the overseer of the poor in the Henry District to buy food for Mary Wingfield, “an old colored [woman].” She was allotted two dollars a month.

The first generation living with Jim Crow in the county did not back away from the spiritual fortifications that their ancestors had built. The black church continued to grow. African Americans played a noteworthy role in the spiritual, social, political, and educational life of the county. Many of the churches opened schools; they also held fundraisers to help pay for extra teachers, they served as meeting places for betterment

170 Hanover Herald Progress, July 14, 1926.
171 ATCM June 7, 1928.
172 HCBS December 22, 1922.
173 HCBS November 1, 1924.
174 HCBS May 2, 1927.
organizations, and they sponsored social events that were aimed at exposing their congregations and guests to the finer things in life.

The black churches in the county also held annual revival services aimed at rejuvenating the community and re-awakening their faith walk. These services rotated among all the churches in the community each fall, which was also known as revival season. These weeklong services began on Sunday with Homecoming, which black citizens also called the Big Meeting, a time when current and past members came together to worship and pray and share a huge meal followed by an afternoon service. Monday through Friday, an evangelist would preach each evening beginning at 8:00 pm. It was his job to remind members of the congregation of the goodness of God—that the Lord had not left them alone before, and would not leave them alone now. These services were typically packed and usually attracted new people to Christianity and to the respective congregations.175

The ministers were concerned for their parishioners’ mortal souls, and this meant providing good clean entertainment that would not tempt them to sin. There were not many “Godly” places that Christians could go in the County that were outside the church arena. As a result, the churches themselves provided social opportunities. In June 1920, Shiloh Baptist presented a May Queen event. The paper reported that the event “was most creditable entertainment from all accounts.”176 These accounts apparently came from the large number of whites present, who spoke very highly of the organization of the event. Almost one year later, the pastor of Shiloh, the Rev. E. W. Murphy, invited the Municipal Band (race unknown) of Richmond to present a classical concert at his church. The notice in the paper informed white readers that seats would be reserved for them.177

175 Gray Interview.
176 Hanover Herald Progress June 4, 1920.
177 Hanover Herald Progress July 1, 1921.
This last note let white men and women know that, if they attended this concert their ideals of racial segregation and white supremacy would not be challenged. It also assured the African American organizers that they would be able to benefit from white contributions to the offering.

The first generation of blacks to live under legalized segregation in Virginia was far from helpless or hopeless. While in some ways they may have given the appearance of submissiveness, the black citizenry of Hanover County continually sought and sometimes obtained redress for wrongs. Taking advantage of such opportunities as were offered, they made the best of a bad situation. And they maintained a rich social life. Hard work, an eye on the future, putting God first, and patience are the themes that continually come up in the sources. Blacks believed that a better day was coming, so they waited patiently, but not idly. While they waited, they also acted: they built schools and churches, homes and businesses. They interacted with whites, but they maintained lives that were separate from those of whites, both physically and emotionally. Through waiting and actively living their lives, blacks forced whites to continue their efforts to control them, all the while maintaining a little control for themselves.
CHAPTER 4

DEPRESSION, NEW DEAL, AND WAR

The decades of the 1930s and 1940s wrought major changes in American life. Economic depression, the New Deal, and finally World War II left an impact that continues to be felt today. Millions lost their homes, their jobs, their families, and even their very lives, some by their own hand. By 1932 Franklin Delano Roosevelt had taken the White House from Herbert Hoover by a large majority, but even his wide array of programs and agencies failed to alleviate the impact of the Great Depression. It would take a war with all the related industrial growth and development to finally put real meaning into the song, "Happy Days Are Here Again." Each of these three character-building or character-killing episodes—the Depression, the New Deal, and the War—this triumvirate of national and international chaos and hope, was felt and reacted to in Hanover County, Virginia. For black Hanoverians, these issues came in addition to the day to day realities of living in a racist and segregated society. In spite of, or perhaps because of, their living situation, black people in the county played their part—they shared what they had, they took advantage of the New Deal, and when the time came they fought in Europe and the Pacific and served on the homefront. They acted as citizens although their rights as citizens were severely limited.

The Great Depression began in earnest with the stock market crash of 1929. While scholars suggest that the seeds of the Depression were planted earlier, October 29, 1929, Black Tuesday, is the commonly acknowledged start of a decade-long financial
decline in the United States and the world, which has been called “one of the most transforming decades in the American chronicles.”

Following World War I, prosperity was the American buzzword. The gross national product rose to more than $51 billion between 1915 and 1920, the largest five-year increase in U.S. history. Delayed gratification went the way of the Pony Express as installment buying became the answer to limited funds—put a few dollars down, make weekly or monthly payments, and take your dream kitchen appliance home today—leading to major debt for families who had always paid as they bought.

At the time of the crash, Herbert Hoover had been ensconced in the White House for just a few months, and in many ways, his response to the economic problems of the time was unrealistic and deadly to the country and his presidency. He believed that optimism would save the day, and so publicly he asserted that production and distribution were at the heart of the United States economy and that both were in fine shape. Privately, he charged the men of industry to take positive action to avoid a major financial depression. For the most, these businessmen agreed to do their part, but even when they failed, Hoover responded inadequately the major layoffs and the spectacle of formerly law-abiding citizens robbing their neighbors for money to buy food and pay rent. Meanwhile, the unemployed fought for garbage from restaurant trash cans, and “Hoovervilles,” the little shanty villages named in the president’s “honor,” sprang up across the country.

In 1932, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, former governor of New York, was elected to the presidency. Unlike Hoover, FDR chose to face the problem head-on. In his first

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2 Watkins, 8.
3 Watkins, 56.
inaugural address on March 4, 1933, he enumerated the problems faced by American citizens—unemployment, low-paying jobs, homelessness, and loss of savings. Roosevelt argued that “only a foolish optimist can deny the dark realities of the moment.” He went on to encourage his fellow Americans with that now famous phrase, “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.”

FDR believed that the nation needed and demanded immediate action, and he proposed to take it. He wanted to establish “safeguards against the return of the evils of the old order; there must be a strict supervision of all banking and credits and investments; there must be an end to the speculation with other people’s money.” He immediately began working to try to provide some relief to the American people. On the very weekend of his inauguration, Roosevelt and his advisors moved to close the banks on the following Monday. This bank holiday was designed to curtail the panic. The holiday was followed by the passage of the Emergency Banking Act, which permanently closed insolvent banks, and provided that those banks that could be rejuvenated would reopen when and only when they were stable. As a result of these measures, many banks were saved. Eventually the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) would emerge from the Roosevelt administration, a permanent agency designed to insure depositors’ money in banks. The changes in the banking system were not the only actions taken by the new administration. Before FDR and his team were finished, the New Deal would include massive federal programs to provide work and services for Americans.

5 FDR Inaugural Address, 5.
6 Watkins, 154.
The Great Depression was felt by all Americans, but relatively little has been written about its impact on African Americans. Perhaps this is true partly because it is difficult the measure changes in the economic condition of most black people, who already lived at or below the poverty line before the Depression hit. Even many of the black men and women who had work were barely able to survive on their earnings.

In urban centers, the effect of the Depression was far more noticeable than in rural areas. Soup lines, shanty towns, and beggars were commonplace on city streets. In rural areas, many people were still able to grow their own food, cut wood, and share with their neighbors. Carrie Burton of Hanover remembers that her father always had a garden, and that he would go through the neighborhood and drop off bags of vegetables whenever he harvested. Whatever he had, he divided with family and friends.\(^7\)

This sharing spirit even encompassed the strangers who walked down dusty country roads. Daisy Wright Tobias, who grew up in Newberry, South Carolina, remembered men known as hobos throughout the rural South during the Depression. These men were often invited in for a meal. An interesting question to contemplate is whether these acts of charity crossed racial lines. There is no direct evidence of blacks and whites sharing with one another in Hanover, but it would not be surprising if it did take place on occasion. As is evident in this dissertation, categorizing the relations between black and white people across the South and in Hanover County is not easy. Black and white people maintained precarious relationships during the Jim Crow era. Litwack offers substantial evidence that class played a role in the relationship of some black and white people. Since the time of slavery, poor whites had been discouraged by the white elite from exploring their economic commonalities with black people. By convincing lower-class white men and women to ally with them, the white elite

\(^7\) Carrie Burton Interview April 29, 2004.
consolidated its position and maintained power. These attitudes did not change with Emancipation. According to Litwack, poor whites and blacks learned at the knee of adults the terms and attitudes with which to address and view each other.\textsuperscript{8} On the other hand, evidence suggests that blacks were typically not prone to act vengefully toward whites, and some white people reached out to black people, although often from a paternalistic base. There are stories of white and black children playing together. White and black hunters sometimes shared the spoils of a hunt.\textsuperscript{9}

Sharing was a way of life in rural areas, so accepting extras from the garden of a neighbor was normal. Accepting help from an agency, however, was another matter. Dorothy Gardner Jones, who worked as the director of the federal welfare office in Hanover County during the Depression, recalled that many people, black and white, were simply too proud to ask for help from her agency.\textsuperscript{10} She typically found out who was in need from the owners of local general stores. These merchants knew who was not able to pay their bills. The storekeepers would tell Jones, and she would drive her truck loaded with surplus food and supplies from the government and either deliver it to the store to be distributed or directly to private homes. The available provisions varied, but in any given week might include cheese, beans, flour, and sometimes fruit.\textsuperscript{11}

The Depression presented many financial challenges to black families, and survival often meant that even the children had to find some way to help bring money to the family. Children sometimes worked odd jobs such as running errands, cleaning, doing yard work, or babysitting, as in the case of Ruth Winston Carter. Carter’s job also allowed her to resist attempts by white people to demean her, even during the Depression.

\textsuperscript{8} Litwack, \textit{Trouble in Mind}, 21.
\textsuperscript{9} Lillian Gardner Interview July 7, 2004.
\textsuperscript{10} Jones Interview.
\textsuperscript{11} Jones Interview.
Carter recalls that she got her first after-school job when she was about ten years old. Many white families hired young black girls to take care of their children after school. The caretakers got out of school at 3:00 pm and picked up the white children by 3:30 pm. They would all meet at the First Baptist Church, where they would run around and play, ride tricycles, and the like. Ruth Carter did this from ages ten to thirteen.

First Baptist, with its large grassy lawn, was the gathering place of all these young nannies and their charges. Mothers usually gave them money to buy the children some ice cream. Some of these white women would also give the sitter a nickel to get some ice cream for herself as well. One of the women Ruth Carter worked for would give her a nickel for the child but not for her. Carter remembers with a chuckle that, since the child could not talk, she could not tell the mother that she never got any ice cream.

Robert Grimes began working when he was thirteen at a boarding house where Randolph-Macon students ate before the cafeteria was built on campus. Looking back, Grimes grasps just how poor his family was, but his first realization of this fact did not hit him until he was a grown man and in the Marines. They were so poor that, while they had shoes for school, they took them off after 3:00 pm, and when the soles of those shoes wore out, they stuffed them with paper. Grimes’s family did not have bedspreads, so they slept under World War I overcoats, and “they were heavy!” While they slept in relative comfort, the house was very cold. Indeed, from November to March they had to break ice in order to wash their face. “It was hell,” Robert explains. During the Depression, his father worked at the Henry Clay Inn in Ashland. He earned three dollars a week, and he got to bring home leftovers, so while the job did not pay well, the family ate well as long as the senior Grimes worked at the Inn.12

12 Grimes Interview.
While some people managed to make a living during the Depression, many blacks sank to a new level of financial destitution. Poverty, like a whiff of smoke, snakes its way into every crack and crevice, and it affects people in ways that are not always clear at first glance. For example, few people, if any, in Hanover County starved to death during the Depression. As pointed out earlier, most people had something to eat, but there was often insufficient food to fill all the stomachs in the typically large rural family. Poor nutrition, along with lack of access to dental and medical care, led to major health problems. This was perhaps most evident in school children.\(^\text{13}\)

Lack of education, understanding, and money led to major dental problems for poor people, black and white. As a result, dental clinics were sponsored from time to time by the Hanover County Health Department and the Red Cross in schools across the county.\(^\text{14}\) At one clinic in 1932, of the 650 black children examined, 616 were found to be in need of dental work; fifty received "corrections."\(^\text{15}\) This meant that 566 children were left untreated; presumably, the untreated problems worsened, and some of them may have led to lifelong difficulties. For example, untreated gum disease can lead to heart problems, diabetes, blood infections, and a variety of illnesses linked to the digestive system. All this was aggravated by issues of appearance and self-esteem linked to missing teeth.\(^\text{16}\)

Health care was always challenging for county blacks, and the Depression brought little change. Indeed, "the demands of white supremacy exerted a profound impact on the physical environment in which black men and women lived...and [on] the quality of health care they could expect."\(^\text{17}\) Tuberculosis, also known as the White

\(^\text{13}\) Discussion with Graham Rose, DDS, May 11, 2006.
\(^\text{14}\) Hanover Herald Progress, April 28, 1932, June 23, 1932.
\(^\text{15}\) Hanover Herald Progress, June 23, 1932.
\(^\text{16}\) Rose Discussion.
\(^\text{17}\) Litwack, Trouble in Mind, 336.
Plague, continued to be a menace to the community. Undoubtedly deaths occurred as a result of this disease, but the records do not reveal how many. Not everyone died as a result of TB, but patients could be removed from the community to sanatoriums, some for many years until they were dead or free from the illness. The county nurse submitted monthly reports, which included anyone sent to a sanatorium for tuberculosis. Sometimes the nurse indicated that she was “suspicious,” meaning that she was not able to state definitively that an individual had TB, but that the person exhibited symptoms that were typically attributed to the disease. This was the case with the seven blacks and two whites the nurse had seen in January 1932.\textsuperscript{18} As in previous decades, free chest clinics were provided by the county, and they remained segregated—black people went to Shiloh Baptist Church and whites to Duncan Memorial Methodist Church.\textsuperscript{19}

Another approach to better health was directed at school children through a hot lunch campaign in 1934, which was sponsored by the State Department of Health. Studies showed that malnourished children were the ones who most often suffered illness, caused discipline problems, and had difficulty learning. Since many families were not able to provide breakfast for their children, the schools tried to provide hot lunches. Adele Dabney, supervisor of the black schools, reported that the Wickham School at Hickory Hill served hot lunches daily.\textsuperscript{20} Wickham was just one place where this program was carried out. In May 1936, the two teachers at the Mt. Zion School in Hanover sent a thank-you note to the \textit{Herald Progress} that was included in the section for African American readers. They acknowledged the “many white friends and colored patrons of

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\item[18] Hanover \textit{Herald Progress}, March 10, 1932.
\item[20] Hanover \textit{Herald Progress}, December 6, 1934.
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the school for so generously giving canned foods during the cold months for hot lunches."\(^{21}\)

The food was furnished and cooked by school supporters, and the teachers served it with the assistance of a student committee. \(^{22}\) By February 1938, two other black schools were receiving soups, vegetables, potatoes, cocoa, and other items from "interested patrons in the community."\(^{23}\) Near the end of 1938, the faculty and students of the Training School thanked members of the community, including the Union Baptist Church Sunday School and the South Anna Elks Lodge, for contributing food to help feed the underweight children at the school. According to the principal, there were sixty-one children at the school who would benefit from daily hot lunches that would be prepared by the home economics department.\(^{24}\)

Of course, the need for hot lunches was only the tip of the iceberg. For other health care concerns, a county nurse was available. For a while, the position of county nurse was not segregated in Hanover. Mae Mathers, the white county nurse, worked with white and black citizens. Her job was multifaceted, but in general, she was responsible for carrying out the edicts of the state with regard to health care. She conducted workshops at the black schools explaining the fundamental principles of health. She also aided the county teachers with the state-mandated five-point check-ups of children's hearing, vision, teeth, throat, and weight. Mathers was acting in this capacity when she visited the Pine Tree Colored School in Hanover in March 1932.\(^{25}\) Typically, parents were encouraged to take their children to a family physician for the five-point check-ups, but most black families did not have access to doctors, at least not for proactive health

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\(^{21}\) Hanover Herald Progress, May 7, 1936.

\(^{22}\) Hanover Herald Progress, December 6, 1934.

\(^{23}\) Hanover Herald Progress, February 24, 1938.

\(^{24}\) Hanover Herald Progress, November 17, 1938.

\(^{25}\) Hanover Herald Progress, March 3, 1932.
care measures. This meant that the teachers were responsible for addressing such concerns in the black schools.

Another of Mathers's responsibilities was to register residents with the state Bureau of Vital Statistics. Most children born in rural areas were born at home, their mothers assisted by a midwife. For many years, registering births was not required, and even after it became obligatory, midwives were not always diligent in carrying out this part of their job. Sometimes it was simply a matter of getting the information into the proper hands, but some midwives did not read or write and could not carry out this task. In 1932, Mathers decided to do a check-up to try and get children who had not been registered at birth recorded at the Bureau of Vital Statistics. She took blank birth certificates to the black schools, and 150 were filled out and returned. She then sent these certificates to the Bureau. She was later notified that fifty of the children had never been registered.²⁶

As with other aspects of their lives, African Americans did not depend solely on the white-run system for health care. The hot lunch program, run largely by black volunteers and teachers, is evidence of this fact. Additionally, black leaders on the local and national level believed that education was critical to overcoming the health-related concerns plaguing their communities. One early response to the lack of information for black people had been the establishment of National Negro Health Week in 1914. This week, which was sponsored by the National Negro Health Movement in conjunction with the United States Public Health Service, state and local agencies and interested organizations, took place each spring.²⁷ Churches, schools, organizations, and private

²⁶ Hanover Herald Progress, February 25, 1932.
²⁷ Susan Lynn Smith. Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired: Black Women's Health Activism in America, 1890-1950. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 58. When the Office of Negro Health Work was established during the New Deal Era "it was the first time since the Freedman's Bureau" that the healthcare of African Americans was made a priority by the federal government. This office was

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citizens came together to educate blacks about the importance of health care. These campaigns were addressed particularly to mothers and children. There were lectures, demonstrations, and contests. Days were set aside to focus on personal hygiene, community sanitation, and communicable diseases.\(^{28}\)

The work of white nurse Mae Mathers and the black school supervisor, Adele Dabney ended abruptly and poignantly when they were killed December 12, 1934; a train hit the car they were riding in. Both women died instantly. The community’s acceptance of Mathers and Dabney presents an interesting quandary. Even with all the Jim Crow restrictions of the time, they appear to have worked together comfortably, and even more striking, county residents liked and respected both women. There seems to have been no surprise that the two women were in the same car. An article in the paper mentioned that Mathers had been in the county for three years, and Dabney, who had been working in Hanover for just under two years, was given the title of “Miss,” a show of respect rarely bestowed on a black person during this period.\(^ {29}\)

According to the newspaper account, friends of Mae Mathers set up the Mathers-Dabney Fund in memory of the two women. Interestingly, the paper does not mention any African American involvement in organizing the project. This suggests that, while Dabney may have been respected and the white organizers were willing to include her name on the fund, they were still not willing to cross the color-line and hold meetings with African Americans.

The new group held its initial meeting in early 1935 and set a goal of $1,000, which was to be used to fight hunger and malnutrition. All the churches, schools, and

\(^{28}\) Hanover Herald Progress, April 5, 1934.

\(^{29}\) Hanover Herald Progress, December 13, 1934.
organizations in the county were contacted and asked to donate. Mathers's adopted son contributed the money from his piggy bank, and black school children from across the county raised $35.22.30

Despite all the efforts of parents, teachers, and the county, there were still at least 100 undernourished black children in the county in 1935. This number was reported to the Mathers-Dabney Memorial Fund Committee by Grace Bushell, the supervisor of Negro schools.31 By 1937 the Mathers-Dabney Fund was being used to expand the hot lunch program in the black schools. In addition to helping students learn, it was believed that hot food would help to cut down on the number of children contracting tuberculosis.32

During his presidential campaign, FDR had promised the country a New Deal to stop the downward economic spiral. In the early years of his administration, he and his advisors worked with Congress to establish new agencies and programs designed to respond to the needs of the people. For example, the Civil Works Administration (CWA) was established to provide temporary jobs repairing roads and bridges. Another, the Works Progress Administration (WPA), offered long-term jobs building schools and other public works projects.

One example of a WPA undertaking can be found in the history of health care for blacks in Hanover. For many years, blacks had sought a public health care nurse for their community. The nurse was to be responsible for maintaining the “tuberculosis work, maternal welfare program, child health program, colored school health education and examinations, smallpox, diphtheria, immunizations, and other activities among the

30 Hanover Herald Progress, January 24, 1935.
31 Hanover Herald Progress, February 7, 1935.
32 Hanover Herald Progress, January 21, 1937.
colored people, which make up 42% of the County’s population." Finally, in 1937, their wish was granted when the WPA agreed to pay a portion of the salary for a graduate nurse who had special training in public health. White organizations, including the Hanover Woman’s Club, the Pamunkey Woman’s Club, the Doswell men’s and women’s clubs, and the Hanover Tuberculosis Association, contributed $180 to hire a black nurse for black people in the county. The remainder of the funds, needed to hire the nurse, were raised by blacks in the community. The willingness of the white organizations to donate money to hire a black nurse seems generous, but one must consider the reality that by taking this generous step, they were once again insuring that African Americans had a place and that they remained in it. This donation may also suggest that while most white people appeared to have tolerated Mae Mathers serving the black community, they may not have liked it after all.

Health care was a major concern during the Depression, and so were unemployment and vagrancy. The Roosevelt administration developed the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in response to these issues. According to many scholars, this was the most successful of the New Deal initiatives. The mission of the CCC was to put young men to work saving forests and creating national parks. A conservationist at heart, FDR was particularly fond of this program. The agency fell under the umbrella of the Department of Interior; the Departments of Agriculture, Labor and War also had major roles. Initially recruits were required to be male and between 18 and 25 years old, but the minimum age was eventually lowered to seventeen. Prospective enrollees had to be unemployed, healthy, 60 – 78 inches tall, and weigh at least 107 pounds. They also needed at least six teeth—three on top and three on the bottom. The Department of Labor

33 Hanover Herald Progress, August 5, 1937.
34 Hanover Herald Progress, August 5, 1937. The sources do not provide the amount raised by the black community.
was responsible for obtaining the recruits.\textsuperscript{35} The men signed on for six-month terms, but could re-enlist—which was what Robert Lee Johnson, a black resident of Gum Tree in Hanover County, decided to do after his initial enlistment ended. He served his six months in 1939, went home for a two-week vacation, and returned to camp for another term of service.\textsuperscript{36}

The War Department clothed, housed, fed, and took care of the medical and dental needs of the participants. It also paid the workers—regular recruits $30; $36 for assistant leaders, $45 for local experienced men (LEMs), who were from the surrounding community, knew the area and could help guide the young men. They were especially important where young urban men were placed in rural locales and expected to come to terms with the woods.\textsuperscript{37} There were also leaders and assistant leaders, who were selected by the enrollees and paid a little more.\textsuperscript{38}

Recruits were expected to send money home to their families. The Department of Interior provided vocational and academic training through the U.S. Office of Education. The Interior Department supervised the CCC’s work in the national parks. The Department of Agriculture oversaw “all work done on the 171 million acres of national forests, wildlife refuges, and other Department of Agriculture lands.”\textsuperscript{39}

In the planning stages, and in the original legislation establishing the agency, the CCC was conceived as a program that would not discriminate by race, although it did

\textsuperscript{35} Stan Cohen, \textit{The Tree Army} (Missoula, MT: Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, 1980), 156; Jones Interview.
\textsuperscript{36} Hanover Herald Progress, July 13, 1939.
\textsuperscript{38} Salmond, 41.
\textsuperscript{39} Salmond, 30.
exclude women. This apparent gender bias may be the result of adherence to traditional values where men were seen as breadwinners, and therefore more in need of employment.

In some areas of the country, for example in the West, this translated into integrated camps. While some of the white enrollees dealt well with the integrated facilities, others resisted them. Many whites in some of the western states, Utah and California for example, proved reluctant to have black CCC workers in their midst. Robert Fechner, director of the CCC, wrote, “Whether we like it or not, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that there are communities and States that do not want and will not accept a Negro Civilian Conservation Corps company. This is particularly true in localities that have a negligible Negro population.” Negative feelings about black CCC camps were quite prevalent. White people were afraid that having a large group of black men living so close would endanger white women and children.

Ironically, the camps were most welcome in the South. Georgia, Arkansas, and Alabama all had African American camps and seemed to appreciate the work the men performed. Integrated camps would have probably have caused a stir, but there was never an attempt in the South to mix white and black enrollees. Additionally, Fechner set a policy that black enrollees would not be assigned outside their own state, and the camp locations for black men were selected by the governor of the state.

The African American camp at Hanover was very welcome in the community. It was located in the county largely as a result of lobbying by the Ashland Kiwanis Club,

40 Robert Fechner to Robert J. Buckley, 4 June 1936, "CCC Negro Selection" file, Box 700, General Correspondence of the Director, Record Group 35, National Archives, College Park, Maryland. Fechner was the director of the CCC; Salmond, 30.
41 Fechner to Buckley.
42 Salmond, 92.
43 Salmond, 92.
which either expressed a pre-existing favorable attitude in the community or paved the way for a warm reception.\textsuperscript{44} This was Virginia’s first CCC camp for either race, and was not established until 1935, two years after the agency was created. The establishment of this new camp was initially reported in March 1935, and the local newspaper noted that it was to be the home of approximately 200 white men.\textsuperscript{45} For reasons that are not preserved in the available records, when Hanover CCC camp 1372 opened in May 1935 its mission had changed; it was designated as a facility for African American men. They were to work on projects in Hanover, Caroline, and possibly King William Counties.\textsuperscript{46}

Camp 1372 was established near Hanover Courthouse in the eastern part of the county and initially included 65 black men. That number soon climbed to 212, with sixteen county men among the enrollees. At first the camp was not complete, so the men slept in tents. The group was divided in two. Half worked on setting up the camp, which included building barracks and laying out roads. The remaining men worked on the land of a Hanover landowner cutting fire lanes. By August, the men were working on new projects. In Louisa and Chesterfield counties, they constructed quarters for forestry camps, and in Caroline and Hanover they did forestry conservation work.\textsuperscript{47}

Bertha Parnell, an African American and a longtime resident of the Georgetown section of Hanover, recalls that the men at the CC camp also put out fires. They had a fire tower that was several floors high with a house at the top. Watchers could see a good portion of the county from this location. In the 1930s, when the camp was still located in Hanover, it was about a half a mile from Parnell’s childhood home. One day, when her

\textsuperscript{44}Kiwanis is an international service organization founded in Detroit Michigan in 1915. http://www.kiwanis.org/WhoWeAre/KiwanisLegacy/tabid/131/Default.aspx.
\textsuperscript{45}Hanover \textit{Herald Progress}, March 7, 1935.
\textsuperscript{46}Hanover \textit{Herald Progress}, March 7, 1935; Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Record Group 35, Entry 115, Division of Investigations, Camp Inspection Reports, Box 224, Folder P-78, NARA.
\textsuperscript{47}Hanover \textit{Herald Progress}, May 30, 1935, August 1, 1935.
mother was burning off a field to prepare it for planting, the fire got out of hand. Parnell says that her mother left them to get the CC boys. When she returned the fire was all around them. Bertha Parnell remembers being very happy to see the CCC men come up the road with their wagon. After the CCC left the area, the fire tower became a hangout for local toughs. The tower remained standing until a young man was either pushed or fell from the platform, after which it was demolished. 48

As is evident from the Parnell story, the surrounding communities profited greatly from the presence of the camp, but the men also benefited. Shortly after the CCC was approved, an educational component was added, and one teaching tool used was a camp newsletter, published bi-monthly. The newsletter for Camp 1372 was called The Bomb at first, but was eventually renamed the White Chimney Eagle around the same time that the camp number changed to 91. The newsletter was published by the high school English class of the Hanover camp.49 The Bomb, which was produced using a typewriter and mimeograph machine, does not clearly identify the entire staff of the paper, but by 1939, the White Chimney Eagle had a more professional appearance and listed all involved.50

The newsletter was not simply for the men of the camp. It must also have been distributed in the community. The White Chimney Eagle contained articles that gave the history of the CCC and highlighted educational activities and the achievements of individual enrollees. The paper also recognized enrollees who were about to graduate. In the issue of August 23, 1939, there were three first-class cooks, as well as chauffeurs, truck drivers, hospital attendants, laborers, and those prepared to enter domestic service.

48 Parnell Interview.
49 Hanover Herald Progress, March 25, 1937. The camp was relocated to Caroline County in 1937, but continued to serve and receive funding from Hanover.
50 Civilian Conservation Corps Newsletter “The White Chimney Eagle” (Caroline County, Virginia August 23, 1939).
At the end of the list, potential employers were informed of the high quality of all graduates. The note assured the reader that all the men were “government trained” and held certificates attesting to their “proficiency and leadership.” The camp newsletters not only informed; they also served to put local residents at ease. The success of the camp and reliability and responsibility of the men associated with it were communicated clearly. The African American staff also took it as an opportunity to challenge some of the traditional stereotypes that white people held about black people, especially men. In the column titled “Did you know that…,” a list of questions were presented to the reader. They highlighted successes of the men from the camp, such as the fact that two White Chimney enrollees would soon be attending Virginia Union University. The column also included items such as the 1600 patents held by black inventors and mentioned that track star and Olympic athlete, Jesse Owens, had visited the camp. The column also pointed out that the second wife of the Biblical Moses was an Ethiopian. Not surprisingly, the newsletter was also sexist. It referred to the new wife of the camp surgeon as a “beautiful long-legged bird.” The men did, however, mention Maggie Walker and her achievement as the only female bank president in the U.S.

An editorial in The Bomb’s issue for Christmas 1935 encouraged the men to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the CCC. One such opportunity was the chance to learn to read and write. According to the editor, there was no excuse for a man in the CCC not to be literate. Teaching these fundamentals was part of the educational program. The men were told to consider the CCC camp their school. They would learn how to plan and build roads, bridges, and fire trails. They would also learn carpentry, landscaping, and plumbing. It appears that most of the top leadership, such as the company

51 “The White Chimney Eagle.”
52 “The White Chimney Eagle.”
commander, were white men, but the enrollees were advised that any man who wanted to advance and hold a key position such as supply clerk or post-exchange steward could do so by his own hard work. The editorial also promised that assistance was only a question away. The enrollee simply needed to ask.\footnote{Civilian Conservation Corps Newsletter “The Bomb” (Hanover County, Virginia December 1935).} The newsletter itself was part of the educational process at the camp and it appears that most, if not all, of the staff and editorial department was African American.

The men were encouraged to think of Camp 1372 as their family, and families played together. During their first summer as a group, the men formed a baseball team, and by summer 1936 they played the local black team, the Ashland Tigers, a semi-pro team in the area.\footnote{CCC, Record Group 35.} The men also played volleyball, quoits, and softball, and they even worked in a little boxing. There was no football equipment available.\footnote{CCC, Record Group 35.}

Additional recreational activities included singing, dramatics, games, and movies. Occasional trips off the premises were authorized so that the men could attend socials at local churches. Camp 1372 also formed a quartet, and this group was sometimes invited to sing at local church events.\footnote{CCC, Record Group 35. It is not known if the churches were black or white or both. Given the groups inclusion in the Patrick Henry celebration, they may have also been invited to white churches.} Music was very important to the men of Camp 1372; they also formed a glee club. This group of men performed on Richmond radio station WRVA. The club also took an active role in Hanover’s bicentennial pageant honoring native son Patrick Henry in 1936.\footnote{Souvenir Program. “Liberty or death”; pageant drama of the life of Patrick Henry presented on the occasion of the bi-centennial of his birth (Hanover Courthouse, Virginia: Richmond, Whittet & Shepperson, 1936).}

Just as they thought of their campmates as their family, the men of Camp 1372 were also encouraged to treat the camp itself as home and to take care of it. Camp
beautification was an expectation of the program. Virginia fell in CCC District Four, and according to one brochure, "The beautification of their camp-sites has been set by the companies of District Four as their most important leisure time activity." By learning to landscape and maintain the camps, it was believed that the men would learn to appreciate well-kept lawns and shrubbery, and that "their home 10 and 20 years hence will show the results of this present plan." By December 1935, Camp 1372 was well on its way to accomplishing the goal of beautification. According to a letter from Special Investigator Charles H. Kenlan, the camp showed remarkable development. Construction of buildings was completed, but two items were still needed: linings for all the buildings to insulate against weather, and a tractor and grader.

Another indication of the enrollees' esteem for their camp was expressed by assistant leader and editor-in-chief of the White Chimney Eagle, Leedom Jones, an African American, in his poem "The Thirteen Seventy-Two":

Of all the CCC under the blue,  
Give me Old Thirteen Seventy-two;  
Others are good and very fine,  
But none are like this one of mine.

Such lovely trees you've never seen,  
And Oh! the lawns are always green,  
Uniform paths leading everywhere;  
Who wouldn't be here, rather than there?

Flowers, my they are grand,  
We have them by every name,  
Dahlias, chrysanthemums, and sweet blue bell  
The others we have, no one can tell.

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59 National Archives, Records Group 35.
Our officers too are full of spirit,
Just as alert as the old wise bird,
But matters not how things may go,
Their hospitality they willingly show.

Music, music everywhere,
We even sing on the air,
We are happy and never blue,
That’s the spirit in seventy-two.

Talking about feed, just come to the mess,
And peep over the table after they’ve been blessed,
Pork, potatoes, beans and ham,
Food, food of every name.

This is really from my heart,
The [day] shall never come for depart,
For I know [____] this is true,
There’ll never be another seventy-two.60

Camp 1372 also had a spiritual side. In the 1935 report on the camp’s progress, Kenlan wrote that there were usually at least 12 religious services per month, and that about fifty percent of all enrollees attended. This number did not include enrollees who attended churches in the community. The enrollees conducted a Bible class and regular Sunday school. Several of the newsletter items shared inspirational sayings and readings. “Lifted Above the Burdens” was one such article. Written by Leroy Sutton, an enrollee at the camp, it encouraged readers not to allow life’s worries to get them down. God will send aid, Sutton wrote, because He knows our incapacity to function without His assistance. The daily loads that seem so heavy are really there to act as stairs to God.

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60 “The Bomb.”

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Sutton ended by saying, “Alone with Christ. Secluded there, we mount our loads, and rest in him. Amen.”

The men of Camp 1372 were not always serious. They also liked a good joke, or even a corny one, at times. In “Bursting Bombs,” a column in the camp newsletter they shared humor of this type:

Ross: I sat next to a swell looking dame in the movies last night and nearly talked her into having a date with me.
Newton: What happened, did she change her mind?
Ross: No, she changed her seat.

Despite this joke, it seems that sometimes local women and men from the CCC did get together to socialize. While there is no direct evidence of this in Hanover, the record does not indicate that outings to the local community were forbidden. Indeed, in some areas “townsfolk living near camps occasionally complained that the enrollees were making too free with their daughters.” According to records, 18.3 out of every 1000 CCC enrollees contracted venereal disease, and while it may have been very little consolation to parents, this rate is significantly lower than that of the Army during the Civil War, the Spanish American War, and World War I.

Some scholars have maintained that black enrollees in the CCC typically did not receive the same treatment and opportunities as their white counterparts. This does not seem to have been the case in Hanover. As discussed previously, black enrollees were part of the newsletter writing staff and seemed to have had access to a good many

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61 "The Bomb."
62 "The Bomb."
63 Salmond, 144.

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opportunities. Some even took bricklaying classes at Armstrong High School in Richmond, and some attended college.\textsuperscript{65}

The African American enrollees in Hanover did not face the same type of opposition as that encountered by their compatriots in the western part of the country. The community sought and appreciated their services. One explanation for this could be that white Hanoverians accepted a black CCC camp because they understood and could relate to blacks who labored on the land. The favorable response may also be attributed to the manner in which the camp was announced in the county. It was the middle of the Great Depression and, as the \textit{Herald Progress} pointed out, construction of the new camp would employ local carpenters, the Ashland Laundry had been awarded a short-term contract, and food for the men was also being purchased from local vendors. The paper also explained that the men in the camp would carry out local forestry projects. Two weeks later, the paper announced that a crew of sixty-five men from the camp were working on the land of a private owner to build fire lanes. The establishment of a camp baseball team and a quartet was also announced, along with the story of a litter of puppies that had been adopted by the men. Finally, the article quoted the opinion of the officers, who were white, that they had in their charge an “unusually fine bunch of boys.”\textsuperscript{66}

In August 1935, an editorial touting the success of the CCC was published in the \textit{Herald Progress}. The unnamed author was from Covington, Virginia, and had nothing but praise for the New Deal program. Referring to the first two years of the CCC, 1933-1935, the writer points out the practical achievements of the men involved: eradicating crop infestations, constructing dams and service roads, fighting fires, and planting trees. He suggests that the greatest achievement of all was the CCC’s work to “salvage a few

\textsuperscript{65} “The White Chimney Eagle.”
hundred thousand young men from the ruinous idleness the [Depression] had forced them into. They were drafted from street corners and marshaled into a productive army to serve their country with useful, health-bringing and character-building work."  

In some ways, Camp 1372, later camp 91, became an active participant in county life. The men were accepted by members of the community, black and white. The glee club’s participation in the Patrick Henry celebration was but one example. This means that they were probably not harassed or made to feel unwelcome. Also, the longevity of Camp 1372 is an indication that this camp found a comfortable place in the local society.

This was evident when the lease on the land was not renewed. The circumstances of the loss of the CCC camp in Hanover are murky. According the Herald Progress, the Leon M. Bazile, a member of the House of Delegates from the County, State Senator Henry T. Wickham, and George E. Haw (affiliation unknown) met with John Ratcliffe, a Richmond florist who owned the property where the camp was located. While the article fails to say so directly, it appears that Ratcliffe refused to continue his arrangement with the government. The paper notes that prominent Hanoverians, including bank directors, businessmen, and individuals from King William and Caroline counties, signed petitions asking Ratcliffe to renew the lease.

The lease was not renewed, and the camp was moved six miles north into Caroline County in 1937. The Hanover Board of Supervisors voted to pay for a portion of the land where the new camp would be located in Caroline. As a result, the county retained access to the services of the enrollees. In an editorial in 1937, the Hanover Herald Progress lamented the loss of the camp, but expressed happiness that it would remain nearby. The editorial went on to say that “the CCC camp is the one project of the

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67 Hanover Herald Progress, August 15, 1935.
68 Kiblinger Papers.
69 Hanover Herald Progress, March 25, 1937.
New Deal that has come through its four or five years of service practically without criticism. When Ashland Kiwanis first proposed bringing a camp to the County, there was considerable fear expressed by many of the residents that the presence of so many Negro youths in the community might lead to trouble. These fears were ungrounded. In the main, the boys have been well-disciplined, have conducted themselves admirably. We note their departure with regret.70

Of course, the camp was not without its problems. In July 1935, having only opened in May, lightning struck the officers' quarters. One of the officers lost consciousness and had to be revived using artificial respiration.71 Two years later enrollees William Lee and Don Saunders were arrested one Saturday night on charges of being drunk and disorderly.72 Such arrests were rare and did not affect the community's esteem for the camp.

By August 1935, the announcement was made that a second camp was to be established in Hanover, and that this one would be for white men. It was located at Poor Farm Park in Ashland. The men in this camp worked mainly on stemming soil erosion.73 This camp remained in the area only for a few months. According to reports, the camp was shut down for economic reasons. Every state that had more than one soil conservation camp, lost one of the camps.74

While the New Deal made some headway in bringing the country out of the Depression, it did not complete the process. It would take a world war to get Americans back to work on a large scale and to get the country's economy operating at full steam again. Interestingly, the war on the homefront began before the United States officially

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70 Hanover Herald Progress, April 1, 1937.
71 Hanover Herald Progress, July 18, 1935.
72 Hanover Herald Progress, September 19, 1935.
73 Hanover Herald Progress, August 1, 1935.
74 Hanover Herald Progress, October 24, 1935.
entered World War II in December, 1941. Indeed, on May 10, 1940, when the Nazis barreled through French and British lines, the safety of isolation was replaced by the fear that the United States would not be able to stay out of the war, and, that the country was not prepared. According to Marvin Wilson Schlegel, "An aroused Congress cheered President Franklin D. Roosevelt's ringing call for fifty thousand airplanes and voted billions without debate."  

American involvement in World War II was supported by most citizens, black and white, but there were detractors. On one hand, some black people argued that African Americans should not have to fight for democracy in other parts of the world when democracy was not available to them at home. Indeed, Henry C. Terry Jr. of Richmond wrote a letter to the Richmond Times-Dispatch expressing his disgust at the notion of sending black men to fight for democracy in Europe when they did not have democracy at home. In the letter, titled "Where Is Democracy?,” Terry argued that black men who had fought in World War I for democracy had still not received it at home; he believed that the outcome of the "present crisis" would be no different. He asserted that his life "[was] as valuable to [him] as any other person's could be to him, regardless of race."  

He ended his letter by explaining that all people should be classified according to their merit, and that once that was accomplished, he believed that "we Negroes will feel even more like doing our best in the cause of national defense." This argument had been heard among African Americans in response to every war since the Revolution. Indeed, in World War II, "a number of blacks refused to serve in the armed forces for a number of reasons,” says historian Jack Foner. Some refused in order to protest the Jim Crow army,

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76 Richmond *Times Dispatch*, January 21, 1941.
and still others refused for religious reasons. Included in this group were members of the
Nation of Islam. Many went to jail instead of war.  

On the other hand, there were blacks who suggested that, if African Americans
showed that they loved the country and were willing to lay down their lives in its defense,
white Americans would come to appreciate them as citizens and bestow upon them the
full rights of citizenship. It appears that men in Hanover County subscribed to this point
of view, since there is no evidence that any black man in the County resisted the draft.

Hanover presents an interesting wartime picture. Segregation, which prevailed in
every segment of daily life, expanded to encompass the war effort on the homefront. All
Hanoverians worked hard, at home and overseas, to do their part to ensure Allied victory
against the Axis Powers—Germany, Italy, and Japan. Many whites who wielded
authority worked just as diligently to insure that race-mixing did not occur except under
the strictest guidelines. As a result, every event or program in the white community had a
parallel in the black community.

On May 28, 1940, FDR appointed the seven-man National Advisory Commission
on Defense. In response, Governor James Price of Virginia issued an executive order
establishing the Virginia Defense Council, the first in the nation, on May 29. The order
explained that, in an effort to insure that Virginia was ready in case of an attack, the
council was being formed, and that, “In the accomplishment of this mission, the full and
loyal assistance and cooperation of all Virginia citizens” was expected. The majority of
the board consisted of white male Virginians who were heads of entities such as the
Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, the Virginia State Chamber of
Commerce, the Virginia National Guard, and the Richmond Times-Dispatch. There was

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78 Schlegel, 1.
also a second tier of leaders, which included at least one African American, J. Alvin Russell, the president of the St. Paul Industrial School for Negroes, and several women including Ella G. Agnew, of the Works Progress Project Administration, a New Deal agency, Bertha M. Wailes, from the State Federation of Home Demonstration Clubs, and Mrs. R.G. Boatwright, president of the Virginia Federation of Women’s Clubs.  

Initially, the Council had to search out its purpose, but, by the summer of 1940, its immediate mission was set. Since the Virginia National Guard was about to be federalized, there was a need to raise a Virginia Protective Force to protect the state. They also set up Civil Police and Fire Protective Mobilization units in case of disaster. These teams were made up of city and county police officers and fire fighters who volunteered and who could be called upon in time of disaster. These units were never activated during the war. Second, the Defense Council also played a role in coordinating the influx of workers coming into the state to work in the defense industry; this was especially needed in Hampton Roads because of the Newport News Shipyard. By October 1940, it had been determined that the variety of the needs in each region made coordination by one state body cumbersome and ineffective. To correct this situation, regional councils were established.

A further responsibility of the Defense Council was to set up an Aircraft Warning Service. Some civilians served as airplane watchers, which was open to men and women, black and white. Floyd W. Tucker, a white Hanoverian, was the director and coordinator of this project in Hanover. He secured locations suitable for observation posts and volunteers to staff the twenty-four-hour shifts. There were seven posts in Hanover; most

79 Schlegel, 2-3.  
80 Schlegel, 7.  
81 Schlegel, 8.  
82 Schlegel, 11.
had fourteen “officers of the day,” two for each day of the week. The Ashland post had one man and one woman for each day. The women served as lookouts from 8:00 am until 4:00 pm each day, and the men covered the remaining sixteen hours. The actual posts were varied in their appearance: one was a donated trailer, two were newly built cabins, and the one in the Peaks section of Hanover County was the former CCC fire tower. Most had a heater, telephone, binoculars, and chairs. 

It appears that initially, black Hanoverians were left out of this service. It is not clear whether this was an oversight or intentional, but the problem was soon rectified. Black citizens organized a meeting at the Elks Home in Berkleytown, and invited Floyd Tucker, coordinator of the civil defense program and director of the air watchers. At that meeting, Friday from 4:00 pm until Saturday at 4:00 pm was set aside for black watchers. The need to set aside a day for blacks was certainly in keeping with the segregation requirements of the times. Although black men and women had demonstrated their commitment to the war effort, racism still reigned supreme.

Educating the public about the war was another major goal of the Defense Council. Since the winter of 1940-41, college professors and others associated with the University of Virginia and the old regional councils had attempted to educate the public in central Virginia about the needs of the war effort on the homefront. By the following winter the local councils were in place and the organizers were in the process of determining how to keep the public informed about the wartime needs of the country.

By the summer of 1942, the need to educate the public about the war had grown, and large-scale Town Meetings for War were initiated by the Virginia Office of Civilian Defense. The general outlines of these meetings were hammered out on the national

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83 Hanover Herald Progress, December 11, 1941.
84 Schlegel, 147.
85 Schlegel, 147.
level, and they seem to have been a little like old-fashioned Baptist revival meetings. The event would start with singing; then the first speaker would fire up the crowd by explaining to them all that individuals could contribute to the effort, and declaring that all present were needed. He then paid tribute to all the local men who were serving in the military.

Once the crowd was revved up, the second speaker would cover a specific topic such as rationing, salvaging, nutrition, or price ceilings. He might also discuss Axis propaganda and ways of keeping criticism of the U.S. constructive. The meeting would then be opened up for questions and answers. The town of Ashland was the first locale in the state to host a Town Meeting; it took place on June 26, 1942, at the Ashland High School. An official of the Civilian Defense headquarters in Washington, DC, was present, and he remarked that the Ashland meeting was the most successful he had attended.86

It appears that the Ashland meeting was segregated, although this statement cannot be verified positively. Hanover’s black Defense Council representatives were not included in the list of staff attending. Also, when meetings occurred in Richmond, they included separate gatherings for black citizens. Finally, separate meetings would have been in keeping with the normal practice of Defense Council events in the county.87

Indeed, a separate meeting was held in the African American community on Labor Day 1942, at the black playground in Berkleytown in Ashland. The event was set up by Thelma Hewlett, the Chief of Mobilization for black people in Hanover. Women were typically placed in these positions. According to Joseph H. Wyse, coordinator of the Virginia Office for Civilian Defense, women “had been most satisfactory because of experience along the necessary lines and available time to give to the work.”88

86 Schlegel, 148; Hanover Herald Progress, June 25, 1942, July 2, 1942.
87 Schlegel, 150.
88 Schlegel, 139.
one hand, then, Wyse credited women with being able to coordinate and organize defense programs on a large scale, but on the other he assumed that a woman probably was not doing anything else, so she had the time to do the job. In Thelma Hewlett’s case, she was a working woman before this appointment. As the African American home demonstration agent, it was her task to visit the women of the community and set up training sessions on all aspects of home and family care.89

While Hewlett wanted the town meeting to be fun, in a letter to J. F. Nicholas, the Negro Coordinator for Civilian Defense in Virginia, she explained that she also wanted to “get before our people the importance of taking an active part in the [war effort]. We want them to understand thoroughly what they can do and what is [expected] of them.”90 The meeting was kicked off with a parade which included the Virginia Manual Labor Training School Band, the Victory Club, the Volunteer Club, airplane watchers, and members of the nutrition, home nursing, and first aid classes. These classes were part of the community service initiative offered by the Civilian Mobilization Program.91 “The object of the parade is to show what the people have done in defense,” said the Herald Progress. Nicholas was the keynote speaker, and other speakers included the Mayor of Ashland, H. Carter Redd, Floyd Tucker, the director and coordinator of civilian defense in Hanover, and William Layton, the superintendent of the boy’s school and Negro Coordinator for civilian defense92. In addition to being an aircraft watcher or educator for the councils, a civilian could also participate in the war effort by purchasing bonds,

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89Home Demonstration agents worked with families, especially mothers and daughters to teach them proper food preparation, sewing, entertaining, etc. There were regular reports in the Hanover Herald Progress discussing programs put on by the white and black agents.

90Hewlett letter to J.F. Nicholas, Aug. 8, 1942. Negro Civilian Defense; Hanover —unprocessed; Box 50; 04/G/01/35/02, LVA.

91Report of the Field Trips of James F. Nichols Hanover County Civil Defense, Box 18, Folder 4, RG 55 July 23-25 & 27, 1942, LVA.

92Hanover Herald Progress, September 10, 1942.
which was a new twist on an old idea. Lawrence R. Samuel writes that bonds are "the most tangible expression of partnership between the government and the American people, bonds represent an important and interesting chapter in the cultural history of the nation." Either by selling securities, or small-denomination bonds, the United States government had sought the financial support of its citizens during the Revolutionary, Civil, and Spanish-American wars. The idea of raising major funds in a short period of time by selling bonds came to fruition during World War I. While this effort was more successful among private corporations than among individual citizens, it did lay the groundwork for the very successful World War II bond campaigns.

On May 1, 1941, the United States Treasury instituted its Defense Savings Program. This time the "people," ordinary Americans from across class and political lines, would be in charge. This differed from World War I bonds, which were set up by investment professionals. Another way in which World War II bonds differed from their World War I predecessors, is that great effort was made to make African Americans feel a part of the process. The NAACP and black celebrities such as musician Duke Ellington, and Joe Lewis, a celebrated boxer, supported the bond drive, as did ordinary black people who saw an opportunity to support the war effort, earn some money, and win a "double victory" against the Axis powers abroad and Jim Crow at home.

Defense bonds were sold in the Ashland Post Office, and residents from all walks of life participated by either buying or selling bonds. In December 1941, more bonds were sold than in any previous month, according to the Kiwanis chapter. Black teachers

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94 Samuel does not mention whether or not racial lines were crossed in the establishment of the leadership of the bond program. However, when developing a list of organizations and agencies to approach to ask to help get the word out to their membership, African American groups were included.
95 Samuel, 20.
led the way by committing to buying $1000 worth. The headline in the local paper read: "Negroes Buy $1000 Bond—Teachers Aid U.S. Defense Effort." Reportedly, "the Kiwanis county-wide committee on defense bonds [was] highly appreciative of this response of the Negro teachers in the county." 96 Black people in Hanover County held at least two bond rallies. The first rally, in February 1944, yielded $4,022. Held at the Elks Home, it was a major event in the black community. The speaker was the head of the State War Finance Committee for Negroes, and the band from the boys’ school played. This event was separate from a similar rally held by the white community at the same time.

Some white leaders of the bond drive efforts in the County did attend the program at the Elks Lodge and one, a World War I veteran, donated a German shell that was auctioned off. Lee Winston, an African American farmer from the Greenwood section of the county, won the shell with a $500 bid. Much ado was made of this purchase. A small article in the newspaper highlighted the sale, pointing out that the man must have saved for some time as he had coins in pockets all over his body. 97 Five months later, on July 4th, the white and black community once again held separate bond rallies. This time the white rally took place on the Ashland Town Lot, a plot of land used for outdoor events. The black people gathered at the playground in Berkleytown. This time the black citizens raised $3000. They also auctioned off items donated by local white businesses including Barnes Drug Store, Loving Motor Company, and the Ashland Dime and Dollar Store. 98

If an individual did not have enough money to buy a bond outright, they would purchase stamps and once they had a certain amount they could trade them in for a bond. Stamps were sold at the Hanover County Training School, to teachers and students. A

96 Hanover Herald Progress, December 25, 1941.
97 Hanover Herald Progress, February 14, 1944.
98 Hanover Herald Progress, July 6, 1944.
special booth was set up and stamps were sold to students each Monday. Once students had the necessary number of stamps, they could trade them in for a bond. The school also had a Victory Garden, which was a way to raise food for home consumption so that the produce of commercial growers could be used for the soldiers. Victory Garden vegetables were typically canned and used in the cafeteria.\textsuperscript{99} Even the very young took up the challenge. Sammie Lee Jerry, an eight-year-old boy, began working at age five doing chores for a farmer. Most of the money he earned went to his mother, but the remainder he saved for three years to buy a bike; he decided to buy a bond instead, however, saying that the bike could wait, but the Nazis could not.\textsuperscript{100} In July 1945, there was a seventh bond drive. This time a contest in selling bonds took place among local students, black and white. Nineteen winners, including two black students from the Hanover County Training School, were selected and their headshots were published, along with those of white students, in the \textit{Herald Progress}.\textsuperscript{101}

The bond effort presents an interesting lens through which to view the efforts on the homefront. The planners saw in the bond drives an opportunity to unite black and white in the war effort; many believed that in time of war, unity should be the watchword. Yet the planners did not fully understand that unity and segregation could not be reconciled. In the end, although the bond effort was supposed to unify all Americans, it really only unified their money.\textsuperscript{102}

The wartime fundraisers were not limited to selling bonds. At least once, black people sold dinners to raise money for the Red Cross war fund. This event was held at the Elks Home in Ashland. The notice in the \textit{Herald Progress} indicated that “special

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\textsuperscript{99} Hanover \textit{Herald Progress}, October 1, 1942.\\
\textsuperscript{100} Hanover \textit{Herald Progress}, October 1, 1942.\\
\textsuperscript{101} Hanover \textit{Herald Progress}, January 24, 1946.\\
\textsuperscript{102} Samuel, xviii.
\end{flushright}
attention [would] be given to orders from our white friends.”¹⁰³ This probably meant that white customers who wanted to pick up their orders and eat elsewhere would not have to wait long for their orders, and that, if they chose to eat on-site, segregated seating would be made available.¹⁰⁴

Sources suggest that white people appreciated and needed the contributions of black citizens to the war effort. Newspaper headlines were consistently favorable. Even though the funds raised by whites always exceeded the amount raised by black people, this was never mentioned in the paper. On the contrary, black events were written about in the same positive manner as those organized in the white community. This type of response may indicate a change in attitude in the general population, or it may have been a reflection of the attitude of the newspaper editor.

In August 1932, the newspaper announced a new column—With Our Colored Readers. The notice explained that the “Herald Progress [would] welcome for publication in this space news of our colored subscribers and their organizations.” There was no public explanation for this change. It could be as simple as economic necessity. Although there is no mention of financial difficulties, this change did occur during the Depression, and the paper, like other businesses, may have been experiencing a downturn in its financial bottom line. It could also be a reflection of a change in the day-to-day management of the paper. Whatever the motivation for the new column, black

¹⁰³ Hanover Herald Progress, March 4, 1943.
¹⁰⁴ This promise of special accommodation may have been due, in part, to the need to adhere to the Public Assemblages Act, also known as the Massenburg Bill, so named after its sponsor in the Virginia House of Delegates. The Act, which had been passed in 1926 and was the first in the U.S. “requiring the separation of white and colored persons at public halls, theaters, opera houses, motion picture shows and places of public entertainment and public assemblages.” For a discussion on this Act and the history regarding the legislation see: J. Douglas Smith, Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics, and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 107-129.
Hanoverians certainly took advantage of the opportunity to use this free advertising space for their organizations and churches and to share the social news of the day.

Another reason for the positive coverage of African American contributions to the war effort on the homefront might have been the owner-editor who had taken over the paper in 1933. That year Paul Watkins and his wife, Lois, purchased the Herald Progress and moved to Ashland from Chicago. Paul had worked for several newspapers, leaving the position of promotion manager for the Chicago Daily News, to move to Ashland.

Watkins was not a Southerner, which may have made him less rigid in his thinking about race. Moreover, as a serious journalist moving into the South, he may have been aware that “in 1925, the Southern Newspaper Publisher’s Association included in its formal code of ethics the newspaper’s obligation to show ‘respect and tolerance for those of different religions, races, and circumstances of life.’”105

Citizens’ commitment to the war effort went beyond money. All across the state individuals were participating in homefront activities by rationing tires and gasoline, raising food, and praying for a swift and victorious end to the war. As early as December 25, 1941, just a few weeks after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, notices were running in the Herald Progress announcing a county-wide sign up for citizens, “white and colored...to register for whatever service they may be able to perform” as part of the civil defense program.106 While women in cities with manufacturing plants were working in non-traditional jobs, in Hanover, volunteers were assigned according to traditional concepts of gender roles. The program wanted women to sew, cook, do office work, dance, and nurse. Men were needed for auto mechanics, fire fighting, map reading, and

105 Kneebone, xiii.
106 Hanover Herald Progress, December 25, 1941.

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demolition. In a few instances the jobs for men and women overlapped, such as the need for photographers and publicity.\textsuperscript{107}

The record suggests that Hanoverians certainly did their part for the war effort at home, but they also contributed on the battlefront. The exact number of men and women who served in the military during World War II from Hanover County is not known, but just over 2,000 men registered for the draft. Of that number, 838 were black. By the last year of the war, one African American Hanoverian family had four sons serving in the effort. At least five African American men from the county died during the war years. Four died from non-battle-related injuries, but Leroy Quarles was killed in action in the Pacific. He is buried in the United States Military Cemetery in Honolulu, Hawaii.\textsuperscript{108}

John Gordon was one black Hanoverian who joined the military to fight for the United States. Initially, he wanted to be a Marine, but was told that there were no vacancies. Gordon believed that he was rejected because of his race, and given the times, this is certainly a viable explanation, but in truth, it is difficult to know whether the Marines’ rejection of Gordon was race-based, or whether there was genuinely no room. It is a fact that the Marines barred blacks from that branch of the service in 1798, and while blacks were once again accepted as of June 1, 1942, it is impossible to know whether or not a recruiter, set in the old ways, blocked Gordon.\textsuperscript{109}

Instead, he was assigned to the SeaBees, construction battalions that supported the Navy. The occupational choice was first opened to African Americans in October, 1942.\textsuperscript{110} Since it was not a combat arm, the SeaBees did not engage the enemy directly, but Gordon recalled encountering difficult combat situations in the Pacific. This is

\textsuperscript{107} Hanover Herald Progress, December 25, 1941.
\textsuperscript{108} Virginia War Dead Database, LVA http://www.lva.lib.va.us/whatwehave/mil/vmd/index.asp.
\textsuperscript{109} Jack Foner, 143.
\textsuperscript{110} Jack Foner, 144.
entirely plausible since the enemy would have wanted to destroy structures being erected by American military engineers. Indeed, the SeaBees did receive assault training as a supplement to their main duties.\(^{111}\)

Gordon, a noted singer in his local Baptist church, also recalled that he and some friends found the time to form a gospel quartet. Sadly, one of the men from that group was killed in action. Gordon described another comrade as a risk taker, and he was also killed. Fifty years later, Gordon still regretted not being on the scene at that moment because he believed that, if he had been present, he would have been able to save this young man.\(^{112}\)

Hanoverian Floyd Dabney had a very different experience from Gordon. Like Gordon, Dabney was born and raised in Hanover, in Ashland to be specific. His father, Floyd Sr. operated a funeral home in the area that catered to African American clients. Thus the Dabneys were members of the black middle class. Upon graduation from the Hanover County Training School, Floyd left home for college, intending to eventually become a lawyer. He attended Howard University in Washington, DC, for one year, and then he was drafted into the Army. He ended up in the famous 761\(^{st}\) Black Tank Battalion, the first African American armored unit.\(^{113}\)

More than six hundred black men would serve in the 761\(^{st}\) Tank Battalion, and they represented the diversity of the African American community. Thirty states were represented. Some of these tank corpsmen were from cities, while others, like Dabney, were from small towns. Many volunteered, while others were drafted. Several of these

\(^{111}\) See photo of SeaBees in beach assault simulation, National Archives:http://www.archives.gov/research/African Americans/ww2-pictures/#women (picture #173.jpg.)


\(^{113}\) Floyd Dabney, Jr. Speech Providence Baptist Church Black History Month Program February 2007.
young men were from middle-class backgrounds, but most "were the sons of janitors, domestics, factory workers, and sharecroppers."114

Dabney was a member of the administrative staff. His specific duties included delivering mail to the men in his unit. In an interview shortly before his death, Dabney explained that, five days a week, he went to the local town to pick up the mail and returned to the office, where he sorted and distributed the mail for six companies. He was responsible for getting the mail out to the men wherever they were—and sometimes they were on the battlefield. His son recalls his father telling him of instances when he was shot at in his jeep. Dabney was with the 761st when, according to some accounts, it moved into concentration camps in 1945.

At the end of the war, Dabney returned to Ashland. His older sister and his father approached him about going to mortuary school so that he could join the family business. He eventually agreed and used the money he had saved and the GI Bill to go to school in Philadelphia. By the time he had finished mortuary school, Dabney and his sister and brother-in-law, who now ran the business, had parted ways, so he went to work for a funeral home in Richmond. In 1955, he opened his own business in Ashland within walking distance from the home his sister and her husband ran.

In 1992, Dabney was interviewed by a reporter from the Richmond Times Dispatch. He described himself as a soldier and a morale booster, because getting mail always meant a lot to his comrades. He had recently viewed the documentary "Liberators," which is the story of the 761st. He did not mention whether or not he felt the portrayal was accurate, but he did say that he understood the bitterness of some of the men interviewed. Dabney attributed their attitudes to the fact that they had gone overseas

to fight for democracy, but came home to the same racist and segregated society they had left. He added that, while things had improved, he believed that “there [was] still too much segregation.”

World War II represented several firsts for groups previously barred from certain kinds of involvement in the U.S. military: black men serving in elite combat units and wearing officers’ insignia, and women, black and white, in uniform. For the first time in the history of this country, women formally entered the military service in World War II. According to historian Leisa Meyer, the bill to create the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps was initiated by Republican Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers of Massachusetts so that the women who served in World War II would have the same benefits as the men in uniform. This had not happened for the women who worked as civilians during the First World War.

Despite the best intentions of those involved in the establishment of the WAAC, and later WAC, it was not spared controversy. On one hand, some believed that it was about time that women had access to the same opportunities as male citizens. On the other, there was concern that the whole balance of nature would be tilted if women were allowed to take on what was perceived as part of the male role. Another challenged face by the women who joined the WAAC was the perception of their sexuality. Many in the public believed that women interested in the military were “mannish” and as a result had “the potential to be lesbians.”

This was especially true in African American communities. In spite of these concerns, in July 1942, Vashti Tonkins, a black Hanoverian, joined the WAAC. It is not

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115 Richmond Times-Dispatch, November 11, 1992.
117 Meyer, 6.
clear why Tonkins decided to join the military. She had already graduated from Hampton Institute and earned a masters degree in education from the University of Chicago in 1939. Little remains of Tonkins's personal story, but her situation may have been similar to that of Charity Adams Earley, who also joined the military during World War II. Earley, like Tonkins, was African American and well-educated. In her memoirs, Earley professes to enjoying teaching but not being challenged by the work. She received an invitation from the WAAC after being recommended by the dean of women at Wilberforce University, where she had attended college.

It is quite plausible that those responsible for recruiting black women for the WAAC approached black colleges seeking out the best and the brightest. Whatever her motivation, Tonkins was inducted into the WAAC in July 1942, and she left the following September for training at Ft. Des Moines, Iowa.\textsuperscript{118} In 1943, Tonkins was commissioned an officer. She went on to serve as a recruiter in Salt Lake City, Utah in 1943, and eventually became the commanding officer at Ft. McClellan in Alabama.\textsuperscript{119}

It appears that Tonkins family did not have any issues with her sexuality. She was given a going-away party by friends and family.\textsuperscript{120} Periodically, Tonkins would visit Ashland while on her way to an assignment, such as the time she was en route from the West Coast, where she had spent three months recruiting, to Ft. Devens, Massachusetts, her next assignment.\textsuperscript{121} Her family also happily notified the town in 1945 when Vashti married overseas and honeymooned in Paris.

As mentioned previously, the country did not fully come out of the Great Depression until World War II. This was largely due to the rapid growth of the defense

\textsuperscript{118} Hanover Herald Progress, September 3, 1942.
\textsuperscript{119} Martha S. Putney, \textit{When the Nation was in Need: Blacks in the Women's Army Corps During World War II}, (London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1992), 154,164,167.
\textsuperscript{120} Hanover Herald Progress, September 3, 1942.
\textsuperscript{121} Hanover Herald Progress, May 6, 1943.
industries. Men and women in every region of the country hoped to expand their incomes greatly as they moved into new and better jobs. As usual, African Americans had to fight to gain access to these opportunities, and black men in Virginia had an interesting group of white male allies, newspaper publishers.

In January 1941, the Richmond Times-Dispatch began a discussion on its editorial page that questioned the efforts of white union and non-union supervisors who refused to hire skilled black men for defense contracts. Virginius Dabney, the editor, went on to point out that contractors were in the process of building Camp Lee and that, of the hundreds of carpenters, bricklayers, and roofers who had been hired, only one was African American. Black men's lack of access to defense work became a subject of brisk discussion across the state. In January 1941, the Lynchburg News chimed in, saying that "it is idle to try to convince the average Virginian of the virtue of social equality. He is dead set against it. But economic equality is another thing. The Negro in Virginia should have justice." The next day, the Staunton Evening News shared its concern that the defense work was not getting done because not all Americans were being allowed to participate. The Norfolk Ledger add its voice to those white Virginians concerned that work left undone left the U.S. vulnerable. That paper also lamented the "indefensible discrimination that bars the employment of skilled Negro workers."

On January 30, 1941, the Times-Dispatch reprinted an article from the Journal and Guide, an African American newspaper in Norfolk, commending the Richmond editor for taking a stand against discrimination in the defense industries. The writer

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122 Richmond Times-Dispatch, January 18, 1941.
123 Richmond Times-Dispatch, January 22, 1941.
124 Richmond Times-Dispatch, January 23, 1941.
125 Richmond Times-Dispatch, January 24, 1941.
asserted that lack of access to these jobs meant lack of access to a decent living wage and the possibility of financial upward mobility.\textsuperscript{126}

Two days later, a letter from the Richmond Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), appeared in the “Voice of the People” section on the \textit{Times-Dispatch}’s editorial page. J. M. Tinsley and Lawrence D. Bolling, president and secretary of the chapter, respectively, thanked the paper for its “intelligent efforts...to acquaint the people of Virginia with the economic blockade which has proven so disastrous to Negro skilled labor, so effectively barred from participation in the erection of the American defenses.”\textsuperscript{127}

By September 1941, J. Walton Hall, superintendent of the Hanover County public schools, announced that defense training classes would take place at night in seven of the county schools, including the Training School. At two of the schools, students would learn metal working. The remaining schools, including the Training School, would offer classes in truck, tractor, and auto mechanics.\textsuperscript{128} The mechanic classes began at the Training School in November 1941.\textsuperscript{129}

The fervent support white editors offered for African American access to the defense industry may seem a little odd, occurring as it did during the Jim Crow years. Historian John Kneebone suggests that the behavior of these newspaper editors was in keeping with the activities of southern liberals at the time. In 1928, sociologist Robert Ezra Park, following observations of the South, suggested that race relations had begun to shift in that region. No longer was there a horizontal division between black and white people, with all whites on top. There was now a supposedly far less pernicious vertical

\textsuperscript{126} Richmond \textit{Times-Dispatch} January 30, 1941.
\textsuperscript{127} Richmond \textit{Times-Dispatch}, 1 February 1941.
\textsuperscript{128} Hanover \textit{Herald Progress}, September 18, 1941.
\textsuperscript{129} Hanover \textit{Herald Progress}, November 27, 1941.
division, with the same class structure on both sides of the line—there were black and white professionals, black and white people engaged in business, and black and white laborers. This configuration allowed a coming together across class lines but did not require breach the wall separating the races socially.

Vertical segregation opened doors for white southern liberals. They could join with black people and speak out against the horrors of lynching without being accused of favoring racial “amalgamation.” In editorializing about the distribution of defense jobs in Virginia, Virginius Dabney and others could forthrightly show their consternation without challenging prohibitions of social equality.

While the Depression, the New Deal, and the war loomed large in the lives of black Hanoverians, they continued moving ahead with hope, as they always had. Spirituality, organization, and education remained the three key bases for progress in the black community. Many black Hanoverians looked at life through a spiritual lens, believing that everything would be better “by and by.” Faith was the way to salvation, but faith without works was dead, so blacks worked to provide a better life to the next generation. The main tool for this was education. Organizing to pay teachers, provide food for poor children, and the like was the way to improve black schools and to try to ensure that everyone’s life got just a little better. Faith, community, organization, and education were so intertwined in the community that it is almost as impossible to write about them as separate components as it was for blacks to separate them in their daily lives.

Sometimes cooperation came in an informal package. As Carrie Burton recalled, when her father had food, he always shared, and others offered help to her own family—a

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130 Holy Bible James 2:20.
community working together to take care of its own. It was this type of sharing that may have lessened the impact of the Depression on rural blacks.

This was certainly true of Walter Jackson and his wife Lelia or [Lillian], who lived on a farm in the Brown Grove section,\(^{131}\) where they raised their five children to believe in God, hard work, and education. Walter had bought the twenty-five acres of land he farmed in 1908, and, while he quickly mortgaged it, he fully repaid the loan within two years.\(^{132}\) The Depression presented challenges to the Jacksons, as it did to most families, black or white, in the county. The Jackson children awoke early every weekday morning to do their chores, went off to school and returned home for their evening duties, and then homework by lamplight.

On the weekends, the Jacksons’ chores were interrupted by church activities. Brown Grove Baptist Church was down the road from their farm and across the road from the elementary school their children attended. As their son Benjamin Jackson says, “[he] got [his] ABCs from the school and [his] GODs from the church.”\(^{133}\) The Jacksons were far from wealthy, but they had what they needed. Ben Sr., now 77 years old, does not remember the Depression vividly. He recalls that things were tight; his lunch usually consisted of fatback and maybe a roll. Sometimes the fatback had a streak of lean meat running through the fat. It was then called “streak-o-lean.” This was a treasure.\(^{134}\)

Jackson, who still has all but two of his report cards, remembers his two-room school in detail. Like the other black schools in the county, the Brown Grove School did not have many of the tools that one usually thinks of as affording a good education. The

\(^{131}\) Brown Grove is a predominantly African American community in Hanover.

\(^{132}\) HCCO (Land Deed Book 50), 173.

\(^{133}\) Benjamin Jackson Interview October 24, 2005.

\(^{134}\) Jackson Interview.
children were split into two groups: grades 1-3 or 4 and 4-8. One teacher was responsible for each group. Every day began the same way: with a hymn, possibly “Church in the Valley by the Wildwoods,” The Lord’s Prayer, and then another hymn. After the devotions, the day would begin, interrupted only by lunch. Students did not eat until they said the grace,

Thou art great and thou art good
Father we thank you for this food
By your hands we’ll all be fed
Give us Lord our daily bread.  

Before leaving for home the students repeated the Mizpah, which says,

Watch between me and thee
When we are absent one from another. Amen.

On Friday afternoons there was a Junior League meeting at the school. The doors dividing the two rooms were opened and the classes came together. Then the children had the chance to recite poetry, sing, or put on skits. It was their time to shine—a time when young Ben learned many of the poems he can still recite today. Each May, the school held a May Day celebration. The girls danced around the May pole, and the boys participated in sack racing and other athletic events.

Once he finished the eighth grade, Jackson had the opportunity to go on to the Hanover County Training School, the only school for blacks in the county that went beyond the seventh grade. Unlike the experience of some of his older siblings, a bus was provided by the time he was going to the school in Ashland, so he was able to avoid the five-mile walk each morning. He hastens to explain, however, that the bus ride was

135 Jackson Interview.
136 Genesis 31:49. The Mizpah is often used in the Baptist church as a benediction.
137 Gray Interview. Junior League was the name of the youth organization for the County-Wide League and the Negro Organization Society.
138 Jackson Interview.
truly hit or miss. Some mornings the vehicle got them to school, and some mornings it did not.

Attending the training school was a successful experience for Jackson. He was active in organizations and often selected for leadership positions. While at the training school, he took part in the traditional high school level classes, but he also took advantage of the agricultural program. By the time young Jackson reached high school, an agricultural building had been added to the campus. Jackson remembers that his teacher, John Fleming, a graduate of Virginia State College, taught his charges the "fundamentals of the purchase, maintenance and care of farm machinery including home building of sheds, stalls, pens, as well as complete care for poultry raising."139

While the training school offered opportunities for Jackson and his classmates that had been missing just a few years earlier, it was still woefully short of the mark when compared with the white high schools. By the time Ben entered the school in 1941, it was what was known as a qualified school—the first step in becoming accredited by the state department of education. The school had to maintain minimum standards for at least one year before being placed on the qualified list. Maintaining those standards for two years would lead to full accreditation. This was a monumental accomplishment for the only black high school in the county. Though segregation still prevailed in society as in the schools, black students at the training school would supposedly "receive the same consideration as shown the graduates of accredited high schools."140

The institution also had a cafeteria, so the principal no longer had to make soup and bring it to school to heat up for the students. There was no gymnasium, however, and the only thing resembling a recreational facility was an empty field out back where

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139 Hanover Herald Progress, September 26, 1940.
140 Hanover Herald Progress, January 23, 1941.
pupils could play, time permitting. There was no auditorium in the school, so when it was time for Jackson and his classmates to graduate, Shiloh Baptist Church hosted the baccalaureate and graduation ceremonies.

After graduation, Jackson found work as a bricklayer's assistant. This meant that he was responsible for making sure that materials were available when the white skilled workers needed them. He wanted to learn the trade of bricklaying, but Jackson recalls being denied instruction by white craftsmen. There was no law barring black men from learning the trade. Indeed, black men in the Hanover CCC camp in the 1930s had learned bricklaying, but because union and non-union employers practiced discrimination, Jackson did not have the opportunity to apprentice with a white craftsman, and there were no black men able to assist him at the time.

Not to be defeated, he drew on some of the work ethic instilled by his parents. He located an old trowel, and every night, after working a full day, he would go home and practice laying bricks. He eventually taught himself the trade and proceeded to work in the field for the next thirty years. He laid the bricks on an addition to Shiloh Baptist Church, Scott's funeral home in Richmond, and his own home. He was actually selected to do the fancy brick work on the front of the funeral home. While he was rejected initially from the profession by whites, he eventually worked for many white-owned companies. As Jackson explains, attitudes eventually softened and the field expanded to include black men.

In addition to being a brickmason, Jackson is also a Baptist minister. This vocation helps to explain his answer when asked how he managed to overcome all the obstacles placed before him. Like many blacks of his generation, he credits his success to
the God he came to know in church and in his parents' home as a boy.\textsuperscript{141} He explains that with faith and hard work, anything can be accomplished.

Faith and works regarding education in the Jim Crow South usually involved organizing formally, and raising money to resist the confines of racial segregation—and to build the black community within those confines. Some observers may be tempted to compare the organizations that operated in the 1930s and 1940s to the so-called faith-based organizations of today. While there are similarities, there are more differences. One key difference is the belief system that fueled the individuals who came together during the mid-twentieth century. This was a time before the strictures of the Constitution had been so tightened that faith had to be separated from other aspects of an individual's civic life. During this time, most organizations in the black community, including public schools, were faith-based. For example, each of the black schools was associated with a community league, and quite often these community leagues were led by men and women who were devout church members. As a result, hymns and prayers were a standard part of the meetings as they were of the public school day.

As mentioned throughout this dissertation, one key to the survival of the black community in Hanover was its ability and tendency to organize for betterment. Black men and women had begun organizing informally and formally from the time they were enslaved, and, as a result, hundreds if not thousands of black organizations existed in the state of Virginia alone. Undoubtedly, the sheer numbers meant a duplication of efforts and may at times have lessened effectiveness. In answer to this problem, a group of what the *Hanover Herald Progress* described as the "highest type of Negro citizenship" including educators and professionals—decided in 1912 that it would make sense to organize these different groups under one parent society. As a result, the Negro

\textsuperscript{141} Jackson Interview.
Organization Society (NOS) was founded at the state level. Its motto was: Better Schools, Better Health, Better Homes, Better Farms. Annual meetings were held in various cities and towns across the state. The NOS met throughout the Depression, and in 1934, the group convened in Ashland for a statewide convention. By this time the Society included fraternal organizations, mutual benefit societies, churches, and the hundreds of County-Wide Leagues that had been set up to work for better schools.

The Hanover County-Wide League proved to be an invaluable asset to black public schools during the Depression. Black Hanoverians raised hundreds of dollars each year to keep their schools running, and often to pay the salary of a sixth teacher at the Training School. J. Walton Hall, the superintendent of the schools in Hanover, was quoted in the newspaper as saying that, "Through the efforts of their own leaders, Negro citizens of Hanover county are doing much for the advancement of schools for Negro children." The leagues would sponsor rallies like the one held in 1933 for the training school. It took place at Shiloh Baptist Church, and the keynote speaker was Major W. R. Brown, who was the Dean of Men at the Hampton Institute, a historically African American college located in Hampton, Virginia. Brown stressed the importance of an education. Music was provided by the school glee club and a gospel quartet. An offering was collected and a financial report was made by the teachers as to where the efforts to raise the $400 stood, but the final amount was not included in the newspaper article. The citizens, as superintendent Hall, significantly, called them, raised $1000 that year to move the old Henry Clay Spring School building to Berkleytown to be used as part of the Training School. The citizens of Rockhill raised $500 dollars to make improvements to their school, including the provision of better sanitation. Neither school board minutes

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142 Hanover Herald Progress, September 24, 1931.
143 Hanover Herald Progress, January 19, 1933.
nor the county newspaper mention any parallels to these types of activities in the white community—whose schools presumably received more generous public funding. So, in a way, deprivation may have built a kind of character in the black community that was not always present in the white community.

Fundraising sometimes involved theatrical presentations. On one occasion, the Virginia Union University Dramatic Players visited the Training School. Two black-themed plays were presented by the actors, who had performed in Baltimore and Washington, DC. According to all reports, this was a real treat for the community. Not only did it give residents something different to do; it also allowed them to see black college students perform. Whites were invited, and segregated seating was provided for their comfort; an offering was collected, and white guests probably contributed.144

While black people had been quietly speaking up for their rights all along, in the 1930s and 1940s in Hanover they began to speak a little louder. Perhaps the desperation of the Depression years led them to push harder against the tide of white supremacy. In the spring of 1933, E.E. Moore of Hanover issued a call in an article in the Herald Progress asking black Hanoverians to hold a mass meeting. Similar to attorney Giles Jackson’s style before the 1902 constitutional convention, Moore spoke to white Hanoverians in a round-about way. He seemed to be addressing black citizens, but he could just as easily have been talking directly to white residents. Referring to the “colored taxpayers,” Moore argued that it was time for a political club to form so that black people could make their concerns known. He continued, “it is now time and high time that the colored people of our county should put themselves in a position to be of some service to one or the other of the leading parties that in turn may be benefited thereby.” He admonished black men to get up and fight and stop following the path of

144 Hanover Herald Progress, April 12, 1934.
least resistance. He referred to battles facing the country—economic challenges in particular, but also the rising tide of nationalism, and political strife. He cried, “Let us go to the rescue.”

He then asked a series of questions aimed at encouraging black men and women to pay their poll tax. First, Moore wanted to know whether they even knew what was going on in the government at the local, state, and national levels. Second, he asked his readers whether they believed that the economic scales in the—county, state or country—were balanced. He then questioned whether they thought that black children had the educational opportunities they deserved. He closed by charging black Hanoverians to pay, register, subscribe to the *Herald Progress* so that they will know what is going on and then prepare to do battle at the polls.

The first meeting of Moore’s proposed political club took place on April 11, 1933, at Shiloh Baptist Church. According to the newspaper, Gordon Blaine Hancock, a sociology professor at Virginia Union University, addressed the meeting on the topic of “The Negro and the Ballot.” It is not clear that this group ever met again, but in January 1935, the Negro Citizen’s League was organized by a group of concerned African American citizens who had attended the Negro Organization Society convention that had taken place in Ashland the previous November. The initial meeting was held at the Elks Home in Ashland. Officers were elected, and the first Friday of every month was chosen as the regular meeting day. When announcing this new organization in the paper, the founders explained that they had decided to start the new league as a result of the “many inspiring messages they had heard at the convention of the Negro Organization

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145 Hanover *Herald Progress*, March 30, 1933.
146 Hanover *Herald Progress*, March 30, 1933.
147 Hanover *Herald Progress*, April 16, 1933.
Society.” The Negro Citizen’s League met two or three times, but like Moore’s political club, it disappears from the public record before the end of 1935.

The formation of this organization presents another interesting snapshot into black and white relations in Hanover County. The article announcing the organization and Moore’s comments ran under the headline “Negro Political Club to Be Formed: Moore will lead move urging Negroes to qualify for ballot in county.”

While Moore’s group seems to have fizzled, the campaign to encourage black men and women to pay their poll tax was taken up in the 1940s by the Negro Organization Society. Luther Porter Jackson, historian and professor at Virginia State College and Virginia’s foremost proponent of black voter registration, appears to have headed the campaign. African Americans, such as Contee Robinson from Hanover, were chosen from each county and charged with the task of getting black people to pay their poll tax. Robinson was well-known and respected in the black community in Hanover County. He had purchased the first school bus for black children in the county. It appears that Robinson achieved less than dramatic results. Records indicate that in 1943 there 325 blacks in the county who were current with their poll tax. This number dropped to 258 the following year. The number went back up to 360 in 1945, but dropped to 250 in 1946. In 1947, Jackson wrote to Robinson to try to ascertain the problem and to urge Robinson and his associates to “redeem [their] situation in Hanover.”

While Robinson’s response is lost, James Woolfolk, an Elk, did respond to an apparent request from Jackson in May 1948 regarding the voting preparedness of the Elks brothers. Woolfolk explained that lodge membership was small, and that many of the

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148 Hanover Herald Progress, December 6, 1934.
149 Hanover Herald Progress, March 30, 1933.
150 Luther Porter Jackson Papers, Letter dates October 2, 1944 and April 13, 1947. Box 46, folder 3, Virginia State University.
men lived some distance from the meeting hall. As a result, they were not able to meet as often as they would like. Woolfolk did report that ninety percent of the membership was qualified to vote. Woolfolk went on to say that, when the group did meet, they discussed the importance of voting and encouraged all to register.

Woolfolk went on to respond to a series of questions from Jackson: Many but not all lodge members belonged to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The lodge was supporting the NAACP membership drive then in progress. While the lodge had not sent a delegate to the state NAACP mass meeting in December 1947, it had sent a telegram to E. O. McCue, a member of the House of Delegates from Richmond City, asking for committee action on the anti-segregation bills that had been introduced by Walter H. C. Murray, a delegate representing Albemarle and Greene Counties and the city of Charlottesville. Woolfolk closed by saying that the lodge members regularly shared their views and supported President Harry Truman’s civil rights proposals.151 In February 1948, Truman had presented a ten-point plan that outlined specific goals for extending full civil rights to every American. He had added that he would soon issue an executive order mandating the complete integration of the military.152

By the end of 1948, Luther P. Jackson was still trying to build a fire under black leaders in Virginia’s counties to motivate them to beat the bushes and find people willing to register to vote. In a letter to county and home demonstration agents, he requested a list of five or six names of people in the county who were “thoroughly vote-conscious.” He explained that, “By this [he meant] they vote themselves and constantly persuade others as well. I mean the kind of persons who will take their fellow citizens to the county

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151 Luther P. Jackson Papers.
treasurer's office to pay their poll tax; who will take them in the same manner to the registrar; and finally, on election day, will take them to the polls to cast their ballots.”

The black Home Demonstration Agent in Hanover, Thelma Hewlett, submitted eight names—two women and six men.

Around the time that the state constitution was changing in 1901-02, black people, especially those in positions of leadership, began to rethink their conviction that political action was the way to gain access to all that America had to offer. Economic equality became more of a focus, and education, hard work, spirituality, and organization became more central than ever as the main avenues toward African American uplift. After World War II, the focus began to shift once again as black people sought political power as a means to gain civil rights. Historians have suggested that fighting for democracy overseas and returning home to segregation had spurred black people to re-focus their efforts on the vote. Luther P. Jackson and the NOS and NAACP certainly offer support of this conclusion in Virginia and in Hanover County, but this is not the complete picture.

Hanoverians had never stopped pushing for their rights. They had indeed turned their attention away from the franchise toward other avenues. But they had never stopped organizing and making demands like other citizens in a democracy, and by doing that, they had never allowed white residents to ignore them or their needs. As a result, they had survived, and made progress during, two of the most turbulent decades in United States history. The small and fluctuating number of black Hanoverians paying their poll tax may have been a reflection of their frustration with the system, but frustration on the part of some people was nothing new. More important were the number of African Americans who were willing to keep working, keep pushing, keep pressing forward. These attitudes and this ethic, too, had deep roots in black Hanover.

153 Luther P. Jackson Papers, Box 21, folder 10.
CHAPTER 5
THE HEAT OF CHANGE

As was the case with the preceding twenty years, the decades of the 1950s and 1960s included wars on foreign soil and domestic problems that involved the entire nation. Unlike the 1930s and 1940s, this time the wars in Korea and Vietnam would be ignored or condemned by many in the U.S. On the domestic front, unlike the Depression, which united the country under one umbrella of despair, the fight for civil rights would divide the country between black people and their allies, and white people who wanted desperately to maintain the status quo. As was becoming apparent at the end of chapter 4, black men and women in Virginia were beginning to change their strategy, choosing to speak out more forcefully. Like their counterparts throughout the South, during the decades of the 1950s and 1960s black Hanoverians engaged with all of the paths established by their forebears to regain their civil rights.

On December 1, 1938, the Hanover Herald Progress published an editorial titled, “What Will Hanover Be in the Year 1950?” This editorial retroactively introduced a series of articles that had begun appearing in the weekly on November 24th. That series, in turn, grew out of a two-year study conducted by the Rural Sociology Division of the Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station.1 This study looked at issues of wealth, housing, living conditions, agricultural practices, and population in rural Virginia.2

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1 This was a state-wide research project on the Virginia Rural Marginal Population conducted by the Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station in cooperation with the Works Progress Administration, Virginia State Planning Board, and other agencies.
2 Hanover Herald Progress December 1, 1938.
The study and the editorial invoked President Roosevelt’s contention that roughly one-third of the nation’s citizen’s were “ill housed, ill clothed and underfed.” The situation in the South was much worse. The study revealed that in Virginia 57% of all agricultural families, and three-fourths of African American farm households were marginal. That is, they earned less than $600 a year. An introductory statement to a report on this study, which was prepared for the convention of the Virginia League of Counties in July 1939, lists some of the factors that fostered the development of this marginal society. First, this introduction traced or located the root of the problems to topography, the original population, selective migration, and population increases beyond the “local optimum.” Additionally, some issues could be traced to “the far-reaching consequences of slavery” and Reconstruction, isolation of the poor, poor educational and social opportunities, poorly conceived state and national use of land, soil deterioration, agricultural depressions, and shifting social and economic conditions. “We now face new conditions which demand new adjustments.”

According to the editorial in the Herald Progress, Hanover County was in a slightly better position than some of the other counties in the state, because “relief in Hanover is lower than the average, property values are higher here, living conditions are better.” Yet the editorial goes on to point out that “figures indicate problems in rural living that Hanover as well as the rest of Virginia and the rest of the South must solve if this section is to build for a future of success and content in rural areas.”

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3 Hanover Herald Progress, 1 December 1938. The newspaper uses the term “underfed” but FDR actually said “ill fed.”
4 Editorial, Hanover Herald Progress, December 1, 1938.
6 Editorial, Hanover Herald Progress, December 1, 1938.
While the series of articles did not highlight the differences between blacks and whites in Hanover, the actual survey paints a picture of difference that is consistent with Jim Crow era conditions. The study found that approximately, one-third to one-half of the rural white population in Virginia was marginal, or living below the poverty line. About three-fourths of rural blacks were marginal.7 The average teacher’s salary in Hanover during the 1936-1937 school year was $957 for white teachers and for black teachers, $413. Twenty-five percent of white students were in high school, compared with 6 percent of black school-age children. Forty-three percent of white farm workers had a marginal income compared with seventy-eight percent of black farm workers.8 These numbers suggest the impact of segregation and racism.

This survey inspired the Conference on Virginia Population Trends that took place in Roanoke, Virginia in 1939. This conference was called by the president of Virginia Tech, the chairman of the Virginia State Planning Board, the state superintendent of public instruction, the state commissioner of public welfare the state administrator of the Works Project Administration, and the president of the Virginia Welfare Council. A report titled “Virginia Does Care” which consisted of ten committee reports on topics ranging from population trends to church aid to the marginal group came out of this gathering.9 One committee, led by John M. Gandy, a Mississippian by birth and a well-known African American educator, reported on Special Negro Problems. Six key areas were discussed

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7 Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station: A Rural Sociology Report. A Manual on Rural Poverty, no. 11.  
9 "Virginia Does Care" Committee Reports: Conference on Virginia Population Trends, Roanoke, Virginia, October 24-25, 1939., Virginia Polytechnic Institute Agricultural Experiment Station, in cooperation with the Virginia State Planning Board, R.S. Mimeo Report No. 12.

Gandy's committee found low wages, lack of employment, and discrimination against black people in the trades and industries as the biggest economic concerns of African Americans. Education, always important to the black community, took up the most space in this report. The education section began by acknowledging that the State Board of Education had established regional high schools for black youth in two or more sections of the state. However, the report continued, problems remained. Inadequate student transportation topped the list, followed by exclusion of black men and women from participation in the operation of the schools, and poor or no facilities for vocational training on the elementary or secondary level.¹¹

Another topic under the sub-heading of education was the inadequate training for black students who wanted to seek professional opportunities in health education in local and state agencies. Finally, the committee wrote, “It appears that the present educational trend is away from the farm. This would seem to necessitate a reorganization of educational procedure in the light of this trend with the idea of directing larger groups back to the farm.”¹² This report does not clearly state why it was a good idea to steer more black people toward farming, but there are certain factors that might explain this suggestion. The first is that the study was conducted by the Division of Rural Sociology or the Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station. It makes sense that this group would be interested in improving agricultural conditions and not sending rural residents to the cities. Since the majority of black and white people in rural areas were considered marginal, it was obvious that they needed a way to make a better living. Since

¹⁰ Who's Who in Colored America, (New York: Thomas Yenser, 1933), 199. John M. Gandy, an African American, was a leading educator in the state and the president of Virginia State College.
¹¹ Virginia Does Care Report.
¹² Virginia Does Care Report.
manufacturing was almost non-existent in Hanover, it only made sense to find a way to better utilize the best resource available. There may have been some element of paternalism and classism involved. Since the end of slavery, white people and black leaders such as Booker T. Washington had been encouraging black people to develop skills in agriculture. Black institutions such as Hampton, Tuskegee, and Virginia State College offered major fields of study in agriculture. Historically speaking, the “fields” were where black people “belonged.” Historian, John Egerton asserts that “most white Southerners effectively sought to expel the black minority from every station of life except menial jobs in the fields and kitchens.”

The third area addressed by Gandy’s committee as part of Special Negro Problems was citizenship. The group argued that the ballot was vital to active citizenship and that both blacks and whites should be allowed access to it without restriction. Also, according to the committee, blacks did not have fair access to participation in local and state government.

Next the group looked at the decline in black land ownership, which it described as “regrettable.” The Hanover County statistics help to illuminate this trend. The 1910 census indicates that there were 832 farms of blacks and other non-whites in Hanover. This number had risen to 860 by 1920, but declined to 559 by 1930, 462 in 1940, and 372 by 1950. The study offered three reasons for the decline in the number of black landowners. The first two were the problems of poor training in the methods of farming, and the lack of support and leadership on the part of the “leading group [white].” These particular concerns might have been eliminated in Hanover with the provision of a county agent to work with black farmers. County farm agents were trained and hired in rural

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14 Historical Census Browser June 2005.
15 Virginia Does Care Report.
communities to work with farmers and help them remain up-to-date on changing agricultural techniques and technology. While there was a white farm agent in Hanover, there was not a black agent, and it appears that the white agent did not readily work with black farmers. The third reason for the dip in farm ownership was attributed to the Depression, but economic downturn does not explain the full picture. Indeed, there was also a dip in white farm ownership between 1920 and 1930, but unlike the black farmers, the number of white farm owners began to rise once again in 1940 and continued in 1950. The loss of land also stemmed from black people being forced to move to areas where they could find better means of support for their families.

Mechanization was the fourth reason given by the committee for the difficulty faced by black farmers. Without state-of-the-art equipment, black farmers were unable to remain competitive. Another factor given in the report as a reason for the decrease in black landownership was “due to injustices frequently practiced by those who make the selling of land to Negroes prohibitive.” In the collective memory of many black people in Hanover County, black landownership was severely curtailed by white trickery. Many black men and women believe today that white people conspired to gain control of valuable property from uneducated and unworldly African Americans.

The fifth overall point made by the committee involved welfare agencies. Black people did not have equal access to job opportunities presented by, presumably, state agencies. While acknowledging that professional training was important, the committee

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17 U.S. Census Records: From 1910-1950, the census gives farm ownership data that includes “negroes and non-whites.” During this period, the number of non-whites in Hanover County fluctuated between zero and 24; with an average of 18. Farm ownership statistics are not available for 1960.
18 Virginia Does Care Report.
19 Gray Interview; John Morris Interview.

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suggested that practical training and experience should also be fundamental when
considering an applicant for employment.\textsuperscript{20}

Finally, the committee addressed crime. The incidence of crime was correlated with
low economic status and poor recreational facilities. The committee also touched on
illegitimacy as a factor in the crime rate; the report quoted a finding by the Methodist
Church Conference that the rate of illegitimate births in Virginia’s larger cities was ten
times higher among blacks than whites. Poor housing and the lack of black law
enforcement officers rounded out the list.\textsuperscript{21}

The committee on education at the “Virginia Does Care” conference also offered an
opinion on the state of the education system in the black community. The committee
recommended that the salaries of black teachers be raised to the level of their white
colleagues. Better transportation for black children was also included on this list. The
education committee suggested an upgrade to the facilities at the black schools and a
reduction of the teaching load in some cases.

The committee on education acknowledged the role of the church in aiding the
marginal members of the community, and pointed out that marginal citizens needed to
attend services to be able to take advantage of all the religious community had to offer.
The committee attributed some of the responsibility to the church itself, saying that it was
the “duty of the churches to reach all the people just as it is the duty of public schools to
train all our citizens.”\textsuperscript{22}

The results of the Agricultural Experiment Station’s survey on rural sociology,
conducted in the midst of the Great Depression and New Deal, was of great concern to
those who understood such information and had a progressive or philanthropic bent.

\textsuperscript{20} Virginia Does Care Report.
\textsuperscript{21} Virginia Does Care Report.
\textsuperscript{22} Virginia Does Care Report.
There was great interest in getting the word out to the larger population, hence the series of articles in the *Herald Progress*.

This chapter takes as its point of departure the socioeconomic snapshot offered by the Hanover editorial writer and by the investigators he cited on the eve of the 1940s. It will examine the changes that remade that picture from about 1950 until 1972, as well as some issues that persisted throughout the period. These twenty-two years were tumultuous, but in the end meaningful change for black and white people occurred. Change rarely comes easily, and this was true in the South and in Virginia during this period. Many white Southerners believed that everything they considered important was being challenged, and indeed, values that had held sway longer than those alive in 1950 could remember were being taken to task. White citizens were being asked to consider a different social structure—one that would put them on an equal footing with their black employees and neighbors. This new structure would expose their children to black children in the formal setting of the schoolroom. Many white parents believed that the next step would be real social integration that could lead anywhere, including intermarriage and mixed-race or "mongrel" babies. This was a scenario that many white people were prepared to fight. But their black counterparts would be fighting just as hard to obtain their rights as citizens of the county, state, and nation.

One avenue of response that had always sustained the African American community was that of spirituality. Like the desire for a good education, reliance on the church as the foundation for all their endeavors had long characterized many black people. Many of the black churches that had been founded following the Civil War were still operating and growing. The church building was still the meeting place for political, educational, and often social events, and the leadership of secular organizations was still made up of church men, especially preachers. Women, too, were involved in these organizations.
They often held the position of secretary. They might also be responsible for fundraising efforts, especially if these involved cooking and selling dinners.\(^{23}\)

Amid these constants, religious practices sometimes varied from one end of the county to the other. Most African Americans in the county were Baptists, and different ritual evolved within each church. For example, while the acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Messiah was a basic tenet of the Baptist church, the conversion experience leading to that acceptance varied. The conversion experience on the eastern side of the county was unique to that section. William Henry Winston’s descendants offer insight into this experience.

When a teenager or older adolescent began to show signs that he or she was ready to accept Jesus as Savior, they would be sent to pray: Lord have mercy on me for I am a poor sinner serving for Jesus’s sake. They would then ask Jesus to forgive them for their sins. This could go on for days, but eventually the Lord would reveal to them that they were forgiven, and when this happened, the person was so overjoyed that he or she could not contain it inside. This was when the convert would go house to house, knocking on neighbors’ doors and telling of the conversion experience. The convert would knock on the door, shake the hand of the person who answered, and then repeat whatever saying had been given to him or her by God. One example was:

I’ve been redeemed
Washed in his blood
God told me that the sun’s gonna rise
And the wind’s gonna blow
And nothing gonna frighten me from that shore.\(^{24}\)

As the newly saved person went from house to house, the old saints would leave their homes and join in the singing. So eventually the singing could be heard for miles around, and people would be up waiting for the convert. This could happen at any time of the day.

\(^{23}\) For an extensive discussion of African American church women see Higginbotham.
\(^{24}\) Doris Wingfield Interview March 3, 2006.
or night. Bernice Parnell's conversion came at midnight on a Saturday night, and it was after 2:00 am before she got back home.25

After neighbors were notified, and before baptism occurred, the convert had to go before the pastor and deacons to be questioned: Do you believe He lives? How do you feel? When this phase was over, baptism would occur. Baptists believe in dunking converts under water, and since most churches did not have indoor baptismal pools, it could take months before the convert was baptized if he or she was “saved” during the winter months. When it was time for baptizing, the ritual would take place at Allen Pond.26

The pond was located in the Liza and A.P. Allen Park, near the location where Winston's family had settled. According to the Allen's' nieces, their aunt and uncle established this park as a recreational site for African Americans. They recall that people came from as far away as New York, and that, during the 1930s, the men from the CCC would come. The Allens sold food, and visitors could play games and swim in the pond. While Allen Pond was used for socializing during the week, on an occasional Sunday morning during the warmer months, the pond was also the baptismal pool.27

When the time for baptizing came the candidate went to Miss Liza all dressed in white. The saints would walk in front with the pastor and process down to the water. One by one the converts would be led into the water to join the preacher. Usually there was singing. The preacher would take the convert in his arms and dip the individual in the water in the name of the “Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” The convert would be quickly brought back to the surface. He or she would then change clothes and be given

25 Parnell Interview.
26 Parnell Interview.
27 Parnell interview.
the right hand of fellowship, a ritual given to men and women, welcoming them into the church body.²⁸

Sometimes this process would begin during the annual revival. Sinners—anyone who had not professed Jesus to be their Lord and Savior—had to sit on the mourners' bench. If you were a child, parents would not let you avoid sitting on the bench, whether you confessed anything while you sat there or not. The entire church would pray and pray in hopes that the people on the bench would be saved. People might stay in church until midnight praying for someone on the bench. Dorothy Allen's conversion provides an example. She was a married woman who had never professed. She went up to the bench and the saints stayed in church until midnight praying and singing for her.²⁹

For really tough cases, the old saints would go to the sinner's house. They might encircle the sinner and pray and sing and tell him or her about the Lord. As odd as these activities may sound today, black people who lived through Jim Crow say that it was their belief in God that got them through. They helped each other, as the Christian teaching directed them to do. Parnell says, "We are the church," and as such black people helped one another to defeat adversity.³⁰

While Beryl Carter does not share a conversion experience, she also recalls the church as a key to the persistence of the black community in Hanover. As a pre-teen, she recalls that civic groups often met at the church. Her parents were active in the County-Wide League and the NAACP; her father encouraged people to vote and gave them rides to the polls. She also remembers the church as a gathering place for "black folks away from white folks where you could talk about things and how you could deal with stuff." Here Carter is referring to the "stuff" of Jim Crow.³¹

²⁸ Wingfield Interview.
²⁹ Wingfield Interview.
³⁰ Parnell Interview.
³¹ Carter Interview.
Carter’s interview sheds light on one of the many contradictions of Jim Crow. She makes it clear that some black people voted during the era of disfranchisement. This was also witnessed in Johnny Winston, and the sixty black men who were allowed to register to vote in 1904. Again, the question is why were some blacks allowed to participate in the electoral process? According to Carter’s testimony, her father was well-known in the community and participated in a type of cooperative, of black and white farmers, that shared farming equipment. He also knew the registrar. Familiarity may have been the key to access, and it may have been affiliation with him that opened the door to those he took to the poll.32

Historian Leon Litwack addresses the circumstances that allowed some black people to vote saying that “certain black Southerners, often businessmen, clergymen, and professionals who enjoyed through their deferential behavior a reputation in the community as “good negroes” and were, therefore, allowed to vote.33 This description does not seem to fit the two men, Winston and Thompson, who are believed to have voted in Hanover during disfranchisement. The bottom-line seems to have been that white men and women still maintained control over the political process, so if they ever changed their mind, they could have easily taken away the right to vote.

As far as the issues brought out in the 1938 survey are concerned, Hanover had made some improvements by the 1950s, as had the rest of the South and the nation. The Depression had not ended, yet more people were working and life in general was better. The generation that would become known as the “baby boomers” was filling hospital nurseries and keeping midwives busy. In the early 1950s, the first of these babies were entering first grade and the schools in Hanover County were overflowing.

32 Carter Interview.
33 Litwack, Trouble in Mind, 226.
It is difficult to get a perfectly clear picture of black economic growth in the county in the 1950s and beyond, for the census records are divided into two categories, white and non-white. The non-whites include blacks, Native Americans, other races (e.g. Filipino, Chinese, Japanese), and individuals of mixed parentage. While the great majority of the individuals in the non-white category in Hanover County would have been black, there is no way to factor out the others. What can be determined is that the African American population in the county increased from 6228 to 6766 between 1938 and 1950. This increase suggests that black men and women were able to make a living in Hanover County and the surrounding area; natural population increase and perhaps even some in-migration more than offset any exodus of blacks from the county. The increase may in part reflect individuals returning home after having moved away to find work during the Depression. The African American population, after all, had decreased by 825 between 1920 and 1930, but grew to 6,566 by 1940 (an increase of 278) and to 6766 by 1950.

According to Dr. Gandy’s report to the “Virginia Does Care” Conference, the clearest way of measuring citizenship was through the vote. In 1953, when the county was preparing to vote on issuing school bonds, the number of registered black voters in Hanover was extremely low—according to the Herald Progress, only 393. There could be many reasons for such low a low number. First, the poll tax and understanding clause were still on the books, and many black men and women could not afford to pay the tax, or had trouble remembering to pay the requisite three years in row, the money being due long before the date of the actual elections. Second, county registrars still worked out of their homes, and this meant that they might or might not answer the door.

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34 Historical Census Browser.
35 Historical Census Browser.
36 Letters to Contee Robinson from Luther Porter Jackson regarding decline in registered voters in Hanover County, Luther Porter Jackson Papers, Virginia State University.
when someone approached to register, and if they did, they still had the leeway to fail an applicant on a whim. Fourth, black voters had become apathetic. Although voting restrictions for veterans, including African Americans, had been lifted in 1945, few black people chose to register. This happened despite the efforts of the NAACP and other black organizations in the county.37

Throughout the period studied here, registering and voting might be difficult for an African American—or, in certain instances, the process could go smoothly. In the early 1960s, when Beryl Thompson Carter turned twenty-one, she was excited to have the opportunity to vote for John F. Kennedy. Carter recalls that her family knew the registrar. Her father participated in an informal farm cooperative with white farmers in the county, in which members shared equipment and labor. One of the men in this cooperative was the father of the registrar, Barbara Johnson Boxley. When Beryl Carter arrived at the Boxley home, the registrar gave Carter a clean sheet of paper and told her to “write something.” Carter recalls that she “puzzled over what to write,” eventually settling on the preamble to the constitution. When she had finished, she handed the paper to Boxley, and was registered. Carter chuckles and says, “I guess she could read.”38 Carter’s experience may have been the experience of some African Americans in the county for generations. She was known to the registrar, and vice versa. If she had been a stranger, the woman might have denied her registration. Carter’s experience also reminds us, however, that, as at the turn-of-the-twentieth-century when William Chenery worked with the voter registration process in Ashland, control over the process of registration remained entirely in the hands of white Hanoverians.

37 Luther P. Jackson to Contee Robinson, April 13, 1947; Janies C. Woolfolk to Luther Porter Jackson, May 14, 1947. Luther P. Jackson Papers, Virginia State University.
38 Carter Interview.
Crime, fifth in the list of factors presented in 1939, was never high in the county, but as everywhere else, it did occur. Throughout the period covered in this chapter, the local paper reported on blacks’ entanglements with the criminal justice system from time to time, but most were fairly minor events. Records for this period that clearly identify the accused race are not available but newspaper accounts do not indicate that African American criminals were more harshly treated than their white counterparts.

Perhaps the most sensational incident involving the criminal justice system during this time centered around a man who barricaded himself in his parent’s home in the Berkleytown section of Hanover. On Tuesday, October 17, 1950, Page Mason, the black father of thirty-eight-year-old German Mason, arrived at the Ashland Town Office seeking help for his son. He specifically asked that a doctor and the sheriff be called to his home. The younger Mason, a former patient at the Kecoughtan Veterans’ Hospital, was acting strangely.

Dr. Geoffrey Curwen, assistant to the county coroner, went to the house in Berkleytown. As he stepped onto the porch, a shot rang out, hitting him in the leg. Just a few seconds later, German Mason shot State Police Officer O. R. Trice, one of eighteen state, county, and town officers on the scene. Both Curwen and Trice survived their wounds. The police lobbed tear gas into the house, and while the papers reported that it could be smelled as far away as the Herald Progress offices, a distance of at least one mile, Mason was not affected. He remained in his parents’ home another four hours. Eventually, two officers slipped into the house through a window and, as one entered the room where Mason was hiding, the World War II veteran put the shotgun under his chin and fired. Still living, Mason continued to struggle as he was carried downstairs and out to the porch, where he was pronounced dead by suicide.39

39 Hanover Herald Progress, October 19, 1950.
According to the papers, almost 500 black and white spectators filled Henry Street, where the Mason home was located, as this scene unfolded. According to those who remember German Mason, he did not suffer from mental illness before World War II. It was believed then and still is today, by those who remember the event, that whatever had affected German Mason had happened during the time he spent in the military.\footnote{Hanover \textit{Herald Progress}, October 19, 1950.}

Education is the arena in which change for blacks is most easily measured. In 1938, Hanover County did not provide a high school for African American students, vocational training was almost non-existent, black parents were providing transportation to school for their children, and black teachers and administrators received far less pay than their white counterparts.\footnote{See School Reports for Hanover County from 1870-1940.} Indeed, salary discrepancy was a consistent trademark of the Jim Crow Era, and one of the three areas that Charles Hamilton Houston selected to attack via the NAACP Legal Defense Fund when he was appointed special counsel to that organization in 1933. Houston, with the help of Thurgood Marshall and other former students, planned the path to \textit{Brown}. His three-pronged attack included the desegregation of public graduate and professional schools, pay equalization for black teachers, and equalization of school facilities. He believed that these suits would chop away at Jim Crow until it was finally a memory.\footnote{Ogletree, 113.}

Houston, his team, and local lawyers achieved success in nine southern states, including Virginia. The great discrepancy in pay between black and white teachers was addressed by the Hanover County Teachers Association for black teachers in 1940 when they asked Superintendent Hall to attend a meeting on December 9, 1940. The following January, Sadie Fleming and Eunice Daniel wrote a letter to the school board asking for a “single salary schedule for teachers of equal qualifications and experience performing the
same duties and service employed in the Hanover County School System without regard
to race or color." The Association requested that the Board begin to make this increase
during the 1941-1942 school year and to close the gap fully by the 1944-45 year.\textsuperscript{43}

The Association wrote to the school board on October 22, 1941, thanking the
members for a 1941-1942 salary increase, but they still had two questions: First, when
did the Board anticipate that equalization would be reached? Second, how large a raise
would be given each year. The teachers requested an immediate reply. The letter was
copied in the minutes of the board meeting on December 1, 1941. The board answered
that, because of state law, they were not allowed to take on financial obligations for more
than a year at a time.\textsuperscript{44}

In 1950, however, one of the greatest wishes of African American parents in the
county was fulfilled: a black high school was provided. Construction of the new school
began in 1949, and the finishing stages were reported on at a school board meeting early
in 1950. On February 7, the architect appeared before the board to discuss the interior of
the new black high school.\textsuperscript{45} The two-story structure was to have an auditorium, cafeteria,
and for the first time, black students in the county were to have central heating. In the
same minutes, the board discussed a name for the new high school. While the minutes do
not include the complete list of possibilities, they do report that the most popular
suggestion was John M. Gandy High School, named after the former president of
Virginia State College.\textsuperscript{46} It is not clear who nominated Gandy, he was not a Hanoverian,
and does not seem to have had a specific connection to the county, but several of the
black teachers had attended Virginia State College, and they may have encouraged his
selection. This may be another example of the school board responding affirmatively to a

\textsuperscript{43} HCSB January 6, 1941.
\textsuperscript{44} HCSB December 1, 1941.
\textsuperscript{45} HCSB February 7, 1950.
\textsuperscript{46} HCSB February 7, 1950.
black request. In the end, it was not going to affect the white students and it would keep some of the black population content. At the April meeting, the architect reported that the building was nearing completion. The issue of the name was settled when the group voted unanimously to name the new school after John M. Gandy.47

At the same meeting, the school board discussed the needs of the auditorium, a space often left out of black schools. David Webb, the superintendent of schools, presented the needs for the new auditorium and the school board authorized him to obtain bids “at the earliest possible time...in order that the auditorium and stage could be made available for commencement exercises in June 1950.”48 Finally, the board members made clear to the architect that they wanted someone from the State Board of Education to be on site for the final inspection in order to certify that the school was up to state standards. The inspection took place on May 26, 1950, and, although the formal dedication would not take place until almost a year later, the school was certified ready for use.49

When John M. Gandy High School, which served kindergarten through high school students, opened in September 1950, it was not only the first and only high school for African Americans in Hanover; it was the only state-of-the-art school for either race in the county. The opening of Gandy was a high-water mark for blacks in Hanover. In October, a young African American student, Geraldine Winston, wrote an article about the new school for the Herald Progress. She reported on the new indoor gymnasium and commented on the sight of the students in their uniforms. For the first time, black children had the opportunity to participate in organized health and fitness activities at school. The boys learned tumbling, pyramid building, and stunts; both boys and girls

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47 HCSB April 11, 1950.
48 HCSB April 11, 1950.
learned square dancing. Ping Pong tables, to be used during gym class, were constructed by the shop teacher and his students.\(^{50}\)

Winston pointed out that, with all of its amenities, the new school still had needs. Gandy, unlike many of the black schools in Hanover, had a health clinic, and that facility needed supplies. Mrs. Hill Carter, who had married into one of the oldest and best-known white families in the county, had donated a mattress, sheets, and a bedspread. Items remaining on the list of needs for the clinic included a pillow, blankets, sheets, pillow cases, a hot water bottle, an ice bag, a basin, a clinical thermometer, a hot plate, and a screen. The school library was also in need, so Helen Moreland, whose husband was J. Earl Moreland, the president of Randolph-Macon College, and others donated books.\(^{51}\)

It is not clear exactly why the school board decided to provide this new school when it did, or why the building was so well appointed. Generosity toward black students was not the school board’s standard operating procedure. It is certainly possible that board members were simply acknowledging that it was past time for the black children in the county to have a high school and a facility that would motivate them and their teachers. The board may have also felt that, since a school was being built, it should embody the best. Given the times, the school board’s decision was most likely in response to recent Supreme Court cases that were desegregating state colleges and universities across the country. Indeed, the University of Virginia law school admitted its first African American student in 1950. Hanover County School Board members may have believed that if they acted proactively they might be able to curb the desire and need for the county’s black citizens to push for school desegregation.\(^{52}\) Regardless of why

\(^{50}\) Hanover Herald Progress, October 12, 1950.

\(^{51}\) Hanover Herald Progress, October 12, 1950.

\(^{52}\) Sweatt v. Painter, 339 U.S. 629 (1950) and McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Board of Regents, 339 U.S. 637 (1950). The first African American to take advantage of these court decisions was Gregory Swanson. He entered the University of Virginia Law School in 1950. He was not allowed to live on campus. He left the school in 1951. See Sarah Patton Boyle, *The Desegregated Heart: A Virginian's Stand*.
they built the school, Winston's story suggests that the county school board still believed that black parents and community members should partly pay for black schools. This arrangement also provided an opportunity for philanthropists to exercise their paternalistic tendencies.

Another point made at the “Virginia Does Care” Conference had been the need for blacks to have an active say in the running of the schools. In 1950, there were still no African Americans on the school board, or in any other leadership position in the county, but they continued to make their voices heard through the avenues open to them. They remained active in the organizations established in their community, and they continued to challenge the white establishment to respond to the needs of blacks. The black teachers and administrators must also be counted among those who played a major role in the success of black students. These men and women were members of the black elite. They were highly revered within the Hanover black community for having attained an education and for their willingness to help others achieve. Even today, many of the teachers and principals from the period discussed here are still remembered as caring and inspiring individuals.  

Although 1950 was a red-letter year for the elementary and high school students to be housed at Gandy, the other black schools in the county were not faring as well. This point was made by a committee, including Contee Robinson, E.E. Roane, and J.P. Giles from the Hanover County-Wide League, which had been established in the early 1920s by blacks who wanted to expand educational opportunities for their children. These League members appeared before the school board on May 2, 1950, after having

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in A Time of Transition, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1962) for a discussion about Swanson’s time at UVA. Also see speech Boyle gave before Race Street Friends Meeting titled “The Lonely Crusade: A Virginian’s Stand for Racial Justice” on December 13, 1963, LVA.  

Grimes Interview.  

HCSB May 2, 1950.
conducted a survey of the county's black elementary schools and finding them to be in very poor condition. They presented a resolution to the board asking that a plan of action be instituted immediately to build modern consolidated elementary schools in the Beaverdam and Henry Districts, and to complete consolidating the elementary schools in the Ashland District.\textsuperscript{55} Consolidation meant that the inadequate and dilapidated one-and two-room schools would be replaced by new, better-equipped buildings.

The board responded by promising that the needs of the black schools would be considered when setting a plan for all the schools in the county. Also, the school board members pointed out to "the committee that it would take time to plan and still more time to carry out the general overall plans that might be projected with reference to the general school situation in Hanover County."\textsuperscript{56} African Americans continued to ask for better schools, but they were typically put off with excuses involving timing, money, or some other logistical block.

The League appeared before the board again two months later, with Contee Robinson at the helm. This time, the representatives presented a petition asking that John Fleming be continued as the agriculture teacher at Gandy for the school beginning in September 1950. According to Robinson, the black community was pleased with Fleming's job performance. He noted Fleming's "many years of service and the excellent work for the improvement of the agricultural interests of our entire County."

\textsuperscript{57} The board acknowledged that Fleming had served well in his position, but declared that "he had been reluctant in giving the proper cooperation to the principal and school board office and that the attitude Mr. Fleming appeared to have had was not conducive to the best

\textsuperscript{55} HCSB May 2, 1950.

\textsuperscript{56} HCSB May 2, 1950. School construction program July 1949 - June 1954 4 new schools scheduled. 2 white high schools and 2 black elementary schools. This represents the consolidation of black elementary schools in the east and west sections of the county.

\textsuperscript{57} HCSB July 7, 1950.
interests of the general school situation of which he was supposed to have been a part." 58

Finally, the Board pointed out that the agriculture teachers had already been appointed for
the 1950-1951 school year. 59

The details of this story are left out of the school board minutes, so there is no
concrete evidence as to why the board dismissed Fleming. There are individuals in the
community who still remember Fleming and can shed some light on the man and his
personality. While it does not seem that he was the type who marched or picketed, he was
a man who strove for the betterment of the race. He is remembered as someone who
worked tirelessly to help young blacks obtain the funds to enter college. He also
impressed people as one who, once he sank his teeth into something, would not let go. He
had a reputation for standing up for the underdog, and sometimes this made him
unpopular. Any of these actions could have landed him on the wrong side of the school
board. What is known is that Fleming was brought back to the school the following year,
and that he remained in the Hanover County School System for the next thirty years.

On March 29, 1951, a letter to the editor from the president of the Gandy PTA,
Ozewell Robinson, appeared in the Hanover newspaper. The PTA had discussed the
proposed budget for the upcoming school year and was concerned that the funds
requested by the school board from the county board of supervisors were inadequate. The
organization pointed out that the schools needed more money “in order to afford better
facilities for all the children of Hanover County.”60 In particular, they wanted enough
money to add typing, bookkeeping, stenography, and business practice to the Gandy
curriculum. According to the author of the letter, fewer than ten percent of the students
would go on to college, but most of the classes were college preparatory. He wanted

58 HCSB July 7, 1950.
59 HCSB July 7, 1950. The Board minutes do not elaborate on the concerns regarding Mr.
Fleming; however, he was hired back for the next school year.
60 Hanover Herald Progress March 29, 1951.
students to get the training they needed to get good jobs after graduation. This letter is part of a recurring theme. Despite Jim Crow, blacks in Hanover freely approached the county leadership to request a service or complain about a problem. What is noteworthy is that the officials appear to have received them politely and listened to their concerns. Unfortunately, this attitude did not often translate into an immediate response—as apparently was the case with the request of March 1951, which the minutes do not suggest was granted.

In the 1930s, black children had walked to school or been driven there by their parents and others in the community. By the 1950s, the county provided buses to the black schools, but transportation was still a major problem, as the Gandy PTA pointed out. The few buses assigned to Gandy were severely overcrowded. Bus seven from the western part of the county had a ridership of 65 when the bus was made for 48. At least two other buses had to carry more than 60 pupils. The drivers had to make two trips in the morning and again in the afternoon; this meant that “children arrive at school as late as 9:15 in the morning and leave school as early as 2:30 in the afternoon.” School began at 8:55 and the day ended at 3:00 pm. “As a result, some high school students missed twenty minutes of class work each morning. Multiply this time lost by five days a week in a 180 day school year, and it is obvious that students are losing valuable school time.”

Nothing changed in the bus situation during the 1950-51 school year, and there was apparently no change at the beginning of the 1951-1952 school year, either, because in October, the Gandy PTA contacted the school board office again about severe overcrowding on the school buses. The superintendent told the delegation that the board

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61 Hanover Herald Progress, March 29, 1951.
intended to address the bus situation at Gandy "as far as possible upon the arrival of the new buses."

While the Gandy PTA was addressing the immediate needs of its constituents, a more dramatic event was taking place just a few counties away that would have far-reaching consequences for Hanover County, the state, and the country. On April 23, 1951, a group of high school students including Barbara Johns, who led the group, went on strike in Farmville, Virginia. They were fed up with the poor condition of the Robert R. Moton High School in Prince Edward County. They convinced Oliver Hill and Spotswood Robinson, civil rights attorneys affiliated with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, to take on their case, which when filed became known as *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County, Virginia*. By this time, the NAACP had changed its strategy. Previously, the legal team had argued to make the schools equal. The attorneys for the plaintiffs in Davis and in four companion cases from other places were now arguing that "separate but equal" as a goal was unachievable and unconstitutional. They now wanted desegregation.

In May 1951 Paul Watkins, owner and publisher of the Hanover *Herald Progress*, addressed the issue of the school desegregation cases in an editorial. Watkins began by explaining that the suits sought to bring integration to the schools. The editorial asserted that there was some sympathy for the cases that sought to bring black schools up to the standards of white ones, because admittedly, the black schools were in terrible condition. "Virginia is not living up to its promise of separate but equal facilities," Watkins wrote.

Having acknowledged the state’s weaknesses, Watkins also pointed out the gains he said the state had made in the education of African Americans. On this list of

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62 HCSB October 9, 1951.
63 Ogletree, 111.
64 Editorial, Hanover *Herald Progress*, May 17, 1951.
accomplishments he included the fact that white graduate and professional schools had begun accepting blacks, and white colleges accepted blacks if the major sought was not offered at a black school.\textsuperscript{65} The writer believed that these changes had been accomplished with few problems, which he attributed to the maturity of those involved. Watkins believed that desegregation would pose problems on the grade school and high school levels due to the immaturity of the students. “If large masses of Negro and white students are thrown together so suddenly,” he warned, “many unpleasant incidents might arise. There probably would be a wave of strikes of white parents against unsegregated schools. There would be much resentment and confusion.”\textsuperscript{66}

Watkins continued by reminding his readers that segregation in public schools was not simply an arbitrary rule but a mandate of the state constitution, and as a result, the school board could face a dilemma. If mandated by the federal courts to integrate, the board would have to decide whether to adhere to the federal mandate or to disobey the federal government in favor of the state constitution. Watkins warned of chaos and conflict: board members would resign, he feared, and no one would step up to replace them, leaving the schools without guidance and no legal status. “One prominent judge,” Watkins wrote, “has remarked that if this occasion arose in his jurisdiction he would have no alternative but to close the schools.”\textsuperscript{67} In effect, Watkins was warning that desegregation of schools could result in there being no public education at all in Virginia.

After painting this very bleak picture, Watkins explained that he was not in favor of segregation, a very unusual stance for the editor of a southern newspaper in 1951. Watkins was not a Southerner by birth, and this may explain his personal stance on segregation. Indeed, he had moved to Ashland from Chicago where he had been the

\textsuperscript{65} Sweatt v. Painter and McLaurin v. Oklahoma.
\textsuperscript{66} Editorial, Hanover \textit{Herald Progress}, May 17, 1951.
\textsuperscript{67} Editorial, Hanover \textit{Herald Progress}, May 17, 1951.
promotion manager for the *Chicago Daily News* a very large newspaper. While it is not certain whether or not he was referring to Chicago or not, he went on to explain that he was used to living in places that were not segregated, and where blacks and whites went to the same schools in harmony. At the same time, he said he understood that the South was not ready for integration. “The people of this area are not mentally prepared for an end to segregation at this time,” he wrote, “and any attempt to end segregation at this time would do the cause of racial harmony and the progress of the Negro race much harm.”

While Watkins was not born in the South, by 1951 he had lived in the South for almost twenty years, and he had adopted the standard argument against segregation typically employed by white southern “liberals” or “moderates” at the time. This argument suggested that treating black people fairly did not have to lead to social integration.

Watkins blamed the black leadership for creating tension; he did not name names, but he did mention the NAACP at the state level, and he pointed to the black law firm of Hill, Martin, and Robinson as responsible for involving the federal courts and stirring up discontentment among blacks. They “are guilty of poor timing and bad judgment,” he asserted. Watkins ended by saying that he believed that at some point the South, or at least Virginia, would come to accept integration, but he doubted “that this happy event will occur in our generation. Any legal attempt to bring it to pass before its time will be disastrous.” It is interesting that Watkins did not recognize any

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68 Shalf, 238.
69 Editorial, Hanover *Herald Progress*, May 17, 1951. Watkins does not divulge where he grew up, but he moved to Ashland from Illinois.
70 See Kneebone for discussion on white southern liberals.
71 Oliver Hill, Spotswood Robinson, and Martin Armstrong Martin made up this Richmond law firm.
72 Editorial, Hanover *Herald Progress*, May 17, 1951. Watkins was correct when he predicted that integration would not take place in his lifetime. He died on 1951, and his wife, Lois Watkins took over the paper.
black Hanoverians as leaders in the push for better educational opportunities for black children in the county. While they may not have been calling for complete desegregation in 1951, blacks in Hanover had not ceased their constant struggle for better schools. Indeed, Ozwell Robinson, who was the president of the Gandy PTA in 1951, had recently written/would soon write a letter to the editor complaining that the school board budget submitted to the board of supervisors was inadequate. Robinson asserted that the funding should be increased to “afford better facilities for all the children of Hanover County.”

While the school desegregation cases are not mentioned again in the newspaper or the school board minutes until after the Brown decision in May 1954, black parents continued to ask the school board for relief from overcrowding and dilapidated facilities. The prevailing issue for all the schools in Hanover County, both black and whites, was overcrowding. The babies born after World War II, the group now known as the baby boomers, had reached elementary school. Their sheer numbers were overwhelming school boards across the country. Hanover also faced the problem of deteriorating and outmoded facilities. This was especially true of the black schools outside of Ashland. There were very few school board meetings in the early fifties that did not include at least one request from an individual or organization that the board “please do something about the overcrowded schools.” Sometimes the board simply received a letter such as the one from the Hanover County Taxpayers Association complaining about overcrowding. The board responded by thanking the association for its interest and promised to set up a meeting at which its members could come to hear about the plans for new schools. The very next month the parents of the Washington-Henry (white) PTA expressed their anger at the overcrowded school their children were forced to attend.

73 Hanover Herald Progress, March 29, 1951.
74 HCSB August 6, 1951.
75 HCSB November 4, 1952.
76 HCSB December 19, 1952.
On February 12, 1953, the school board held a joint meeting with the Hanover County Board of Supervisors to review a proposed school building plan. The minutes report that there were several community members present. Most are named in the minutes, except for the "group of four Negro patrons from Hanover County." Based on suggestions from those in attendance, the plan was revised and presented at the next school board meeting. The revised school plan included adding ten rooms to Washington-Henry School, which included students from the first through the twelfth grades, and repairing and renovating the Henry Clay High School building. The new plan also included construction of two new white high schools—one in the western part of the county, and one to the east—and two new black elementary schools—also one in the east and one in the west. The children from the one-and two-room schools would be consolidated into these newer and larger facilities. The plan did not mention any upgrades to the black high school to complement the two new high schools for whites. Gandy had not been open for very long, but it was already overcrowded; one high school for blacks was not enough. The board may have been concerned with backlash from white people if the body granted blacks another high school after building Gandy. The five-year building plan seemed a major step forward, but in the meantime, the school situation worsened. The press announced that, during the 1953-1954 school year, students would experience double shifts and classrooms in the hallways and cafeterias.

In order to obtain the funds to put the building plan into action, the school board would have to issue bonds. Bonds could not be issued without the consent of the people of the county, so a referendum was scheduled for July 14, 1953. Lois Watkins, the wife of the late Paul Watkins, and by then the editor of the *Herald Progress*, exhorted readers

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77 HCSB February 12, 1953.
78 HCSB March 16, 1953.
79 Hanover *Herald Progress* July 9, 1953.
to pass the bond issue and thus bring better schools to Hanover County. The bond issue did pass, and the wheels began to turn, but they would soon be stopped short.\(^{80}\)

On May 17, 1954, the United States Supreme Court handed down a decision that rocked the very foundation of Jim Crow society in the South. The Court overruled *Plessy v. Ferguson*, a judicial precedent which had been the law of the land since 1896. The court ruled that separate schools for blacks and whites were unconstitutional. The Virginia school case had been joined with cases from Delaware, South Carolina, and Kansas and decided under the name, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*.\(^{81}\) The cases that Paul Watkins had addressed in his editorial of 1951 had been decided in favor of school integration. On May 20, 1954, Lois Watkins wrote another editorial. It called for calm and level-headedness, pointing out that "history is not made in the high places only; the story of these times is the composite picture of the happenings in all the communities, little and big. An idea, good or bad, in our one county of Virginia can be as powerful as one born in Washington or New York."\(^{82}\)

The author went on to say that she did not expect another Patrick Henry or Henry Clay, Hanover's most renowned sons, but she did hope that county residents would remember that "the thoughts and the doings of us all are important. The little conversations, the kindly gestures, the searching mind and the big heart will all play their part in writing the history of this next decade."\(^{83}\) She invoked an editorial in the Atlanta *Constitution* the year before that pointed out that anger and violence were not the answers. "May we of Hanover county—though we have quarreled over many lesser problems—face the difficult adjustments ahead with courage, with the will to understand,

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\(^{80}\) HCSB April 12, 1954.

\(^{81}\) Ogletree, S. *Brown v. The Board of Education* 347 U.S. 483 (1954). *Bolling v. Sharpe*, 397 U.S. 483 (1954), a case from Washington, DC, was initially part of Brown, but it was decided separately.

\(^{82}\) Editorial, Hanover *Herald Progress* May 20, 1954.

\(^{83}\) Editorial, Hanover *Herald Progress* May 20, 1954.
and with an intelligent calmness,” Watkins concluded.\textsuperscript{84} Lois Watkins’s reaction and call for calm was in keeping with a response that historian Francis M. Wilhoit finds among moderate white people in the South, “especially those in journalism, [who] were less pessimistic [than many] and saw the [Brown] opinion as more or less inevitable.”\textsuperscript{85}

The \textit{Herald Progress}, in its efforts to encourage calm, reprinted an editorial from the \textit{Christian Science Monitor} which asserted that \textit{Brown} was an historic pronouncement, but cautioned that it could be compared to the Emancipation Proclamation. This being true, “it must be remembered also that to many people of the South it bears the ring of the news from Appomattox...If it be proclaimed that here democracy, as was then the Union, is preserved in its entirety, let it be resolved that, as at Appomattox, there also be forbearance and understanding...Let those to whom this decision means nothing less than a social revolution be forgiven their first angry outbursts and be borne with in their first efforts to cushion the impact and their continuing endeavors to adjust their institutions to so great a change.”\textsuperscript{86} The editorial went on to point out that the court had left the door open for the states to determine how best to deal with this transition. It closed by asking what else the court could have done but rule against segregation.

On June 24, 1954, the first volley was fired in the war against integration in Hanover County. Samuel W. Shelton, attorney for Walker S. Beadles, the heir to the Rufus Beadles estate, filed a demurrer in the Hanover County Circuit Court which questioned the legality of the million-dollar school bond issue that had been passed in July 1953. Apparently Hanover County planned to condemn property belonging to Walker Beadles in order to build new schools. The suit challenged the Hanover County plan to condemn private property for that purpose.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{84} Editorial, \textit{Hanover Herald Progress} May 20, 1954.
\textsuperscript{86} \textit{Hanover Herald Progress}, May 27, 1954.
\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Hanover Herald Progress}, June 24, 1954.
The suit alleged that the ballot for the bond issue had specifically called for the board to build black and white schools, not integrated schools. According to the *Herald Progress*, Shelton argued that, "if this was true, such monies could not legally be spent for construction of integrated schools. Apparently if integrated schools cannot be constructed with this bond issue fund, a new vote may be necessary."88 Responding to the demurrer on the legality of the school bonds issued, the *Herald Progress* suggested that "we have had occasion many times to congratulate Hanover on its 'firsts.' We do not feel the same spirit of enthusiasm for Hanover's new 'first'—testing the validity of selling bonds for school construction, voted before the Supreme Court ruling."89

The demurrer may simply have been a self-serving attempt on the part of Beadles to retain his land, or to extract more money in compensation for the loss. However, there is an even stronger possibility that this legal action was just what it seemed, a desperate attempt to prevent Hanover from desegregating its schools. Whatever the reason for the demurrer, Judge Leon M. Bazile of the Hanover Circuit Court found in favor of Shelton, writing that "any expenditure from the proceeds of the bond issue for non-segregated schools is illegal."90 The school board appealed Bazile's decision, and in the meantime all construction was placed on hold.91

Judge Bazile's ruling drew the attention of New York bond brokers to Hanover County. According to historian James H. Hershman Jr., brokers were already concerned about the soundness of the Virginia bond market even before the Hanover case provided "confirmation that their fears were perhaps justified."92 The school appealed the decision to the Virginia Supreme Court, which overturned Bazile's ruling. "The cases that made

88 Hanover *Herald Progress*, June 24, 1954.
89 Editorial, Hanover *Herald Progress*, July 1, 1954.
90 Hanover *Herald Progress*, June 2, 1955.
91 Hanover *Herald Progress*, August 8, 1955.
up *Brown* had been filed and widely discussed at the time of the July 1953 bond vote,“ the court remarked; “the voters had to be aware of the uncertainty over the continuance of segregation.”93 While the state Supreme Court ruled in favor of the school board, bond brokers were still wary of purchasing Virginia school bonds. Hershman argues that many factors led to the demise of massive resistance in 1959—court rulings at the state and federal level, a movement in support of public schools, and the effect of the school crisis on economic development—but “in any accounting of the period the public school bond debt should be acknowledged as an important, if underlying, restraint in keeping an American state in the mid-twentieth century from dropping out of the public school business.”94

Shelton and Beadles were not alone in their efforts to stop the issuing of the bonds. A very good example of the anti-integrationist viewpoint is a letter from Preston Wickham dated August 25, 1955. The letter was addressed to the school board, but a copy was sent to the board of supervisors which met on August 26. Wickham supported the Beadles suit and disagreed with the school board decision to appeal. “Your position is one in which you should represent the majority and not the minority,” Wickham lectured county officials. “For the honor and betterment of your home and county you should resist integration in every manner possible. Each act on your behalf towards integration in any form is a sign of weakness.” Wickham insisted that he did not mind his money going to build schools for black children, but he was “bitterly” opposed to integration. In fact, Wickham explained, “I would not vote for one dime towards integrated schools.”95 He believed that the whites of the county should have another chance to vote on the bonds

93 Hershman, 401.
94 Hershman, 409.
95 HCSB September 6, 1955; HCBS August 26, 1955.
given the Supreme Court decision. The ultimate goal was not to overturn *Brown*, necessarily, but at least to stop Hanover County from desegregating its schools.

E.C.C. Woods, a county supervisor, moved that the board heartily endorse the opinion stated in Wickham's letter. To this end, the board of supervisors sent a letter to the school board, in support of Wickham, which was read at the September 6 meeting. At the same time, the supervisors requested that the school board withdraw its notice of appeal of the Circuit Court order prohibiting the sale of bonds for school construction. The school board discussed the correspondence from Wickham and the supervisors, yet voted to keep the appeal going. One member, C.N. Carter, said that he was not in favor of integration, but he still believed that the appeal should continue. He does not offer an explanation for his support of the appeal, given his personal leanings; however, it may be safe to assume that he voted the way he did because the schools needed the money from the bonds.  

The school board responded in a letter to the board of supervisors, acknowledging a difference of opinion. “The board is of the belief,” the school board wrote, that “its action in noting an appeal is in the best interest of the Hanover County School system, and should some way be found to continue the operation of segregated schools, the money derived from the sale of bonds would be urgently needed.” The school board, while in favor of segregated schools, was committed to the maintenance of public education and urged the supervisors to reconsider their request.

In August 1954, J. Lindsay Almond, attorney general of Virginia, spoke at the Ashland War Memorial. This talk, sponsored by the Hanover Junior Chamber of Commerce as a public address on problems confronting Virginia, drew two hundred people. Almond began by discussing a letter from the NAACP which accused him of

96 HCSB September 6, 1955.
97 HCSB September 6, 1955.
being “in contempt of the highest court of the land.” In turn, he referred to the NAACP as an alien organization and called it the National Association for the Agitation of Colored People. During his speech, Almond explained that he had been called on to prepare a brief for the United States Supreme Court on the thinking of the legislators who had written the Constitution and the early Amendments. In his brief, he pointed out that public schools were not one of the civil rights granted by the 14th Amendment. He asserted that the matter of public schooling was considered at the time the amendment was written, but that a proposal to include it as a right had been defeated in Congress. Almond believed that the matter of “public schools was given as a charge to the states and local authorities, and because of this, States’ rights have now been challenged...The Supreme Court read into the 14th amendment, an application to the public schools, which was not intended by the legislative authorities of the federal and state governments.”

According to the Herald Progress, Almond “decried the soft pedals, the whisperings, the unwillingness of citizens to speak out now on this issue. He proceeded to set an example by forthright discussion.” Almond insisted that he was not prejudiced against blacks, but he stated his belief that blacks were better served in segregated schools. He repeated his promises that no child would be forced to go to integrated schools, and that no “Negro teacher shall teach white children in Virginia.” In closing, Almond promised to do his best for Virginia, and proclaimed that he was “fighting for the preservation of the life, customs, and mores of Virginia as we know them. I want to preserve public education in Virginia.”

During the same month, the Hanover Supervisors went on record with its response to the Brown decision, resolving “That the Board of Supervisors of Hanover County firmly believes that the interests of the people they represent are best served when

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98 Hanover Herald Progress, August 26, 1954.
99 Hanover Herald Progress, August 26, 1954.
white and negro children go to school at separate but equal institutions of learning from
the first year of grade school through the last year of High School inclusive.” The
supervisors then instructed the “governor and legislature to do everything in their power
legally possible to continue the teaching of white and negro children in different school
buildings and transporting them in different buses.” Copies of the resolution were sent to
Governor Thomas Stanley, state Senator Thomas Blanton and Delegate Edmund
DeJarnette of Hanover County, and H.L. Brankley, president of the League of Virginia
Counties.100

In the time between the filing of Shelton’s demurrer and the state supreme court’s
reversal of the Bazile decision, the condition of Hanover’s schools continued to
deteriorate. The overcrowding in the white schools was bad, but the black schools were in
even worse condition. As Paul Watkins pointed out in his editorial of 1951, the county
had long done a very poor job maintaining the black schools on an equal basis. As a
result, when these schools declined, they went from bad to worse.

In 1955, Martha Riis Moore, writer for the Herald Progress, produced a series of
articles on the county schools. The first school she visited was Bethany Elementary, a
school for black children. At the time of her visit, Bethany consisted of two identical
buildings with four classrooms in each building. Each building was heated by a
woodstove that was located by the only exit. Fire extinguishers were located near the
doors. The heat was uneven, and on very cold days the partitions separating the
classrooms were opened so students could gather around the stove.101

Moore pointed out that “some days there are 55 six and seven year olds in the
same space.” The school also lacked indoor toilets, coat closets, and running water. There
was a basin into which water could be brought, where the children could wash their

100 HCBS July 30, 1954.
hands. For drinking, each child had to bring a glass from home. The principal, who also taught seventh grade, had stopped accepting deliveries of milk because there was nowhere to store it. The Bethany School employed a janitor, who started the fires in the morning and cleaned the buildings after school.\textsuperscript{102}

Moore also wrote about Pleasant Grove Elementary School for black pupils in the east end of the county. There were ninety students in a three-room frame building taught by the principal and two teachers. This 30-to-1 ratio was actually better than in most of the black schools. The classrooms were very small, and there was no room for the “instructional projects used in modern education.” The toilets were located outside, there was no running water. A new well had been dug when Moore visited, so the Pleasant Grove students had a good supply of drinking water.\textsuperscript{103}

Just over a year after Almond’s fiery speech to Hanover County residents and his own first response to the prospect of integration, Samuel W. Shelton struck again. This time he appeared before the board of supervisors and read a resolution which in essence asserted that, since Virginia had established public schools it had been considered “necessary and for the well being of all alike, both white and colored, to maintain a policy of racial segregation.” He added that this policy had been included, wisely, in the documents governing the Commonwealth.\textsuperscript{104}

The board of supervisors agreed with Shelton and offered its own resolution declaring the body “opposed to the operation in Hanover County of integrated, or racially non-segregated public schools.” “If it be unlawful to continue to operate segregated public schools,” the board continued, “then, let the public schools of Hanover County be discontinued and closed, and the energy and substance of its people be devoted to the

\textsuperscript{102} Hanover Herald Progress, January 27, 1955.
\textsuperscript{103} Hanover Herald Progress, February 10, 1955.
\textsuperscript{104} HCBS September 30, 1955.
establishment of other facilities for the education of its children, both white and colored, alike.\textsuperscript{105}

While a copy of this resolution was sent to the chairmen of boards of supervisors of counties throughout the state, the Hanover board did not vote on it at this meeting. The board decided to “spread” or record, the resolution in the minutes, but not to take action. The resolution was voted on at the October meeting, where it passed 2-1.\textsuperscript{106} The one hold-out believed that the board should wait for the report of the Gray Commission, a panel that the Virginia General Assembly had set up to formulate the state’s response to \textit{Brown}.\textsuperscript{107}

The hold-out on the board of supervisors did not have a long wait, because the Report of the Commission on Public Education, also known as the Gray Commission Report, came out on November 11, 1955. It described the problem of school integration as “the gravest to confront the people of Virginia in this century.” Appointed by Governor Thomas B. Stanley in August 1954, Senator Garland Gray and his colleagues from the Virginia General Assembly had been instructed to examine the possible effects of the \textit{Brown} decision and to make recommendations. The commissioners addressed both the original decision and the Supreme Court’s subsequent implementation decision, known as \textit{Brown II}, which was handed down in May 1955.\textsuperscript{108}

The Gray Commission submitted a twelve-point legislative plan, at least some of which would require amending the state constitution. In general, the Commission tried not to flout openly the mandate of \textit{Brown and Brown II}, while at the same time shielding white citizens of the state from desegregation. For example, one of the twelve points promised that no child would be required to attend integrated schools. Another suggested

\textsuperscript{105} HCBS September 30, 1955
\textsuperscript{106} At this time, the board of supervisors consisted of three members.
that local school board budgets include funds to pay tuition grants and transportation to
students attending private institutions. The establishment of Pupil Placement Boards
(PPB) was a third point. These boards would theoretically allow students to apply to
attend the school of their choice. This meant that integrated schools were available in
theory, but the implication was that the Placement Boards would generally turn down
requests by blacks to attend previously white schools.¹⁰⁹

After the Gray commission rendered its report, the wheels began to turn quickly.
Governor Stanley called for a special session of the General Assembly to take place on
November 30, 1955. At that time the legislators of Virginia decided to submit a question
to the voters: Should there be a constitutional convention to amend Section 141 of the
state constitution? The public voted on January 9, 1956. The number of voters favoring a
convention was staggering across the state. Those supporting the convention totaled
304,154, and those against 146,164. In Hanover the outcome was no less impressive, as
is evidenced by the headline in the Herald Progress which read, “Convention Favored 4
to 1 Here, As Hanover Chalks Up 2nd Largest Vote in History.”¹¹⁰

Some of the success of this vote may be traced to an organization called the
Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties, known for short as the
Defenders. The Defenders were part of a growing trend in many southern states that
Francis Wilhoit refers to as private resistance. While he argues that most of the
resistance to Brown came in the form of state action, he acknowledges the appearance of
certain private groups that paralleled the governmental resistance.¹¹¹

The first to organize in private response to Brown was a group of people in
Louisiana that called itself the Association of Catholic Laymen. In Durham, North

¹¹⁰ Hanover Herald Progress, January 10, 1956.
¹¹¹ Wilhoit, 49.
Carolina, some white people joined the North Carolina Association for the Preservation of the White Race, Inc. Around this time, the white Citizens Council was first formed in Indianola, Mississippi and included such local notables as the mayor, the city attorney, a circuit court judge, a college football star and World War II paratrooper, and a Harvard-trained attorney. These Councils would become the most active segregationist group in the deep South, and they typically attracted the local political and business leaders.\textsuperscript{112}

Wilhoit asserts that The Defenders were to Virginia what the Citizens Councils were in the lower South. This organization was founded in July 1954 just sixty days after “Black Monday,” as segregationists called the day the \textit{Brown} decision was handed down by the Supreme Court. There were two thousand Defenders in Virginia in 1954, and the group quickly expanded to twelve thousand by 1956. In an organization brochure, The Defenders listed ten principles "For Which We Stand," most of which addressed states' rights in general; one specifically asserts sovereignty of the states to "determine segregation of the races."\textsuperscript{113}

The Defenders formed chapters and recruited individual members across the state. While some Hanover residents joined in 1955, the county chapter did not form until July 1956. At that time a public meeting was held; one hundred people attended. Of that number, forty joined after a rousing speech by State Senator Segar Gravatt of Blackstone, Virginia. Gravatt spoke mainly about the group's goal of fighting school integration in the state. He berated the Supreme Court for having supposedly exercised judicial tyranny.\textsuperscript{114}

Gravatt also expressed his organization's consternation with at least one part of the Gray Commission report. While the group generally supported the Commission's

\textsuperscript{112} Wilhoit, 49.
\textsuperscript{113} The Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties, \textit{The Defenders News and Views} August 1955, LVA.
\textsuperscript{114} Hanover \textit{Herald Progress}, July 1955.
findings, it was adamantly against the formation of a Pupil Placement Board (PPB),
which the Defenders were sure meant integration, regardless of the Board’s ability to
limit the influx of black students into white schools to a proverbial trickle. Even one
black child in school with white children was too many. The Defenders also believed that
the existence of the PPB put “the stamp of approval of the Commonwealth of Virginia,
by its own people in the Legislature, on this nefarious and diabolical scheme to
eventually mongrelize our people.”115

Meanwhile, the constitutional convention for which The Defenders had so ably
lobbied took shape; in January 1956, the legislature passed an act that allowed for the
election and convening of delegates in the state capital. Lewis Jones of Middlesex County
represented the senatorial district which included Hanover, Caroline, King William,
Essex, King and Queen, and Middlesex counties at the constitutional convention. He was
selected to be one of two delegates to escort the temporary chairman to the podium on the
first day of the convention, and, like each of his colleagues, he served on one of the four
committees established to carry out the business of the gathering. The great majority of
the men who attended this convention, including Delegate Jones, had been elected to do
one thing: amend section 141 of the state constitution to allow for tuition grants from
public funds so that students could attend private schools.116

The convention began on March 5 and adjourned on March 7, 1956. Initially, the
convention delegates all seemed to be of one mind. The leadership was elected
unanimously, and rules for the convention were easily adopted. The initial speeches from
the leadership on the topic of states’ rights received great applause, and it seemed as

115 Hanover Herald Progress, March 14, 1957.
116 Cynthia Miller Leonard, The General Assembly of Virginia (Richmond: General Assembly of
Virginia, 1978), 157. Papers of the 1956 Virginia Constitutional Convention, ACC 37566; Box 5 folder 1
Clerk, House of Delegates, LVA.
though there would be no controversy. This was true until H.D. Dawbarn, a moderate Republican who represented the counties of Augusta, Bath, and Highland and two cities, Staunton and Waynesboro, proposed what became the chief alternative to “Massive Resistance”: an amendment to the proposed amendment of section 141. Dawbarn explained that the area he represented in the western part of the state had very few blacks; Highland county, for example, had only three. Dawbarn pointed out that the people of Highland were not concerned about integration, but rather about maintaining their public schools. Unlike other areas, the people of Highland county had no intention of opening private schools, and the private schools already located in the county cost far more to attend than the proposed tuition grants would cover; the latter being equal the amount that would have been spent on a student in a public school. Dawbarn pointed out that, since private school education was not an option for most whites in his district, the amendment to 141 would leave both black and poor white children without an education. In short, Dawbarn and his moderate colleagues wanted local option, under which some localities might voluntarily desegregate their schools, while Senator Harry F. Byrd wanted state control in order to prevent them from doing so—to prevent any desegregation anywhere. Dawbarn’s amendment was voted down.117

In March 1957 the Hanover Chapter of the Defenders held a meeting at Battlefield Park High School. More than 200 people came out on what the newspaper described as a “rainy and disagreeable” Monday evening. The primary speaker was Robert Crawford, president of the state organization and a resident of Prince Edward County, which would close its schools in 1959 to keep from integrating. Crawford rallied the members and visitors with stories of his travels across the country, meeting with groups concerned about the Brown decision. He assured those present that people outside

117 Acts (1956) 376.
the South were looking to the region for guidance, and that people in the South were looking to Virginia, the "cradle of freedom," for leadership.\footnote{Hanover Herald Progress March 14, 1957.}

Before he closed, Crawford summoned up the specter of communism, a common theme in Defender rhetoric. He accused "certain vocal minorities and so called pressure groups" of using Virginia as a guinea pig. He informed the group that, unchecked, these people would try to still their freedom and "foist upon [us] the communistic teachings of Karl Marx."\footnote{Hanover Herald Progress, March 14, 1957.}

Communism was seen and portrayed to the public as a constant threat by the Defenders. In a statement from the organization’s state board of directors in the June 22, 1963, issue of The Defenders News and Views, it was explained that the communists were promoting "racial agitation in America for their own long-range goal of taking over the whole world." The "Reds" planned to instigate "small revolutions" in the South and later in the North. The Kennedy administration was leading the country down a slippery slope, at the bottom of which was a destroyed Constitution and slavery for all.

In the meantime, in spite of the Defenders, a constitutional convention exerting itself to avoid desegregation, and a county board of supervisors that would rather see the schools closed than have black boys and girls mingle with white children, black Hanoverians continued at their accustomed slow but steady pace toward achieving their goals. While the Herald Progress carried the news of the segregationists, it also printed the news of the black community. The Gandy PTA remained active, set goals, and continued to let its presence be felt at the school board and in the community at large.

Despite the continuing issues of overcrowding, the Gandy PTA shared its positive outlook with Herald Progress readers in a report that ran on September 30, 1954. The organization announced plans to beautify the school grounds, which were to be carried
out by John Fleming’s agriculture classes. The students planned to transplant evergreens, and this project was touted as presenting the opportunity to enhance the exterior of the schools and provide a teaching and learning experience for the participants. The PTA also hosted a chest clinic to check for TB.  

Gandy students continued to prepare for life after high school. Senior English students who were studying about occupations decided to conduct a survey to find out their classmates’ plans for after graduation. They interviewed 144 students and discovered that 108 had definite plans, while 32 of the students reported only a vague idea of what they would like to do. Only four of the students interviewed admitted to having no plans at all. Of those with plans, 41 wanted to be physicians, nurses, teachers, engineers, or ministers. Twenty-five thought they would go into the service field, and 21 planned to obtain clerical positions. The actions and aspirations of these young black Hanoverians offer insight into their commitment to themselves and the overall betterment of the race. In the midst of Jim Crow and now Massive Resistance, when it must have been easy to become discouraged, frustrated, and angry, they also found time to hope and plan for a brighter future. By continuing to beautify the schools, the adults taught the children to work with what they had. In turn, the students learned to think beyond the limitations placed on them by a system beyond their control. This survey indicates that, while full citizenship might remain beyond their control, they still planned to attain their piece of the American dream.

Other Gandy students were busy planning an all-French assembly, and the junior English students were working on an assembly of their own to end the unit on assemblies that they had been studying. These students had learned how to preside, introduce

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120 Hanover Herald Progress, September 30, 1954.
121 Hanover Herald Progress, October 7, 1954. These same surveyors reported to the Herald Progress that they planned to survey Gandy alumni to see what paths they were following.
speakers, and make announcements. They planned to conduct a forum on some national topic. Regular morning devotions were held in the high school by members of the senior class. Each morning a student gave a brief talk. Each month the devotions were planned around the Bible. One month the theme was “The Bible, a Lamp and a Light.” Using the intercom system, the students were heard all over school. These activities shed light of the continued role of Christianity in the schools; African Americans did not separate their spirituality from the rest of their lives.\textsuperscript{122}

While the students were achieving and moving forward, the PTAs were busily working on their behalf. Undaunted by the opinions held by many of their white neighbors, the Gandy PTA sent a letter proclaiming its stance on integration to the \textit{Herald Progress} on February 17, 1955. The statement was addressed to David B. Webb, the superintendent of schools. The missive read, “We would hereby like to submit our stand on the integration of public schools issue. We are highly in favor of integration. We feel that such barriers as one’s race, creed and other such minor differentiations should be entirely eliminated so as not to impede any man’s progress.” The letter continued, “We realize that this will be a somewhat radical change for we, the inhabitants of the south; but with sincere efforts of each citizen, we feel that any necessary adjustments can be made. It is not our intention to cause conflicts or disturbances between any persons or groups of people; we only think that each citizen should have an equal right to fully enjoy the many opportunities that are offered by our great country.”\textsuperscript{123} This letter was signed by Thomas Johnson, the president of the PTA, and Bessie Taliaferro, the secretary. Taking this very public stance and allowing their names to be published took courage on the part of Johnson and Taliaferro who could reasonably worry that they were risking retribution,

\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Hanover Herald Progress}, October 7, 1954.
\textsuperscript{123} \textit{Hanover Herald Progress}, February 17, 1955.
financial and possibly even physical, from whites in the town who wanted to maintain segregated schools.

Also in February 1955, the Pole Green Elementary School PTA held a meeting at First Union Baptist Church. Delegates from other eastern Hanover County schools for blacks were invited guests. The Rev. B. S. Giles, the pastor of First Union, started the meeting by emphasizing the importance of education. He went on to commend black teachers for the work they had accomplished in spite of the poor facilities and few resources. He added that the times were changing; the scientific age demanded a different set of skills and abilities, and parents and teachers were going to have to make sure that their children had what they needed to succeed. He went on to say that all the schools needed good ventilation, heat, and cooling to bring out the best in the students. Black parents would have to make the school authorities recognize and fulfill these needs. At this juncture, Giles appears still to have been seeking equalization rather than desegregation; that he felt free to espouse that point of view, which differed from the position of the NAACP and other national groups, suggests that not all black Hanoverians preferred desegregation to equalization.124

Lester A. Banks, the executive secretary of the state NAACP, was the guest speaker, and he seemed to take that sentiment into account even while standing up for his organization’s goal of desegregation. He traced the role of the NAACP in putting legal pressure on localities when working for better salaries for teachers and better schools, and he acknowledged that no change had occurred in the South without legal pressure. In closing, he said that the forthcoming decision by the Supreme Court on the implementation of Brown was pending, and he urged those PTAs represented at the meeting to move with caution—by which he seems to have meant they should avoid

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124 Hanover Herald Progress, February 17, 1955.
signaling acceptance of separate schools, no matter how good the facilities that they might be offered by the white authorities. The PTAs represented at the meeting had been working for several years to obtain a consolidated black school for their area, but they voted to adopt a “wait and see policy and to not fight for separate facilities.”

Indeed, while the *Brown* decision did not force any immediate changes in the school systems across the South, in Hanover at least, it had spurred the school board into action. All of a sudden, many of the obstacles that had previously prevented the board from improving the schools for black children were removed. For example, in February 1956, sixty members of the East End PTA turned down the school board’s offer to build a new school to serve the African American students in that end of the county, as Lester Banks and the NAACP would doubtless have urged them to do. Prior to this offer, the PTA had consistently requested that the board build one school and eliminate the five inadequate one- and two-room schools. Time and again, the board had informed the group that it was not able to obtain the necessary land. But now, in early 1956, the school board had told the PTA members that they would get the consolidated school. Had land and the money to buy it somehow magically appeared, or was the school board trying to bribe these black parents into contentment with segregated schools? Whatever the circumstances leading to the offer of a new consolidated school in the eastern section of the county, the PTA members did not accept the offer. Instead, the sixty members present at the February meeting took the very bold step of voting “to reject the offer to build a school for colored children.” They pointed out that, since the *Brown* decision, it was illegal to establish schools based on race. These parents were not going to sacrifice what they believed to be a better future for their children to a white school board that was

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125 Hanover *Herald Progress*, February 24, 1955.

126 Hanover *Herald Progress*, February 23, 1956.
finally offering too little too late. Shortly after the east end parents made their stand, a separate demand was unfolding in the western end of the county. School board minutes have regular notations regarding communications about poor conditions at the Bethany Elementary School for black children. Like the parents in the east end, the Bethany parents were told that the holdup was the acquisition of land. Apparently, the members of the Bethany Baptist Church, an African American congregation located across the road from the school, had already agreed to sell land adjacent to the school so that the facility could be expanded. In March 1955, Robert Gwathmey, the school board attorney, wrote to J.P. Giles, a Bethany trustee, reminding him that Bethany Baptist Church had agreed to sell the land so that the Bethany school could be enlarged. Gwathmey said that it was his understanding and that of the school superintendent that the congregation had met in February to finalize the decision. He wrote, "Yesterday Mr. Webb called me and stated that the School Board is very anxious to get its program going in order to relieve the congested conditions at Bethany School."^1^2^7^ In response, Giles, Stephen Phillips, and Anderson Taylor, presumably all church trustees, sent a letter to Gwathmey and the school board informing them that the church members had decided not to sell the land after all. In a letter to the board, the congregation noted that "we are aware of the congested conditions now existing at the Bethany School. But we also feel that it is unwise to make any definite plans for selling the church property, until the final decision has been made by the Supreme Court, regarding the law of segregation in the public schools."^1^2^8^ The letter was signed by J.P. Giles, Stephen Phillips, and Anderson Taylor.^1^2^9^ This response provides another example of the awareness of the black community of what was happening in the federal courts and

^127^ HCSB March 1, 1955.
^129^ While it is not stated, these men were probably trustees of the church. Typically it is the trustees in a Baptist church who deal with financial transactions.
of what it could mean for them and their children. Both cases, that of the East End PTA and the other involving Bethany Baptist Church, illustrate the exercise of a basic right of citizenship in this country—the right to change one's mind and then express that new viewpoint. These incidents also show the integrity of the black men and women involved in this process. They could have taken the bribes as offered, in the form of new, segregated schools.

One of the suggestions of the Gray Commission was something called a Pupil Placement Board (PPB). This board, operated at the state level, was established as a clearinghouse for applications from students who wanted to integrate schools of the opposite race. If a black student wanted to go to a white school, his or her parents would complete an application and submit it to the local school board; the school board would then pass the application on to the PPB at the State Board of Education for review and decision. The Gray Commission believed that this plan would satisfy the requirements of \textit{Brown II}.\footnote{Brown II.}

While Virginia established the PPB in 1956, and black Hanover had held fast, by and large, to its advocacy of desegregation in principle, no students in Hanover County, black or white, turned to the PPB until 1963, when ten black students applied to transfer from Gandy High School to Lee-Davis and Patrick Henry High Schools. These first students were the sons and daughters of NAACP members in the county. The students' names, and their parents' names and their addresses, were all listed in the \textit{Herald Progress}. It is quite possible that publishing this information was done to intimidate these ten applicants and to discourage any others who might be considering taking this step.\footnote{Editorial, Hanover \textit{Herald Progress}, June 6, 1963; June 27, 1963.}

This first attempt at integrating the schools did not go unnoticed by the staunch segregationists in the county. Yet despite the board of supervisors' resolution of 1956,
and later reaffirmations by individual board members, resolving to close the schools rather than desegregate, when the time came to make the fateful decision, the board was unwilling to close the schools, and in this it reflected white public sentiment—not to mention black opinion on that subject. A man by the name of John Gabbert of the Ellerson community in Hanover conducted a poll in Mechanicsville in June, 1963. Gabbert, described in the Herald Progress as a “one-man nighttime and Saturday hobbyist,” went door to door asking residents their opinions on certain questions. When asked about closing the schools, the informants said overwhelmingly that the schools should remain open. In the end, the majority opted for token integration in the schools rather than sacrifice public education altogether. In the end, the PPB approved all ten applications. When school opened that fall, two African American sisters entered Patrick Henry High School at the western end of the county, and six entered Lee-Davis on the eastern side of the county. Two students had decided to return to Gandy. This transition happened without incident.

While the schools began desegregating in 1963, in the nine years since the Brown decision had been handed down nothing had changed in the racial make-up of the schools in Hanover County. Another promise of racial change came along in 1964 in the form of the Civil Rights Act. Title VI of this act provided a new weapon to the NAACP legal team. School systems that did not take meaningful steps toward real integration ran the risk of losing federal funding.

To insure adherence, all school board members across the country were required to sign an “Assurance of Compliance” agreement with the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. While some in Hanover, including the Herald Progress, felt this

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133 Hanover Herald Progress, September 5, 1963.
134 Ogletree, 131-132.
requirement was an insult to board members who had already pledged to uphold the Constitution, all representatives signed the agreement on February 18, 1965. The Assurance of Compliance read in part: “no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity for which the Applicant [the Hanover County School Board] received Federal financial assistance from the Department.”

Ready to use its new weapon, the NAACP legal defense team for Virginia held a meeting in Richmond, and representatives from counties and cities across the state attended. The lawyers informed the group of the power the Civil Rights Act had given them to force meaningful change in the state’s schools. The team was looking for plaintiffs to step forward, and many of the attendees put their names on the list. The first step was to give local school boards a chance to make changes on their own. To this end, petitions were circulated in various Virginia counties.

Harold Thompson, the education director for the Hanover NAACP chapter, coordinated the petition in that county. Thompson’s daughters, Arlene and Stephanie, had transferred to Patrick Henry in 1963. On May 28, 1964, almost exactly ten years since Brown, a petition asking for the immediate desegregation of the county’s schools was presented to the school board with a letter suggesting that failure to respond in the affirmative would result in court action. The petition asked the board to announce its intention to integrate the schools by its next regular meeting. A second step demanded by the NAACP-sponsored petition was that the board adopt and publish a plan “by which

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135 Virginia Department of Education, Record Group 27, Desegregation Files 1965-1970 ACC # 29479 Box 3, Assurance of Compliance Form, Hanover County File, LVA.
136 HCSB February 18, 1965.
137 Calvin C. Green Interview November 2, 2001.
racial discrimination will be terminated with respect to administrative personnel, teachers, clerical, custodial and other employees” of the school system.\textsuperscript{138}

The school board and the local paper responded to the letter by saying that the schools were already desegregated, and that they planned to maintain the plan already in place. Seventeen more black students did enter predominantly white schools for the 1964-65 school year, but the NAACP was not satisfied. Common practice in Virginia cities and counties in effect put all the responsibility for effecting desegregation on black parents. State Senator Henry Marsh III, a civil rights attorney at that time, recalls that desegregation only took place when black students were willing to “run the gauntlet” in white schools. As a result of the board’s unsatisfactory response, black parents in Hanover and seven other counties, along with the NAACP Legal Defense team, initiated action to sue their respective school boards on behalf of their children. Stephanie V. Thompson was listed as the lead plaintiff in the Hanover case.

In response to the lawsuit, the Hanover county school board began developing a freedom of choice plan to desegregate its schools. This plan allowed any student in the county to attend any school in the county “at which the grade for which the child is eligible is taught.”\textsuperscript{139} The numbers of African American students who enrolled at predominantly white schools increased, but no white students opted to attend the historically black schools. In spite of the lack of success of these plans, the Hanover County NAACP chapter opted to withdraw from the suit, but other complainants stayed in the fight, taking their case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In May 1968, the Supreme Court handed down its decision in \textit{Charles C. Green v. The County School Board of New Kent County, Virginia}. According to those involved, it

\textsuperscript{138} Hanover \textit{Herald Progress}, March 18, 1965.

\textsuperscript{139} Department of Education Record Group 27, Desegregation Files 1965-1970 ACC # 29479, Box 3, Hanover Folder, Notice and Instructions to School Children and their Parents or Guardians, of Hanover County, Virginia, LVA.
was the simplest and clearest of all the cases. There were only two schools in New Kent County, one black and one white, and both serving k-12 students. Unlike Hanover, New Kent did not have any students attending integrated schools at the time the petitions were circulated. In fact, the county did not make any move toward applying *Brown* until the lawsuit was filed. At that time, a freedom of choice plan was adopted, but it was too little, too late.

In May 1968, fourteen years after the *Brown* decision, the Supreme Court finally forced the matter of integration in the public schools in the South to a conclusion. The justices wrote that, where freedom of choice plans were not providing for real and meaningful integration, they were to be discontinued, and the local school board was to develop a plan that would integrate the schools immediately.\(^{140}\)

As a result of the *Green* decision, Samuel W. Tucker, a prominent civil rights attorney, asked Judge Robert R. Merhige Jr. of the United States Fourth District Court to review Hanover’s freedom of choice plan, along with the plans in ten other Virginia counties. The school board in Hanover reportedly discussed its freedom of choice plan at length and determined that it was working. All members agreed that the attorneys should “defend the Freedom of Choice plan and its progress in the Hanover County schools and that if more rapid integration of the schools is required, as much time as possible should be sought for its implementation.”\(^{141}\) The board argued that the extra time was needed because “the complete reorganization necessary to comply with the court ruling would be “virtually impossible administratively and would be disruptive to the educational program of the public this year.” The board may have needed more time to reorganize, but they may have also wanted more time to bring the black school up to an acceptable


\(^{141}\) Hanover *Herald Progress*, August 8, 1968.
standard for white students. This was the rationale given by New Kent County when asking Judge Merhige for an additional year to comply.\textsuperscript{142}

On July 10, 1968, Judge Merhige directed the Hanover school board to determine whether its system was being operated in compliance with the plan of desegregation as enunciated by the United States Supreme Court in its decision of May 27, 1968, in the case of \textit{Green v. County School Board of New Kent County, Virginia}; and, if not, to file a plan of desegregation of the public school system to bring it in compliance with the principles of the said decision." Finally, the Hanover County school board was forced to take a close and realistic look at its plan of desegregation; it admitted that the freedom of choice plan in operation "may not result in a 'unitary' school system within the meaning of the New Kent decision as quickly as will be required by the principles of said decision."\textsuperscript{143}

The board submitted a plan for the desegregation of the county's schools, but it was rejected by Judge Merhige. In particular, he found the plan to integrate the faculty inadequate. While Merhige had determined to give the schools an extra year to fully integrate the students, he required that the faculties be significantly integrated for the 1968-69 school term. This communication came to the school board in August 1968, after teacher assignments had already been set for the school year. Superintendent J.K Samples sent a letter to all the county's teachers explaining that "indications are that all the Hanover County Public Schools will be totally integrated beginning with the school session 1969-70. The school board, however, is currently under Federal Court order to substantially further desegregate the various school faculties for the session 1968-1969. It is hoped that enough teachers will volunteer to be transferred to faculties on which their race is in the minority to satisfy the court order." There was a form at the bottom of the

\textsuperscript{142} Green Interview. \\
\textsuperscript{143} HCSB August 6, 1968; Hanover \textit{Herald Progress}, July 11, 1968.
letter on which teachers could indicate whether they were already in the minority, would be willing to transfer, or were not willing to transfer. In the end, fourteen white teachers and thirty-one black teachers indicated a willingness to transfer.\textsuperscript{144}

In its attempt to formulate a plan acceptable to Judge Merhige, the Hanover school board ultimately proposed a complete reorganization based on geographic zoning, pairing of grades, or both to accomplish integration for the 1969-1970 school year. The plan also included a promise to make every attempt possible to further integrate the faculties for the current term. Finally, the board agreed to study and consider programs to be conducted during the 1968-1969 school year that would help with a smooth transition for the following school year. Examples provided included the formation of a county-wide bi-racial faculty committee and a bi-racial student committee to work together on transitional problems. Merhige approved this plan.\textsuperscript{145}

During this tumultuous time in the county and in the country, the blacks of Hanover found themselves with an unexpected ally in their fight for civil rights: Randolph-Macon College students and faculty. In the spring of 1963, a group of 102 Randolph-Macon students signed a letter to the president of the college, J. Earl Moreland. The letter requested that the college prepare a statement disavowing discrimination and agreeing to accept students solely based on qualifications and not race or color. This letter was presented to the Board of Trustees. The board appointed a committee to examine the student proposal which asked for a policy on desegregation to be established by the school.\textsuperscript{146} The following spring, the trustees released a statement reaffirming its current policy, which they said did not discriminate based on race. The board also pointed out that, to its knowledge, no blacks had ever applied to the college.\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{144} HCSB August 27, 1968.
\textsuperscript{146} Hanover Herald Progress, April 11, 1963; April 25, 1963
\textsuperscript{147} Hanover Herald Progress, May 14, 1964, May 21, 1964.
At least one RMC supporter was upset enough by the board’s actions to take the time to write an anonymous letter to the body. It said:

Now go take your wife to Montaldo’s and buy her
Some fine clothes to go conference and then when
She can have a big reception for all your niggers that
Are coming in your college and I hope they will Your
Preachers are getting out and trying to get money for
All your wants and not preaching [Christ] as you should
So go along and take it. I hope the worst smelling will
Be your first visitor.
I wish I could buy for what I think you are worth sell you
For what you think you are then you could build college
At Virginia Beach, without milking us to death, but now since
You are open to niggers I shall not pay another cent on
My pledge, as you all not keeping your promise so WHY
SHOULD I?  

This correspondence was postmarked in Petersburg on May 20, 1963. It is not clear whether this person was ill or a poor typist. It is possible that he or she was an alumnus of the college. Whoever this individual was, their anonymous threat was not taken seriously, because two years later, in 1966, the college accepted its first black student, who transferred from Virginia Union in Richmond.  

In the midst of everything happening in the county, the nation was also dealing with a series of assassinations that rocked the country. John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, Jr., all seen as figures of hope for the black community, were killed before the job was done. Perhaps the death of Dr. King had the greatest impact on blacks in this country. In life he had preached non-violence, but his death instigated some of the most violent events outside of war in this country’s history, a series of urban riots. Ironically, the Herald Progress did not publish anything about King’s death other than the fact that a memorial service was held at Randolph-Macon. The paper did print a

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149 Scanlon, 380; Hanover Herald Progress September 1963.
picture of the sheriff and his deputies in their new riot gear, which had been purchased in case of problems arising as a result of the civil rights leader's demise.\footnote{Hanover Herald Progress, May 16, 1968.}

Regardless of all the turmoil in the world and stressors in the county, the schools in Hanover opened for the 1969-1970 school year on a totally integrated basis. Hanover County was like many other localities across the state and across the South between 1950 and 1970. It experienced continual growth and development. The Depression was over, and the economic situation had greatly improved. The county was in a prime location. While still mostly rural, it also offered town living. It was twenty minutes north of Richmond, a major urban area and the state capital, and just two hours south of the nation's capital.

Those in leadership positions in the county anticipated dealing with the normal growing pains of a county. Issues of zoning for the many new roads that would be needed kept the supervisors busy. Questions related to Interstate 95, which by the 1960s made travel easier from Florida to Maine, consumed the town planners. Speeding was also a hot-button issue: as more and better roads appeared along with faster cars, traffic fatalities became more frequent. As a result, more and more news stories and editorials appeared imploring drivers to slow down and drive more responsibly. Healthcare loomed large on the county's collective mind.

While tuberculosis and polio had been brought under control, cancer was taking their place as the most dreaded disease. Frequent articles related to fundraising and new medical research were found in the \textit{Herald Progress}. Education was important to virtually all the residents of Hanover, having long since ceased to be regarded as a privilege, an understood a right of citizenship. Citizens, black and white alike, now
expected that the school board would live up to their expectations. This meant good facilities, good teachers, and good administration.

What the county’s leadership had not anticipated in 1950 was a many-pronged attack on the very structure of southern society which had been in place, informally and formally, since the end of slavery. Often forgotten today, however, is that whites in the county had always had to deal with black residents who made demands of a system that did not respect their place as citizens. White Hanoverians believed, since they had made certain concessions to African Americans, that blacks were relatively happy. As had been the case down through the years, whites severely misread their black neighbors.

In the years between 1950 and 1972, African Americans in Hanover continued to study and address the needs of their community. They did this by steadily and consistently using established channels of communication. They understood how the system worked—and failed to work for them—and they were determined to use it and even change it. This they had always done. After 1950, however, they had the added support and leadership of a national movement with the same goal of full citizenship for African Americans.

True, Hanover did not experience the violence that was associated with these times in the deep South. Some people may not regard what black Hanoverians accomplished as significant. Their actions were not flamboyant or sensational. They did not even picket in the county. The change that occurred in Hanover was the result of a slow and steady hammer, wielded by black hands, knocking against a wall whose cornerstone had been laid in 1902 at the Virginia constitutional convention that disfranchised African Americans.

A blow was struck every time a group attended a school board or board of supervisors meeting. Another blow landed each time a letter was sent to the newspaper. Still another
blow found its mark with every Sunday morning sermon calling for black Hanoverians to stand firm. Countless blows hit home when local black leaders stepped forward and simply made their presence known, and when black citizens worked to improve the schooling or the healthcare their community received. They did not cower. They did not hide. Their demands were constant and unrelenting and, in the end, black Hanoverians contributed to the overall betterment of their families, friends, and fellow Virginians. They helped change the South just surely as did their better-publicized brethren and sisters in Birmingham, Selma, or rural Mississippi. They built lives worth living, and, in the end, they did their part in reshaping the nation.
EPILOGUE

It has been 144 years since Henry Taylor Wickham watched as enslaved individuals walked toward freedom with the Union Army, and 144 years since the fifteen-year-old William Henry Winston chose freedom over fealty to his owners. Both men lived long lives, Winston until he was seventy-five and Wickham until he was ninety-four. Both worked hard and achieved personal goals. Both knew a time when black men voted, and another time when that vote was taken away. These men were on opposite sides of a struggle that outlived them both. Descendants of both men still live in Hanover County, and they have witnessed changes in the county, state, and nation that their ancestors would find astounding.

The Wickham family still owns Hickory Hill, but the times are changing as the current owners try to sell off land to developers. Some of Winston’s great-grandchildren live in the same community where he first set down his roots. The land he purchased and left to his wife was sold in 1942, but his great-grandson, John Morris, bought land nearby and still lives on it with some of his siblings.

Unlike Winston, Morris has lived long enough to have experienced both the humiliation of segregation and the confusion of integration. As a young man, he worked after-school jobs to help take care of his mother, who picked the eyes out of potatoes at Virginia Products. While still in school, Morris decided to get a job so that his mother could quit hers. He worked at Kelly’s Truck Shop just a couple of miles outside of
Ashland. The white owner told Morris that, if he got off the school bus at the shop everyday, he would make sure the boy got home, which may be an indication that the owner had some positive regard for the young man. Morris earned more money than many of his teachers. His time at Kelly’s was not easy: he was often called racist names, but he says that this atmosphere prepared him for things that would happen later.¹

After he graduated from John M. Gandy High School, John Morris worked at several jobs, but eventually he was hired at Reynolds Metals in Richmond. A self-described “finished product of Martin Luther King Jr.,” Morris was the first black to work in the can division of Reynolds Metals. The manager told Morris that his hiring would probably cost the company nine white employees, but in the end, none of the white employees left, Morris recalls, because “they needed the job as much as I did.”

After five years, the company relocated people all over the country, but Morris could not leave Richmond because his wife was very ill at the time. By this time, he had proven his value, and the company did not want to lose him. Instead, he was retrained as a machinist and assigned to the foil factory in Richmond. There were a lot of diehard racists in this division, “a lot of Confederates,” according to Morris. For a while he was regularly called “nigger,” “coon,” and “darky.” Words did not bother him, explains Morris. He had heard them ever since he had worked at Kelly’s. There was at least one older white worker who warned the younger white men that they had better be good to the black man because “he might be your boss one day.” Indeed, Morris eventually became their boss’s boss.²

¹John Morris Interview.
²John Morris Interview.
Like his great-grandfather, John Morris is a deacon in his church and deeply spiritual. This is evident as he credits his success at Reynolds to the fact that he walked what he preached. Morris asserts that leaders have to “let your walking match your talking.” He began all of his staff meetings with prayer, and no matter what other workers said to him, he responded as he believed a Christian should. He notes that, before he retired, most of the men in the shop had Bibles in their desks, and that, when he did retire, they gave him a beautiful Bible. Someone asked him how the people in his shop could keep the good feelings going that had been established in his time, and he pointed to the Bible. He treated his workers with respect, and he listened to every idea. In short, he respected his men and they respected him.3

At the end of every oral history interview that I conducted for this dissertation, I asked the same question: Do you believe that desegregation helped or hindered African Americans? With differing degrees of intensity, every black informant responded that desegregation had hindered the race. In spite of his success, John Morris said, “It was something that they had to do, but was not a good thing. The schools were imbalanced. There were more whites than blacks, and the blacks had to be better to survive, and that’s the same today.” Doris Wingfield concurs, saying that, in the all-black schools, “the children learned more. The teachers took time with them and gave them the basics. The white teachers catered to their own kind.”

Melvin Hall, the first black to serve as principal of a desegregated school, shares the sentiments of Morris and Wingfield. In response to my question, he said that, in education, “We didn’t profit by integration. Socially maybe.” One of the problems

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3 John Morris Interview.
centered around the fact that black children did not have the same “home curriculum” as
their white classmates. By this he meant that white students had access to educational
opportunities at home through resources like encyclopedias and other books, games, and
parents who were able to expose them to new things.4

Hall also found that, after desegregation, many white “teachers now didn’t take
the interest [in the black students] that the black teachers did.” He saw this in some
teachers who taught his own family members. For instance, he was surprised to find out
that a white teacher told his daughter she was not prepared to go to college. He adds that
no black students in his niece’s high school class in Hanover went to college. It is this
lack of encouragement that many African Americans believe is at the core of the problem
with young people in the black community today.

My husband and I were recently at dinner with two good white friends. One had
heard something on a National Public Radio show that had deeply perplexed him. To my
friend’s surprise, an African American man in the piece had stated his belief that
desegregation had harmed the black community, and my friend asked whether I had ever
heard this before. Indeed I have. I grew up hearing this mode of thinking.

As a child, I heard many stories of what it was like growing up in the South. I
heard the bad. I learned that my mother hated to go shopping with my grandmother,
because she was afraid she would forget one of the many rules about what to do and what
not to do, and therefore would get into trouble. I was given the very distinct impression
that Jim Crow colored all that one did or wanted to do. I also learned that, with only a
little exaggeration, everybody in the black community was poor, but that everybody stuck

4 Melvin and Florine Hall Interview March 9 2003.
together, because everybody lived together. My grandfather, the shipyard worker, lived in the same neighborhood as the doctor and the teachers. This allowed my mother and my aunts an opportunity to see that they had options. They understood that, while their parents were good, hard-working people, they had difficult and tiring jobs that they did not want to pass on to their children. Black children saw people who made their living in all sorts of ways, and they knew that they had options. My uncle worked hard, attended Hampton Institute, became one of the first African American pilots in the Navy. He parlayed that training into a career as a pilot for American Airlines. The lessons my relatives learned under Jim Crow were translated to me in a way that taught me to be proud of my grandfather who could not read, but to know that his limitations were not my limitations.

Today it appears that some African Americans are beginning to rethink the whole idea that segregation was all bad. Others, both black and white, see in this line of thought misplaced nostalgia, at best. I believe that the latter view is short-sighted. What I heard from my family and during my interviews was not a wish to turn back the clock to Jim Crow, but rather a wish that desegregation had not meant such a rush to erase black culture and black community in favor of a white promised land that might not offer a solution to every problem for every person.

The reality is that, for many years, blacks in this country were barred from what they believed to be a better life. When desegregation came, many willingly ran to the "other side," leaving behind much that was good in their community, and they soon lost much of the strength imparted by that community. I think that what is happening now, is
that black people are able, with the deeper perspective that the passage of time affords, to revisit the days they thought were horrible, and to see that there were good things about their culture in those times. They are not nostalgic about segregation, but they are seeing that all the answers to life's problems did not lie in the white community. Indeed, African Americans are finally coming to realize that black community and culture afforded some answers that still apply today.
APPENDIX A

ORAL HISTORY INFORMANTS

Carrie Winston Burton
Beryl Thompson Carter
Ruth Winston Carter
Claudius Dabney
Lillian Gardner
Helen Gibson
John Gordon
Inez Winston Gray
Calvin C. Green
Ella NaChay Grimes
Robert Grimes
Florine H. Hall
Melvin R. Hall, Jr.
James Henry
Benjamin H. Jackson, Sr.
Dorothy Gardner Jones
Doris Morris
John I. Morris, Sr.
Bernice Parnell
William Robinson
Virginia Shelton
Margaret Washington
Doris Wingfield
APPENDIX B

ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATCM</td>
<td>Ashland Town Council Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FB</td>
<td>Freedmen's Bureau Assistant Commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBSE</td>
<td>Freedmen's Bureau Superintendent of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCBS</td>
<td>Hanover County Board of Supervisors Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCCO</td>
<td>Hanover County Clerks Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCSB</td>
<td>Hanover County School Board Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LVA</td>
<td>Library of Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NARA</td>
<td>National Archives and Records Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCC</td>
<td>Southern Claims Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VHS</td>
<td>Virginia Historical Society</td>
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VITA

Jody Lynn Allen

Jody Lynn Allen was born in Newport News, Virginia and raised in Hampton, Virginia. She graduated from Hampton High School and received her B.A. from the University of Delaware in Criminal Justice and Political Science. She earned a Master's degree in 1987 from Michigan State University (MSU) in Criminal Justice.

Jody worked as a college administrator at MSU, the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond before entering the College of William and Mary in 1995. She defended her dissertation in July 2007.