Harrison Heritage News

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"Banneker circled by shrub and tree;
Tis with delight we honor thee...."
From *Ode to Banneker* by W. E. Newsom

BANNEKER SCHOOL
AND BLACK EDUCATION IN HARRISON COUNTY, KY.

Banneker High School - Photo top, date unknown, courtesy of Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum. Bottom, detail from aerial photo, 1955, Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum.

Harrison County Historical Society

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Harold Kearns, Cynthiana
Tony Smith, Lexington
Ben and Sara Jones, Cincinnati
Gayle Ashbrook, Hot Springs, Ark.
Harvey Crowe, Brentwood, Tenn.
Terry Box, Cynthiana

Upcoming Events and Meetings

Meeting time and place: *Hospice of the Blue Grass on Oddville Avenue, 1317 US HWY 62E. Meeting room is 1st floor rear entrance. Except March 19 Sat. 10 am Rohs Opera House.*

January - February - December - no meeting.

March 19 - Saturday, 10 am, Rohs Opera House, 10 am.

April 28 - Eddie Price, author of the Kentucky-based novel *Widder's Landing*, will speak on "1812: Remember the Raisin!" Kentucky's contribution in the War of 1812 was vital to the American War effort. This presentation shows how deeply Kentuckians were involved — economically, politically, militarily, and emotionally.

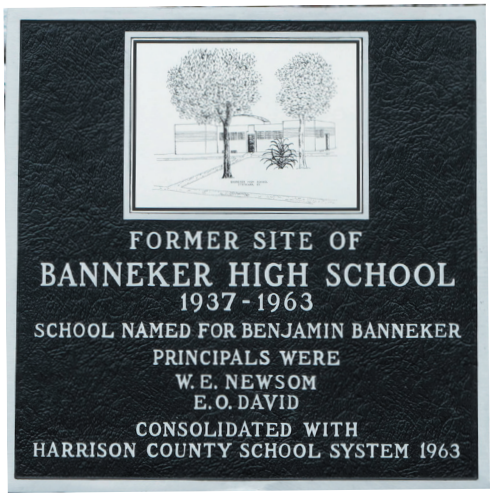
May 26 - Programs by the History Clubs at Northside and Eastside Elementary. Come and support our junior historians.

June 23 - TBA - officer elections during business meeting.

Field Trips for Historical Society Members

(Sign up sheets will be in March newsletter)

April 23 - 10 am - "Harrison Co. Historical Society Day" at the Cynthiana - Harrison Co. Museum.
May 7 - Tour of Mary Todd Lincoln Home, Lexington.
May 14 - Tour of "Kentucky Room" at the public library.



Sign on Penn St. near the site of Banneker High School.
Photo, Denny Lipscombe

President's Corner

- Don Wagoner

Blissful Wintertime Sleigh Rides

by President Donald L. Wagoner

As another winter snow silently falls, I hark back to the days of yesteryear, when a snowfall brought promise of great fun. The days I speak of were our teenage ones.

During my senior year at Cynthiana High School, in January or February 1960, the perfect snowfall came that was ideal for sleigh riding down Wilson Avenue. Oh, what joy, we could hardly wait to take our sleighs to arrive in the North Elmarch Avenue and Wilson Avenue intersection at about 6:30 p.m. At 7:00 p.m., the owner of the Pleasant Street Shell Service Station, Mr. Lark "Larkie" Box, would come with worn-out automobile tires, and make a fantastic fire in the intersection that warmed us for four to five hours. By 7:30 p.m., the crowd became larger, since kids came from all over town to sleigh ride down the Wilson Avenue hill.

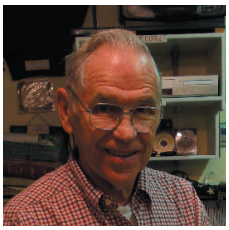
Without delay, the first brave souls fearlessly took their trusty sleighs in hand, while running a few feet down the top part of the hill, falling onto the sleighs and quickly disappearing into the darkness. The annual winter rite of passage was on with the charging of the crowd and their sleighs. The momentum of the moment was breathtaking or maybe it was just the cold winter weather that did it, or maybe it was a combination of both elements.

So, it went with some taking the perilous journey two or three times and going home, while the new arrival of folks continued. Some of the residents in the area treated us to a hot chocolate. It was a time when people came together and interacted in play. I wouldn't trade the late 1950s or 1960 for any other time to be growing up. It was a great time and we knew it.

Digressing just a moment, I got a surge of energy that could not be denied. Between 6:30 p.m. and 10:45 p.m., I went down the hill and walked up it 17 times. I was 17 years old, in great shape, 165 pounds and never realized any boundaries to having good honest, wholesome fun.

So, time moves on, while in our memories we will forever be young, in the best times, and with the best friends we would ever know.

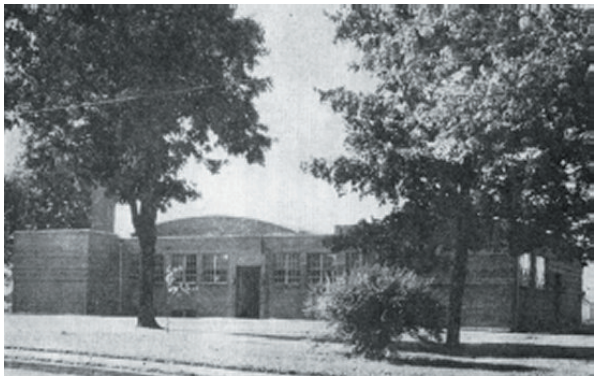
Kids in the 1950s warmed themselves by bonfires of tires at the top of Wilson Avenue in between sledding down the intimidating long, steep street.
Photo, Denny Lipscombe



CYNTHIANA MUSEUM HARRISON CO.

Kenny Simpson, Curator www.HarrisonCountyKy.US/Museum

Banneker High School 1920-1936



Banneker High School 1937-1963

(Above, left) The original Banneker School was in the former C. B. Cook house, ca. 1860 (later owned by W. S. Cason), which had served as the Harrison Hospital prior to purchase by the Board of Education in 1920 for $12,000. Although an improvement over the old school on Water Street, this was an example of unequal funding for black schools considering that the Cynthiana Board of Education had, in 1919, built for white students a new Cynthiana High School on Bridge Street. Banneker School, which was on the north side of Penn Street between Locust and Poplar Streets, was used as a school until 1937. It was demolished that year and, with federal funding, a new Banneker High School built on the site (above, right). A school newsletter, "The Librarian," June 1929, refers to "Banneker High School" and so the name apparently was given to the old mansion by that date and possibly used from 1920-1936. Photos, courtesy of Mrs. Marilyn David Wash and Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum.

(Above) Detail from a postcard with Mr. Newsom, principal, in foreground, with what appears to be a graduating class.
Postcard courtesy of Denny Lipscombe.

Some Memories of Integration

(Cynthiana Democrat, Feb. 12, 2015)

Banneker student "[Bonita] Watson admits to feeling apprehensive in those first few weeks at Cynthiana High School [spring 1957], but there weren't marches and police lines in Harrison County. It was just kids walking to school. I was leaving what I knew. Of course I was nervous. It was a new school with a lot of people I didn't know very well," Watson said. "One thing that helped is that Cynthiana is a small town. We all knew each other," Watson said. But even though there was a change in school, the sense of community and of belonging continued. Even now, she identifies herself closely with the Cynthiana High class of 1959. "We have always been a tight class. There were people who were scared about what might happen...[but] no one asked us, we just had to get with it and move on."

School Enrollment High School/Grade School

1927-1928 - 18/134
1928-1929 - 16/148
1929-1930 - 20/118
1930-1931 - 25/121
1931-1932 - 36/110
1932-1933 - 33/112
1933-1934 - 32/111
1934-1935 - 25/104
1935-1936 - 32/101

Source: Board of Education annual reports. CHS Alumni Archives.

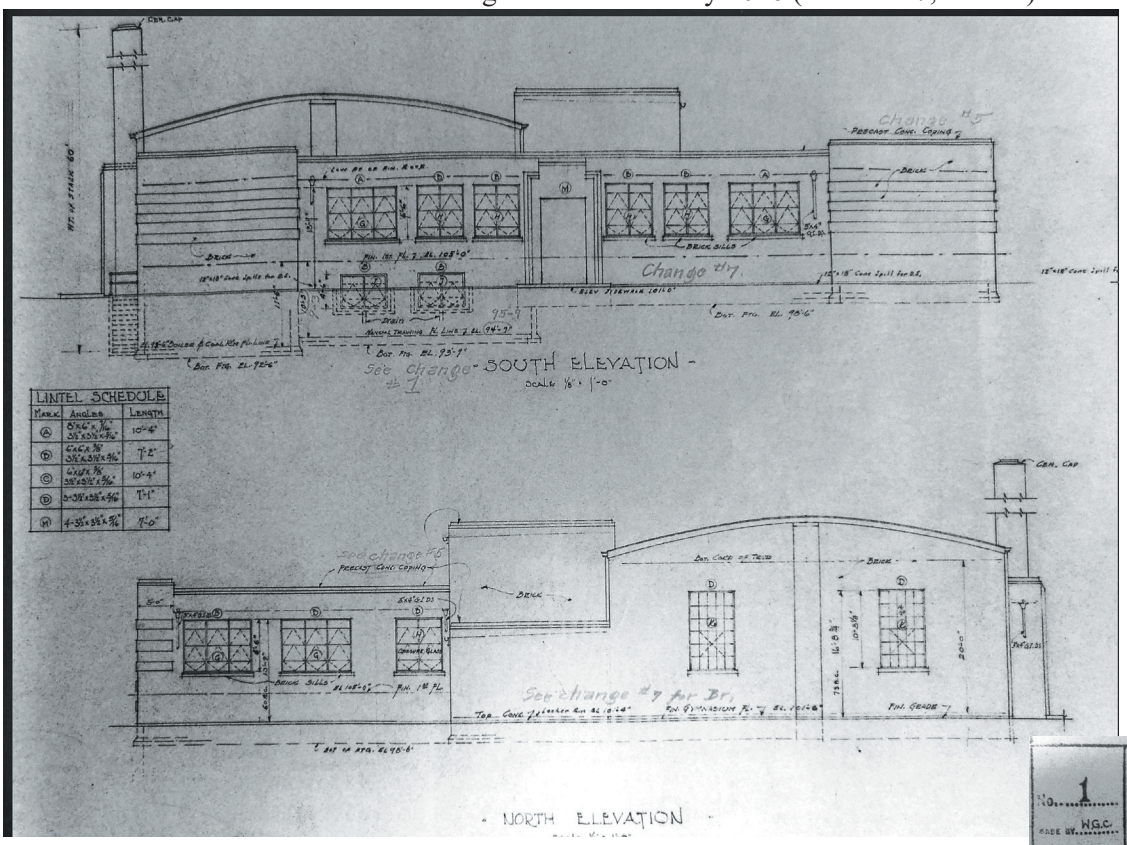
"Colored Schools" in Harrison County as of 1882 from Perrin's *History of Bourbon, Scott, Harrison, and Nicholas Co., Ky.* (1882).

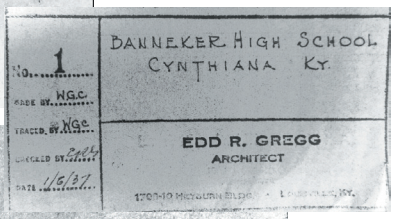
"Harrison County is laid off into thirty-nine districts for school purposes..... In addition to these, there are also fourteen districts for the colored people, and they have their teachers, schoolhouses and school fund "(223). "A colored school has also been held in town since about the year 1868; it is pleasantly situated on the so called 'Common,' in a comfortable house near the river" (282). Although there were fourteen districts, the book only mentions these precincts with colored schools:

Cynthiana - 1
Berry - 1
Leesburg - 1

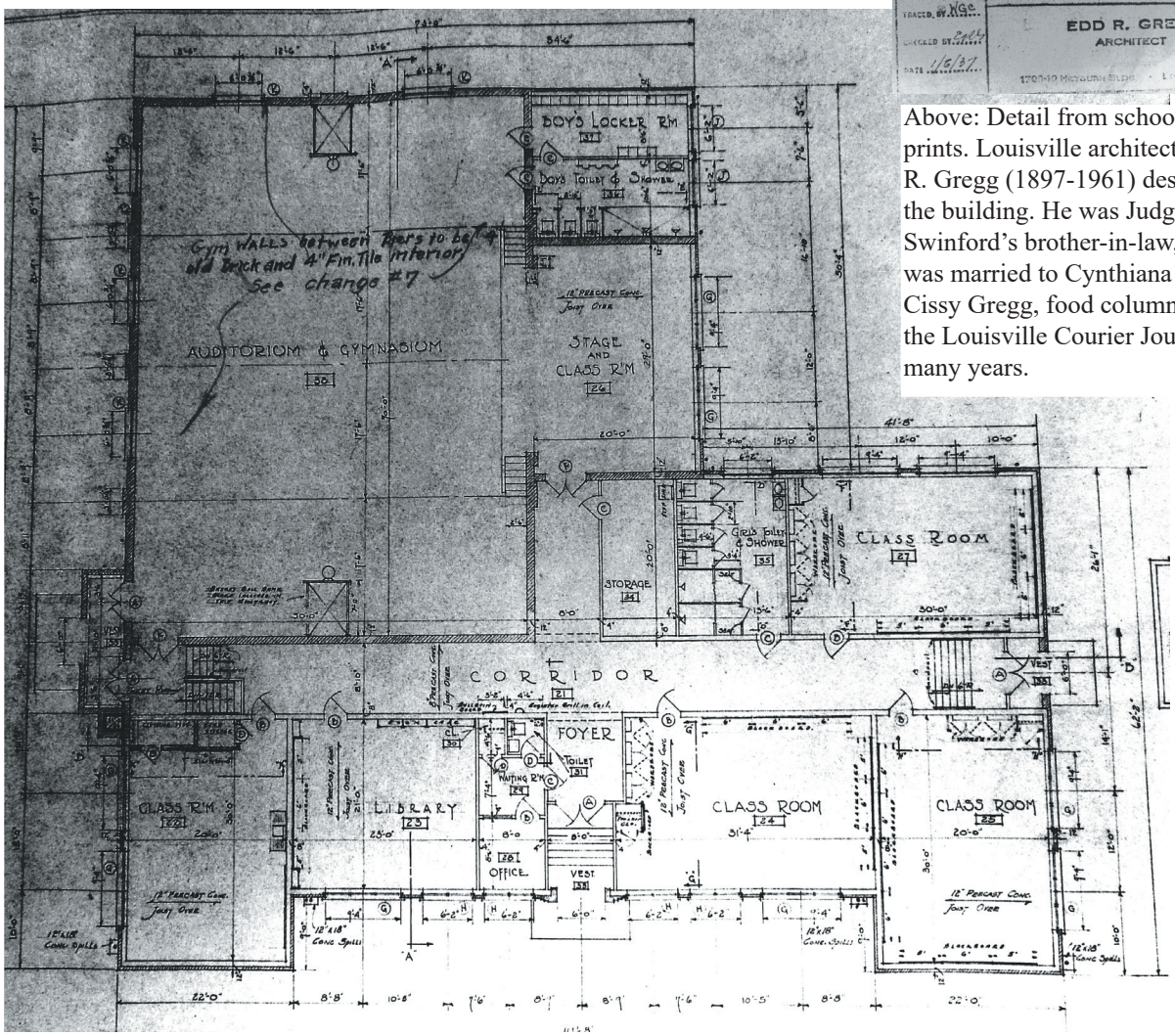
Note: There were black churches in Cynthiana and several in the various precincts which probably provided some education in their Sunday schools.

This page: Two pages of a set of Banneker High School blueprints from the Harrison County Board of Education files. This school on Penn St. replaced the former Cook mansion that had been used as Harrison Hospital and then as Banneker School beginning in 1920.





Above: Detail from school blueprints. Louisville architect Edd R. Gregg (1897-1961) designed the building. He was Judge Mac Swinford's brother-in-law, and was married to Cynthiana native Cissy Gregg, food columnist for the Louisville Courier Journal for many years.



Notes on the History of Banneker School - Bill Penn

"Up to January 1, 1894, a colored Board of Trustees had operated the Colored Schools, but on that date all schools were put under the same Board. Various converted buildings were used by the Colored School [on Water Street] before the erection of the present modern building. The Banneker School Building was constructed by the Public Works Administration at a cost of approximately $36,000 and was dedicated in 1937. A four year high school course having been established [note: it had been eight grades; three year high school added 1928, see "Banneker Day 1988"], a more elaborate curriculum was then offered. A course in Home Economics was taught, and a complete program in Physical Education was developed. In 1941 W. E. Newsom and Lucinda Lewis retired and E. O. David became principal. World War II altered the beginning of a far reaching program and caused much changing of personnel. Complete courses in Home Economics; Industrial Arts; and Agriculture, through 4-H Club work, are taught. Extra curricular activities now include a lunch program, Physical education for all children, Music for the High School, Dramatics, and Class organization, and a Student Council. A Boy Scout [Troop 176, and Girl Scout] troop is included in the program. The course of study is approximately the same as that of the other schools of the City. The lunch program was discontinued from 1937 to 1941, but exists through 1946 under the Federal Government's support. High School team is the Banneker "Coyotes". There is [1946] a glee club for boys and girls. Cynthiana Public Schools."(1)

Banneker High School was named for Benjamin Banneker (1731-1806), who was a free African American almanac author, surveyor, naturalist and farmer. According to a history of the school by Marilyn David Wash, Mrs. Fannie B. Duncan gave the school its name. In sports, Banneker High School was a member of Blue Grass Athletic Association - school colors were green and white. The school offered both football and basketball programs beginning in 1930-1931. The last high school graduating class was 1956, and the following year Cynthiana High School (CHS) was integrated. With Banneker's high school students transferring to CHS, the school on Penn Street continued as an elementary school until 1963, when Marshall Elementary School was also integrated. In 1956, "Pupils in grades 10-12 enrolled in CHS, and Banneker School retained grades 1-9. White pupils at the 6-8 level [could] enroll at Banneker on a voluntary basis." Banneker was later demolished and a federal housing development occupied the site. (2) In 1956, the first schools in Harrison County to be listed as integrated were Buena Vista, Connersville, Harrison County High School, Oddville, Renaker, and Cynthiana High School. (3)

Source:

1. 74th Annual Report of Cynthiana Public Schools, 1946.

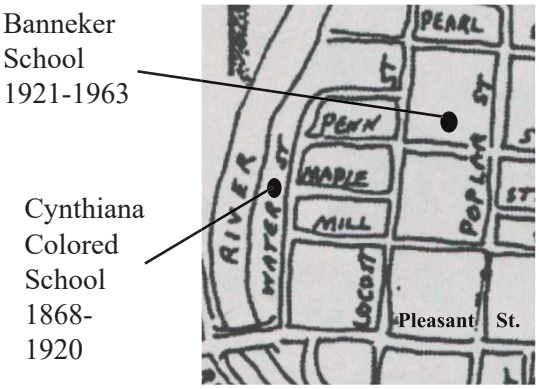
2. Marilyn David Wash, "Banneker High School," Cynthiana Democrat, July 11, 1974. This article lists all the faculty members and graduates of the school, and personal memoirs of the author; Cynthiana Democrat, August 23, 1956 (this article also lists all county schools' staff).

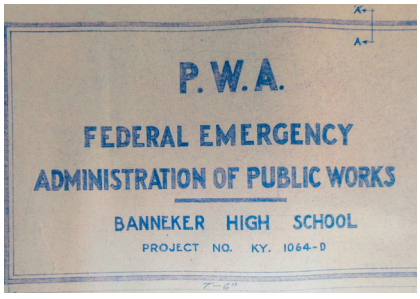
3. Kentucky Public School Directory, 1956-57, p.431. ttp://nkaa.uky.edu/record.php?note_id=2066, accessed February 11, 2016.

Students at B.H.S. from the photo album of Marilyn David Wash.

Class of 1952 - From left, Willa M. Porterfield, Velma Custard, Marilyn David, Elwood Boyers, Jacqueline Ferguson, Harry Willis. Courtesy of Marilyn David Wash.

Location of Cynthiana Colored School and Banneker School





Left: Detail from school blueprints. Public Works Administration (PWA), part of the New Deal of 1933, was a large-scale public works construction agency in the United States headed by Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes. It was created by the National Industrial Recovery Act in June 1933 in response to the Great Depression. From 1930 to 1939, 1,768 education-related federal building projects were in Kentucky. (Ky. Historic Schools Survey, Ky. Heritage Council, 2002; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_Works_Administration).

Banneker School Faculty 1924-1962

Black, Mary Elizabeth, 1942-48
Brown (Hawkins), Christine, 1924-30
Bryant, Mary E., 1950-58
David, Elmer O., 1930-41; principal 1942-62
David, Vivian F., 1945-62
Fields, Henrietta Mae, 1924-49
Finch, Margueritta, 1942-43
Ford, James T., 1924-30
Gaddie, Mrs. J. T. (Hillard), 1930-62
Hawkins (See Brown)
Henderson, Mary Ann, 1951-56
Hughes, Abby Stewart, 1943-45
Jones, Della, 1945-46
Lewis, Lucinda, 1924-42
Mabson (Stout), Anna E., 1958-62
Martin, Clydie B., 1950-51
Mathews, Charles, 1942-43
Newsom, W. Eli Principal, 1925-42
Nichols, Georgia B., 1941-42;1948-49
Stout (See Mabson)
Vaughn, Maud, 1930-32
Way, James S., 1947-62
Williams, Mayme M., 1924-30

Source:
"Colored School" Employees Folder 1924-1962 - CHS Alumni Archives.

From left: Principal and teachers in the school hall: E. O. David, Vivian David, Mrs. J. T. Gaddie, James S. Way, Ann Madison Stout. Photos this page courtesy Mrs. Marilyn David Wash except as noted.

Mrs. J. T. (Hillard) Gaddie watching children during recess.

Mary Ann Henderson

W. E. Newsom, principal 1925-1942. This photo is misidentified as "E. O. David" in the *Harrison Co., Ky. History & Families* and *Pictorial History of Harrison County*. Photo courtesy Alice Allen.

W. E. Newsom, 1929, from "The Librarian," June 1929, B. H. S. newsletter.

Mrs. J. T. Hillard Gaddin

Miss Lucinda Lewis

E. O. and Vivian David. Mr. David was a coach and science teacher beginning in 1930 and principal 1941-1963. After the school closed, he taught at the junior high school. Mrs. David was a teacher at Banneker H. S. from 1946 until it closed.

Plays were held on a stage in the gymnasium.

Girl Scout troops were started at Banneker by Mrs. Mary Williams. Mrs. David, scoutmaster.

1950-1951 Banneker High School Coyotes, "3rd in the Bluegrass." Front row: Donald Allen, mgr., H. P. Jacobs, J. R. Custard, Burnett Williams Jr., Edward (Brick) Rawls, Elwood Boyers, Coach James S. Way.
Back row: Principal E. O. David, Harry Willis, Billy T. Willis, Raymond Lynem, William (Buck) Henry, Theodore (Micky) Stewart.

Photos this page courtesy Marilyn David Wash.

Status of Education of Black Children of Kentucky before 1900

In antebellum Kentucky, "education was second only to religion as a goal of black churches. In contrast to states of the Deep South, Kentucky did not prohibit by law the education of slaves, though scattered white opposition existed to the idea of literate bondsmen." Historians believe during slavery less than ten percent were literate. Two local examples were Harrison and John Griffith, former slaves who joined the Union army, sent letters to their old master, William K. Griffith, whose farm was at Broadwell.
An 1874 school law created a racially segregated common school system for black children. In the 1880s, "The vast majority of Kentucky whites viewed black education as a burden, spending only the minimum required by law, if in fact that small amount."
In 1882 a federal circuit court ruled that "Kentuckians [had] a choice: to integrate white and black pupils or to equalize the funds for black and white schools. The latter option was adopted...but equal funding for black schools never became a reality under Kentucky's dual school system. In 1890 fully 56 percent of the state's 197,689 black citizens were illiterate...but decreasing to 5.7 percent in 1930."

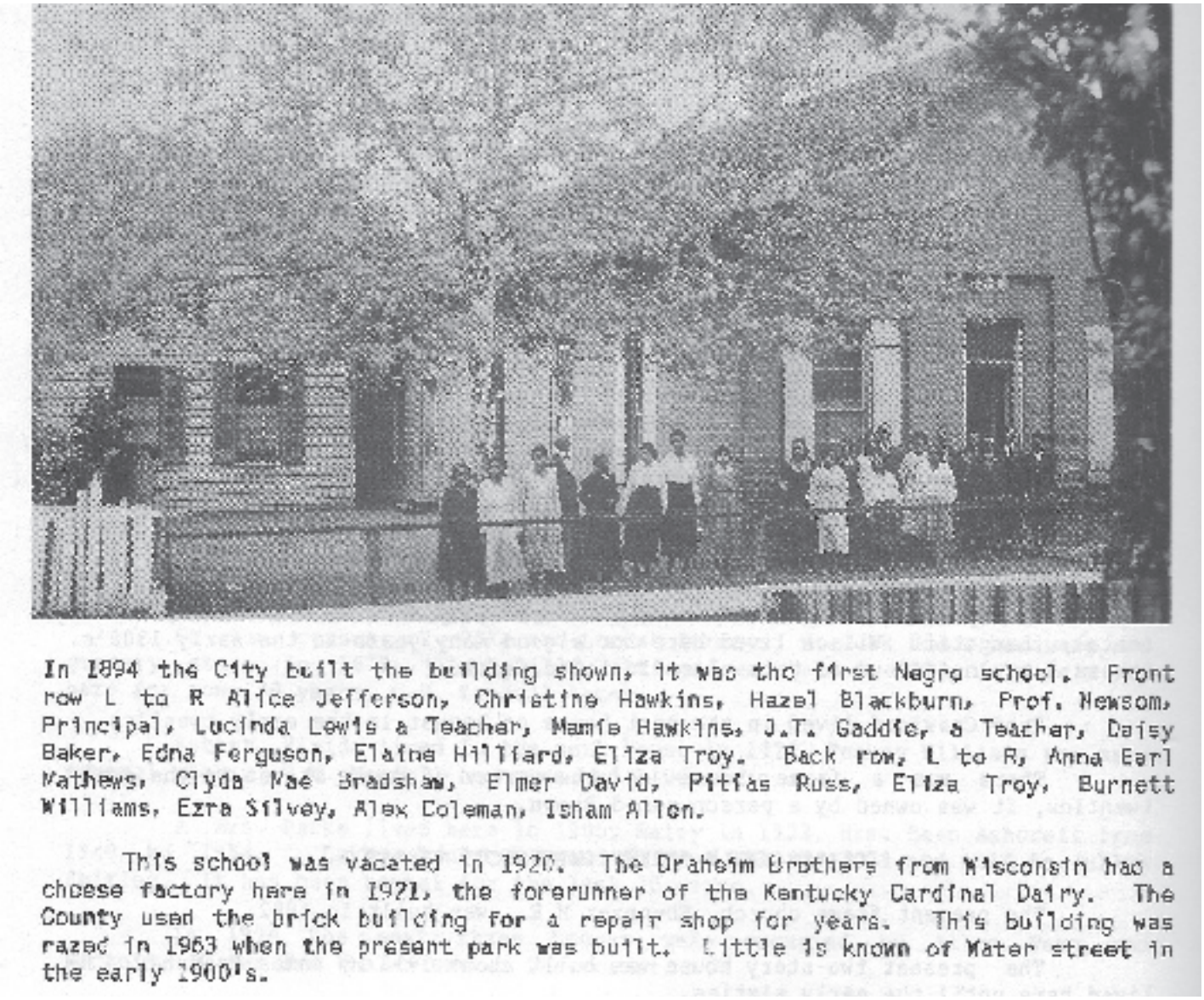
Source: George C. White, Marion B. Lucas, *History of Blacks in Kentucky,* (Kentucky Historical Society, 1992), Vol. 1:141-142; Vol. 2:104-107; Wm. A. Penn, *Rattling Spurs and Broad-Brimmed Hats* (1995) 154.

African American Schools in Harrison County, KY (1866-1921)

"According to the 1866 Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, there was a colored school in Harrison County in 1866. It may have been one of the two schools in Cynthiana that were funded by the U.S. Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands between 1866 and 1870 [see NKAA entry Freedmen Schools, Kentucky]. A history of the colored schools was found in the Harrison County Historical Society files and reprinted in the Harrison Heritage News, with editing by William A. Penn. The original author is unknown. According to the article, it was thought that the first colored school in Harrison County opened in 1868 and was the beginning of formal education for African Americans in the county. The school was located on the "Commons" near the river [source: *History of Education in Harrison County*, by Mrs. H. E. Young, p.115]. According to the article in the Harrison Heritage News, a second school was located on Water Street. In 1870, a colored school was constructed in Cynthiana by the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, and in December of 1869, there was an American Missionary Society (AMS) school [source: Tenth Semi-annual Report on Schools for Freedmen, July 1, 1870, by J. W. Alvord]. The schools were independently managed, and it was after 1875 that the colored schools came under the Harrison County Board of Education [source: *History of Education in Harrison County*, pp.32-33]. In 1880, the school teachers were Laura Brown in Leesburg; Janie Harding, Ella Asberry, and Frank Howard in Cynthiana [source: U.S Federal Census]. In 1885, there were nine colored school districts with eight schools. The teachers were from Xenia, OH. In 1892, there were 11 colored school districts with 11 common schools, and the school terms lasted for 3 months (2 schools), 4 months (2 schools), 5 months (5 schools), and more than 5 months (2 schools) [source: *Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction*, 1892, p.357-361]. Three of the school buildings were made of log, seven were frame structures, and 1 was made of brick. There were 1,165 school age children, of which 602 were enrolled in the colored common schools and they were taught by 13 teachers. In 1890, there was an all time high of 14 teachers in the colored elementary schools [source: *History of Education in Harrison County,* p.70]. In 1893, a new colored school was opened, bringing the total number of schools to 12; ten of the schools were taught for 5 months, and two were taught for more than 5 months. All but one of the schools was located in the county. Beginning in 1895, the colored schools were in session for nine months [source: *History of Education in Harrison County*, p.121]. By 1908, there were eight colored school teachers. The city school, Cynthiana Colored School, had three teachers, and was soon overcrowded. In 1921, the Board of Education purchased the old hospital in Cynthiana, had the building remodeled, the name Cynthiana Colored School changed to Banneker School, and two years of high school were added to the curriculum [source: *History of Education in Harrison County*, pp.116-124]. Mr. Newsom was principal. At the end of the school term in 1925, there were 150 students enrolled in Banneker School. For more see "African American Education in Harrison County," Harrison Heritage News, vol. 6, issue 2, February 2005 [available online]; and Welcome to Harrison County, KYGenWeb [online]." From 1917 Board of Ed. Report: "Programs were at Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church and St. James A. M. E. Church; commencement at Rohs' Opera House; two boys, two girls." (1)

The Colored School on Water Street: "There were 9 [actually 6 - see below] grades and 5 or 6 teachers. A building behind a little red brick building was for small children. Older children had classes in the red brick with [principal] Mr. Orton. Mr. W. E. Newsom followed Mr. Orton as principal. The children were living in the city limits and in territory outside the city. The state recommended a single Board of Education for cities of fourth class and Cynthiana was one of the few cities of the state in which the Board of Education made conditions possible to take on the Negro school. Prof. Pitts became principal from Knoxville College, Tenn. He graded the school and started it on the road to progress. In 1895 there were six grades with Mrs. Fannie Pitts instructor of grades 1 and 2. Miss Mattie ------- instruction of grades 3 and 4 and Mr. Pitts instructor for grades 5 and 6 and principal. A report for 1895 registered to Mr. A. G. Pitts included this data: Avg. number of pupils registered to each teacher, 75; average number of boys, 110; avg. number girls, 116; average age in grade 1, girls 9.1/boys 11.2; grade 2, girls 11.2/boys 15; grade 3, girls 13.5/13.4; grade 4, girls 13.8/ boys 14; grade 5, girls 15.8/boys 16. " (2).

Source: (1) http://nkaa.uky.edu/record.php?note_id=2066, accessed February 11, 2016.
(2) "Negro Education in Harrison County," unpublished manuscript, no date/no author, Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum.



In 1894 the City built the building shown, it was the first Negro school. Front row L to R Alice Jefferson, Christine Hawkins, Hazel Blackburn, Prof. Newsom, Principal, Lucinda Lewis a Teacher, Mamie Hawkins, J.T. Gaddie, a Teacher, Daisy Baker, Edna Ferguson, Elaine Hilliard, Eliza Troy. Back row, L to R, Anna Earl Mathews, Clyda Mae Bradshaw, Elmer David, Pitias Russ, Eliza Troy, Burnett Williams, Ezra Silvey, Alex Coleman, Isham Allen.

This school was vacated in 1920. The Draheim Brothers from Wisconsin had a cheese factory here in 1921, the forerunner of the Kentucky Cardinal Dairy. The County used the brick building for a repair shop for years. This building was razed in 1963 when the present park was built. Little is known of Water street in the early 1900's.

Source: Virgil Peddicord, *Cynthiana Since 1790*, p. 54.

Condition of the Water Street school from the 1917, 1918 Board of Education Report that led to purchase of the former Harrison Hospital on Penn Street in 1920:

Principal W. E. Newsom: *"(1917 report) Our Needs: Whatever needs seems urgent the most dominant one is a well equipped school building. It is a race need, and yet it is so closely allied to the general interests of all that the pride of the whole city could not perform a more becoming duty than to erect a Negro school." (1918 Report) Our Needs: Lest we forget, we insert this reminder. The Negro school children are being subjected to wretched conditions. Do you care? Somebody is not getting a fair deal. Who is responsible? Let us think it over and out of the results of our meditations, ACT. "*

B. T. Riggs, President, Board of Education*: (1917 Report) The conditions in our Colored School are deplorable and the least said about it the better, but no blame can be attributed to our faithful and efficient Principal and teachers...considering the handicap under which they are compelled to work by reason of the dilapidated old building which is inadequate in every respect."*

Colored School Faculty 1868-1921

Pitts, A. G. Prof., principal
Hughes, Prof., principal
Orton, W. C., principal
Newsom, W. E., principal
Adams, Mary H.
Allen, Anna U.
Baker, Mrs. Daisy
Brewer, Annie Mae
Bryant, Anna
Clark, Vashti
Fife, Abby Hughes
Hillard, Mrs. James T.
Hughes, Cora
Hutson, Lula B.
Lewis, Lucinda
Mason, Thomas
Patton, Hattie
Pitts, Mrs. Fannie
Stewart, Allyne
Terry, Margaret Finch
Thomas, Fannie H.
Utah, Mrs. Anna
Williams, Mrs. Mamie
Williams, Robert D.

Source: Marilyn David Wash, "Banneker High School," Cynthiana Democrat, July 11, 1974. Also listed above are teachers in "Banneker Day 1988" reunion booklet that were not on the Board of Education payroll records 1924-62, so the assumption was made they were teachers in the earlier school.

Faculty "Cynthiana Colored School" 1908

From left: Mrs. Daisy Baker, Miss Hattie Patton, Professor W. C. Orton, Mrs. Orton, and Mr. Thos. J. Mason.

Courtesy of Alice Allen and Cynthiana-Harrison Co. Museum

Harrison County One-Room Black Schools

(1921 and 1927)

1921
Leesburg - Anna Watson
Broadwell - Fannie Spears
Hinton - Alice Allen
Boyd - Elizabeth Lynem
Glentown - Mrs. Jessie Whalen
Connersville - Hattie Haden
Shadynook
Red Oak

1927
Rosenwald* - Miss Minnie Johnson
Leesburg - Mrs. Jessie Russ Crawford
Red Oak - Mrs. Fannie Spears
Pleasant Green**

Source: Charline Wilson, "One Room Schools of Harrison Co., Ky.," unpublished manuscript, copy courtesy of Denny Lipscombe. The schools also existed in other years - these lists are probably from board of education reports Mrs. Wilson examined. Perrin's *History of Bourbon, Scott, Harrison and Nicholas Counties, Ky.* (1882) lists black schools in various precincts.

* Harrison County had one "Rosenwald" school, location unknown. Julius Rosenwald, who was a business partner of Richard Sears of Sears and Roebuck Company, created a building fund in 1917 for rural black schools upon meeting and talking with Booker T. Washington. In Kentucky, the Rosenwald fund assisted 158 schools and education-related buildings. Harrison County's school was built in the 1924-25 budget year. It had one teacher and an elementary library. The cost was paid as follows: "Negro, $100, public, $1,650, Rosenwald, $400, total $2,150." *Rosenwald Schools In Kentucky 1917-1932* - Kentucky Heritage Council and Kentucky African American Heritage Council, 1997-2005.

**There was also a one-room school for black children at Pleasant Green, years unknown. (Interview with Byrd Penn, 1985.)

Editor's note: I want to thank Mrs. Marilyn David Wash, Alice Allen, and the Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum for sharing photos and information for this special issue on Banneker School. I have added notes on early black education to put Banneker School in context. Due to space limitations, I was able to only document the building, staff, some students, and basic dates. A more comprehensive history of the school, with all graduates listed, along with distinguished alumni, is in an article by Marilyn David Wash, "A Memory: Banneker High School," Cynthiana Democrat, July 11, 1974. A copy is at the Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum. The Museum also has Mrs. Wash's notes on alumni who gained prominence in various academic and professional pursuits along with a display of Banneker School mementos, photos, and various alumni.