In the 1900s, Dr. Booker T. Washington, world renowned educator and founder of the Tuskegee Institute, knew that early education was needed for children of color. Due to Booker T’s personal sojourn, determination and passion for education, a vision was born and a destiny was put into play. Dr. Washington and Mr. Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears and Roebuck, would meet, connect and take a stand for children of color. Mr. Rosenwald already had an interest in supporting a wide range of charitable causes for Negro people. However, after reading Dr. Washington’s book *Up From Slavery*, Mr. Rosenwald’s chief concern became “Education for Negro children in the South.” Rosenwald was motivated to work with Washington based on his belief in the value of education, combined with hard work and self-reliance, as the foundation for personal success.

Washington shared Rosenwald’s vision about the transformative power of education. Together they created the Rosenwald School Fund, which had its beginnings on the campus of Tuskegee Institute. Dr. Washington and Mr. Rosenwald met in person in 1910-1911 and soon Mr. Rosenwald became a trustee of Tuskegee Institute. Dr. Washington informed and persuaded Mr. Rosenwald that help was needed for children of color, not just in higher education, but at the elementary school level.

Upon rehabilitation, the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School will serve as a Community Cultural Center and an Interpretive Museum intended to promote a fuller understanding of southern Appalachian black history and to enhance education at all levels.

The Vision of Dr. Booker T. Washington & Mr. Julius Rosenwald

*Booker T. Washington, 1856-1915*

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On the occasion of Mr. Rosenwald’s fiftieth birthday, he presented Dr. Washington with $25,000 to aid black colleges and preparatory academies. Dr. Washington asked that a small amount be used as grants to build elementary schools in rural areas near Tuskegee. Mr. Rosenwald accepted with the stipulation that each community had to raise funds to match the gift of the grant.

The first Rosenwald school was built in Alabama and dedicated in 1913. In 1915, at the age of 59, Dr. Booker T. Washington made his passage from this life. By this time, some 80 schools in three states had matched the gift of the grant. In 1917, in order for Dr. Washington’s vision to continue, Mr. Rosenwald established the Julius Rosenwald Fund.
The Rosenwald Program

By 1920, the burgeoning construction program to build the schools was more than Tuskegee could handle.

Mr. Rosenwald then created the Rosenwald Southern Office, located in Nashville, TN. Mr. Samuel Leonard Smith was hired to run the Nashville office. Mr. Smith had decades of experience administering Tennessee’s rural negro school programs and possessed a keen interest in country school house designs.

In 1932, at the conclusion of the Washington/Rosenwald project, approximately 5,000–5,600 schools had been built throughout the south, with approximately 800+ schools built in North Carolina. Each of these small communities were able to match funds from the Rosenwald grant to have a school constructed in their communities. The vision of Dr. Washington and the well-placed investment of Mr. Rosenwald have given us a mighty legacy, one that lives on and continues to this day.4

The Rosenwald School Plans for Madison County

Superintendent Blankenship’s correspondence to the Director of Rosenwald Funds explains that the Rosenwald Plan No. 20 was used in building the new Negro school house at Long Ridge; however, the Industrial Room was left off. “Can we still get Rosenwald Funds?”12

The Rosenwald monies for $750 came in the summer of 1929, and the first Rosenwald School class was taught at Long Ridge in 1929-1930.13

Ten years later, the Board of Education adopted the Rosenwald Community School Plan No. 6 for a Madison County white school.14

The Rosenwald Community School Plans were used for many white school buildings in the South during the late 1930s and early 1940s, Madison County included.

Colored School Committeemen 189615

Bull Creek (Mars Hill)
Joe Anderson
Alfred Bailey
J.B. Bailey

Marshall
Lon Henry
M. Roberts
Wm. Williams

Middle Fork
Ben Hampton
Joe Logan
Ned Ray

Hot Springs
C.E. Coleman
P.A. Gardner
Joe Young

Little Pine Creek
Mark Baker
Henry Paine
John Paine

Booker T. Washington

Booker Taliaferro Washington was born into slavery in Franklin County, Virginia, on April 5, 1856. In spite of the fact that it was illegal to teach enslaved blacks to read and write, Washington was able to obtain a primary education, and subsequently entered Hampton Institute in the fall of 1872. He proved to be an exemplary student, and over the years, an equally respectable teacher and speaker.

The principal of Hampton Institute recommended Washington to a group of Alabama legislators as a viable candidate for director of an African American school they wanted to establish. In 1881, Washington became president of that school, known as Tuskegee Institute.

Primarily a training ground for teachers, Tuskegee’s program provided students with academic and vocational training. As a result of Washington’s work as an educator and public speaker, he became the most prominent African American leader in the United States between 1895-1915.11

Interest in securing Rosenwald Funds for Madison County came after investments in upgrading the older school building on Long Ridge in September 1925 for $300, plus labor and materials for around $100, and $250 for desks. The Madison County Board of Education requested that Superintendent write the Rosenwald Fund for information relative to securing aid for the building of a colored school at Mars Hill.5

Again in July of 1926, the Board directed the Superintendent to write the “Director of the Rosenwald Funds as to whether they would give assistance on a building with a site of less than two acres?”6 By the middle of 1926, they reported “no action was taken on the colored building at Mars Hill…”7

In the spring of 1927, C.M. Blankenship was elected as Superintendent of schools.”This same year, the Board purchased an additional acre of land from J.M. Rice for the colored school site on Long Ridge,8 and by July 1928, around $600 in funds were expended on a new Negro school building at Long Ridge.9
The New Long Ridge Rosenwald School Building

In 1928, the Madison County School Board erected a new two-room school structure where the old building stood, using the Rosenwald School Plan No. 20, leaving the industrial room off the new building. In 1929, $750 in monies came from the Rosenwald Fund of North Carolina and were matched by State, Madison County, and the Long Ridge Community monies.

John Ferguson of the Long Ridge Community gave the $200 for the community match, according to oral tradition by Ms. Dorothy Coone of the community, school, and History Committee. Another acre of land was purchased in 1927, adjacent to the older school lot, from J.M. Rice and wife for $150. This additional land was required to secure Rosenwald funds for the new building, a Rosenwald requirement. Total cost for the school was $2,093.

Eighty-three Negro children were enrolled in Madison County colored schools in 1930 according to the North Carolina Superintendent of Public Instruction, “9th smallest of any county in the state.”

This beautiful new school building was a two teacher school house that was intended to served all the colored students of Madison County through the seventh grade. High school students were bussed to Stephens Lee High School in Asheville after the 1940s, a practice which continued until Mars Hill schools were fully integrated by 1965.

The Long Ridge Rosenwald School, 1929-1959

The new two-room school house was built in 1928 on the old school site and qualified for Rosenwald Funds in 1929.

The North Carolina Superintendent of schools reported Madison County School houses in 1929-1930 as follows: 5 brick buildings; 48 frame buildings, 22 of which were one-room school buildings for White children; and 2 frame buildings, a one-room at Hot Springs, and the two-room at Mars Hill for Colored children.

Black school-age-population possible enrollment dropped from over 150 in 1900 to 83 in 1930, with Marshall colored students being bused to Mars Hill, starting in 1929.

Mary H. Wilson was hired as teacher at the Rosenwald School in 1939 and she, with others from the community, met with the Madison County Board of Education, requesting improvements to the ten year old building: paint, underpin, water to the school, and a piano for the school. The Board of Education voted to improve the building and pay $10 down payment to Dunham’s Music House for a piano. The school was to meet the remaining payments. Mrs. Wilson taught at the school for fourteen years, with Ms. M. Grace Owens as a second teacher during the last four years, 1949-1953.

Community Struggle and Success stories include how Viola King Barnette helped rural students in North Carolina achieve access to secondary education; Madison colored students going to Stephens Lee High School in Asheville; and the struggle to bring running water to the Mars Hill school.

The Rosenwald Alumni share happy memories from their school years on video: recess fun games; special events at Thanksgiving, Christmas, May Day, and Graduation; walking to school, riding the bus, or going home for lunch; art, crafts, music, and dance were choice memories; and even a ruler or two on the palm of the hand was recalled with laughter.

The Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School, 1959-1965

In 1959, the Board voted to ask Superintendent Fred W. Anderson to have the local school committee, Manuel Briscoe, Augusta Ray, and Seam Roland, “select an appropriate name for the colored school. It was the feeling of the Board that an appropriate name would add prestige and dignity to the school.” The committee chose to rename the school Anderson Elementary, honoring Joseph Anderson who had helped in the founding of Mars Hill College.

The empty building continued standing after integration, being used as a possible Recreation Center in the 1970’s, even a basketball court by local youth, and later as a burley tobacco air-curing barn for the Briscoes in the 1980’s.

The building continued to be owned by the Madison County School Board, but forgotten by Board Members until a local Long Ridge neighbor requested that the building be removed for widening the road by the school. Steward Coates, having grown up as a youth in the neighborhood, a Board of Education member, suggested that the historic building be given back to the Long Ridge Community for preservation. Thus the building was not torn down, but has survived for posterity.
African American Public Education in Madison County

After the Civil War, public education began again in North Carolina by the 1870s, including free public education for elementary colored students in Madison County. Later, by 1901, Madison County operated colored schools at Hot Springs, Little Pine, Marshall, and in the Mars Hill area. The Mars Hills schools were fully integrated by 1965.30

Before 1905 there were three colored schools in the greater Mars Hill area: in the Grapevine, Mars Hill, and Ivy neighborhoods.31 The Mars Hill Colored School moved to a new building in the fall of 1905. The property, one acre, on which the new school house was erected was secured from Mr. Scudder Willis in April of that year.32 R.L. Moore, Superintendent, reported in June, “a new school house built for colored people at Mars Hill at a cost of $125 dollars, including one acre of ground.”33 In 1908, J.R. Rogers was paid $10.50 for the road to the school, what would become Mt. Olive Drive.34 This new colored school location was on a long ridge knob, above the Ivy River Basin, overlooking the Forks of Ivy community, facing the Blue Ridge Mountains to the southeast. The Forks of Ivy was a crossroad settlement where pioneer homestead settlers and Native Americans left past and even ancient history evidence through oral traditions and artifacts.35

The Long Ridge name came from the ridge that runs south from Little Mountain at Mars Hill to the Forks of Ivy, along a horse and buggy road that developed between the two settlements. This road, over two miles long, ran through what became the Long Ridge Colored Community. This community grew around two new buildings; the school, built in 1905,36 and the church, built in 1917.37 The Mount Olive Baptist Church was built not distant from the school, close to where the church building is located today.

Mount Olive Baptist Church evolved from an older African American church, known as Piney Grove Church, located on Walker Branch in Paint Fork of Little Ivy.38 It was in the Piney Grove Church that the wedding ceremony took place for the parents of Billy Strayhorn in March of 1910. This church was established in 1906, and the Strayhorn family remembers that the church wedding took place in “wooded Mars Hill.”39


According to oral interviews with Augusta Ray, and Shirley Sewell, they attended school in the older Long Ridge School building, as did Manuel Briscoe who also attended the new Rosenwald School building, but all three referred to the school as the Long Ridge School.40 That local name continued to be used even after the new Rosenwald building replaced the older structure in 1928–29; however, the School Board still referred to the school as Mars Hill Colored, until 1959, when they voted to give the school a more appropriate name, Anderson Elementary School.41

The new name was to honor Joseph Anderson, the Mars Hill slave who went to prison for Mars Hill College indebtedness in 1859. The name may have been suggested by the Mars Hill Colored School Committee according to members of the History Committee. Two members of that school committee were Manual Briscoe, great grandson-in-law of Joseph Anderson, and Augusta Briscoe Ray, sister to Manuel, and mother of Charity Ray and Dorothy Coone. Two Long Ridge School student interviewees, Augusta Briscoe Ray and Shirley Barnette Sewell, also told of a 1920s visit by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and friends to the school. His gift added a new room for art to the building, the Rockefeller Room.42

By 1920, the Federal Census for Madison County lists 51 colored children in the Mars Hill district, with 126 in the whole county, ages 6 through 21.43 By the 1920s, it appears that the three colored schools in the Mars Hill area were consolidated at Long Ridge.

Written by Richard Dillingham with historical research and input by members of the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School’s history committee, Dorothy Coone, Edwin Cheek, Pauline Cheek, Richard Dillingham, Dan Slagle, chair, and Charity Ray. Both Ms. Coone and Ms. Ray attended the Long Ridge Rosenwald School. Their mother, Augusta Briscoe Ray, attended the older Long Ridge Colored School, built in 1905 at the same location.
Teachers and School Committee Persons

Mars Hill Colored School Committeemen 1896 - 1913

1896 Bull Creek: Joe Anderson; Alfred Bailey; J.B. Bailey (Mars Hill P.O.)
1896 Middle Fork: Joe Logan; Ned Ray; Ben Hampton (Briggsville P.O.)

Five Colored School Districts in Madison County:
Mars Hill, Middle Fork, Ivy, Marshall, and Hot Springs

1905 Ivy: A.D. Coon; Howe Ray; Jerry Wilson
1905 Mars Hill: J.H. Ferguson; Alfred Barnett; Neil Anderson
1906 Ivy: A.D. Coon; Howe Ray; Jerry Wilson
1906 Mars Hill: Neil Anderson; Alfred Barnett
1910 Mars Hill: James Bowdridge
1911 Ivy: W.B. Ray; Harvey Ray; Dolph Coon
1913 Ivy: W.B. Ray; Harvey Ray; Dolph Coon

Known Mars Hill Colored School Committee Persons 1937 - 1964

1937: Gilbert Brisco; Alfred Barnett; Oscar Young
1939: Oscar Young; Gilbert Briscoe; Alfred Barnett
1940: Oliver Barnett; Oscar Young; Gilbert Briscoe
1941: Oscar Young; A. M. Roland; A. E. Ray
1953: Gustie Ray; Avery Ray; Dowell Anderson
1957 Avery Ray; Seam Roland; Gustie Ray
1958: Gustie Ray; Avery Ray; Seam Roland
1960: Manuel Briscoe; Augusta Ray; Seam Roland
1961: Manuel Briscoe; Augusta Ray; Seam Roland
1962: Seam Roland; Augusta Ray; Manuel Briscoe
1964: Manuel Briscoe, Chair.; Seam Roland; Augusta Ray

Mars Hill Colored School Teachers 1901 - 1913

1901 (Fall) Effie Anderson
1902 Eliza L. Randolph
1903-04 Elise Rand (Eliza Randolph?)
1905-06 Sam W. Anderson
1906-07 Sam W. Anderson
1907-08 Sallie Green
1908-09 J.B. Baile
1909 Josephine Barnard
1910 Alice Baird
1911-12 Sam W. Anderson
1912-13 Sam W. Anderson

Known Mars Hill Colored School Teachers 1935 - 1963

1935 Elizabeth Conley
1936 Edna Bell
1939-1943 Mary H. Wilson
1945 Mary H. Wilson; Addie J. Best
1949-1953 Mary H. Wilson; M. Grace Owens
1954-1955 Mrs. Lillie D. Love
1957-1959 Bernice E.S. Smith, Principal
1960 Mrs. Dora B. Bass
1963 Mrs. Brown
The Long Ridge Community in Mars Hill, NC

Mount Olive Baptist Church

Mt. Olive Baptist Church began as Piney Grove Church on Walker Branch of Paint and Middle Forks of Little Ivy, before moving to Long Ridge of Mars Hill in 1917, taking the name Mount Olive Baptist Church. The church that stands today was dedicated in 1952, bringing the 1917 corner stone to the new structure. Over the years, Joseph Anderson’s family and descendants have been members of these church communities. Two children of Joseph and Jane Ray left descendants, Cordelia and Cornelius. Daughter Cordelia’s descendant is great-great granddaughter Oralene Graves Simmons, through Oralene’s grandmother, Effie Coone. Son Cornelius “Neal” Anderson’s descendants were life members of Mount Olive Baptist Church. They were grandson Dallas Anderson and granddaughter-in-law Frances Wilson Anderson, “Big Frances”; and granddaughter Doskey Anderson McDowell, and great granddaughter Frances McDowell Brisco, “Little Frances.” All were personnel in Mars Hill College cafeteria.

Great grandson-in-law Manuel Briscoe, employee with the town of Mars Hill for 34 years, was a deacon in the church. Charity Ray, also an employee of the college, and her families have been life members of the church. The deceased of the Long Ridge Community are buried in the Mount Olive Cemetery, located near the school on land purchased from the Board of Education in 1936.

The Long Ridge Community in Mars Hill, NC

Stories Connected to the Long Ridge School

Stories connected to the Long Ridge School and its community have attracted both state and national attention:

Joseph Anderson

One of the most noted is that of Joseph Anderson, or Joe the Slave. The story of Joe the Slave of Mars Hill, who went to prison for Mars Hill College’s debt in 1859, has made press throughout the nation and Europe. His imprisonment is the only case known where human flesh and blood went to prison for an institution. After returning from jail to Jane Ray and his two infant children, Cordelia and Andy, he lived on a farm below the campus and became a living Negro Legend locally.

Joe Anderson was a school committeeman in 1896 for the Mars Hill Colored School. His descendants attended the Mars Hill Colored Schools; granddaughter Effie Anderson was a teacher in the 1901 school; his nephew, Sam W. Anderson taught in the Mars Hill Colored School in 1905-1906 and 1911-1912. Joe’s son, Neil Anderson was paid .64 cents for school census in Mars Hill colored district in 1907.

More than twenty of Joseph Anderson descendants are buried in the Mt. Olive Cemetery. Camp Joe, the Mars Hill CCC Camp on South Main Street, established in the 1930’s, also carried Joe’s name.

By 1910, this Mars Hill Living Negro Legend was deceased, being buried in the Huff family graveyard, before his remains were moved to the college campus in 1932.

Today, Joe’s grave is located on the Mars Hill University campus beside Joe Anderson Drive, also named for him. The grave’s granite marker, “In Memory of Joe,” “is one of the first known incidents of a monument erected to a person for going to jail.

Viola King Barnette Writes a Letter

Viola King Barnette was a washerwoman for Mars Hill College personnel. All of her children, including Shirley Sewell, attended Long Ridge School, which went to the seventh grade. Mrs. Barnette wrote to the Superintendent of NC Schools saying that her children and other rural children were not able to attend high school and keep the new law requiring that all NC children attend school until age sixteen, as high schools do not exist in many rural areas such as Madison County. In reply she was told that because of her letter, all children in NC would have access to secondary education. Thus busing began for Madison County colored students to Stephens Lee High School in Asheville, and continued until integration in 1965. Viola King Barnette’s story is told by Emily Wilson in Hope and Dignity: Older Black Women of the South.
The Story of Joe Anderson

The story of Joe comes to us from oral tradition, both white and black. His history was first published by Ammons in 1907, again in the 1930s by Carter, and in McLeod’s college history, From These Stones, in 1956/68. A video of the legend of Joe, Bonded, was produced in the 1980s and is historical fiction.

Joseph and his family, Jane Ray, Andy, Neal, and Cordelia, were owned by J. W. Anderson, one of the founders, and secretary to the Board of Trustees, of Mars Hill College. In 1859 Joe was taken by the Sheriff of Buncombe County as collateral for the college’s $1,100 debt to the contractors for their erecting the first college building on campus. Joe was placed in jail at Asheville until the debt was paid.

Eleven of the college trustees raised the money, paying the debt for Joe’s return to Mars Hill. Joe lived out his life on a small farm below the campus on Gabriel’s Creek, being deceased by 1910.

Oral tradition says that Joe may have helped make the bricks for the first building. Also, some say that Joe went to jail freely. This may mean that he went without a fight! The oral tradition claims that Joe was in Asheville’s jail only a few days.

Joe’s master, J.W. Anderson, lost his chattel with the Civil War, after which he became a Baptist Preacher. Oral tradition says that Joe took care of Rev. Anderson during his last days in Asheville.

Deceased by 1910, Joe was buried in the Huff family graveyard. Joe’s family gave permission for his remains to be moved to the Mars Hill College campus in 1932.

In 1959, the Anderson name was given to the Rosenwald Anderson School in the Long Ridge Community. His name was also given to the CCC Camp in the 1930s on South Main Street in Mars Hill, Camp Joe.

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Time Line Notes

The bricks for the first building at Mars Hill College would have been made 1854-1855 at Mars Hill. The first building was completed in the spring of 1856. If Joe were born in 1838 (?) he would have been 18 years old in 1856. The $1,100 debt with the contractor was not settled until 1859. Joe’s going to jail must have forced settlement of the debt. Joe would have been age 21 when in jail at Asheville.

Joe’s original headstone was embedded by Mr. Tilson, Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds, in Robinson Infirmary on

1880 NC Farm Census for Joseph Anderson, Tenant Farmer, Mars Hill

- Value of all farm, $250
- 18 acres, Improved; Value $180
- Sorghum, 1/4 Acre
- 1/8 Acre Irish Potatoes
- Implements, $6
- Corn, 400 Bushels
- Butter, 125 lbs.
- Eggs, 100 Dozen
- Potatoes, 12 Bushels
- Molasses, 22 Gallons
- Dry Beans, 2 Bushels
- Live Stock; Value $125
- Swine 4
- Poultry: 6 barnyard, 6 other
- Horses 1
- Milch cows 2, Other 2, Sold 3
- Wood, 16 cords cut/used

Mars Hill College 1909

Joe Anderson Memorial

campus in 1935. This information was given by Mr. Tilson in the early 1980’s and later confirmed by James Fish and Ellen Coomer in the 1990s. The headstone is a rectangular field stone, located to the right above the front door.

Joe’s first resting place on campus was below the drive on Men’s Hill. It was moved in 1955 to the Oak Grove, above the drive near the cabin, now Heritage Cabin on the lower campus quad, for construction of a new street, Dormitory Drive, now Joe Anderson Drive.

In 1961, Oralene Graves, great, great granddaughter of Joseph Anderson, was admitted to Mars Hill College. She was the first African American to be admitted. She graduated from Mars Hill Junior College in 1963.

In 1977, Charlene Delores Ray, great granddaughter of Doskey McDowell, Doskey being the granddaughter of Joe, was awarded the first Appalachian Scholarship at Mars Hill College. She graduated from Mars Hill Senior College in 1981, the first Anderson descendent to do so. Further, she graduated with honors.

In 1995, Namurah Simmons, daughter of Oralene Graves Simmons, graduated from Mars Hill College.

In 1999, the Joseph Anderson and Jane Ray family was celebrated as one of the Founding Families of Mars Hill College.

In 2009, Shamia Terry, granddaughter of Oralene Graves Simmons, graduated from Mars Hill College.

In 2010, during Founders Week, Dormitory Drive on the college campus was renamed Joe Anderson Drive, and a memorial to Jane Ray was placed at Joe’s grave.

Delta Kappa Theta men’s fraternity adopted the historic Anderson Memorial Site as a project for upkeep, beautification, and interpretation of Joe’s story.
The Billy Strayhorn Connection

In March 1910 the mother and father of Billy Strayhorn, the eminent African-American composer-arranger, were married in the Mars Hill African American church, Piney Grove Church. It was located on Walker Branch of Paint Fork and Little Ivy. The Strayhorn family remembered the wedding having taken place at the church in "wooded Mars Hill." Both his mother, Lillian Young, and his maternal grandmother, Alice Young, must had attended the colored schools in the Mars Hill area, as mother Lillian acquired advanced education.89

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Students pose for class photos outside of the school.

A Visit from John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

“I was born in 1913, and I started school when I was 6; so that was 1919, and I finished the 7th grade, that’s all that they had here. I was 8 or 9 years old when ... John D. Rockefeller came through. I remember that the teacher told us to get dressed; so we put on our Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes and wore them to school that day. He had been to Marshall, so he came to Long Ridge School to see our work...

“So he came up — seems like it was a T-model Ford, he and two other guys. I know he had on a big Stetson-like hat, and I don’t remember what the other people wore, ‘cause all we wanted to see was the richest man in the world, John D. Rockefeller. So we saw him… He appropriated the money for us to add an addition to the school, and this additional room was called the John D. Rockefeller Room.”90
Dr. David Lloyd Briscoe

Dr. David Lloyd Briscoe grew up in the Long Ridge Community and attended the Long Ridge School. Also, he was a member of Boy Scout Troop 85 that met at the school. After receiving his Ph.D. in Sociology from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, he became a tenured, full Professor of Sociology at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

He is the U.S. Fulbright Scholars Program Representative, a Graduate School Faculty Member, a Distinguished Teaching Fellow in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, and coauthor of one book and author of four more. He serves on the Boy Scouts of America National Executive Board, and is a recipient of the Silver Buffalo Award, the highest award in the Boy Scouts of America for distinguished service to youth on a national level. He is the first Board of Advisors member for the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School Friends’ Group.

Charlene Delores Ray

Charlene Delores Ray, great, great, great granddaughter of Joseph Anderson, graduated from Mars Hill College in 1981 with honors. She was awarded the first Appalachian Scholarship at Mars Hill College. For her senior research project, she researched and wrote, “History of Blacks in Madison County, 1860-1981.” After receiving her Masters Degree at ETSU, Mrs. Dunn was employed at the Environmental Protection Agency in Washington, D.C.

Kevin Barnette

Kevin Barnette, grandson of Viola King Barnette, graduated from Mars Hill College in 1985, having been one of the school’s star football players. He achieved his Masters Degree from the U.S. Sports Academy at Daphne, Alabama. Kevin returned to his Alma Mater as Assistant Football Coach, where he works today. The Rev. Barnette serves as Leader and Deacon in his Baptist church in Asheville, NC. At Mars Hill, he helped organize the Fellowship of Christian Athletes at the college, one of the largest in the South. He is a member of the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald Friends Group, serving as chair of the Community Relations Committee.

For more information

If you are interested in contributing to this history, or need additional information about the rehabilitation project, please contact Willa Wyatt, (828) 689-3922, e-mail wwyatt@frontier.com or info@andersonrosenwaldschool.com

Dorothy Coone and sister Charity Ray test out the ramp installed at the school.
~ NOTATIONS ~

1. Madison County Board of Education (MCBOE) Minutes, July 6, 1959, Extracted by Pauline Cheek and Dan Slagle.


5. MCBOE Minutes, Nov. 2, 1925.

6. Ibid., July 5, 1926.

7. Ibid., July 19, 1926.

8. Ibid., April 13, 1927.

9. Ibid., July 5, 1927.

10. Ibid., July 9, 1928.


12. C.M. Blankenship Correspondence to Credle, Feb. 22, 1928, NC Archives.


14. MCBOE Minutes, May 15, 1939.

15. MCBOE Minutes, 1907; Office of County Commissioners, 1896.


19. MCBOE Minutes, July 5, 1927.


24. MCBOE Minutes, 1939-1953.


28. MCBOE Minutes, July 6, 1959.

29. Anderson Elementary School, Madison County History, MHU Archives.

30. MCBOE Minutes, April 27, 1965.

31. Madison County Board of Education “School Expense Ledger Book, 1901-1904” (Robert L. Moore, Superintendent) MHU Archives, Local History, Box 103, Folder 1.


33. MCBOE Minutes, June 5, 1905, Microfilm, MHU Archives.

34. School Expense Ledger Book, 1903-1908, p. 151, MHU Archives, Local History, Box 103, Folder 2.


36. MCBOE Minutes, June 5, 1905.


41. MCBOE Minutes, July 6, 1959.


43. 1920 Federal Census, Madison County, NC.

44. MCBOE Minutes, 1905-1907.

45. MCBOE Minutes, 1905-1965.


47. Ibid.


50. MCBOE Minutes, Jan. 6, 1936.


52. 1860 Federal Census, Madison County, NC; McLeod, pp. 10-21.

53. Minutes, 1907; Office of County Commissioners, 1896.

54. School Expense Ledger, Book 1901-1912, MHU Archives, Box 103, Folder 1.

55. Ibid., Box 103, Folder 3.

56. Ibid., Box 103, Folder 2.


59. 1910 Federal Census, Madison County, NC.

60. McLeod, pp. 28-29.


68. Ella J. Pierce, MHC Founding Family Histories, 1956, MHU Archives.

69. McLeod, Ammons, Carter.

70. Ibid.

71. 1910 Federal Census, Madison County, NC.

72. McLeod, p. 23.

73. French Broad Baptist Associational Minutes, 1862 (Not Listed as Ordained); 1873 (Listed As Ordained) MHU Archives, Box 112, Folders #2 & 3.

74. Anderson Family Oral Traditions, Black and White.

75. McLeod, p. 23.

76. Minutes, July 6, 1959.

77. Jolley, p. 46.

78. 1880 NC Farm Census, Madison County, NC, Mars Hill, Joseph Anderson.

79. McLeod, p. 18.


81. Bryson Tilson, Conversation with Richard Dillingham in the early 1980s, and Confirmations by James Fish and Ellen Coomer in the 1990s.


83. MHC Laurel, 1968, MHU Archives.

84. MHC Laurel, 1981, MHU Archives.

85. MHC Laurel, 1995, MHU Archives.

86. MHC Founders Week Program, October 1999, MHU Archives.

87. MHC Laurel, 2009, MHU Archives.

88. MHC Founders Week Program, October 2010, MHU Archives.

89. Hajou, pp. 3-5, 18.


91. Mars Hill Rosenwald Planning Committee Minutes, 2009-2014: Willa Wyatt; Teresa Buckner; Simone Bouyer.

92. Fisk University "Rosenwald Fund, Card Database,” Dan Slagle.
The Mars Hill Rosenwald School Rehabilitation Project

Friends of the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School began meeting in the fall of 2009 and organized the Planning Committee to save the school building. Steward Coates was elected as leader of the group, and committees were appointed: Building, Grants, History, and Publicity.

Margaret Newbold, Associate Director of Diversity, Conservation Trust of North Carolina from Raleigh met with the Friends Group. Her grandfather, Nathan Carter Newbold, was Director of the NC Division of Negro Education with the NC Department of Public Instruction. Viola King Barnett’s letter may have gone to Director Newbold. Barry Williams, Diversity Project Coordinator also met with the Planning Committee. During 2010, monies were secured from Conservation Trust of North Carolina and Madison County School Board to place a new roof on the building.

The first public gathering, celebrating the Long Ridge Community and the Rosenwald building rehabilitation took place in October 2010 as part of the Mars Hill College Founders Week, celebrating Joe Anderson, for whom the Anderson Elementary School was named.

Also during 2010, Willa Wyatt was elected chair of the Planning Committee, as she and husband David Wyatt had been members since the beginning. Architect Scott Donald, Padgett & Freeman Architects, rendered the drawings for the rehabilitation of the historic school building, meeting preservation standards for historic preservation, as the Mars Hill Rosenwald School building was placed on the State Study List for possible listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Long Ridge neighbor Simone Bouyer, Ad World Services, is webmaster for the Friends Group; Theresa and Ryan Phillips, Legacy Films, Ltd., are media specialists; and Fatimah Shabazz is chairwoman of the Alumni Committee.

In 2011, students from Elon University filmed interviews of alumni and friends of the school for an eight-minute video on the Mars Hill Rosenwald School, which may be viewed on the web site. Also, Mars Hill University students from Lifeworks and Bonner Scholars Program have rendered community service for the school project. In fact, they received the National Award for the best photograph during the National Martin Luther King Day of Service in 2012, for their work on the Mars Hill Rosenwald school property.

The Friends of the Mars Hill Rosenwald School have completed the Strategic Plan with the leadership of Judy Futch and Paul Smith, Judy Futch Consulting, Inc., and qualify for tax deductible contributions under the Madison County Education Foundation, designated to Friends of Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School.

Today, there are other buildings in western North Carolina that were built using the Rosenwald building plans without Rosenwald Funds; however, the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School is the only Rosenwald school building still standing in western North Carolina which received Rosenwald Funds.

Our Story, This Place

In September 2014 the Rural Heritage Museum at Mars Hill University opened the exhibition: “Our Story–This Place, The History of African American Education in Madison County, North Carolina: The Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School”. Historic artifacts, including a chalkboard, school desks, teaching aids, and a reconstructed privy, were placed on display. The exhibit will be on display through February 2015.

For More Information

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NOTE: This history overview is shared for input, corrections, or additions by alumni, members of the community, and friends of the Mars Hill Rosenwald School Project.

The restored Ridgeley Rosenwald School, located in Maryland.