The Historic
Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School
“Our Story, This Place”

Notated History created by Friends of the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School
and the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School History Committee
Our Story, This Place
NOTATED HISTORY
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Introduction

The story of this manuscript is nearly as complicated and remarkable as the restoration of the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School. More people than can be named contributed to it, ranging from those interviewed more than 35 years ago by the late Pauline Binkley Cheek and her son Edwin B. Cheek, to those who have done yeoman research by delving into the archives of the Madison County Board of Education, the State Superintendent of Education office, newspapers, books, and other sources. From the early 1980s through 2018, Polly Cheek took on numerous other tasks, such as researching, proofreading, editing, and interviewing, as well as transcribing twenty years’ worth (1905-24) of Madison County School Board minutes from microfilm.

Especially diligent have been Richard Dillingham, a historian and researcher with unending appetite for detail and confirmable facts, and Dan Slagle, whose knowledge and understanding of original sources, paint layers, and other essentials (in construction and history) helped ensure accuracy in the school building’s rehabilitation.

Such alumni as Fatimah Shabazz and Omar McClain, Sarah Hart, Charity Ray and her late sister Dorothy Ray Coone, Oralene Graves Simmons, and others have provided personal memories, documents, photographs, and other important information. And the entire committee has continued to hold the process in place as we have gathered and documented the material for this short history.

The committee itself has been led, convened, and glued together by the dedication and unending work of Willa Wyatt, who for more than 10 years has donated her time, energy, and leadership to bringing us together and keeping us on task.

The committee has also benefitted from contributions made by Simone Bouyer, whose title of graphic artist and/or layout artist does not encompass her full role in pulling these pages together, organizing and formatting them from scores of individual documents (Word files, PDFs, photographs with captions, lists of family names, etc.), and turning them into a book for our—and your—review.

We hope that there are few mistakes or omissions; but we equally hope that alumni, who are more intimately connected to the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School than nearly anyone else, will catch any mistakes that exist, offer corrections, and provide new material for the full-scale published history scheduled for release one year from now.

~ A.D. (Andy) Reed
Editor-in-chief, Pisgah Press
August 2019
Forward: Our Story, This Place

Kevin Barnette

Welcome to the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School story, Our Story, This Place.

I am Kevin Barnette, football coach at Mars Hill University, a native of Mars Hill, and member of the Madison County Board of Education.

My grandmother Viola King Barnette’s letter to the Superintendent of NC Public Schools, gave access to high school for all rural children in North Carolina.

Our Story is not just an African story; not just an American story; not just a Southern story; nor just a North Carolina or Madison County story, but all of these, and more! This is a Mars Hill educational story. So Welcome to Our Story, This Place.

Oralene Simmons

I am Oralene Simmons, also a native of Mars Hill and alumna of the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School, named for my great-great-grandfather Joseph Anderson.

Joe Anderson was the slave who went to jail as collateral in 1859 for Mars Hill University’s debt on its first building. Also, I was the first African American admitted to Mars Hill College in 1961.

This history, Our Story, This Place, is also my story and the story of my family. My grandmother, Effie Anderson Coone, was a teacher in the Mars Hill Colored School in 1901.

Welcome to Our Story, This Place.

Charity Ray

I am Charity Ray of the Long Ridge Community and a Mars Hill artist and church musician. My sisters Christine, Dorothy, and I attended the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School. In fact, the teacher let me sit in when I was only five years old, where I drew my first art.

After retiring from Mars Hill University Education Department and Library, I continued my art with the Church Mice Art Group in Mars Hill.

My mother, Augusta Ray, uncles, and grandfather Gilbert Briscoe served on the Mars Hill Colored School Committees. This history is truly Our Story, This Place. Welcome.

Sarah Roland Hart

I am Sarah Roland Weston Hart of Asheville. My family, the Arseamous Roland family, lived in the Long Ridge Community, and my son, Oscar Weston and family, still reside there. My father Arseamous “Seam” Roland was a school committee member of the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School for eight years, 1957–1964, during the critical, but peaceful, integration period.

My siblings and I attended the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School, and we are proud to call this home “Our Story, This Place”; therefore, welcome home alumni, descendants, and friends.

Fatimah Shabazz

I am Fatimah Shabazz, daughter of Mary H. Wilson, a teacher at the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald for fourteen years, 1939–1953. I attended this school.

In working with the Friends Group to save this historic school building, I have served as leader of our Alumni Group.

We hope that you enjoy this history, Our Story, This Place, and if possible, join the cause—also making this Your Story!

Omar McClain

Hello! I am Omar McClain from Marshall in Madison County. I attended the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School and was bused from Marshall to the Rosenwald School, and later to Stephens-Lee High School in Asheville.

I too have worked with the Friends Group to save our school building, now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

We invite you to visit and become part of Our Story, This Place.

Simone Bouyer

On behalf of the Historic Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School Rehabilitation Project’s Friends Group, I, too, say Welcome!

I am Simone Bouyer, a neighbor of the Long Ridge Community. I serve as Webmaster of our rehabilitation project.

The Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School is the only funded Rosenwald School building still standing in Western North Carolina.

Thank you for taking the time to travel through history with us to learn more about Our Story, This Place.

Lauren Rayburn

I am Lauren Rayburn, a member of the Friends Group. My family owns and operates the Rayburn Farm of Big Ivy.

I have served as the Grants Person for our rehabilitation project, securing the prestigious grant award for $50,000 from the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, one of only eleven Heritage Grants funded nationally.

This American gift makes each of us part of Our Story, This Place. Thank you, and welcome!
Blacks and Whites in the Greater Mars Hill Area

Black and white families were living in the Mars Hill area when Madison County was formed in 1851. Ten white families and five domestic slave farm families were neighbors during the period of Mars Hill College’s founding in 1856.¹

Until 1851, Mars Hill was located in Yancey County, with the Yancey-Buncombe line crossing Little Mountain at Mars Hill. After the Civil War, the “Ku Klux War” devastated the social fabric of the local area, casting neighbor against neighbor, causing fear, arson, and even murder within the neighborhoods.²

Thomas Shepherd Deaver, one of the founders of Mars Hill College, organized the Union League in the college building to protect the returning Union soldiers and the newly freed blacks. But many mountain communities remained Confederate strongholds and organized the KKK against the Union League.³

By the early 1900s, black families living in the communities of Cane River, Bald Creek, Swiss, and Higgins in eastern Yancey County began moving closer to Mars Hill in search of educational opportunities, tenant farm family options, domestic work, or possibly employment at the college or in Asheville.

¹ John Angus McLeod, From These Stones, p. 20; 1860 Federal Census, Madison County, NC, Slave Schedule.
² J.N. Carr, “Mars Hill College In The War Between The States,” p. 4, NC State Archives, Box 76, Folder 76; copy in MHU Archives.
Master/Slave Relations in Madison County

“An historian of Madison County has pointed out that the relationships between the slaves and their masters were generally a good one because the county was so sparsely settled and the slaves were like members of the family. They and their masters worked together side by side, in the field.

“However, working side by side in fields does not constitute a ‘good relationship.’ Even though the slaves might have had a ‘close relationship’ with their masters, the lines of caste still prevailed greatly, as the following story told by Everette Barnette clearly shows.

“One day Everette’s grandfather was looking at a book. White people did not allow blacks to look at books; however, Everette’s grandfather was just a boy. He was only playing around the house. He said that the hardest whooping he ever got, he got from the white woman. She personally beat him herself. He never looked at any books anymore until after the war was over and he was free.”

~ Charlene Delores Ray

“Even though the slaves might have had a ‘close relationship’ with their masters, the lines of caste still prevailed...”

Race Relations in Madison County

“Before the Civil Rights Act of 1964, blacks could not sit down in any restaurant or café in either Marshall or Mars Hill. Blacks also had to sit at the back of the bus while riding to Asheville. The caste line was slow to break down in Mars Hill, and sometimes the line is still apparent, especially in employment and housing.

“The majority of blacks interviewed in Madison County say that the relationships between blacks and whites have always been ‘good’ ... Perhaps one reason why the relationship between blacks and whites has been good is because the black community has never been in competition with the white community. It has served as a self-sufficient unit, neither forcing itself upon the white community nor allowing the white community to be forced upon it.”

~ Charlene Delores Ray
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.

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, 64 again in the 1930s by Carter, 65 and in McLeod's college history, From These Stones, in 1956/68. 66 A video of the legend of Joe, Bonded, was produced in the 1980s and is historical fiction. 67

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. 68 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. 69

Eleven of the college trustees raised the money, paying the debt for Joe’s return to Mars Hill. 70 Joe lived out his life on a small farm below the campus on Gabriel’s Creek, being deceased by 1910. 71

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. 72

Joe’s master, J.W. Anderson, lost his chattel with the Civil War; after which, he became a Baptist preacher. 73 Oral tradition says that Joe took care of master Anderson during his last days in Asheville. 74 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 1952. 75

In 1959, the Anderson name was given to the Rosenwald Anderson School in the Long Ridge Community. 76 His name was also given to the CCC Camp in the 1930s on South Main Street in Mars Hill, Camp Joe. 77

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. 79 If Joe was born in 1838 (?) he would have been 18 years old in 1856. The $1,100 debt with the contractor was not settled until 1859. 80 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 campus in 1935. This information was related to writer by Mr. Tilson in the early 1980s 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. 81

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. 82

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. 83 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, 84 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. 85 In 1999, the Joseph Anderson and Jane Ray family was celebrated as one of the Founding Families of Mars Hill College. 86 In 2006, Joe’s Memorial was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.
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.

In 2015 MHU students planted a Weeping Cherry tree in honor of Oralene Graves Simmons at Joe’s Memorial.

In 2016 MHU established the Joseph Anderson Memorial Kiosk: From Slave to Founder.

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

Footnotes for the Story of Joe Anderson


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

69. McLeod, Ammons, Carter; Elizabeth Webster Watson, Bricks, A Play in Two Acts, 1970 (Effie Coone was narrator in this play), MHU Archives.

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.
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The Long Ridge “Colored” Community

The area called the Long Ridge takes its name from the ridge that runs from Little Mountain in Mars Hill to the Forks of Ivy. A horse-and-buggy trail along this ridge top developed during the pioneer period of the area. The ridge tops were passable even during winter.

Parts of this early road through the Long Ridge Community would become the main entrance road to Mars Hill from Asheville. This road has had various names over the years: Old Burnsville Road; NC 213/The Dixie Highway; Old Mars Hill Highway. Now, it has returned to the original name: Long Ridge Road, and South Main Street of Mars Hill.

The black community developed around two new buildings located at Long Ridge: the Mars Hill Colored School building erected in 1905, and the Mount Olive Baptist church built in 1917. School-age children were required to walk to the new school building if neighborhood transportation was not furnished. They traveled from Gabriel’s Creek, Bull Creek, Banjo Branch, Bruce Road, Long Branch, or Forks of Ivy. Both white and black children traveled by foot to their schools, walking two to three miles each day.

The original black families in the Mars Hill area were the Andersons, Barnettes, Briscoes, and Rays. In 1929, the Madison County Board of Education hired John Ferguson for $40 per month to transport black school children from the Marshall area to the Long Ridge School.¹ This was part of consolidation at the new Rosenwald School at Long Ridge in 1929.

After 1937, lots in the Long Ridge Community came onto the market, and other black families from Yancey County—the Seam Rolland family was one of the first—began moving to the community,² seeking educational opportunities, tenant farm family options, domestic employment, or the possibility of work at the college or in Asheville.

By 1940, the Long Ridge Community had fully developed. The Federal Census reveals that of the thirty black families in Mars Hill, twenty were living in or around the Long Ridge Community.³

¹ Madison County Board of Education Minutes, Sept. 1929.
² Polly Cheek Interview with Manuel Briscoe, 1984.
³ 1940 Federal Census, Madison County, NC.
Mount Olive Baptist Church

The Mount Olive Baptist Church in the Long Ridge community of Mars Hill originated from Piney Grove Church at Walker Branch on Paint Fork of Little Ivy in Madison County.\(^1\)

The Piney Grove Church was organized April 6, 1906 by the Reverend Hamp Flack, with a membership of 100. Some of the organizing families were the Coone, Connelly, Ferguson, and Anderson families. The average distance for some to travel was around five miles.\(^2\)

It must have been at Piney Grove Church where the wedding ceremony took place for the marriage of Billy Strayhorn’s parents in March 1910. His family recalled that it was in “wooded Mars Hill.”\(^3\)

As families moved closer to Mars Hill, they used monies from the sale of the Piney Grove Church property by Uncle John Ferguson for $120. Securing land near the school building, they erected their new church structure in the Long Ridge Community. The church was organized as Mount Olive Baptist Church by the Reverend Sandy Ray of the Big Ivy Community, July 15, 1917. His support deacons were Harve Ray, Dolf Coone, Gilbert Briscoe, and John Ferguson, all bringing their memberships from the Piney Grove Church.\(^4\)

Charity Ray’s painting of Mount Olive Baptist Church was from a photograph of the 1917 Long Ridge church building.\(^5\)

A young man from Sylva, NC, by the name of Joseph Smith, was ordained into the ministry and became pastor of Mount Olive Baptist Church in 1928. He met and married a local girl by the name of Cerilda Hampton and remained pastor there for 58 years until retirement in 1985.\(^6\)

As families grew, a larger and more substantial church building was erected in 1952, bringing the 1917 cornerstone from the older building to the new structure.\(^7\) Reverend Cleveland Martin, Sr. followed Rev. Smith as pastor. Today, the Rev. William Hamilton is Minister to the fellowship. Mount Olive Baptist Church is now a member in the French Broad Baptist Association of Churches.

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3 David Hajou, Lush Life: Biography of Billy Strayhorn, p. 4.
5 Charity Ray Collection.
The Historic Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School

Madison County Community Schools

The first schools in the pioneer area of Madison County were “Old Field Schools,” which were usually log structures erected by the community in an abandoned farm field. The log structure of the Heritage Cabin on the Mars Hill University campus was such a schoolhouse. It was referred to as a “Frog Level” school, built in the Grapevine Community in the 1850s.1 Subscription Schools were held in these community buildings when public schools were closed down as the Civil War was fought during the 1860s. In Subscription Schools, each family paid the teacher in wheat, corn, bacon, or ham.

These community school structures predated church buildings in the mountain community. In fact, many churches in Madison County were organized in the local school building, as was the case with Mount Olive Baptist Church in Mars Hill. That the school building in the mountain community predates the community church buildings is an indication of the importance of education to the mountain family.2

Free public schools had begun in Yancey County in the 1840s with the North Carolina funding of the “Common Schools.” The part of Yancey County that became Madison County in 1851 is included in that “Common School” educational history.3 It was claimed that North Carolina Common Schools were the best in the South,4 and equal to those in New England. The North Carolina Literary Fund supported those free public schools for white children, but there were no schools for children of color until after the Civil War.

Public Education in Madison County after the Civil War

Free public schools were reestablished in Madison County in the early 1870s, including “colored” public schools. The State Superintendent reported in 1874 that there were twenty white schools and one colored school in Madison County, with 860 white children and twenty-five black children attending.1 By 1896, there were five colored districts in Madison County: Marshall, Bull Creek (Mars Hill), Little Pine Creek, Middle Fork, and Hot Springs.2 By 1901 there were three colored schools in the Mars Hill area: Mars Hill, Grapevine, and Ivy.3

In June, 1905, Superintendent R. L. Moore reported “a school house built for colored people at Mars Hill at a cost of $125 dollars, including an acre of ground,”4 located in what became the Long Ridge Colored Community, south of Mars Hill.

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1 John Angus McLeod, From These Stones, MHC.
2 Jinsie Underwood, This Is Madison County, 1975.
3 Hunter, Education In Yancey County, NC.

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1874 U.S. Civil Rights Bill

Passed by the U.S. Senate, May 23, 1874

The United States Senate passed the Civil Rights Bill of 1874 on May 23, 1874. It read in part:

“All citizens and persons within the jurisdiction of the United States shall be entitled to full and equal enjoyment of the advantages of the common schools and other institutions of learning and benevolence without distinction of race, color or previous condition of servitude.”

In response, North Carolina Superintendent of Public Instruction Alexander McIver replied, “I replied to North Carolina Senator Merrimon: ‘No legislation in favor of mixed schools have ever been attempted in this State. Public sentiment on this subject is all one way: Opposition…”

Source: NC Annual Report of Sup’t of Public Instruction, Nov. 1. 1874-75, pp. 63-64.
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African American Public Education in Madison County

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 knoll, 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.

Footnotes for this section can be found on page 46.
The Historic Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School

Julius Rosenwald

Julius Rosenwald was the son of German-Jewish immigrants. He rose to become one of the wealthiest men in America by building Sears Roebuck into the nation’s leading mail order house. But his most lasting legacy was as a humanitarian, whose commitment to social justice led to historic change for black Americans in the South in the years following the Civil War. Influenced by the social gospel espoused by Rabbi Emil Hirsch of Chicago Sinai Congregation, Rosenwald used his great wealth and talent for leadership to try to fix what he viewed as wrong with the world. All told, throughout his life he gave away over $630 million to charity.

“…Perhaps in no way was Julius Rosenwald more ahead of his time than in matters of race. After meeting Booker T. Washington, Rosenwald became increasingly convinced that blacks and whites were equal and should be treated as such. His most enduring legacy was the establishment of quality schools for African Americans. More than 5,300 were built in fifteen Southern states, and they lasted until the Civil Rights era.

A recent study by the Federal Reserve Bank in Chicago indicates that the schools had a significant impact on raising the educational level of the students who attended them. The schools helped create a new black middle class in the South. Rosenwald hoped that if blacks and whites within the same community worked together to raise funds for and build a school for blacks it would break down racial barriers. This did not happen until the civil rights movement advanced in the 1960s, and even then it took many years to erode the prejudices of centuries. But the schools were an important step on this road to equality.”

Julius Rosenwald’s grandson and biographer, Dr. Peter Ascoli, observed the following: “…His “Rosenwald Schools” were something really unique. Even the General Education Board, a Rockefeller Foundation offshoot (which was supposed to fund education for whites and blacks in the first decade of its existence from 1902 to 1912), funded almost exclusively White things because they were afraid of riling southern sensibilities. J.R. [Julius Rosenwald] didn’t give a hoot about southern sensibilities. He thought that this was a great idea, schools for blacks in rural areas, and he was determined to go ahead and it didn’t matter what the results were going to be. And I think that kind of bravery and doggedness, if you will, was entirely admirable…”

1 Beverly Siegel, From Sears to Eternity: The Julius Rosenwald Story, 2002, WTTW, PBS, Chicago.


3 Peter Ascoli, Julius Rosenwald: The Man Who Built Sears, Roebuck and Advanced the Cause of Black Education in the American South, Philanthropic and Nonprofit Studies, 2006.
Booker T. Washington

Booker Taliaferro Washington was the most famous black man in America between 1895 and 1915. He was also considered the most influential black educator of the late 19th and early 20th centuries insofar as he controlled the flow of funds to black schools and colleges. Born into slavery on a small farm in Virginia, he became determined to educate himself after emancipation. He was later accepted at Hampton Institute, where he became a star pupil under the tutelage of General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, the headmaster of Hampton.  

In 1881, Washington founded Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Alabama. He won the trust of white Southerners and Northern philanthropists to make Tuskegee into a model school of industrial education. He reassured whites that nothing in his educational program challenged white supremacy or offered economic competition with whites. He accepted racial subordination as a necessary evil, at least until such time as blacks could prove themselves worthy of full civil and political rights.  

As far as blacks were concerned, Washington insisted that industrial education would enable them to lift themselves up … and escape the trap of sharecropping and debt. Historian Robert J. Norrell believes that both the professional and popular wisdoms on Washington are seriously mistaken. Norrell sees a sophisticated mind, a complex approach to social problems, and admirable goals for the people he sought to lead, all in a world that set profound limits on what he could expect to achieve. Rather than take the potentially suicidal path of resistance or simply concede the fight, Washington offered hope and optimism, together with an effort to rise above history itself.  

Washington consolidated his influence by his widely read autobiography *Up From Slavery* (1901), the founding of the National Negro Business League in 1900, his celebrated dinner at the White House in 1901, and control of patronage politics as chief black advisor to Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft. Gilded Age industrialists, like Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Rosenwald, who controlled the financing of many black schools in the South, depended upon his advice as to which schools should receive funds. In 1903, Washington's policies received a challenge from within the black community.  

W.E.B. Du Bois, then a scholar at Atlanta University, attacked Washington's philosophy in the book *The Souls Of Black Folk*. “The legendary battle of ideas between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois at the dawn of the 20th century was also a battle over masks: should we seem humble and modest or prideful and outraged? …And yet both men had good ideas for black uplift. Washington's emphasis on self-help was not fundamentally incompatible with Du Bois's emphasis on protest, and both were necessary."  

Most middle-class and working-class blacks continued to hold Washington in great esteem. Even though he was known for a level of appeasement with white America, it was discovered, after his death, that Washington gave financial backing in many court cases challenging segregation.  

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

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.

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.1

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Overview of The Rosenwald Program

The Rosenwald rural school building program was a major effort to improve the quality of public education for African Americans in the South during the early twentieth century.

In 1912, Julius Rosenwald gave Booker T. Washington permission to use funds he had donated to Tuskegee Institute for the construction of six small schools. Pleased with the results, Rosenwald then agreed to fund a larger program for schoolhouse construction.

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.

By 1928, one in every five rural schools for black students in the South was a Rosenwald school. At the program’s conclusion in 1932, it had produced 4,977 new schools, 217 teachers’ homes, 163 shop buildings, and served 663,615 students in 15 states.

Approximately 800+ schools were built in North Carolina. Each of these small communities was able to match funds from the Rosenwald grant to have a school constructed in their community. The vision of Dr. Washington and the well-placed investment of Mr. Rosenwald has given us a mighty legacy, one that lives on and continues to this day.4

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The Rosenwald Schools and Black Education in North Carolina

North Carolina Director of Negro Education Nathan Carter Newbold demonstrated considerable skill in convincing state legislators and local governments to allocate funds to match foundation grants for the construction of Rosenwald schools.

In 1913 the state appointed Nathan Carter Newbold the “Negro agent” for rural schools in North Carolina. A white man trained at Trinity College (later Duke University), Newbold had taught in Asheboro and Roxboro and worked as superintendent of schools in Washington County before being hired as Negro agent. He now made black education his life’s work, serving thirty-seven years in the same position.

Newbold’s enthusiasm for Rosenwald schools predated formal creation of the fund. In 1915 Newbold arranged with Julius Rosenwald for the construction of one of the first schoolhouses outside the Tuskegee area. On October 8, 1915, the school—a two-teacher facility in Chowan County—was completed and inspected.

When the Rosenwald Fund was established in 1917, one of its first actions was to offer each state a grant to help hire a black administrator to assist the white “Negro Agent.” By 1918 black assistants were at work with Director Newbold in North Carolina.1

NOTE: Nathan Carter Newbold’s granddaughter, Margaret Newbold, Associate Director of Diversity for the Conservation Trust of North Carolina, has been an advocate and friend of the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School, helping secure funds to reroof and save the old Mars Hill Rosenwald school building.

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Securing Funds to Build a Rosenwald School

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 the 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.8 This same year, the Board purchased an additional acre of land from J.M. Rice for the colored school site on Long Ridge,9 and by July 1928, around $600 in funds were expended on a new Negro school building at Long Ridge.10

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?”11

The Rosenwald monies for $750 came in the summer of 1929, and the first Rosenwald School class was taught at Long Ridge in 1929–1930.12

Ten years later, the Board of Education adopted the Rosenwald Community School Plan No. 6 for a Madison County white school.13

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.

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1930 Black School Enrollment in NC

“Few Negroes in Madison”

According to the Feb. 7, 1930 issue of the News Record, “Madison County’s total school enrolment is 83 Negro children, 9th smallest number of any in the state.”

The numbers by county were:

9    Mitchell County  (Smallest of all)
23   Clay County
46   Watauga County
47   Swain County
53   Cherokee County
61   Yancey County
75   Alleghany County
80   Avery County
83   Madison County

Those compared with 8,936 listed for Robeson County.

Sources:
The News Record,  
NC Superintendent of Public Instruction Report, 1930.

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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.
Support from the Long Ridge Community

The Long Ridge School and Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Madison County had already manifested much commitment to the community and to the education of their children. In 1925 they updated an older school for $300 plus $250 for desks, and approximately $100 for labor and materials. The building was still inadequate, but the members of the Long Ridge community had begun a tradition of community support in addressing the needs of local families.

In the spring of 1927 the Board of Education purchased an additional acre of land from J. M. Rice, and by July 1928 the community had raised approximately $600 toward construction of a new building on Long Ridge.

In correspondence with the Director of Rosenwald funds, the newly elected Superintendent, C. M. Blankenship, explained that Rosenwald Architectural Plan No. 20 had been used for the new school, which cost $2,093, except that the Industrial Room had been omitted. “Can we still get Rosenwald Funds,” he asked. In response Rosenwald monies for $750 came in the summer of 1929, and that fall the first class was taught in the African American school which is known as the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School.

How the Long Ridge Community Supported the School

Rosenwald funds for the school could not have been matched without the efforts of members of the Long Ridge community who contributed cash or in-kind labor and materials, wrote to the Superintendent of N.C. Schools, and lobbied the county school board and Board of Commissioners.

- Rosenwald Monies’ Community Match
- Two Acres of Land Contributors
- School Road Builder
- Service of School Committee Persons
- Family Taxpayers
- School Census Takers
- Parents
  - Food Preparers, Lunch Boxes
  - Clothes Preparers
  - Special Programs Supporters
- Diggers of Water Line from Town to Community
- Transportation, Bus Drivers
- Community Participation in School Events
- Teachers
- Students
  - Mentors of Younger Students
  - Water Carriers
  - Coal Carriers
  - Kindling Makers
  - Fire Builders
  - Building Custodians
  - Groundskeepers
  - Grass Cutters
Is Your Family Name Listed?

Carry on the legacy by sharing your story, giving a donation, and telling others about this project.

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**African American Long Ridge Families**

*Federal American children ages 6–21 in Madison County, North Carolina.*

**Federal Census 1930**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MARS HILL:</th>
<th>Federal Census 1940</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barnett, Oliver/Viola</td>
<td>Barnette, Oliver/Viola 4</td>
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<td>Conley, Adeline</td>
<td>Briscoe, Gilbert/Fanny 6</td>
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<td>Coon, Doug/Sarah</td>
<td>Briscoe, Umphrey/Tessie 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coon, Otis/Hattie</td>
<td>Coones, Howard/Lena 2</td>
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<td>Elliot, Tilda</td>
<td>Coones, Ottis/Hattie 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hampton, Jim/Essie</td>
<td>Fergerson, Max/Velva 1</td>
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<td>Henson, Oscar/Zona</td>
<td>Henson, Gaither/Ruby 3</td>
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<td>MIDDLE FORK:</td>
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<td>Grifin, Tom/Effie E.</td>
<td>Jones, Hubert 2</td>
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<td>Ray, George/Laura L.</td>
<td>Stokley, Charlie/Maggie 4</td>
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<td>HOT SPRINGS:</td>
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<td>Houston, Blanch 2</td>
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<td>Ray, Harve/Sarah</td>
<td>Smith, Luther/Lucille 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ray, Nate/Mary</td>
<td>Stokley, Charlie/Maggie 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilson, John/Mary Ann</td>
<td>Stokley, Mary 1</td>
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<td>MARSHALL:</td>
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<td>McClain, Lena</td>
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<td>Henshaw, Blanch</td>
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<td>Smith, Luther/Lurie</td>
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<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Spelling of names used by census taker.
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.

The Long Ridge Rosenwald School began in the fall of 1929 and continued until 1959 when the school name was changed to Anderson Elementary School, to honor Joseph Anderson, the slave who went to prison one hundred years earlier, in 1859, for Mars Hill College’s debt; that school name continued until integration in 1965.

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

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19. MCBOE Minutes, July 5, 1927.
The Water Story on Long Ridge

Open springs were available in the valleys on both sides of Long Ridge, west on Long Ridge Road in the hollow above the John Ammons home place, or east on what became South Main Street, near the Robel West home place.

Therefore, when Madison County Board of Education built the new Mars Hill Colored School on Long Ridge in 1905, buckets of water were carried by the older students from the bottom of the hill below the school, where today is South Main Street. Fresh buckets of water were placed on the school water shelf daily where a dipper hung for the students. This system continued until in the 1930s when students became sick through contaminated water from open springs.

Manuel Briscoe described this sad event during an interview with Polly Cheek, years later, in 1984: “It took the deaths of three black children from typhoid fever before an agreement could be reached whereby blacks furnished the labor and whites the lines to take water to the black Long Ridge Community.”

Seemingly, the matter was complicated because the Long Ridge Community was outside the town limits for water service, but the two groups worked together and solved the problem.

Extending the Town of Mars Hill water line to the Long Ridge Community still required that students carry buckets of water a long distance, “approximately 2,000 feet” to the school, that is, almost as far as Mt. Olive Church.

It was in the mid 1940s before the water line was extended to the school. That gave the school children an outside water spigot.

Only in the 1950s did the school house get inside plumbing and restrooms.

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2 Madison County Board of Education Minutes, March 6, 1939.
3 Ibid., Sept. 6, 1943.
4 Oralene Simmons and Charity Ray Memories, 2014.

Black Folkways in Madison County: Doctors

“Up until the 1930s and 1940s, most black people in Madison County had never been to a doctor for any of their medical problems. Black women doctored their children with roots and teas. When they had their children they used the services of the local midwife, Aunt Tillie Elliot. She charged around six dollars to deliver a baby, but Dr. Locke, the white doctor, charged fifteen dollars. The midwife delivered babies for both blacks and whites.”

~ Charlene Delores Ray

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The History of Blacks in Madison County: 1860-1981
Mars Hill College Scholar's Research, 1981
Mars Hill University Archives, Local History, Box 1, p.13
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.\(^{22}\)

The North Carolina Superintendent of Schools reported Madison County school houses in 1929–1930 as follows: five brick buildings; 48 frame buildings, 22 of which were one-room school buildings for white children; and two frame buildings, a one-room at Hot Springs, and the two-room at Mars Hill for “colored” children.\(^{23}\)

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.\(^{24}\)

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.\(^{25}\)

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.”\(^{29}\) The committee chose to rename the school Anderson Elementary, honoring Joseph Anderson who had helped in the founding of Mars Hill College.

\(^{22}\)  Biennial Report, p. 314.
\(^{24}\)  MCBOE Minutes, 1939-1953.
\(^{28}\)  MCBOE Minutes, July 6, 1959.
\(^{29}\)  Anderson Elementary School, Madison County History, MHU Archives.
A Visit from John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

“I was born in 1913, and I started school when I was six; so that was 1919, and I finished the seventh grade, that's all that they had here. I was eight or nine 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.”


Arts and Crafts in the Long Ridge School

Shirley (Barnette) Sewell

I will be seventy years old on June 27, 1983. I started school at Long Ridge at age six and finished the seventh grade. Our teacher, Mrs. Fortune, from Old Fort, taught us to make shuck dolls, whisk brooms, and pottery. We'd take a certain kind of red clay from the bank near the school, get it wet till we could work it good, and shape it any way we wanted. We'd put it on racks, two layers with bricks to hold the heat, and then build a fire. It was just a one-room school, so we had to make it outside.

At special events our parents would come and look at our pottery. Some would buy it. Mrs. Fortune was real good at all different crafts. We made shuck rugs, picture frames; we took pictures from magazines and folded them to make pretty belts. With clay we made jugs, vases, large, small, even water pitchers. As good as any you buy in a store. People from Mars Hill College and everywhere came to buy them. It was something to see.

Augusta (Briscoe) Ray

I went to Long Ridge School about 1924 and finished out the seventh grade. We made pottery about 1927 or '28. Ruby Fortune was our teacher… This here red clay, it looks right slick. We got it out back from the school, and we rolled it out by hand, then baked it… We made corn shuck dolls and shuck mats, and other things from shucks; I can remember John D. Rockefeller coming to visit Long Ridge. We had the pottery on show for him, our parents and people of the community.

Manuel Briscoe

I started at long Ridge School in 1927, and we made pottery about 1930. Our teacher was Charity Hazart, from Abington, Virginia... She made us get buckets of clay near a small branch below the school… We'd get a vase or bowl formed and then work it down to make it smooth inside and out. Then we'd set it out to dry. We did not fire it in a kiln. When it was dry we'd paint it. We took our pottery to the fair in Asheville in the fall of the year... We'd take baskets made out of walnuts and crossbows and arrows. One fellow won a shotgun with his crossbow. I won a blue ribbon, surprisingly enough.

Alumni interviews conducted in 1983 by Edwin B. Cheek.
The Historic Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School

Manuel Briscoe
Chair, MHARS Committee, 1960–1964

Interviewed June 18, 1983

I started at Long Ridge School in 1927, and we made pottery about 1930. Our teacher was Charity Hazard from Abington, Virginia. I don’t know where she learned pottery, but when she came, she really knew how to do the job. She made us get buckets of clay near a small branch below the school. We didn’t mix anything with it. If it was too soft, we’d let it dry till we could knead it like flour [dough], stiff enough to roll out to form a base. We’d take a little water on a knife or paddle to smooth it.

We’d get a vase or bowl formed and then work it down to make it smooth inside and out. Then we’d set it out to dry. We didn’t fire it in a kiln. When it was dry we’d paint it. Charity Hazard was craft-minded, and we took our pottery to the fair in Asheville in the fall of the year. In those days, we’d take baskets [carved] out of walnuts and crossbows [with] arrows. One fellow won a shotgun with his crossbow. I won a blue ribbon, surprisingly enough.

A Pearson fellow was head of the fair for blacks, held on a vacant lot on the corner of McDowell and Southside. Charity taught at Long [Ridge] for two years and then went to Burnsville. [Student] Hugh Lee Griffin; I knew him well. I was talking with Charles Young today, and he said Charity Hazard taught crafts there. She passed less than a year ago in Richmond, and her husband burned up in an accident in a house.

For the fair we made pitchers, vases, and bowls and painted them with watercolors. Also we made a type of basket with a handle and carved birds – ducks and other type of fowl. You know, in those days we called that junk, but now we value it. I doubt that you could find anybody who kept any. Under the school building there’s two feet of coal dust; I doubt whether you could find any pieces of pottery.

Mr. Briscoe tried to recall names of teachers at Long [Ridge]. His first teacher was…Mackie. His second teacher was Mrs. Roseberry. Other names he mentioned were Mrs. Phillips from Lenoir, Mrs. Davis, and Mrs. Conley. “Our teacher trusted me and another boy to take her check, about $50 a month, to the bank.”

Black Home Remedies of the Briscoes

We went barefoot as kids. We’d stump a toe—it would be nearly hangin’ off—but the doctor’d get pine rosin and bind it up and first thing you knew it would be healed.

We’d bring in resin and steep it and make a tea for colds. We’d put in on sores and on horses when the bridle rubbed them. We raised Rhode Island Reds and Plymouth hens, and we’d dye their eggs—brown with walnuts and gold with sage. We made real good wine back then—blackberry and grape. Some people used yeast, but we just put in sugar and let it work till it quit. Wine helps cramps.

We collected all sorts of wild stuff—poke, plantain, thistle (it was thorny), wild mustard, lamb’s quarters. Sumac tea was good for bed-wetters. We’d decorate with galax wreaths. Gudger Barnett would kill a hog and his wife would render out the fat for people to take with a little sugar at night, like cod liver oil. Blacks and whites both came for that. Also onion plasters were used. We’d cut pumpkins like wheels and hang them on a hoe handle to dry for food.

My daddy kept the [branch] banks grubbed. He knew how to keep things fixed. If the wind blew wooden shingles off something like the chicken coup he’d make new ones out of oak wood, and they would stay on. He made oak bottomed chairs, and he got hickory splits to tie chair bottoms. The blacks, that was their thing. We got broom straw to make brooms; the kids scraped off the seeds for it. My uncle made split baskets, and white folks bought them. A lady on Middle Fork made them. Charity Ray has a picture of one of the baskets. I remember Aunt Sarah with a basket full of goodies. Some baskets were square, and there was a gizzard basket. My mother knit little booties and sweaters and quilted. We’d have quilting parties.
The Historic Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School

“\textit{For nerves you’d boil catnip and drink it at night. We’d boil wintergreen and make a syrup for coughs.}”

My mother used horse mint for bronchitis. Boneset was bitter stuff, but you would boil it and drink it for a cough. For nerves you’d boil catnip and drink it at night. We’d boil wintergreen and make a syrup for coughs. I keep it and take it with a little brown sugar. It’s hard to find good molasses now. My daddy made it the old way; and oh boy, that was good. He raised everything we ate, even wheat, peanuts, rutabagas, all that stuff in our garden. He and mother pickled cucumbers and made kraut in a wooden keg. He raised celery. My mother would take tansy and wash it real good for the blood in spring. We’d make spice wood tea, sweeten it and drink it cold or hot. My mother used to take molasses and sulfur to purify the blood, and I’d try it once in a while.

“My mother would take tansy and wash it real good, cut it and put it in a jar, and we’d drink it. White plantain was good for women’s discharge. My mother-in-law, Doskie McDowell, would cut it up and make a drink out of it.

“Sassafras tea was good for the blood in spring. We’d make spice wood tea, sweeten it and drink it cold or hot. My mother used to take molasses and sulfur to purify her blood, and I’d try it once in a while. I had whooping cough one time. A neighbor had a mare so daddy went to him and got some mare’s milk, and it cured my cough. A lot of people used mare’s milk.”

\textit{Interview by Pauline and Edwin B. Cheek, 1983}

Augusta Ray,
Mother of Charity Ray and Dorothy Coone
Interviewed June 15, 1983

My mother was born on September 17, 1893, in Yancey County, and my daddy in Madison County. I was born on Paint Fork in Madison County, the oldest of 14 children. I married when I was eleven. I went to Long Ridge School about 1924 and finished out the seventh grade.

We made pottery about 1927 or 28. Ruby Fortune was our teacher. I don’t know where she was from. She was married. She taught two or three years. You had to have water to make the pottery. This here red clay, it looks right slick. We got it out back from the school, and we rolled it out by hand, then baked it. I don’t remember any glaze. We made corn shuck dolls and shuck mats, and other things from shucks. I can kind-of remember John D. Rockefeller coming to visit Long Ridge. We had the pottery on show for parents and people of the community.

I have one of the teachers’ pictures, Sallie Ledbetter Davidson, who taught my second year. She was born May 19, 1895, to William and Anna Logan Ledbetter and graduated from Johnson C. Smith University. We went to see her in a Charlotte convalescent home on September 17, 1977. We were so proud to see her, and she was proud to see us, too.

Daddy played the guitar—religious songs and the old-timey hoedowns. John Hanson, my mother’s daddy, played fiddle for both whites and blacks. They’d play long into the night. Mother did the cooking, and Daddy would call all the children around for prayers. We sat around a square wooden table, and he would say thanks. I enjoyed being with other children in the community. Oh yes, we’d walk to school; there was no other way. When I finished Long Ridge, I went to work for Dr. Willard Robinson—cooking and house work. I’d read to little baby Ray—“Little Red Hen,” and “The Sky Is Falling,” and “The Three Little Pigs.” Daddy was wanting to send me to Johnson City to his sister’s so I could go to school, but you had to have clothes. He was share-cropping, and he had to work hard. He had to clear off a field, go in and grub it. He’d start in the fall of the year to burn brush, and then he’d plow for summer. It was hard work.
Shirley Sewell,  
Daughter of Viola King Barnette

Interviewed June 9, 1983

I will be seventy years old on June 27, 1983. I started school at Long Ridge at the age of six and finished the seventh grade. Our teacher, Mrs. Fortune, from Old Fort, taught us to make shuck dolls, whiskbrooms, and pottery. We’d take a certain kind of red clay from the bank near the school, get it wet till we could work it good and shape it any way we wanted. We’d put it on racks, two layers with bricks to hold the heat, and then build a fire. It was just a one-room school; so we had to make it outside. At special events our parents would come and look at our pottery. Some would buy it. Mrs. Fortune was real good at all different crafts. We made shuck rugs, picture frames; we took pictures from magazines and folded them to make pretty belts. With clay we make jugs, vases, large, small, even water pitchers. As good as any you buy in a store. People from Mars Hill College and everywhere came to buy them. It was something to see.

John D. Rockefeller came to visit Long Ridge School, and we had an “exhibition” for him. We had pottery on display, and also we took pretty flowers. The teacher told all of us to get dressed up. It was like an outing. We carried our lunch and baked a cake. We were told he was the richest man in the world, and we were going to see him. He came in a model T Ford and wore a Stetson-like hat. He stayed a couple of hours. He was impressed with the rugs, and more so with the pottery. He got some. He appropriated money for a new room. I was eight or nine when he came. I graduated in 1929, and the second room was built in 1927. Miss Luck and Miss Davis were my last teachers. They would take time with you and tell you how to look forward to the future.

NOTE: Interviews were by Edwin B. Cheek, son of Dr. Edwin R. Cheek, and Pauline Binkley Cheek, in a 1983 summer internship for credit at Mars Hill College, while a student at Wake Forest College. His research was “Arts and Crafts at Long Ridge School,” supervised by Richard Dillingham.

Edwin B. Cheek in 1983
**The Historic Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School**

**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 at the church in "wooded Mars Hill." Both his mother, Lillian Young, and his maternal grandmother, Alice Young, must have attended the colored schools in the Mars Hill area, as mother Lillian was well educated.

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**Lillian Young Strayhorn**

Billy Strayhorn (1915–1967) was one of the greatest composers in the history of American music, the creator of a body of work that includes such standards as “Take the ‘A’ Train.” Yet all his life Strayhorn was overshadowed by his friend and collaborator Duke Ellington, with whom he worked for three decades as the Ellington Orchestra’s ace songwriter and arranger.¹

These words come from the back jacket of David Hajdu’s biography of Billy Strayhorn.² In the book he writes about Billy’s family and background in Mars Hill.

Eighteen-year-old Lillian Young, the only child of Alice Young, a single mother from a comfortable working family in wooded Mars Hill, North Carolina, was attentively raised and well educated.

She graduated from a two-year program for women at Shaw University, a Baptist school whose curriculum stressed ladylike manners and social skills. Poised and soft-spoken, with an eye for modest, womanly clothes and an ear for elegiac language (“I see the rain is slackening”), she earned a lifelong reputation for formality.

Lillian and twenty-year-old James Nathaniel Strayhorn were married in a Baptist Church ceremony in wooded Mars Hill on March 10, 1910.

James, a descendant of the founder of the first whiskey distillery established in the South after the Civil War, was also raised in relative comfort and style in a roomy Prairie Victorian house in the black section of Hillsborough, North Carolina. A firecracker of a man, James seemed a perfect counterbalance to Lillian, as ebullient as she was sedate, as spontaneous as she was doctorial, as adventurous as she was restrained. They made an exquisite-looking couple: willowy, elegant Lillian, with her curly, pulled up hair, her clear, open eyes, and a soft smile that nudged two sets of double dimples on her cheeks; and thick-set towering James with his glistening liquid eyes and broad, sly, cocksure attitude.

Their fourth child and third boy, was born in 1915 without a legal name on his birth certificate, just Baby Boy Strayhorn. At age five, he was given the name William Strayhorn, but everybody called him Billy.

His love of music began early with his mother and Grandmother Strayhorn at Hillsborough, when visiting there during his summers. By the time he reached high school, his classmates called him “Talent.” Talent. Talent. That was Billy. “Everybody was in awe of Billy, you know, because of his music.” “...he was just like, you’d say, a genius.” His first jazz composition, “Lush Life,” was composed while he was still in high school.

Billy Strayhorn’s professional jazz career brought him international fame with Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Lena Horne, and others.

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¹ David Hajdu, Lush Life: A Biography of Billy Strayhorn, North Point Press, NY, back cover.

² Ibid. pp. 3-5, 18.
The Historic Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School

Story of the School Building After Integration

After 1965, the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School building continued being the property of the Madison County Board of Education. In 2009, the Friends Group was organized to rehabilitate the building.

During the late 1960s, the building was used by the Buncombe-Madison Opportunity Corporation, which secured use of the building for a possible Long Ridge Youth Recreation Center. A young African American Asheville male was retained to develop the center. This idea for the use of the old school building for a recreation center was great for the youth, but not for the adults of the community. Therefore, the Recreation Center only operated for a few months. However, the basketball goals remained on each of the building end walls, where local black and white youth gathered and played basketball. These youth left their team chalk marks and scores on the walls along with their initials, even some of them adding plus and love marks beside initials. Many of those youth are now our adult leaders, “and still great friends!”

During the last years of the 1900s, the building was used as a Burley tobacco air-curing barn by the James Briscoe family. Uncle James added small tree tier-poles in the building for hanging sticks of tobacco for curing. (He surely had leased the tobacco allotment of one of his white neighbors, as the tobacco acreage was regulated through the local Farm Office by the federal program.)

James was one of many children of Gilbert and Fannie Henson Briscoe. His sister Augusta Ray and brothers Dave Briscoe and Manuel Briscoe were also of the Long Ridge Community.

For many years James worked as a painter for Jackie Shepherd, Shepherd’s Enterprises. After completing a trailer paint job for Mr. Shepherd, to James’ surprise, the newly painted trailer title was given to the Briscoes. With the help of his white friend L. C. Chandler, the mobile home was set up on Long Ridge, replacing their older trailer, where they lived out their lives. James was buried in the Mount Olive Cemetery, where the Mars Hill VFW Chapter erected a Flag Memorial for veterans of the community, James being a WWII Army veteran.

In the early 2000s, a big tree fell on the building’s addition, causing damage to the main building’s roof. The Friends Group secured resources for a new building roof in 2011.

Integration Memories

Manuel Briscoe

“Integration of the schools went better than I thought it would go.

Declining the offer of help from an Asheville lawyer, Briscoe “felt on the spot” as a member of the school committee, but he says “I sought to maintain harmony. We had opposition on both sides, but it didn’t get out of hand. We just worked together as people and didn’t even lose friendship!”

Interview by Polly Cheek, “Briscoe Retires After 34 Years in Mars Hill,” The Asheville Citizen, June 6, 1984, p. 13

The Rosenwald Alumni share happy memories from their school years on video: fun games during recess; 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. Even a ruler or two on the palm of the hand was recalled with laughter.

Lasting Memories

High school students were bused to Stephens-Lee High School in Asheville after the 1940s, a practice that continued until Mars Hill schools were fully integrated by 1965.

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

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. Board of Education member Stewart Coates, who had grown up in the neighborhood, 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.

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1 Dr. Richard Hoffman Journals, 1960s, with comment by Jeannie Hoffman, 2019.
2 Nephew Dr. David Lloyd Briscoe information, 2019.
3 Jackie Shepherd, employer, and friend L.C. Chandler information, 2019.
4 MHARS Minutes, 2011.
The Historic Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School

Viola King Barnette, Crusader for Black Education

Viola King Barnette was a crusader for black education who became acutely aware of the unfairness of an educational system that required all students to attend school until they turned 16, but refused to provide high schools for rural black students.

Under segregation in the 1940s, African American children were barred from the white schools, and in Madison County there was no black high school; all-black Long Ridge School went only from first through seventh grade. As a result, when students finished at the Long Ridge School (later the Joe Anderson School) in Mars Hill, or any other black school in the county, they were required to repeat seventh grade over and over until they turned 16. Their only other option was to attend the segregated Stephens-Lee High School in Asheville, but the state did not take responsibility for transporting students to high school.

With some help from Caroline and Martha Biggers, teachers at Mars Hill College, and from Cornelia Vann, for whom Mrs. Barnette did washing, her daughter Shirley was sent to boarding school for a year. She got a job as cook to help pay her tuition. Her sister Blanch and brother David spent the week with her in Asheville in order to attend Stephens Lee.

Like her children, most of Viola King Barnett's grandchildren have fulfilled her vision of the importance of education, continuing on to college and graduate school, earning masters and doctorates, and some working at colleges themselves. One grandchild, a PhD, is on the staff of Central College in Durham, North Carolina. Her grandson Kevin Barnette, Mars Hill University's Assistant Football Coach, describes her this way.

"I never saw her frustrated. She never raised her voice. She always knew it was going to happen. She was the most positive person I've ever been around. She just believed God was going to work it out. She always smiled. She sang all the time, and she spoke in the softest voice."

True to her favorite hymn, "I'm on the Battlefield," Viola Barnette spoke out for a better education for African American children in Madison County when no one else shared her hope.

"It never made sense to her that they just would continue to repeat the same grade," Coach Barnette recalled during an interview with the Hilltop staff. "My grandmother wasn't a person to really show a lot of emotions, but she thought that was pretty stupid."

Emily Herring Wilson described Viola Barnette's reaction in her 1983 book, When the Sun Goes Down, about the influence of elderly black women.

"She'd 'ask around' if there was any way buses could take the children from Mars Hill and other small villages into Asheville, 25 miles away, where they could advance through high school...

In frustration, Mrs. Barnette wrote to the NC Superintendent of Schools asking that something be done about the problem. She ultimately received a letter from him, informing her that buses would be made available to take them to Stephens-Lee—an hour each way. The superintendent wrote, "Because of your interest in this matter, in the future all North Carolina children, black and white, will have a chance to go to high school."

Mrs. Barnette, who died in 1983 at the age of 91, was honored during Martin Luther King Day ceremonies at Mars Hill College in 2006 "for her contribution toward equal secondary education opportunities for all children in North Carolina."

Coach Barnette said his grandmother would not take any credit for her accomplishment were she alive today. "I know for a fact she would give God all the glory."

A Mars Hill graduate himself, Kevin was reared in Madison County and still lives here today with his family. His fondest memory of his grandmother is that she loved kids, and that she would treat them with great respect.
“She'd get down to your level and talk to you… She always had toys in her house for kids. Even up into her eighties she would be on the floor playing with kids. Everything had a rhyme or reason to it. It either had a learning concept to it, or a spiritual concept. She never wasted her words. When she said something, it always had unbelievable substance to it.”

She stressed education and wanted all her children to go to school to get an education and be successful. “She wanted them to desire to have an education.”

He said the first time he understood the wide impact of his grandmother was in 1997, when he was flown to Duke University Hospital in Durham for emergency heart surgery. I had two heart surgeries at Duke, and I was in the heart tower. One day I was walking and a gentleman came into my room. I didn't know him from Adam. He said he was Robert Seymour.

He learned later that Robert Seymour is a well-known pastor in the Chapel Hill area who during the days of segregation was influential in fighting to integrate churches, restaurants and schools in that area. Early in his career he had been pastor at Mars Hill Baptist Church. Viola Barnette had worked for him. “He told me during that time that my grandmother played a real important role in how he saw Civil Rights and his spiritual walk during the time that she worked for him. And to me that was really amazing. Finding out and knowing who Robert Seymour is, and finding out and knowing that she had that big an impact.”

She supported Martin Luther King and other civil rights leaders. She despised racism so much that she had her name changed from Barnett to Barnette with an “e” on the end because the governor of Mississippi at the time (Ross Barnett) had the same name and she loathed the things he did to defend segregation. “It's very important to me when people write my name that it has an “e” on the end,” said Coach Barnette.

Many years after the first buses took children from Madison County into Asheville to school, Madison County public schools finally opened their doors to black students. Coach Barnette, who went to school in the early 1970s, had five older brothers. “I know that four of my brothers had a hard time with integration. Once they got into high school, all four of them said there's no way we're going to go through that. They all went into some service, Army, Navy…

His own experience in Madison County's newly integrated schools was positive. “By the time I got there, it was so much easier. All my friends that I grew up with, we all went to the elementary school here. From here I went to high school. I played Little League baseball. Little League football. I was involved in the Boy Scouts, the Cub Scouts, and all those things with all those kids from the time I was very young.

“I haven't had any racial problems in Madison County. I know that sounds impossible, but I haven't. I grew up and basically spent my entire life here.”

He was then and is now continually inspired by his grandmother's persistence and faith. “Her walking a mile and a half carrying clothes and washing people's clothes, and taking care of nine children by herself... I have it easy compared with that! She saw through her spiritual walk that all things were possible.”

This profile was adapted from “Viola Barnette: Spoke Out for Education,” with permission from Mars Hill University's “The Hilltop Online” student newspaper, January 23, 2006. Interview and story development by Loretta Akins, Joseph Ayers, Shatara Drummond, Rachel Dudley, Chris Hewitt, Xavier Jordan, Katie Powell, Matt Welch, Ryan Wright, and Deidre Abouahmed.

Additional Sources


Long Ridge Achievers

Five students from the Long Ridge School and community are given as examples of academic achievement and cultural contributions, still living today, from second to sixth school generations.

**Charity Ray**
Charity Ray, retired from Mars Hill University School of Education and Library, is a local artist. Her water colors have been purchased by individuals from many states, and her renderings of the Mt. Olive Baptist Church building and the Mars Hill Rosenwald School building are published by the Friends Group. Her love for art began when she was allowed to sit in at the Long Ridge School at age five, where she began her first drawings. This was before the days of kindergarten. She continued her art work at Allen High School for African American girls in Asheville, where she graduated. Today she is a member of a Mars Hill arts group, The Church Mice. Also she is a member of the History Committee of the Rosenwald Building Rehabilitation Project. Thank you Rockefeller Room, her parents, and her teachers at Rosenwald Elementary and Allen High Schools, who encouraged her.

**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, which he organized at age twelve. After receiving his PhD in Sociology from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, he became a tenured professor of Sociology at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

He is U.S. Fulbright Scholar’s 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. Today, 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. In the summer of 2019, he is a program presenter at the 24th World Scout Jamboree in West Virginia. He is the first Board of Advisors member with the Mars Hill Rosenwald School Friends’ Group.

**Oralene Simmons**
Oralene Simmons attended the Long Ridge School in the Rosenwald building, and graduated from Stephens-Lee High School in Asheville, NC. She was the first African American admitted to Mars Hill College in 1961, one of the first admissions in the South, two years before Martin Luther King’s famous speech, “I Have A Dream!” She is the great-great-granddaughter of Joseph Anderson. Her grandmother, Effie Anderson Coone, granddaughter of Joe Anderson, taught at the Mars Hill Colored School in 1901.

Oralene became a leader in Asheville during the integration protest years, later becoming Director of the YMI Cultural Center. She organized the Martin Luther King Prayer Breakfast in Asheville, the largest in the Southeast. Today, she continues her leadership in cultural diversity activities. She is a member of the Friends of the Mars Hill Rosenwald School Rehabilitation Project.

**Charlene Ray**
Charlene Ray, great-great-great-granddaughter of Joseph Anderson, graduated from Mars Hill College in 1982 with honors. She was the first Appalachian Scholar at the school, receiving a full scholarship. For her senior research project, she researched and wrote, “History of Blacks in Madison County.” After receiving her masters degree at ETSU, Mrs. Dunn became a staff member 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. At Mars Hill University, he helped organize the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, one of the largest in the South. Further, Mr. Barnette is a member of the Madison County School Board. The Rev. Barnette serves as Associate Pastor at Brookstone Church at Flat Creek. He is a member of the Rosenwald Friends Group, serving as chair of the Community Relations Committee.
Oralene Graves Simmons

The history of western North Carolina’s slave economy became a stark reality for Oralene Graves when she enrolled at Mars Hill College in 1961. The first African American student admitted to the school, she had stronger and deeper ties to the institution than anyone else on campus. Her great-great-grandfather Joe Anderson was the slave who was held in jail as collateral for a debt to contractors who built the first building.

After marriage, a family of five and grandchildren, and a long career with Asheville Parks and Recreation Department, following her studies at Mars Hill College, Oralene would retire and become chair of the Martin Luther King Association. While there, Oralene received a call from Hawaii, a complete stranger, who wanted to know if Oralene knew of someone named Jessie Woodson Anderson. The caller said that she was Susan Anderson, great-great-granddaughter of J. W. Anderson, owner of Oralene’s enslaved ancestor Joseph Anderson.
Reflecting on Changes

by Teresa Buckner, reprinted from the 2009 issue of From These Stones, the Mars Hill College magazine

Where the pavement ends on Mt. Olive Road in Mars Hill, there stands a remnant of a bygone era. Peeking out from numerous too-close sapling trees and a few stray vines, the remains of the Long Ridge School are not that different from numerous other simple, boxy schoolhouses that once dotted the hills of Appalachia.

But the Long Ridge School is not like many other community-built one- and two-room schoolhouses throughout the region. The Long Ridge School was one of nearly 5,000 schools for black children throughout the rural South built by the Rosenwald Initiative, a program funded by Julius Rosenwald, one-time president of Sears, Roebuck and Company.

“Oh, I can't even count how many of us there were that went to school there,” Charity Ray said recently. “See, we had students that came up from Hot Springs and Marshall too.”

At 72, Charity Ray has been a resident of Mars Hill for most of her life, and she has been an employee of Mars Hill College for 38 years. She began as a secretarial assistant in the president’s office in 1970, but soon afterward, found her niche in the school’s library.

These days, Charity works at a school that enjoys the largest student minority population of any college in western North Carolina. In her role as a library assistant, she sees and works with young people every day who have never known the sting of institutionalized segregation. Those young people have grown up in an America where their choices of friends, roommates, and even dates, are increasingly colorblind.

Many of them helped to elect America’s first African American president, Barack Obama. When President Obama was sworn into office on January 20th, 2009, most of those students, whatever their racial or political background, realized that the event was a historic one. But it may be hard for them to honestly fathom how far America has come until they view see the story of segregation through the eyes of someone they know—like Charity.

“It seems almost like it never happened,” she says. Matter-of-factly and without rancor, she tells about a time when there were places she could not go and things she could not do. And then, with characteristic optimism, she shakes her head and says, “You just cannot dwell on the hard times.”

Like the Rosenwald school, Charity’s memories tell a story of a time and a place when Americans were segregated at work, in their communities, at school, by the color of their skin.

“I had white friends that I played with and they didn’t understand why we couldn’t go to school together,” Charity said. “But their parents explained it to them.”

Charity’s mother was an elementary student when Long Ridge Elementary was built. The school was funded by the Rosenwald Initiative, with additional funds from a local fundraising venture. According to Charity, local parents in the community made clay pots from the clay found near the school and sold the pots to make money toward the school’s construction.

By the time Charity was in school, the Long Ridge School and Mt. Olive Church had become the center of life in Mars Hill’s black community. “All the black people in Mars Hill bought land up around Mt. Olive so we could be near the school and the church,” she said. Charity’s mother did domestic work and her father sharecropped and did farm labor jobs on the side.

“I started school when I was five years old because my mother couldn’t get a babysitter and the teacher said, ‘Oh that’s all right, just let her come on to school and I’ll give her something to do,’” Charity said. “So that’s how that happened.”

What Charity did, mostly, in her words, was "doodle." The teacher gave her crayons and she drew picture after picture. It wasn’t long before the teacher realized that Charity had a gift for art, and when Easter rolled around, she enlisted her youngest student to draw bunnies to decorate the blackboard.

“It was a gift; it wasn’t anything I learned,” she said. “I could always just look at something and then draw it.” In the years since she discovered that gift, Charity has taken art classes and honed her artistic talent on canvas. She now sells her paintings in various local venues.

Charity Ray is a fifth-generation resident of the greater Mars Hill area. Her family first lived in a log cabin near the present Ingles grocery store, then built homes in the Long Ridge community. She is the daughter of John and Augusta Briscoe Ray, and sister to Christine Ray Rucker and Dorothy Ray Coone, both deceased.

Today, Charity lives at her parents’ home place. Of course she is working to save the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School, where she began her art at age five.

The Long Ridge School, painting by Charity Ray.
Charity attended the Long Ridge School through the eighth grade. At that point, she joined other African American students from Madison and Yancey counties in riding a public bus to Asheville. “The county paid for our tuition to go to a private school in Asheville because they didn’t want integration,” she said.

So she caught the bus on Main Street in Mars Hill and rode to Lexington Avenue in Asheville. She and her sisters then walked about a mile to Allen High School, a private school for black girls near the present-day tunnel on Tunnel Road. At the end of each school day, Charity remembers lugging a heavy load of books back to the bus stop. She and the other black students had to sit, or stand, in the back of the bus, even if there were seats available in the front.

“It did make you mad sometimes, because you were tired and you’d get to the bus and maybe you’d have to stand even if there were empty seats,” she said. “You got angry and then that was it, because you didn’t dare be rude. My parents wouldn’t have stood for that.”

The forced separation of white and black children at the bus stop, on the bus and in school created fear and distrust. “I remember one time, some of the white kids thought that we had tails,” she said, laughing. “But we told things on them too. It was just something that kids do,” she said.

After graduation, Charity did domestic work for Dr. Hoyt Blackwell, the president of Mars Hill College. But she knew that she didn’t want that life forever. “I was determined not to be domestic for the rest of my life,” she said. So, during a visit to a cousin in New York City, she decided to stay.

Charity worked at a department store in New York for about ten years. It was during this time that she heard about a Baptist preacher from Memphis who was making waves for his moving sermons about racial equality. Not one to be an activist, she never went to hear Martin Luther King, Jr. speak, even when he was in New York City, but she was impressed with his words.

“I felt like it was going to take time for there to be equality, but I thought the direction he was taking was in line with what Christians would think, that you don’t return evil for evil,” she said. A woman of deep faith, Charity applies scripture to every area of her life. “You should be bold in your beliefs, especially if they are according to scripture, but violence just never solved anything.”

Sometime later, Charity had “a feeling” that she should return home for a visit.

While in Mars Hill, her father was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Soon after his death, Charity’s mother got cancer and eventually passed away as well. Charity stayed with her parents through their illnesses, while months turned into years. She never returned to her job in New York.

Not long after returning to Mars Hill, Charity became the pianist for Mt. Olive Church, a position she held for over 30 years. And in 1970 she took a secretarial position at Mars Hill College. Charity and a few other people from Mt. Olive Church formed a small singing group, and for several years, they traveled to various churches in Madison County to sing. “In that way, we made so many friends in Madison County,” she said.

Among the group of singers who traveled from church to church was Charity’s uncle, Manuel Briscoe, a well-known employee of the town of Mars Hill for many years. Briscoe had a reputation among older folks in Mars Hill as a godly man of character, and in fact, a small monument on Main Street commemorates his many contributions to the town.

It has been thus, in small and seemingly inconsequential ways, that Charity and her church family have fought—without fighting—a cultural racism that relegated them to a segregated school as small children.

“The color of your skin is just pigment,” she tells students at Mars Hill College when professors invite her to address a class. “All blood runs red.”

Charity’s brand of “activism” is gentle and loving, and recognizes that even the right words do not always make for equality. “Hatred and prejudice are things that happen in your heart, and it takes a heart change. You can act one way, but you can feel another way,” she said.

Not long ago, she was asked if she thought that she and the other Mt. Olive singers had had a positive impact on race relations in Madison County through the years. “I think maybe we did,” she says, smiling. “Maybe we did.”

The movement to save the Long Ridge school building began when Stewart Coates of the Madison County Board of Education recommended that the building not be torn down, but given back to the Long Ridge Community for preservation. Some years later, the movement continued with the “In As Much” Mission Group of the Mars Hill Baptist Church. Rev. Justus, Edwin and Pauline Cheek, Stewart Coates, Dr. Lee, and others organized activities for saving the school building. In 2008, Richard Dillingham made a presentation to the Rotary Club that encouraged them to help with the preservation. His history presentation was taken from Edwin B. Cheek’s research in 1983: “Arts and Crafts in the Long Ridge School,” which he had supervised at the college.

Also, in 2008, Phyllis Stiles introduced Dillingham to Margaret Newbold and Barry Williams with the Conservation Trust of North Carolina in Raleigh. Thus, the first meeting was called for December 16, 2009 on the campus of Mars Hill University. Those attending were: Stewart Coates, Ed and Pauline Cheek, David and Willa Wyatt, Fifi DeGroot, O’Neal Shelton, Phyllis Stiles, Richard Dillingham and others. Stewart Coates was elected Chair of the Friends Group and Standing Committees were established: Building and Grounds; Finance and Grants; Alumni; and History. The next meeting was scheduled for March 12, 2010, with Margaret Newbold and Barry Williams attending.

Margaret Newbold, Associate Director of Diversity, Conservation Trust of North Carolina from Raleigh, along with Barry Williams, Diversity Project Coordinator met with the Friends Group. Newbold’s grandfather, Nathan Carter Newbold, had been Director of the NC Division of Negro Education with the NC Department of Public Instruction. Viola King Barnette’s letter would have gone to Director Newbold.

The first public gathering, celebrating the Long Ridge Community and the Rosenwald building rehabilitation took place in October 2010 as part of 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 building, meeting preservation standards for historic

Plans for restoring the historic Anderson Rosenwald School provided by Architect Scott Donald of Padgett & Freeman Architects.
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, became Webmaster for the Friends Group. Theresa and Ryan Phillips, Legacy Films, Ltd., are Media Specialists for the project. Fatimah Shabazz, who attended the school, agreed to be Chairwoman of the Alumni Committee. Members of the History Committee were Charity Ray and her sister Dorothy Coone, both having attended the school; Pauline Cheek; Richard Dillingham; and later, Dan Slagle.

During 2010, monies were secured from the Conservation Trust of North Carolina and the Madison County Board of Education to place a new roof on the building.

In 2011, students from Elon University filmed interviews of alumni and friends of the school for an eight-minute video on the Rosenwald School, now posted on the web site. Also Mars Hill University students from Lifeworks and Bonner Scholars programs 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 Rosenwald school property. The winning project photograph was captured by their religion professor Dr. Marc Mullinax.

In 2013, Friends of the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School completed its Strategic Plan with the leadership of Judy Futch and Paul Smith, Judy Futch Consulting, Inc. The rehabilitation project qualifies for tax-deductible gifts under the Madison County Education Foundation.

In September 2014, the Rural Heritage Museum at Mars Hill University opened its exhibit, “Our Story—This Place. The History of African American Education in Madison County, North Carolina: The Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School.” Les Reker, director of the museum, is a member of the Friends Group.

In November 2015, the Rehabilitation Groundbreaking Program was held at the school site with a large group of friends, supporters, and alumni in attendance.

In 2018, the historic school building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places, and a rehabilitation grant for $50,000 was received from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, one of only eleven in the nation.

In 2019, the building rehabilitation progressed to a Grand Public Dedication during Homecoming Weekend in the Long Ridge Community and Mount Olive Baptist Church, August 30 – September 1, 2019.

Today, there are other Rosenwald buildings still standing, having used the free Rosenwald building plans, including the Rock School Buildings in Madison County. The Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School, according to the Fisk University Rosenwald database, is the only funded Rosenwald School still standing in Western North Carolina, and is the only known Rosenwald School still owned and operated by a public school system in North Carolina, or even in the South.

The rehabilitated Long Ridge Community’s Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School will serve as a Community Cultural Center, an extension of the Madison County School System, and an Interpretive Museum, intended to promote a fuller understanding of Southern Appalachian black history in the Blue Ridge Mountains, and to enhance education at all levels.
Friends of the Mars Hill
Anderson Rosenwald School

LEADERS: Stewart Coates; Willa Wyatt
SECRETARIES: Fifi DeGroot; Teresa Buckner; Simone Bouyer; Lauren Rayburn; Judy Balsanek
ALUMNI: Fatimah Shabazz
BUILDING AND GROUNDS:
David Wyatt, Willa Wyatt, Dan Slagle
Scott Donald, Padgett & Freeman Architects
Jimmy Willis, MH Hardware, IAS LLC
FUNDRAISING/GRANTS:
David Wyatt; Willa Wyatt; Lauren Rayburn
HISTORY: Charity Ray; Dorothy Coone; Pauline Cheek; Richard Dillingham; Dan Slagle
MEDIA: Theresa Phillips, Legacy Films, Ltd., Ryan Phillips, Cinematographer; A. D. Reed, Publisher

WEBMASTER: Simone Bouyer, Ad World Services
MHU REPRESENTATIVES: Fifi DeGroot; Joy Kish; Ray Rapp; Les Reker
STRATEGIC PLANNER: Judy Futch & Paul Smith, Judy Futch Consulting, Inc.
HISTORIC PRESERVATION: Jennifer Cathey, Restoration Specialist, State Historic Preservation Office, NCDR, Western Office
WORK VOLUNTEERS: Dan Slagle, Coordinator (Building & Grounds) Justin Metcalf; David Wyatt; Willa Wyatt; Ben & Jesse Wyatt; Fatimah Shabazz; Omar McClain; Charity Ray; Ray Rapp; Dorothy Rapp; Les Reker; Wallace Bohanan; Philip Ervin; Bill Zink; Ryan Phillips; Richard Dillingham; MHU Students; Mark Norwood

Members of the Committee

David and Willa Wyatt
(Madison County Schools - retired)
Ed and Polly Cheek
(Mars Hill College - retired)
Will Hoffman (Madison County Schools)
Scott Donald
(Padgett & Freeman Architects)
Fatimah’ Rashida Shabazzz (Alumni)
Omar L. McClain, Jr. (Alumni)
Richard Dillingham (Mars Hill College)
Charity Ray (Mars Hill College - retired, Anderson School alumna)
Dorothy Coone (Anderson School alumna)
Kevin Barnette (Mars Hill College, son of Anderson School alumnus)
Lenny and Beth Ross
(Long Ridge Community)
Russell Blevins (Mountain Valleys Resource Conservation & Development Council)
Travis Proffitt (Mars Hill College)

Kasey Boston (Mars Hill College)
Ciara Felder (MHC student)
Doneisha Gartica (MHC student)
Justin Derr (MHC student)
Steve Garrison (Madison County)
Simone Bouyer
(web designer, Long Ridge Community)
Stewart Coates (Madison County Schools)
Fifi DeGroot (Mars Hill College)
O’Neal Shelton (Madison County Rotary)
Becca Johnson
(NC Dept. of Cultural Resources)
Kaye Myers (NCDCR)
Margaret Newbold (NC Conservation Trust)
Teresa Buckner (Mars Hill College)
Oralene Simmons (Alumni)
Eugene Jones (Alumni)
A.D. Reed (Reed Memorial Fund)
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 was on display through February 2015.

Welcome!

I am Fatimah’ Shabazz. My mother, Mrs. Mary H. Wilson, was a teacher at the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School (MHARS) for 14 years, 1939-1953.

To preserve time, when I was four, mom decided to take me with her to school; this was a better choice for everyone. This versus her driving me across town five days a week to deliver me to my grandmothers and then drive to Mars Hill to teach.

As I gained a little age, being a smart-aleck child, thinking I knew best for me, on a few occasions, I would say to my mom, “I am going to run away.” She would respond, “Okay, but first get a good education.” Those words supported me through college, my career in California, locally, and to this day.

Participating with the Friends of MHARS Committee, I have learned and discovered histories I was totally unaware of, in addition, learning of families and family connections in the Long Ridge Community—all while being the Facilitator of Communication for Alumni & their families.

For you, we choose that you enjoy and embrace a most unique history, ‘Our Story, This Place’ and participate with us in the evolutionary process of MHARS.

The Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School Exhibit at the Rural Heritage Museum

by Les Reker, Director, Rural Heritage Museum, Mars Hill University

Today’s historians tell us that a sense of place is what defines a people. This exhibition then, tells the story of African American education in a place called Mars Hill, Madison County, North Carolina. It details the history of a people’s experience, in their own words, from Reconstruction through the period of integration and the Civil Rights legislation in the 1960s.

The Long Ridge School, later the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School, played a significant role in the history of African American education in western North Carolina. In this exhibition, aspects of the day-to-day learning experience of the students who attended the school are featured. The exhibition also reveals some of the struggles, the hopes and dreams of their teachers and their parents, in the context of the time. All of this is presented through the experiences of students who attended the school. The legacy of the Rosenwald education on their adult lives is also presented. Every effort has been made to secure and present a factual picture of events in this story. Research in this area continues.

As a visitor to this exhibition, we hope that you take away an educated awareness and a greater understanding of the struggles and success stories experienced by African American families in their desire to provide a quality education for their children in Madison County after Reconstruction. Another goal is to provide an opportunity to understand the hope for a brighter future that the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School provided African American children between 1929 and 1965.

The panels and materials included in the exhibit will be part of a permanent display at the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwalds School.
A Pioneering School for Black Children in Madison County Finally Gets Its Due

Written by Cameron Huntley, Mountain Xpress, January 23, 2015

If you wander off the beaten path in Mars Hill, you might come to a dead end on Mount Olive Drive in the community of Long Ridge, not far from the town’s university. There sits a solitary building that appears forlorn and somber, at first.

A peek inside reveals fragments of green tile still clinging to the floor and chalk graffiti decorating the walls. There’s a chimney, sturdy as ever, and evidence of pipes that likely ran to coal stoves. A pale line runs up the length of the chimney, as if a wall once stood there and neatly bifurcated what’s now just one big room.

The building seems inauspicious, until you peer into its legacy: In fact, this humble structure is a rare standing relic of the Jim Crow South and a monument to how Madison County’s small but vibrant black community carved out its own education for generations. And now, the former school, which has gone by a few names over the years, is finally on the verge of getting its proper recognition, a once-fading legacy now coming back into focus.

A boon and a challenge

It’s a history that dates back to the Civil War era. After their emancipation, many former slaves stayed around Mars Hill and built new lives. “There were other areas settled by African Americans in Madison County,” says Les Reker, director of Mars Hill University’s Rural Heritage Museum, which is helping drive new interest in the school. “But Long Ridge was the area predominately settled by African American families.”

Black migrants from less peaceful locales swelled the numbers. “Madison and Yancey used to be one county,” Reker recounts. “Their split may have actually been because Madison was more pro-Union, and Yancey more Confederate. Many African Americans moved to Madison from Yancey County because the Ku Klux Klan was so active in Yancey.”

A few small, spread-out schools sprang up to serve black children, and in 1905 many of these coalesced into a centralized one called Long Ridge School by the students (and Mars Hill Colored School by white school boards). This facility did the job until 1930, when it was replaced by the Long Ridge Rosenwald School, the product of a pre-desegregation push to radically improve academic options in places like Mars Hill.

Funds to build the school came from a grant of $750 (about $8,000 in today’s dollars), matched by the community and school district. The grant came from the Rosenwald Fund, which was the brainchild of Julius Rosenwald and Booker T. Washington. The former was a wealthy philanthropist and admirer of the latter.

Washington believed that self-help and education among African Americans was the best means of improving their communities, and that after a period of improvement, they could challenge inequality by force of their economic viability and social indispensability.

Rosenwald, a part owner and top executive of Sears, Roebuck and Co., took the notion to heart, and with Washington launched a grant program that funded African American schools. By 1932, when the last of them was built, close to 6,000 Rosenwald schools stood throughout the South, 800 of them in North Carolina alone.

The qualifications for receiving a Rosenwald grant were simple: The building had to match Rosenwald specifications (the foundation provided many potential building plans; Mars Hill used Plan 20, according to Reker), and the community and school district had to furnish part of the funds.

Starting in 1930, all African American students in Marshall started being sent and ultimately bussed to the Long Ridge Rosenwald School. This was the situation when Omar McClain, a Marshall native, attended from 1950 to ’54.

“I’m one of those people that caught that little yellow 10-passenger bus,” McClain says. “They would come and pick us up from Marshall, and I didn’t really realize … the sacrifice that [the bus driver] made—the driver was one of my classmates. If I had to get up at five in the morning, what time did he have to get up? ‘Cause he had to drive all the way to Marshall and back.”

The school taught eight grades in two classrooms: first to fourth in one, fifth to eighth in the other. The teacher “was juggling all these people at the same time,” says McClain. “Each grade would have their own stuff.” Younger kids sat in front, and the teacher started the mornings with them. “They’d do their little thing, and then she’d move onto the next.”

Preserving history

In 1965, with the advent of integration, the Long Ridge Rosenwald School (known since 1959 as Anderson Elementary) closed for good—11 years after Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, declared segregated public education unconstitutional.

The Madison County school system maintained ownership of the building, but no one seemed sure how to use it. It served as a...
sometime recreation center, basketball court and even a tobacco barn, but nothing lasted, and for decades the building just sat there as nature moved in to claim the husk that remained.

Perhaps it would have stayed on this path until it completely disintegrated. But in 2003, a neighbor wishing to expand a road that passed by the school from his property asked the Board of Education to demolish the building. The board refused, and a long conversation ensued about what to do with it.

In 2009, an informal committee of school alumni formed with an eye on preserving the school in some fashion. As the push grew and other community members joined, it became the Friends of the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School in 2011. With help from volunteers, the group began clearing the property of debris and making repairs to the building.

“They are rehabilitating it, not restoring it,” notes Reker. “To ‘restore’ it means returning it to its original use. That can’t happen, for obvious reasons.” Rehabilitation, however, still means that the building, to garner governmental protections, must look exactly as it did before, right down to the materials used; the few exceptions are modern features such as handicapped access and air conditioning.

When the rebuilding is complete, organizers say they may turn the facility into a full-fledged community cultural center—but whatever form it takes, it will be one that forever preserves and shares the story of how black students and teachers persevered in separate and unequal times.

Of course, there is much work remaining before that can happen. At present, it’s estimated that $130,800 is still needed to finish the project, including new windows, siding, floors, wiring, paint and HVAC.

But publicity and support for the effort have been growing, bolstered most recently by Reker’s historical efforts and a series of panels on the school, hosted by Mars Hill University and featuring many of the Rosenwald School’s alumni. In September, the university’s Rural Heritage Museum opened an exhibit, Our Story—This Place, devoted to African American education in Madison County and using the former school as a focal point.

“It became apparent,” says Reker, “that this was a very important, yet largely unknown, story that occurred right here in Western North Carolina.”

The exhibit, which will remain open through the end of February, houses numerous school artifacts, and massive panels feature blown-up photographs and facsimiles of many newly discovered documents pertaining to the school. “These documents reveal the decision making that occurred over the years with regard to segregation,” says Reker.

Perhaps the most significant excerpt of a public record on display reads, in part:

Madison County Board of Education Meeting, June 1, 1964
9:30 p.m. …

Action: Consider Geraldine Griffin’s written request to place her Child in the Mars Hill “White” School?/Consider requests by other parents.

Action: Approved

School days
In extensive interviews with Mountain Xpress, four of the school’s alumni recounted in detail just what it was like to attend their Rosenwald School.

Efforts are underway to preserve the Rosenwald School in Madison County. An exhibit in Mars Hill tells the story of how Rosenwald—built in 1928 and later named Anderson Elementary—served the African American community in the area.

Photo courtesy of the Rural Heritage Museum

Dorothy Coone and her sister, Charity Ray, lived nearest, in Mars Hill part of the time—during which their father usually drove them to school—and then in Long Ridge, at which point they walked. McClain, as mentioned, took the bus from Marshall. Fatimah Shabazz was from Asheville, and attended the school because her mother, Mary Wilson, was a teacher there.

Wilson ended her teaching career in 1953 as a 14-year veteran of the school; close to an entire generation learned in her classroom, where she taught grades one through four. “It was kind of like she was on roller skates,” McClain recalls. “She didn’t do much teaching from the desk.”

The older students, says Ray, were there to help out if Ms. Wilson was occupied. The atmosphere was ever orderly, Coone says. “You didn’t really have any disturbance in the room, even with four different grades.”

And if there was any misbehavior? “We got two different degrees” of discipline, McClain says with a laugh. “She’d do your hand with a ruler if you did something minor. But if you broke the cardinal rules or something, she had a little Bolo bat. She’d bend you right over them chairs and bust you right out there. It wasn’t … violent, or even painful. But the embarrassment was unbelievable. You’d cry just because you were embarrassed.”

“It was either a switch or ruler when we went,” says Coone. “Girls didn’t get switched,” Ray adds, smirking.

There were three rooms in the building. A parlor “where we hung our little cloaks,” says Shabazz, and the two classrooms. In the center, on the windowed side, was a brick chimney. A sliding partition ran from the chimney to the other wall, separating the classrooms. Two pot-bellied coal stoves were connected to the chimney, one in the corner of each room. One student was designated “fire-keeper,” responsible for lighting the stoves before school started and feeding them coal throughout the day.

Down below the school was an outdoor privy, which served as the restroom until the school got plumbing in the late 1950s. There was one spigot outside that all the kids used to wash their hands.
School started at 8 a.m. and went until 3 p.m. Lunch was around noon, with recess right after that. Each day, Shabazz says, began the same way: “You come in, hang up your coat, sit down and have devotion—singing a song, reciting a scripture by memory and doing the Pledge of Allegiance.”

The coursework was very much up to the discretion of the teacher. Students learned the basics—reading, writing and arithmetic—but McClain recalls other lessons catered to local living conditions. “Our curriculum dealt in the world,” he says. “We had studies on leaves and vines … what you could grab or not grab, what to eat or not eat. Most people lived off the land … and I think that it contributed mightily to the longevity of the people.”

One of the obstacles to learning was the state of the classroom materials, books in particular. The school couldn’t afford new books, nor did the school system provide them, so all books were secondhand, with some in better shape than others. “We didn’t get any new things at all,” says Coone. “And part of the book would be there, and the other part wouldn’t.” Shabazz recalls getting hand-me-down texts from public libraries. “Whatever kind of books we could get, we read,” she says.

Ironically, the students’ lack of access to standard reading materials sometimes ended up exposing them to more-challenging works. “There was Shakespeare, all that,” Shabazz says. Shakespeare, in the first grade? “Yes,” she insists, laughing. “Not only did we read it, but we acted them out.”

Ms. Wilson “was big on classroom participation,” says McClain, as if performing Shakespeare as an eight-year-old were the most normal thing in the world. “Acting it out,” Shabazz continues, “you really can relate more to what you’re reading.”

### Connecting community

Acting practice and plays the students put on for the community were a big part in a big school tradition, say alumni. Holiday and end-of-year plays were standard, though often there were others throughout the school year, often to fund a class trip or other activity.

“It was an efficient way to raise money for something,” says McClain. The teachers would slide back the partition, and “all the community would come—white, black, whatever. It would be packed with people.”

“The whole neighborhood [came]—sometimes people your parents worked for, [and] even people from uptown [Mars Hill],” says Coone.

Many of the productions were in the Nativity vein, especially around holidays like Christmas and Easter. Others were shorter, more like skits.

“I remember one of them we did,” says Coone. “It was about hats.”

“It was ‘hats, hats, hats,’” Ray reminds her, replicating the hand motions accompanying each utterance.

“We got out Mother’s hats—the ugliest one,” says Coone. “I also remember one play: we were supposed to be daisies. We had on white dresses our mothers made, and they made the hats out of construction paper. … And we had a choir, so we’d sing.”

“Ms. Wilson had a knack for getting the word out,” says Ray. “She could really get people to come.”

“It was kids that put on the play, but it was a community effort,” says Shabazz. The tight-knit local neighbors played a huge role in the lives of the students. “The community raised the children as much as the parents,” she says. “When we got out of school, we didn’t have to worry about going home. If nothing else, we went to someone else’s house until someone was home to meet you. Safety and security was big.”

“All the families knew each other,” Coone says. “Most families were large, had eight or nine children. I think we were the smallest group with just three girls.”

“Everybody knew everyone’s comings and goings,” says Ray. “It was a way of protecting one another.”

“When I was a kid, I actually thought everyone on that ridge was related to us,” says McClain. “because the trust was there. I remember, both my parents were working at the time, and I stayed with this white family at the house next to me;” he adds. “But they cared about me.”

### Racial matters

All four alumni describe a relatively peaceful racial situation in Mars Hill and the surrounding countryside, even as the Civil Rights movement ramped up in the 1950s.

“The people who lived near me, there was never that racial thing going on,” says McClain. “It just wasn’t that way at that time. When my grandmother’s house burned down in Marshall, the next day, black and white, they were rebuilding that house. They just jumped in.”

Virulent racism “wasn’t a pertinent way of being” in that part of Madison County, Shabazz remembers. “The mindset of the community [was] it didn’t really matter. Everybody took care of everybody else.”

“Mostly it went well,” Coone says of the racial dynamic. “You might have some people, but they usually wouldn’t let you know. The blacks here wouldn’t have stood for it. They’d let you know right then what they thought and it would never come up again. To me, the smaller town is better because everyone knows each other. Half the time, their parents grew up with your parents.”

Ray, describing interactions with white school-age peers, says: “If you got the best of them, they started getting nasty, so you just clobber them one. It didn’t mean your friendship would end tomorrow—you’d play together again. But the name-calling wasn’t there anymore.” Still, she says, “Our playmates would ask our parents why we couldn’t go to school with them.”

“I think it had to do with the economic level,” says McClain of the state of black-white relations. “It was basically the same. We were all on the same level. No one could point down to you.”

Both McClain and Shabazz hint that there was a certain feeling of normality to the situation—that segregation was just the way things were, and thus went unquestioned. “When we were in school, there was no time devoted to racial disharmony,” says Shabazz. “They did teach us about Booker T. [Washington] and Frederick Douglass,” says McClain. “At the time, we thought there was only two black men who ever did anything.”

“I don’t think any of us knew the history of that school (Rosenwald) or how it all came about,” Shabazz adds.

“It was always there,” says McClain. “My mother went to that school. We just all thought it was always there.”

But even if Mars Hill was relatively accepting and safe, the kids were schooled in a segregated setting and could not escape the broader cultural landscape. “I knew racism existed,” says McClain. “Because every now and then someone would holler out a window or something. When we traveled, or pulled up in a diner, we couldn’t go in the front and eat, we had to go around and get the food to go, where people would wash the dishes or whatever.”
Shabazz in particular has a unique perspective on racial matters during her childhood. As a native of Asheville, she attended the Rosenwald School with an outsider’s view to the interactions in Mars Hill; she, too, contends that it was “a little different” in the rural community.

Mars Hill “didn’t carry that torch as much,” says Shabazz. “In the city [of Asheville]? Yeah. I was aware of the lack of respect around my mom and dad, which really upset me as a child.”

Indeed, no matter how ideal Mars Hill was or wasn’t, it only took a half-hour trip south to the Land of the Sky to find the indignities.

Major department stores and other locales, they recall, were particularly problematic, and the memory got a rise out of McClain.

“Let’s don’t go there. White and black water fountains.”

“White and black bathrooms,” says Shabazz. “Yep. And where Diana Wortham is, there used to be a theater called the Plaza, and we went in on Market Street.”

“Around the corner to go in,” says McClain.

“Up to the balcony,” says Shabazz. “And then we’d throw things down on your heads.”

During high school, meanwhile, most Madison and Buncombe county African American students attended Stephens-Lee in the East End neighborhood of downtown Asheville (Coone and Ray both attended Allen, a private high school for African American girls, also downtown).

African American students from Madison had to do this because there was no black high school in Madison County. For a long time, those students had no option to go to high school at all—Stephens-Lee was, after all, way out of district.

And before North Carolina raised the mandatory age for school attendance to 16, with no high school for them, this meant that many black children in Madison who finished 8th grade at the Long Ridge Rosenwald School would simply have to repeat the 8th grade over and over until they turned 16.

Mars Hill native Viola King Barnette was instrumental in getting this changed—so much so, Reker says, that she’s considered a “crusader for black education.” King, a domestic worker whose son Herbert attended the Long Ridge School, wrote the North Carolina Department of Education to request that schoolchildren from the Long Ridge school be bused to Stephens-Lee after 8th grade. The state superintendent responded in the affirmative, paving the way for McClain and many other Madison natives to attend high school when they otherwise wouldn’t have been able.

McClain and Shabazz both light up when speaking about their time at Stephens-Lee.

“[Lee Edwards High] were our rivals,” says Shabazz. “We used to kick their butts in football.”

“And when they had the [holiday] parade, our band was the toughest around,” says McClain.

“Man, our band was bad,” says Shabazz, meaning they were “so [awesome] that initially we used to be up front or in the middle [of the parade]; but people would just start leaving [after we passed], before Santa Claus came!”

“So they put us at the end, to make everybody stay,” McClain adds.

“I remember being on Asheville Avenue one day,” says Shabazz.

“And this gentleman was chewing tobacco, and he did this pitch-chew spitting kind of thing, and he said ‘I ain’t leaving till Stephens-Lee gets here.’ You can check the history, but it happened: Our band brought in Santa Claus, because [otherwise] people would leave.”

“I had a good time at Stephens-Lee,” she continues. “At Asheville High? No.”

Shabazz is the only one of the four that experienced integration while still in school. She spent her senior year at the new Asheville High School, which integrated Lee Edwards and Stephens-Lee. It would prove to be her least-favorite year of schooling. “Our class was the first to have integrated teachers,” she says. “And a lot of teachers at Stephens-Lee lost their jobs. ‘All highly educated, all had Masters [degrees].’

“They didn’t want to take a pay cut,” says McClain. “And rightfully so: they had degrees, why should they have to take a pay cut?”

“I know I went to a meeting in Asheville,” says Ray. “And they were discussing equal rights, and these were supposed to be educated people. They weren’t from way out [in the country]. And one lady says, ‘You all just have to give some of us time to love you.’ And I said to her, ‘Your love is not worth a dime. What we want is equality. When we go to work someplace, we want to get paid equally.’”

Ray pauses a moment, thinking. “I guess that lady has grandchildren by now. Maybe she learned to love or something. But I didn’t hold it against her. I don’t think she realized what she was saying.”

**Homecomings**

All four Rosenwald alumni left western North Carolina after their schooling, and all eventually made their way back.

McClain joined the Army after graduation. After leaving the service, he moved to New York, embarking on myriad enterprises: “I went to college there, worked on Wall Street, owned an inventory business, and at the end I owned a nightclub.” But tiring of the “rat race,” McClain says, he returned to western North Carolina in 2008.

After her tumultuous senior year at Asheville High, Shabazz migrated to the West Coast. “I swore I would never come back,” she says. She lived in California, Virginia, and Atlanta, for the most part keeping her distance from her hometown. In 1993, she had to return to take care of her parents, arriving just when the infamous blizzard hit. “It’s like God was saying, ‘You ain’t going nowhere,’” she recalls.
The Ray sisters departed as well. Charity wound up in New York. After working there for several years, she returned home to take care of her ailing father, and stayed. She got a job at Mars Hill College (now Mars Hill University) as a circulation assistant in the campus library, a position she kept for 39 years.

Dorothy went to Virginia, working for a bank as a credit analyst. After her husband passed away, she returned to Mars Hill to help take care of her mother, and she, too, decided to settle. The sisters live together in the house they moved into in the 1940s, the one that made it possible to walk to school.

All four have been intimately involved with the rehabilitation campaign. When it started, Ray recalls, “We said, ‘This school is still standing.’” “Separate but equal” was always a lie, but that just makes the quality of education in the Rosenwald School all the more remarkable.

“When we went to Asheville schools from Mars Hill schools, there was this thing like we aren’t supposed to be ready, because we came from a rural school,” McClain remembers. “But most of the teachers were vested in our future, either by relationship or family. It seemed like they put a little more into it to make sure each person was prepared. We were more than ready.”

Cameron C. Huntley Obituary

Cameron Chase Huntley, 26, a resident of Nairobi, Kenya, formerly of Asheville, NC, died Wednesday, June 1, 2016 in Nairobi, Kenya.

Born April 27, 1990 in Asheville, NC, Cameron was a 2008 graduate of Erwin High School and a 2011 magna cum laude graduate of Clemson University. After college, he worked in Human Resources for the City of Asheville and was a freelance writer for the Mountain Xpress. He visited Kenya in 2013 with NewSpring Church of Anderson, SC, and felt called to return to Kenya in 2015.

While in Nairobi, he taught English, participated in missions and continued writing. His entire life was devoted to those in need. Cameron had a huge heart for people who were less fortunate. He lost his life protecting someone he loved.

Remembering Cameron Huntley

From Les Reker, Director, Rural Heritage Museum

“I knew Cameron Huntley as an impressive young man and incredible writer. I first got to know him when he contacted me regarding his writing a couple articles for the Mountain Xpress about exhibitions at the Rural Heritage Museum at Mars Hill University. One very important story he wrote was printed on January 21, 2015. It was the cover story that week. The headline was WE REMEMBER, Saving Madison County’s Rosenwald School! The exhibition about it was titled ‘Our Story-This Place, The History of African American Education in Madison County, North Carolina: The Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School.’

“Cameron carried out incredibly extensive research for this article. He visited the Museum several times and conducted interviews with all the principle people. He also attended the panel discussions, committee meetings, and all the programing related to the exhibition. He went above and beyond what most would think was necessary for a single article. He demonstrated a deep commitment, a profound sensitivity, incredible patience, and a real passion for accuracy. Although he was writing prose it seemed like poetry…. “He was a very special person and his loss is keenly felt!”
The Historic Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School

African American History Time Line: The Long Ridge Colored Community

1901

“Colored” schools at Mars Hill, Grapevine, and Ivy were operating at this time.¹ Two of the teachers in the early Mars Hill “Colored” School days were members of the Joseph Anderson family: Effie Anderson (Coone) was a teacher in 1901,² while nephew Sam W. Anderson was a teacher in 1905-06 and then from 1911-12.³ He was the son of Lewis Anderson (Joseph’s brother).⁴ Joseph Anderson served on the Mars Hill Colored School Committee in 1896.⁵ His son, Neal Anderson served on the committee in 1906-07.⁶

1905

The new Mars Hill Colored School building was built on Long Ridge and was referred to as the “Long Ridge School”⁷ by alumni.

1907

Joseph Anderson died around this time and was buried in the Huff family graveyard. His grave was moved to Mars Hill College campus in 1932.⁸

1917

Mount Olive Baptist Church was organized in the school building, organized with 100 members, most of whom travelled over five miles to attend service, bringing memberships from Piney Grove Church on Walker Branch at Paint Fork of Little Ivy to the new church. The old Mount Olive Baptist Church building was erected in 1917.⁹

1928

The Madison County School Board purchased an additional acre of land on Long Ridge to meet the requirements for receiving support from the Rosenwald Fund.¹⁰ John Ferguson paid $200¹¹ for the community’s match to receive the Rosenwald funds of $750.¹²

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¹ Madison County School Expense Records, MHC Local History Archives, Box 103, Folder 1.
² Ibid. Box 103, Folder 1 (Sept.-Oct.).
³ Ibid. Box 103, Folder 2, p. 151; Folder 3, p.146.
⁴ Federal Census, Madison County, NC, Bull Creek, 1880.
⁵ MCBOE Minutes, 1907; Office of County Commissioners, 1896.
⁶ MCOBE Minutes, 1905-1907.
⁷ Edwin Cheek Interviews: Shirley Sewell; Augusta Ray; Manuel Briscoe, 1983.
⁹ Madison County Heritage Book, Vol. 1, p. 32.
¹¹ Oral Interview with Dorothy Ray Coone, 2012.
¹² Fisk University, "Rosenwald Fund, Card Database," Dan Slagle.
1929

The Long Ridge Rosenwald School, offering grades 1-8, was opened, located on the older, Long Ridge “Colored” School site. The Historic Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School

1930s

Mars Hill’s Civilian Conservation Corp’s “Camp Joe” on South Main Street to Long Ridge was named for Joseph Anderson.

1936

Madison County School Board deeded land beside the school to trustees of the Mount Olive Cemetery: John Ferguson, Oliver Barnett, Jim Hampton, Rev. J. H. Smith, Pastor. Annual “decoration of the graves” still takes place at Homecoming, the first weekend in September.

1940s

Viola King Barnette’s letter to the NC Superintendent of Schools secured high school access for all rural students in North Carolina. Her son, Herbert, and others from the Madison County, were bused to Stephens-Lee High School in Asheville.

1959

The Long Ridge Rosenwald School was renamed Anderson Elementary School, in honor of Joseph Anderson.

1961

Oralene Graves (Simmons), an alumna of the Rosenwald School, was the first African American student admitted to Mars Hill College in 1961. She is a great-great-granddaughter of Joseph Anderson.

13 Ibid., Cheek Interviews, 1983.
15 Madison County Deeds, 1936.
16 Emily Wilson, Hope and Dignity: Older Black Women of the South, pp.172-173.
17 Cheek Interview, Sewell, 1983.
18 MCBOE Minutes, 1959.
19 John Angus McLeod, From These Stones, p. 251 (Mars Hill, NC: Mars Hill Press), 1968; Reprint 2000.
The Historic Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School

2009

The Planning Committee for saving the Rosenwald School building was formed.\(^{(20)}\) (The Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School is the only Rosenwald school still standing in western NC.)\(^{(21)}\)

2010

Architect Scott Donald of Padgett & Freeman Architects was commissioned by the Planning Committee to draw up plans for the rehabilitation of the historic Rosenwald school building.\(^{(22)}\)

2012

A new roof was provided for the Rosenwald school building with help from Madison County School Board, the Conservation Trust of North Carolina partnership, and Mr. Lawrence Ponder.\(^{(23)}\)

2013

A Strategic Plan evolved and was adopted by the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School Planning Committee. The committee also began the process of forming a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation to help with fundraising.\(^{(24)}\)

2014

MHU’s Rural Life Museum opened its exhibition: “Our Story, This Place—The Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School Story,” which ran from September 7, 2014 to February 28, 2015).\(^{(25)}\)

2018

The Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School listed on the National Register of Historic Places.\(^{(26)}\)

2018

A $50,000 rehabilitation grant was awarded by the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund.\(^{(27)}\)

2019

Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School Strategic Plan updated; Notated History Updated and Published; Grand Public Dedication, August 30-September 1, 2019.\(^{(28)}\)

\(20\) Rosenwald Planning Committee Minutes, Dec. 2009.
\(21\) Ibid., Fisk.
\(22\) Ibid., RPC Minutes, 2010.
\(23\) Ibid., RPC Minutes, 2012.
\(24\) MHARS Strategic Plan, 2013; 2019.
\(25\) Rural Heritage Museum Exhibit: Our Story, This Place, 2014-2015.
\(26\) National Register of Historic Places, 2018.
\(27\) African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, 2018.
\(28\) Grand Public Dedication, August 30-September 1, 2019.
Peabody Education Fund in North Carolina

Founded of necessity due to damage caused largely by the American Civil War, the Peabody Education Fund was established by George Peabody in 1867 for the purpose of promoting “intellectual, moral, and industrial education in the most destitute portion of the Southern States.”

“We pay for well-regulated public free schools, continued about ten months of the year, and having a regular attendance of not less than 100 pupils, averaging daily 85 per cent.”

The following North Carolina schools were accepted for funds in the 1874-75 school year:

- Fayetteville: $450
- Flemming’s Chapel: 300
- Shool Creek: 300
- Roan Mountain: 300
- Pisgah: 300
- Flat Creek*: 300
- Webster: 300
- Cowee: 300
- Grantville* (Forks of Ivy): 300
- Pleasant Hill* (Mars Hill): 300
- Laurel Branch*: 300
- Balsam Seminary: 300
- Rich Hill: 300
- Ivy*: 300
- Smyrna: 300
- Smithfield: 300
- McElrath Chapel: 300
- Waynesville: 300
- Holly Springs: 300
- Charlotte “colored”: 300

* Of the twenty schools in North Carolina that qualified for Peabody Funds, five (20%) were in the greater Mars Hill area: only one “colored” Peabody school in the whole state.

NC Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Nov. 1, 1874-75, p. 57.
## School Books Recommended by State Board of Education for the Year 1886

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Price</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holmes’ First Reader</td>
<td>.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holmes’ Second Reader</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holmes’ Third Reader</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holmes’ Fourth Reader</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holmes’ Fifth Reader</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holmes’ New History of the U.S.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maury’s Elementary Geography</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanford’s Primary Analytical Arithmetic</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanford’s Intermediate Analytical Arithmetic</td>
<td>.36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sanford’s Common School Analytical Arithmetic</td>
<td>.64</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sanford’s Higher Analytical Arithmetic</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worcester’s Primary Dictionary</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worcester’s Common School Dictionary</td>
<td>.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worcester’s Comprehensive Dictionary</td>
<td>1.40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worcester’s Academic Dictionary</td>
<td>1.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worcester’s Octavo Dictionary</td>
<td>3.46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reed &amp; Kellogg’s Graded Lessons in English</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reed &amp; Kellogg’s Higher Lessons in English</td>
<td>.70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goodrich’s Child’s History of U.S.</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephens’ History of U.S.</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swinton’s Language History Primer</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harringtons’ Spelling Book</td>
<td>.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moore’s History of N.C.</td>
<td>.85</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steele’s Abridged Psychology</td>
<td>.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beers’ System of Penmanship, per doz.</td>
<td>1.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harrey’s Revised Elementary Grammar</td>
<td>.50</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of NC, 1885-1886, p. 5
Footnotes for African American Public Education in Madison County

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.

Water to the Long Ridge School

From the Madison County Board of Education Minutes

Feb. 6, 1939: A delegation from Long Ridge colored school… requested the Board to install a water system… and pay water rent to the Town of Mars Hill for the use of said school.

Mar. 6, 1939: The Board ordered that the Superintendent purchase approximately 2000 feet of ¾ inch galvanized pipe for Long Ridge School.

Jun. 5, 1939: A delegation from Long Ridge colored school requested the Board take immediate steps… lay a pipe line from the Mars Hill water line to the school house.

Sep. 6, 1943: A letter was read from Mr. R.L. Lee (Mayor of Mars Hill) concerning the extension of pipe line to Mars Hill colored school. The Board of Education approved the giving of $150.00 to the Town of Mars Hill to extend the pipe line. This amount was to be returned to the Board of Education in water rent from the Mars Hill colored school. Among bills approved: Town of Mars Hill, water line, $150.

Oct. 4, 1943: Board of Education approved the agreement. The Mars Hill colored school will receive water free of expense until the $150.00 will have been used at the rate of $4.00 per school month.

Jan. 3, 1949: The Board was informed that contract with Town of Mars Hill to supply water to Mars Hill colored school until $150.00 had been consumed was fulfilled and a letter from Mr. Lee, Mayor of Mars Hill, stated charge would continue to be $4.00 per month water rent. The Board considered the amount too much and directed Supt. contact Mr. Lee requesting reduction in water rental for Mars Hill Negro School.

Feb. 7, 1949: The Town of Mars Hill has agreed to charge the minimum of $2.50 per month for water rent for Mars Hill Colored School.


Madison County Board of Education Minutes, Feb. 6, 1939-Mar. 7, 1949; extracted by Pauline Cheek and Dan Slagle.
Names Noted in Board of Education Minutes

Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School name evolved over the years in the Madison County Board of Education Minutes. “Our Story, This Place,” used in the Museum Exhibit and Notated History, was first used as the theme in the Strategic Plan in 2013.

Madison County, North Carolina 1905-1966

Board of Education Minutes related to the “Mars Hill Colored School,” also known as the “Long Ridge” and “Anderson School”—A Rosenwald Fund School.

Note different names used for the school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 2 &amp; 3, 1905</td>
<td>Mars Hill Colored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 9, 1928</td>
<td>Work on “Negro” School Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928–29</td>
<td>Budget Year, Fisk University Rosenwald Fund, Card File Historic Name: Mars Hill School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 6–June 5, 1939</td>
<td>Long Ridge Colored School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1, 1940</td>
<td>Mars Hill Colored School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 3, 1949</td>
<td>Mars Hill Negro School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 6, 1959</td>
<td>Superintendent, Fred Anderson, to request Colored School Committee to select an appropriate name for the colored school that would add more prestige and dignity to the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1, 1963</td>
<td>Committee: “Mars Hill Colored School was to be named at a later date.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 4, 1964</td>
<td>First entry in the Board of Education Minutes naming the Mars Hill Colored School as the Mars Hill Anderson (Colored) School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 5, 1965</td>
<td>Anderson Colored School, Mars Hill Anderson School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 27, 1965</td>
<td>Anderson School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School Committee Persons

1896 “Colored” School Committeemen
Madison County, North Carolina

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marshall</th>
<th>Hot Springs</th>
<th>Little Pine Creek</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wm. Williams</td>
<td>Joe Logan</td>
<td>Henry Paine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Roberts</td>
<td>Ned Ray</td>
<td>Mark Baker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lon Henry</td>
<td>Ben Hampton</td>
<td>John Paine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bull Creek (Mars Hill)

Joe Anderson; Alfred Bailey; J.B. Bailey (Mars Hill P.O.)

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

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.)

Known Mars Hill “Colored” School Committee Persons 1937–1964

1937: Gilbert Briscoe; 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
School Teachers

Mars Hill “Colored” School Teachers 1901–1913

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>Effie Anderson (Fall)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>Eliza L. Randolph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903-04</td>
<td>Elise Rand (Eliza Randolph?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905-06</td>
<td>Sam W. Anderson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906-07</td>
<td>Sam W. Anderson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907-08</td>
<td>Sallie Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908-09</td>
<td>J.B. Baile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>Josephine Barnard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Alice Baird</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911-12</td>
<td>Sam W. Anderson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912-13</td>
<td>Sam W. Anderson</td>
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Known Mars Hill “Colored” School Teachers 1935–1963

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Teacher(s)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Elizabeth Conley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Edna Bell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-43</td>
<td>Mary H. Wilson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Mary H. Wilson; Addie J. Best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949-53</td>
<td>Mary H. Wilson; M. Grace Owens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954-55</td>
<td>Mrs. Lillie D. Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957-59</td>
<td>Bernice E.S. Smith, Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Mrs. Dora B. Bass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Mrs. Brown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

44. MCBOE Minutes, 1905–1907.
45. MCBOE Minutes, 1905–1965.
47. Ibid.
Local African American Resting Places

Piney Grove Graveyard, Walker Branch of Paint Fork

During the late 1800s blacks began to move into the Piney Grove section of Paint Fork. As the community grew there was a need for a place to worship; therefore, around 1906 Piney Grove Church was established by the following families: Dolf Coone, Earl Connelly, Ferguson and Anderson Families.

The first church was a simple structure with a potbelly stove. The Rev. Sandy Ray of the Big Ivy Community was the church leader, and his deacons were Harve Ray, Dolf Coone, and Gilbert Briscoe, all of the Piney Grove Community, as well as John Ferguson of Yancey County.

Blacks began to move into Madison County, with a large population moving into a section called Long Ridge near Mars Hill. Since there was not a church in this community, church meetings were held in the one-room schoolhouse of the Long Ridge School. This provided a modest place for worship but a need for a larger church grew. Therefore, the Piney Grove Church was sold by Uncle John Ferguson for $120 and another church, Mount Olive Baptist, was built in the Long Ridge Community of Madison County.

Known graves in the Piney Grove Cemetery included Alfred Briscoe (1850-1922); Adaline Conley (1850-1935); Carolina Briscoe (1856-1923); Bowditch Ray (1865-1953); Sarah Essie Wilson, a daughter of Adaline Conley (1875-1944); Nate Ray (1881-1918); Mark Coone (1896-1917); and Addie Ray (1900-1930), with a gravemarker, while all others have field stones for markers. Addie Ray was daughter of Henry and Tilda Ray.¹

Mount Olive Baptist Church Cemetery, Long Ridge Community

Mount Olive Baptist Church was established in 1917, with its members coming from the Piney Grove Church. The first church building was located beside the present building, not distant from the Long Ridge School building. (See painting by Charity Ray on page 31.) The second church building was built in 1952, bringing the 1917 building corner stone to the new building.

The Mount Olive Cemetery was established in 1936 on land purchased from the Madison County School Board, with named Trustees as John Ferguson; Oliver Barnett; Jim Hampton; and Rev. J. H. Smith. Many years later the Mars Hill VFW Chapter erected a Veterans Flag Memorial on the old school playground adjacent to the school and cemetery.

Many of the African American Legacy Families are buried there: Joseph Anderson descendants; Viola King Barnette and descendants; and many American Veterans.²


American Veterans

Mars Hill VFW Flag Memorial

Claud B. Ray “Louis,” Army
Clyde James Young, Army, WWII
Ulysses McDowell, Navy/Army, Korea
James B. Hampton, A.F., Korea
Lark Wood Ray, Army
Harlon Wilson, Army
Ned Smith Jr., Marine Corp
Michael Douglas Goins, Army

James R. Briscoe, Army, WWII
William Albert Ray, Army, Korea
Sherrill Roland, Army, Korea
Jerome S. Higgins, Army, WWII
Richard B. Conley, Navy, WWII
David Glenn Wilson, Army
Joel Anthony Smith, Army
William H. Barnette, Navy, WWII

Other Known African American Burial Sites

White Graveyards
Thomas W. Ray Family Graveyard, Gabriels Creek, MHU
Ramsey Graveyard, Bruce Road
Old Fork of Ivy Graveyard, c. 30 graves with field stone markers, on knoll above where the 1843 Log Church Building stood, end of Long Ridge, Oss Deaver home place; Removed c.1970.

Black Graveyard
Charlie Piercy Black Graveyard (aka Wilson Yard), at Swiss on Tomberlin Property, where Charlie Piercy (1837-1917), a Yancey County African American landowner and “Free Man of Color” is buried. Each fall of the year, from many states, Yancey County African American Family descendants return for Surrogate Grave Decoration and Dinner on the Ground.

3 Richard Dillingham Community Research Notes “The Forks of Ivy.”
4 Elaine Dillinger, Yancey County local historian, cemetery research information, August 5, 2019.
Federal Census Data on the Joseph Anderson Family

Madison County, North Carolina

1860 SLAVE SCHEDULE

Anderson, J. W.    Ray, T. W.   [Joe's Rays were from this family, J.W. Anderson's brother-in-law]
57 M B  14 M M
60 F B  9 F M
26 M B  1 F B
23 M B  1 F B
18 F B
17 F B

1870 Madison County Federal Census, Raysville

212 Ramsey, Willey SC (B) 35
   Eliza SC (B) 37
   Anderson, Cordelia (B) 12 [Twin?] 3
238 Anderson, Isaac (B) 65 [Father]
   Joseph (B) 25
   Andy (B) 12 [Twin?] 4
   Nelus (B) 09
239 Anderson, Lewis (B) 37
   Marinda (B) 30
   Matilda (B) 12
   Madison (B) 09
   Albert (B) 05
   Sopha (B) 01

1880 Madison County Federal Census, #3 Bull Creek [Near E. Carter/T. S. Deaver]

(Age before June 1, 1880)

[Joe's Brother]   [Joe's Second Family]   S F M
287 Anderson, Lewis (B) 50  50 360 Anderson, Joseph (B) 50
   Marinda (B) wife 40  40  50  50  Mary (Mu) wife 52
   Matilda (B) daughter 20 20  20 Delila (Mu) daughter 21
   Mattison (B) son 17 17 17 Cornelius (Mu) son 16
   Albert (B) son 15  1  5  15  Henry (Mu) son 13
   Sophia (B) daughter 11  0  11  Mary A. (Mu) daughter 12
   Lucinda (B) daughter 09  0  0  Dora L. (Mu) daughter 07
   Samuel (B) son 07  0  7  07  Carr (Mu) granddaughter 01
   John (B) son  0  0  0  Ray, Susan (B) mother-in-law 85
   Clara (B) daughter 01  0  1

The Historic Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School
**Legacy Families**

**Joseph Anderson Family**

Over the years, the Joseph Anderson family and descendants have been members of Piney Grove and Mount Olive churches. Joseph Anderson's grave is located on Joe Anderson Drive of Mars Hill University campus. Two children of Joseph Anderson and Jane Ray left descendants, Cordelia and Cornelius. Many of them are buried in the Mount Olive Cemetery.

**Joseph Anderson and Jane Ray Descendants**

Cornelius “Neal” Anderson and Frances Roland Anderson

Cornelius “Neal” Anderson, son of Joe  
Frances Wilson Anderson, granddaughter-in-law  
Doskie Anderson McDowell, granddaughter  
Ulysses McDowell, grandson-in-law  
Flora Henson Anderson, granddaughter-in-law  
Oscar Young, grandson-in-law  
Manuel Briscoe, great-grandson-in-law  
Mildred McDowell Smith, great-granddaughter  
Fred “June” McDowell, great-grandson  
Ronald Avery McDowell, great-grandson  
Ulysses McDowell, great-grandson  

Andy Anderson, Twin (Died in 1870s)  
Cordelia Anderson, Twin

Effie Anderson Coone, granddaughter  
Dillard Coone, great-grandson  
Patricia Ann Coone, great-great-granddaughter  
Gertrude Bruton Kilgore, great-granddaughter  

Floyd John Coone, great-grandson  
Kelly Cornelius Coone Jr., great-grandson  
Cordelia Coone Wilson, great-granddaughter

Viola King Barnette Family

Viola King Barnette, mother  
Kathleen Williams, daughter  
William H. Barnette, son  
Michael Douglas Goins, great-grandson  

Shirley V. Sewell, daughter  
David Barnette, son  
Margaret Felder, daughter
Madison County School Expense Records

Book 1901–1904, Box 103, Folder 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEARS</th>
<th>SCHOOLS</th>
<th>Excerpts and Notes by Richard Dillingham</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1904  | Marshall (Col)  
M.E. Moore  
William Sullivan  
Little Pine Colored | These books are expense ledgers saved by Dr. Moore, (March 15–Apr 30) Superintendent of Madison Schools, 1901–1912. Mars Hill College Archives, Local History, Box 103, Folders 1–3. (Transferred to Marshall) |
| 1901  | Marshall Colored  
Albert Logan  
M.E. Moore | Granddaughter of Joe Anderson (Effie Coone), grandmother of Oralene Simmons |
| 1901  | Mars Hill Colored  
Effie Anderson (Sept.–Oct 4)  
E.L. Randolph (Sept.–Dec.)  
Eliza Randolph | May have been located on Walker Branch between Paint Fork and Middle Fork Communities, where the black Piney Grove Church building was located? |
| 1901  | Ivy Colored  
Joseph Logan | Located below the Long Ridge Community on Old NC 213, knoll above Flint Morgan Drive in the Forks of Ivy Community. |
| 1902  | Joseph Logan | |
| 1904  | Joseph Logan (Fbry.)  
Joseph Logan (Aug.) | |
| 1902  | Hot Springs Colored | |
| 1901  | Grassy Knob (White School) | |
| 1901  | Grassy Knob (White School) | |
| 1901  | Grapevine Colored  
J.B. Bailey (Dec.) | Stepfather of Viola King Barnette |
| 1903  | J.B. Bailey (Jan.) | |

Book 1903–1908, MHC Local History Archives, Box 103, Folder 22

1903  
1904  
1905  
1906  
1907  
1903  
1904  
1905  
1906  
1907  
1908  
1908  
1909  
1909  

Hot Springs Colored p. 109  
Joseph Logan  
Joseph Logan  
Joseph Logan  
Joseph Logan  
Joseph Logan  
J.J. Coone  
J.H. Coone  
Marshall Colored p. 27  
Mars Hill Colored p.151  

Ivy Colored p. 65  
Joseph Logan  
Joseph Logan  
Joseph Logan  
Joseph Logan  
Elise Randolph  
Sallie Green  
J.H. Coone  
J.H. Coone  
Marshall Colored p. 27  
Mars Hill Colored p.151
YEARS | SCHOOLS | Excerpts and Notes by Richard Dillingham
---|---|---
1903 | Elise Rand | I believe this was for what became the Long Ridge School Building and lot. Land deed from Scudder Willis and new school building would be the first construction in what would be the Long Ridge Community.
1903 | Elise Rand |
1903 | Elise Rand |

1904 | ($125 Bld. & Lot) | This is believed to be the son of Lewis and brother to Joe.
1905 | Sam W. Anderson |
1906 | (R.S.Gibbs expense for Repair) |
1907 | Sallie Green |
1907 | Sallie Green |
1908 | (Neal Anderson was paid .64 for School Census) |
1908 | (J.R. Rogers was paid $10.50 for road) |
1909 | J.B. Bailey |
1909 | J.B. Bailey |
1909 | J.B. Bailey |
1909 | J.B. Bailey |
1909 | J.B. Bailey |
1905 | p. 163 (Unused Appropriations Set Aside for buildings in Districts) |
1911 | Hot Springs Colored p. 106 |
1911 | J.B. Bailey teacher |
1909 | Marshall Colored p. 26 |
1909 | J.B. Bailey teacher |
1909 | Mars Hill Colored p. 146 |
1910 | Josephine Barnard, teacher |
1910 | (A.B. Barnett was paid .64 for School Census) |
1910 | Alice Baird, teacher |
1911 | Alice Baird, teacher |
1911 | S. W. Anderson, teacher |
1912 | S. W. Anderson, teacher |
1912 | S. W. Anderson, teacher |
1912 | S. W. Anderson, teacher |

Ledger for 1909–1912, Box 103, Folder 33

1911 | J.B. Bailey teacher |
1909 | Marshall Colored p. 26 |
1909 | J.B. Bailey teacher |
1909 | Mars Hill Colored p. 146 |
1910 | Josephine Barnard, teacher |
1910 | (A.B. Barnett was paid .64 for School Census) |
1910 | Alice Baird, teacher |
1911 | Alice Baird, teacher |
1911 | S. W. Anderson, teacher |
1912 | S. W. Anderson, teacher |
1912 | S. W. Anderson, teacher |
1912 | S. W. Anderson, teacher |

Madison County School Expense Records, Mars Hill College Archives, Local History, 1901–1904, Box 103, Folder 1.
Ibid. Box 103, 1903–1908, Folder 2.
Integration
Madison County Board of Education Meetings

September 6, 1963:
Action: Consider Geraldine Griffin’s request that her child be assigned to Asheville School Unit
Decision: Rejected

April 6, 1964:
Action: Consider Geraldine Griffin’s written request to place her child in the Mars Hill White School
Present: Geraldine Griffin, Mother
Board of Education
Mr. Day, Asheville Attorney, NAACP
Mr. Roland, Colored Jeweler of Asheville
Anderson Rosenwald School Committee
Manuel Briscoe, Chairman
Seam Roland, Augusta Briscoe Ray
Decision: Meet Again June 1, 1964

June 1, 1964:
Action: Consider Geraldine Griffin’s written request.
Present: Jesse Ray of Asheville
Board of Education
Mr. Eldridge Leak, County Attorney
Long Ridge School Committee
Manuel Briscoe, Chairman
Seam Roland, Augusta Ray
(Media) Mr. Shields, WMMH Radio
Mr. Story, News-Record
Mr. Harlecheck, Asheville Citizen
Decision: Meet Again at 9:30PM

June 1, 1964, 9:30PM Meeting:
Action: Consider other written requests by parents?
Present: Jesse Ray of Asheville
Board of Education
Mr. Roland of Asheville
Long Ridge School Committee
Manuel Briscoe, Seam Roland, Augusta Ray
Mars Hill Parents: Gudger Barnett, Mrs. Irene McDowell, Mr. Ernest Ervin; Marshall was Mrs. Presnell and three children
Decision: Approved
Jean Dobbins, 1st Grade, to M.H. School (Father, Gudger Barnett)
Phillip M. Ervin, 7th Grade to M.H. School (Father, Ernest Ervin)
Betty & Anne McDowell, 7th Grade to M.H. School (Mother, Irene McDowell)
Vickie Louise Wilson, 5th Grade to M.H. School (Mother, Geraldine Griffin)

Madison County Board of Education Minutes, Sept. 6, 1963–June, 1964. Extracted by Pauline Cheek and Dan Slagle
In December 2009 an initial planning group convened to explore how to preserve the Long Ridge Community Anderson Rosenwald School. Over the years, numerous individuals, including students from Mars Hill University, were instrumental in planning for the future of the school.

Friends Group Planning Committee
Members and Contributors

Lakia Allah  
Flora Barnette  
Herbert Barnette  
Kevin Barnette  
Donna Beavers  
Gordon Benton  
Russell Blevins  
Darhyl Boone  
Kasey Boston  
Simone Bouyer  
Colie Brown  
Teresa Buckner  
Edwin Cheek  
Paulie Cheek  
Bud Christman  
Stewart Coates  
Jessie Coleman  
Dorothy Coone  
Charles Cutshall  
Joe Davis  
Justin L. Derr  
Scott Donald  
Jameson Donnell  
Phillip Michael Ervin  
Melissa Dean  
Fifi DeGroot  
Richard Dillingham  
Scott Donald  
Darlene Dunn  
Hank Dunn  
Phillip Erwin  
Ciara Felder  
Judy Futch  
Steve Garrison  
Doneisha Garcia  
Augusta Gladding  
Weston Hart  
Sarah Hart  
Jeane Hoffman  
Will Hoffman  
Barbara Jones  
Eugene Jones  
Karen Kiehna  
Howard Lee  
Page Lee  
Ruth Lennon  
Max Lennon  
Dan Lunsford  
Lori Hagen Massey  
Omar McClain  
Cleveland Martin  
Justin Metcalf  
Tracy Morgan  
Kaye Myers  
Ben Morrell  
Jula Moore  
Margaret Newbold  
Mark Norwood  
Aerial Odan  
Samantha Odham  
Arlene Pettway  
J. Bruce Phillips  
Ryan Phillips  
Theresa Phillips  
Shirley Pike  
Wesley Pike  
Lawrence Ponder  
Alexis Poplos  
Travis Profitt  
Dorothy Rapp  
Ray Rapp  
Alonzo Ray  
Charity Ray  
Inez Ray  
Preston Ray  
A. D. Reed  
Sarah Roland  
Beth Ross  
Lenny Ross  
Fatimah R. Shabazz  
O’Neal Shelton  
Carol Shields  
Oralene Simmons  
Dan Slagle  
Paul Smith  
Pat Smith  
Walter Smith  
LaHalica Snyzeen  
Jonnee Taylor  
Katie Terry  
Sandra Tolley  
Caroline Twiggs  
Oscan Weston  
David Wyatt  
Willa Wyatt  
Bob Zink

Willa Wyatt has led the Friends Group committee for more than 10 years.
Strategic Plan

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

After several years of discussion and planning, the Long Ridge Community Anderson Rosenwald School Planning Committee decided to develop a strategic plan to guide the restoration activities of the Long Ridge Community Anderson Rosenwald School during 2013–2016. A Strategic Planning Committee, comprised of the Committee Chairs, met to identify the strategic directions and broad goals needed to develop the School. Through a participatory process, the Planning Committee developed the vision and guiding principles to guide the organization. A draft plan was developed by planning consultants and reviewed by the Strategic Planning committee and the Planning Committee.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AGREEMENT

The Long Ridge Community Anderson Rosenwald Project Planning Committee approved the strategic plan in March, 2013. The plan represents the commitment of the Planning Committee to the mission, vision, guiding principles, and organizational goals and objectives that they defined during the planning process. The Planning Committee recognizes that active governance, oversight and participation are required to fulfill the goals and achieve the mission and vision. The Volunteers are committed to developing well-defined action plans, monitoring the plans and adapting as needed to fulfill the strategic directions outlined in this plan.

~ Willa Wyatt, Chair, representing the Long Ridge Community Anderson Rosenwald Planning Committee, March 8, 2013

HISTORY

Julius Rosenwald, part-owner and president of Sears, Roebuck and Company, established the Rosenwald Fund in 1917 for “the well-being of mankind.” The largest project of this fund, undertaken with input and encouragement from African American educator Booker T. Washington, involved providing funds for African American schools throughout the American South.

Between 1917 and 1932, the Rosenwald Project provided over $4.4 million in matching funds for over 5,000 schools plus teachers residences and shop buildings in fifteen states. The schools were constructed according to models designed by architects at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama to maximize light and ventilation.

The Long Ridge Community Anderson Rosenwald School (previously known as the Mars Hill Colored School and as the Long Ridge School), located in the Long Ridge community of Mars Hill, NC, was one of those 5,000 schools. The school was completed in approximately 1930 with funds raised by the Mars Hill African American community and the Madison County Board of Education, with additional funds from the Rosenwald Project.

More than 2,000 African American children from Madison County attended the Long Ridge Community Anderson Rosenwald School during the years it operated. The school closed in 1965 as a result of integration, and Madison County School system continued to own the building. The Historic Anderson Rosenwald Rehabilitation Project has a memorandum of understanding with Madison County School system regarding the use and care of the school building and site.
**PROGRESS TO DATE**

In December 2009 an initial planning group convened to explore how to preserve the Long Ridge Community Anderson Rosenwald School and continued meeting in 2010. The Planning Committee met monthly from 2011 to 2013. The activities below reveal primary steps the Planning Committee has taken:

**2010** – Initial rehabilitation plans for The Long Ridge Community Anderson Rosenwald School building were developed by an architect; sub-committees were established; Elon University created a film and conducted four interviews with alumni; a mission statement was drafted; roof rebuilt; trenches dug for electric lines; Mars Hill University students hired as “Rosenwald Scholars”; trail maintenance conducted; website developed, Community Celebration event held on October 13, 2010

**2011** – Financial support received from North Carolina Conservation Trust; building renovations continued; Planning Committee networked with a state and regional preservation groups, Madison County officials, Madison County School system, and local community groups

**2012** – Historical research about the school continued; building restoration continued; oral history interviews conducted; Community Block Grant presented to the Madison County Commissioners; application made to the Department of Housing and Urban Development; strategic planning process begun; oral history interviews continued; mission statement approved

**Strategic Directions 2013 – 2016**

In the next three years, The Long Ridge Community Anderson Rosenwald School will enhance and expand relationships with community stakeholders to ensure that the following strategic directions are reached:

**Preserving Long Ridge Community Anderson Rosenwald School**
The school building is a place where the community can gather and programs can be held.

**Educating the community about the Long Ridge Community Anderson Rosenwald School**
Through educational programs, people in the Blue Ridge region understand the impact of the Long Ridge Community Anderson Rosenwald School on the black community and on the community as a whole.

**Reaching out to Madison County and surrounding counties**
People in Madison County and surrounding counties work together to ensure that the Long Ridge Community Anderson Rosenwald School is sustainable and accurately represents the students, families, and communities surrounding the Long Ridge Community Anderson Rosenwald School.

**Ensuring longevity of “our story, this place”**
Long Ridge Community Anderson Rosenwald School has organizational structures and policies in place to ensure capacity to provide programs.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

We believe that our story at this place, at this school, in this community and in this region matters. We are committed to working together to ensure that a lasting legacy is preserved.

**We Value**

**Equality**
We believe that all people have equal worth and that it is important to honor our story: where we came from and the journey to where we are today.

We believe that the history of EVERY community is important to our region and our country.

**Respect**
We believe that the contributions of each person and each community are important.

We believe that recognizing history and courage helps us celebrate achievements and learn from mistakes.

We believe that education has been and continues to be an essential building block for progress.

We believe by working together we can create strong collaborations for the future.

**Sustainability**
We believe the future generations deserve the model of living roots that are preserved in this place.
Resolution by the Madison County Board of Education

Resolved by the Madison County Board of Education honoring the 90th anniversary of the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School, upholding the core values of public education, and strengthening an educational environment free from discrimination and harassment.

WHEREAS, in 1923, the Madison County Board of Education built a new school building on Long Ridge, using funds from the Rosenwald Fund for building African-American schools in the South.

WHEREAS, today, the Madison County Board of Education celebrates the historical and cultural significance of the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School, which was created out of segregation at that time, and which served as a consolidated elementary school for Madison County African-American school children, serving a generation of Madison County children and standing as a beacon for 90 years on Long Ridge in Mars Hill.

WHEREAS, it has been 64 years since Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, the landmark 1954 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that separate schools for African American and white children were 'inherently unequal.'

WHEREAS, ten years after the Brown decision, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, thereby prohibiting segregation in public schools and outlawing discrimination based on race, religion, sex or national origin.

WHEREAS, despite the Supreme Court’s ruling in Brown and the adoption of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, children in our country are still subject to and affected by discrimination and bigotry.

WHEREAS, discrimination, bigotry and hate speech in the school setting has an overwhelming negative impact on students' emotional health and well-being, as well as their ability to freely benefit from the many educational opportunities provided.

WHEREAS, our students have the basic right to attend school in an environment that is safe, promotes personal growth, volunteerism and is free from discrimination, bigotry, and disruption.

WHEREAS, the Board of Education acknowledges the dignity and worth of all students and employees and strives to create a safe, caring, and inviting school environment to facilitate student learning and achievement.

WHEREAS, the Board of Education, and its staff, honor the history of the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School and are fully dedicated to the education and support of ALL students, and uphold the core values set forth in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which provides for equal educational opportunities for all and prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sex or national origin.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Madison County Board of Education:

1. That, on its 90th anniversary, the Board honors the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School and the significant, historical role it played in our community for over a generation; and

2. That the Board honors the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School teachers, whose purpose was to ensure African-American children in our community received a sound education despite the hardships they encountered.
The Madison County Board of Education Members and Principals read the Resolution for the Anderson Rosenwald School in November 2018, honoring the 90th Anniversary of the school.

In further recognition and honor of the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School's 90th Anniversary, the Board further resolves that:

1. We all must strive, harder than before, to provide each of our students the opportunity for an excellent education free from discrimination, harassment and bigotry;

2. As the Board of Education's anti-discrimination policy states, we will not tolerate any form of unlawful discrimination, harassment, or bullying at school, athletics, school programs, or school events;

3. We must lead by example and demonstrate by our conduct that we are committed to equality;

4. We also must encourage and support all students to achieve their best; and

5. We want our students to leave our school district not only with strong academic and vocational skills, but also with the understanding that all people are worthy of respect and dignity.

Read and Adopted, this 9th day of November 2018.

Theresa Banks, Chair
Mr. Kelby Cody, Vice-Chair

Mrs. Loretta Massey, Member

Mrs. Barbara Wyant, Member
Dr. Will Hoffman, Superintendent
Ex-Officio Secretary

*Three Madison County colored schools in the Mars Hill area began in the 1880s: Mars Hill; Bull Creek; and Ivy Colored schools. In 1905, the Madison County Board of Education, under the leadership of Superintendent R.L. Moore, bought an acre of land for a new school house, consolidating the Mars Hill colored elementary schools on Long Ridge, south of Mars Hill. This new school house was the beginning of the Long Ridge African American community in Mars Hill, with Black residences and Mt. Olive church to follow.*
~ The Historic ~

Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School

Standing in front of the old Mt. Olive Church. Photo courtesy of Augusta Ray
The Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School, located in the Long Ridge community, will serve as a Community Cultural Center and Interpretive Museum intended to promote a fuller understanding of southern Appalachian black history and to enhance education at all levels.

To contribute stories or funds to the project, please visit www.marshallrosenwaldschool.org