

SPECIAL EDITION

Jefferson County Public Schools

CHARLES TOWN DISTRICT 1849 - 1933

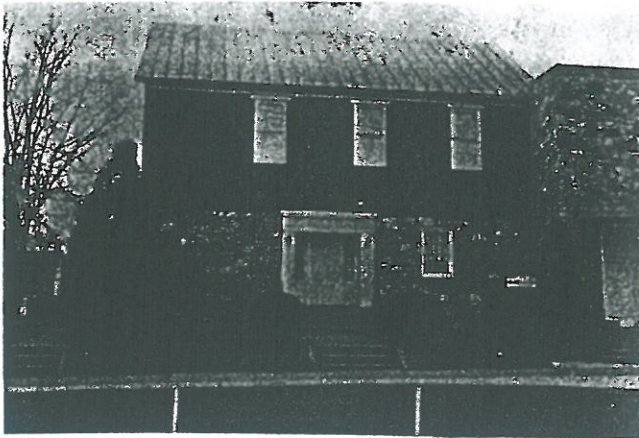


Vol. 2, No. 6

Jefferson County, West Virginia

March, 1976

Charles Town Schools



FIRST PUBLIC SCHOOL IN CHARLES TOWN

The first public school in Charles Town still stands upon the corner of Charles and North Streets directly across from the Asbury United Methodist Church.

Built in the early 1850's, it is a two story stone and brick building still in use today as the Methodist Educational Building.

The land for the school was purchased from William Crow in 1849. Originally the structure was one-story stone, the upper portion of brick having been added in later years.

The school was used until 1893 when the Board of Education of the Charles Town District purchased the Ranson Inn, now the Ranson Town Hall, as the new Charles Town Graded School.

Children of both sexes attended this first school. The teachers were all men, and for a number of years were not natives of the town or county, but came from other counties of Virginia or from other states.

In this period of public school beginnings, the first requisite of a teacher was that he be a disciplinarian.

No pupil taught at public expense was expected to like school, and compulsion was considered the key to learning. Punishment was meted out to those who would not, or could not, learn their lessons.

The teachers were not popular but neither were the first public schools. The name "free school" created a prejudice in the minds of the people.

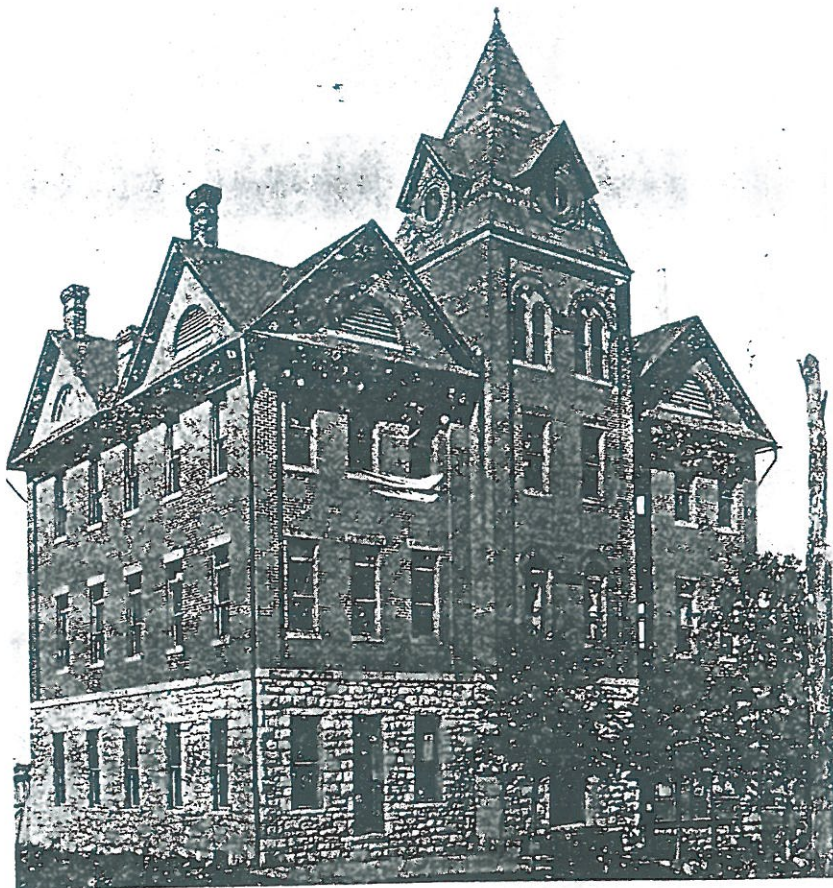
The rich and cultivated class of Charles Town preferred paying the high tuition rates of private institutions of learning like the Charles Town Academy. (See SCHOOL NEWS, October, 1975)

In 1894 the Board of Education sold the property to Charles Town Mining, Manufacturing and Improvement Company which in turn sold it to Cook and Phillips, a hardware concern in Charles Town for use as a warehouse.

In 1926, the building came into the possession of the Exchange Creamery Company. Mr. E. O. Zynda continued to operate it as the Jefferson Creamery from 1937 until the Asbury Methodist Church purchased it in 1948 to be used as a Sunday school. Today the building is still the property of the Methodist Church.

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Charles Town Schools, Con't.



**Charles Town Graded School, 1893 - 1912
(Originally Ranson Inn)**

Charles Town Schools 1893 - 1925

The Ranson Inn, now the Ranson Town Hall, was purchased in 1893 by the Board of Education of the Charles Town District for \$9,000. It became the Charles Town Graded School until 1912.

Since much of the subject matter taught at the school was beyond the elementary level and since many of the school's pupils were being admitted to colleges, the name of the school was changed in 1905 to the Charles Town Graded and High School.

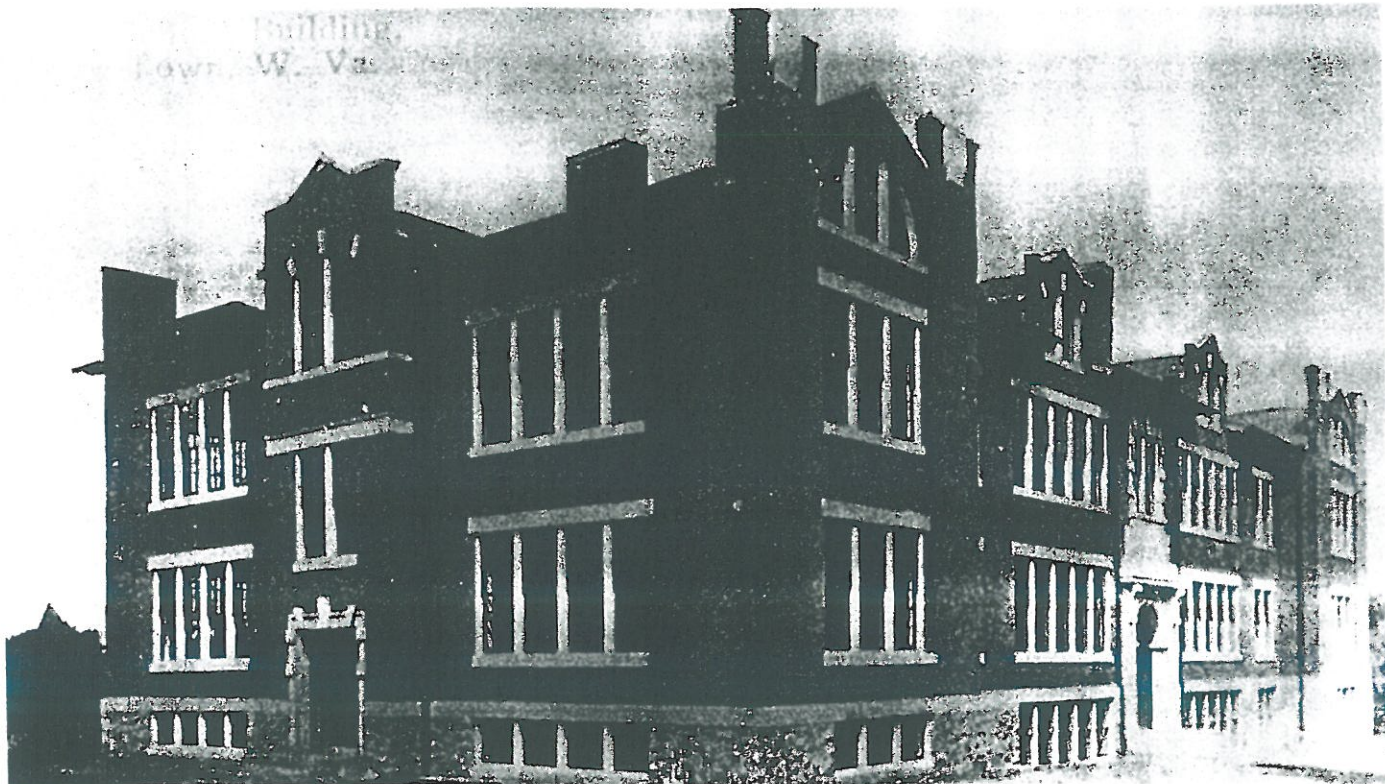
By 1910 it became evident that a larger building was needed. Therefore the Board of Education purchased The Charles Town Academy building (located in the present playground of Wright Denny Elementary) and grounds for \$1500.

It was the Board's intention to remodel the building for use as a primary school for grades 1-3. However, the Board later decided that the building was not worth the expense of repairs.

The Board began to formulate plans for the construction of a new school on the Academy site. A bond issue of \$30,000 was approved by the county in 1910, but the contractors' bids were all in excess of the appropriation.

Nothing more was done about building the new school until 1912 when the Board finally accepted a bid of \$36,000.

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The Charles Town Graded and High School was built in 1912 on what is known today as South Lawrence Street. In 1912 the site was part of the Charles Town Academy grounds purchased by the Board of Education in 1910. The school continued to operate until 1972 when it was destroyed by fire.

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The Academy was torn down and some of the material from the old building was used in the construction of the new school.

The new Charles Town Graded and High School (better known now as the Wright Denny Elementary which was destroyed by fire in 1972) was completed by the end of 1912.

School enrollment expanded quickly at the new school. By 1921 the Board of Education again began to look for additional space. That same year, the Board purchased the Timberlake property (later to become the site of the new Charles Town High School) on Congress Street for \$15,000. Renovations were made to the Timberlake home so that it could be used as a high school.

Wright Denny served as principal of both buildings until 1927 when Dwight Hurley of Waynesboro, Virginia, was employed as principal of the Timberlake building which came to be known as Charles Town High School. In 1927, Hurley had four teachers on his staff for grades 9-12, and his salary was \$2400 a year.

Wright Denny remained as principal of Charles Town Graded School. In 1927 he had 14 teachers on his staff for grades 1-8, and his salary was \$3,300 a year. Denny continued to serve as principal of the school until he retired in 1939.

The Board of Education minutes of the August 1, 1939 meeting records the high esteem the county felt for the man who had served Charles Town schools for so long:

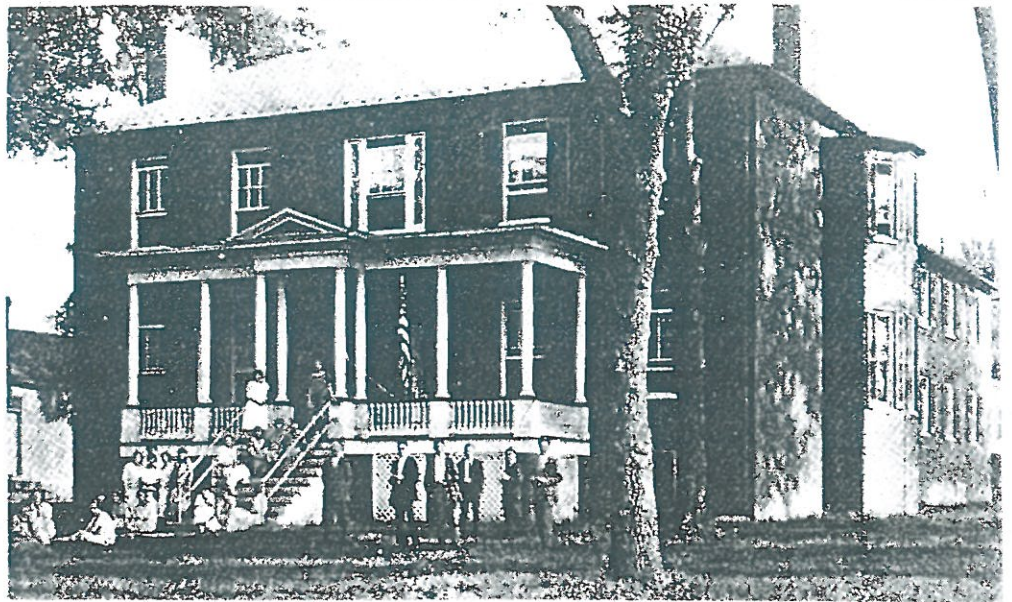
"Whereas the Board of Education of Jefferson County, West Virginia accepts Mr. Denny's resignation with regret, feeling his place as a teacher, principal and Christian gentleman cannot be filled, but recognizing the fact that Mr. Denny owes to himself and to his family a cessation

from his arduous duties in order that he may enjoy the pleasures of an honorable retirement."

"Whereas the Board of Education further acknowledges the 46 years of service, which Mr. Denny has rendered to his community in teaching to its boys and girls those high ideals which he exemplifies in his own life."

"Now, therefore, be it resolved by the Board of Education that the Charles Town Graded School be named the Wright Denny Graded School and a suitable plaque calling attention to this fact be placed in the school."

When Wright Denny Elementary was destroyed by fire, the school building on Congress Street, originally built in 1930 as Charles Town High School, was converted to an elementary school and its name became Wright Denny Elementary.



In 1921 the Board of Education of the Charles Town District purchased the Timberlake home on Congress Street and renovated it for use as a high school. The home was used as a school until 1930 when it was torn down and replaced by the new Charles Town High School (now Wright Denny Elementary).

CHARLES TOWN HIGH - 1930



A new Charles Town High School was built in 1930 as the result of a \$125,000 bond levy passed in 1928 which also provided a new Eagle Avenue School for black students.

The original purpose of the bond levy was to provide a joint high school to serve both the Charles Town and the Harpers Ferry School Districts. A clause in the levy stipulated that if Harpers Ferry citizens did not accept the idea of a consolidated high school, then the Charles Town District would proceed with building a new high school of its own.

Charles Town District citizens passed the levy, 919 votes for and 565 against. However, Harpers Ferry District residents voted overwhelmingly against the consolidation.

As the levy stipulated, the Charles Town District proceeded in building a new high school just for the Charles Town District.

The Timberlake home was torn down, and the new Charles Town High School was built in 1930 on the same site. The new school served students in grades 7-12.

The school continued to be used as a high school until 1958 when a new Charles Town High School was built on High Street. At that time the school became Charles Town Junior High.

When Wright Denny Elementary (built as Charles Town Graded and High School in 1912) was destroyed by fire in 1972, Charles Town Junior High became Wright Denny Elementary serving grades 1-3. Currently the building is still used for grades 1-3, but with the completion of a new solar heated elementary school now in progress, the building will still be called Wright Denny Elementary but will serve grades 4-6. Currently, additional classrooms are being added to the building.

Charles Town Black Schools

The first school in Charles Town for Black students started in the basement of Archilles Dixon's home on Liberty Street and was taught by white teachers, Miss Annie Dudley and others, from the North. The first black teacher was Enis Wilson, a student from Storer College.

In 1867 the Charles Town District Board of Education purchased a lot on Harewood Avenue at the intersection of the Summit Point and Middleway road from a Thomas Davis for \$100.

The brick school which was built upon this lot still stands today next to the Zion Baptist Church. It is owned by the church and rented to James Brown as a private residence.

The school's first teacher was Littleton L. Page who served for forty years. The new high school built in 1948 for black students was named Page Jackson High School in honor of this early teacher and Philip Jackson, also a long-time teacher and principal in the area black schools.

This early school was used until 1894 when the Board of Education purchased a lot on Eagle Avenue for a new, four-room brick school from a George and Emily Washington for \$500. In 1906, the Eagle Avenue School received a substantial addition. According to the 1906 Board meetings,

40 double desks, 2 recitation benches, 1 principal's desk, and 2 stout chairs were ordered for the new addition.

The first Eagle Avenue School was used until 1929 when a new Eagle Avenue School was erected in the same general area but facing Harewood Avenue.

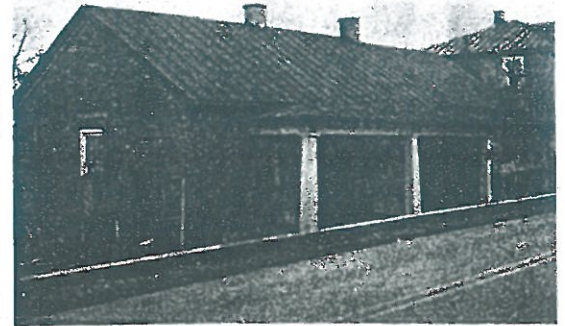
The second Eagle Avenue School was used for grades 1-8 until 1938 when the first high school classes were started through the efforts of Principal O. M. Steward and his staff who took on extra duties to initiate the high school program.

In 1942 an annex was added to the school, providing classrooms, a home economics room, a shop, and a cafeteria. Eagle Avenue was used as both a high school and graded school until the Page Jackson High School was erected in 1948.

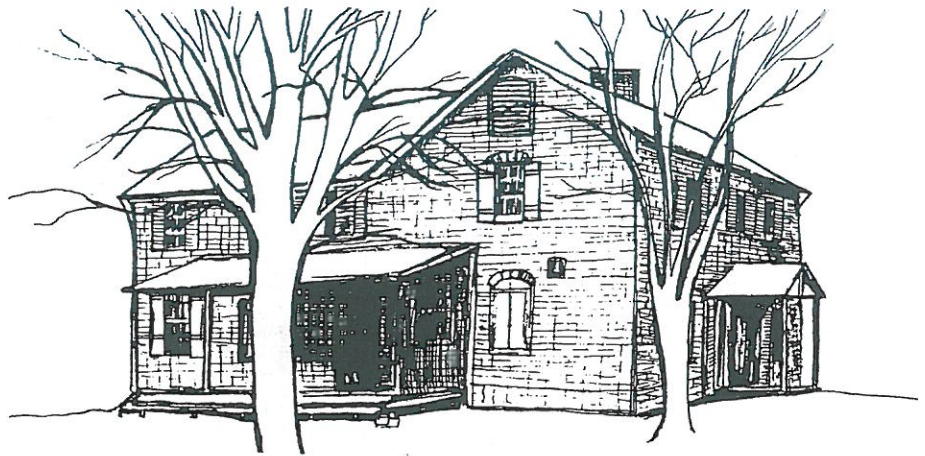
In 1966, Eagle Avenue School was destroyed by fire.



First Black School in Charles Town was Home on Liberty Street.



The Second Black School in Charles Town, Built in 1867, STILL STANDS TODAY ON HAREWOOD AVENUE.



Eagle Avenue School - 1894



Eagle Avenue School - 1929

SHENANDOAH JUNCTION SCHOOLS



Pictured is the home of Ferd Snyder of Shenandoah Junction whose home is built on the former site of the Shenandoah Junction Oak Grove School for black students.

Oak Grove was built in 1895 on property purchased by the Board from a John Aglionby for \$50.

The school was not always open because there were not enough students attending the school to justify employing a teacher.

One period in which the school was closed was around 1919. The Board minutes of 1919 order that the school be opened and a teacher appointed, but that it would remain open only if an average daily attendance of 12 was met.

The school was closed in 1930, and students were transferred to Kearneysville.

When Ferd Snyder purchased the property, the old school was being used as a hay shed. He tore down the old school and built his home on the same site.



FIRST SHENANDOAH JUNCTION SCHOOL Built 1889

It is unknown when the first Shenandoah Junction school for white students was built, but it stood approximately 1000 feet behind and facing the opposite direction of the brick school which was built in 1916.

This picture was made from a postcard loaned to this paper by Jesse Boyd of Shenandoah Junction.

Although most schools of that time were one-room buildings, the Shenandoah Junction School was a large two-room school with a staff of two teachers. In fact, it was the only school in the Charles Town District, other than Charles Town Graded School, to have more than one teacher.

After the school closed in 1916, it was rented by a firm in Baltimore as a garment factory, first for making shirts and later for overalls. Later it was used as an antique shop, and during that time was destroyed by fire.



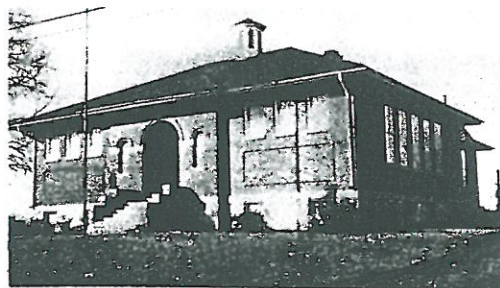
Pictured are students sitting in front of the first Shenandoah Junction School in 1916, the last year the school operated. The picture was loaned to this paper by Robert Darr of Shenandoah Junction.

Pictured front row are Stella George Rice, Florence Hill Fraley, Calvin Grove, (?) Shackleford, Kenneth Broyles, Mary Irving, ?, Pearl Broyles, ? Shackleford, Mae Morris, and Jesse Boyd.

Second row: Clarence Hill, Ethel Howe Stickles, (?) Shackleford, Billie Clipp, Lucy Broyles Casey, May Wright Brown, Josie Clipp Seibert, Ercel Boyd, Wilbert Weller, Hartzell Weller, (?) Shackleford.

Third row: Margaret Howe Cave, Helen Marsh Darr, Ruth Clipp, Julian Grove, Forest Littlejohn, Herbert Boyd, Jasper Hill, Tom Grove.

Fourth row: Elizabeth Slaughter Reynolds, Miss Florence Lancaster (teacher), Jesse Engle, Francis Daniel (teacher).



SHENANDOAH JUNCTION SCHOOL - 1915

In 1915, a bid of \$6200 from a J.T. Blackford was accepted by the Charles Town District Board of Education to build a new school in Shenandoah Junction for white students.

It was a large school for its time, a three-room school for grades 1-8.

In 1927, parents of Shenandoah Junction students requested that the Board of Education transport high school students to Charles Town High. The Board denied the request on the grounds that it was against its policy "to transport any pupils to any schools in the district."

The school was later used for grades 1 - 6 until it was replaced by North Jefferson Elementary on St. Rt. 9 North.

Today the school is the property of the Shenandoah Junction Ruritan Club.

MOUNTAIN SCHOOLS



MANNINGS SCHOOL - 1857

One of the earliest public schools erected in Jefferson County was the Mannings School built in 1857 on property purchased by the Board of Education in 1857 from a Nathaniel Mannings for \$10.

The school still stands today on a dirt road directly off St. Rt. 9 South across from the entrance to the Mt. Mission Road.

The deed transfer in 1857 states that the school would have perpetual use of a spring located "about 100 yards from the school house."

The school was used until 1923 when it was replaced by the Mt. Mission School. Today Mannings School is owned by Mrs. Jesse Clevenger of Halltown, who rents it as a private dwelling.



MT. MISSION SCHOOL, 1928-1934

In 1928, the Board of Education rented the Mt. Mission School from the Episcopal Diocese for \$40 a month to replace the Mannings School.

Mt. Mission School had been built in 1904 as St. Andrews Mission School and remained open as a parochial school until around 1926.

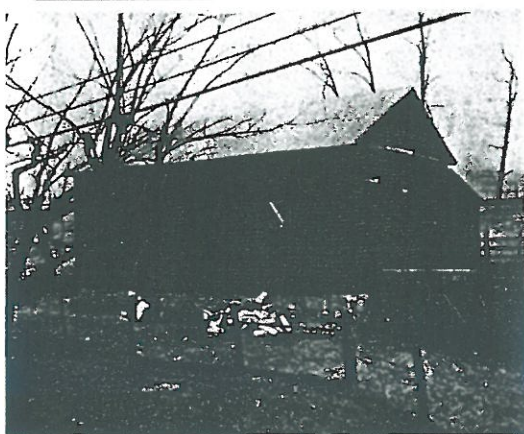
As a public school, it was used for grades 1-8 until 1934 when pupils above the fourth grade were sent to Charles Town Graded School.

The following year, there were so few students attending Mt. Mission that the Board decided that it was no longer practical to rent the building.

Starting in the 1935-36 school year, students above the second grade were transported to Charles Town Graded School and grades one and two were placed in a home near Mt. Mission.

This arrangement continued until 1940 when Blue Ridge Elementary was erected for grades 1-6.

Today the Mt. Mission School is still the property of the Episcopal Diocese and is being used as the Mountain Community Center.



Mechanicstown Schools

The Mechanicstown School for white students stood on the right at the top of the steep hill after turning onto Federal Hill Road from St. Rt. 9 South. The school was built in 1867 on property purchased from a Mr. Chew.

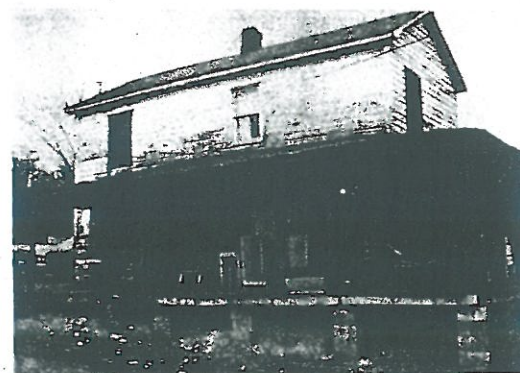
The school was used until 1935 when it was closed and the students were sent to Charles Town Graded School.

In 1935, the building was sold to a B. V. Moler for \$80 but the land was sold for \$50 to Margaret Chew, the daughter of the original owner of the property. Today the property is owned by an attorney from Frederick, Maryland.

The Mechanicstown School for black students was built in 1891 on land purchased by the Charles Town District Board of Education from a John Myers.

The building stands in Mechanicstown on St. Rt. 9 South on property now owned by Lester Ott. Today it is used as a wood and machinery shed.

The school was closed in 1934, and students were transported to Eagle Avenue School in Charles Town.



MANNINGS SCHOOL, 1935-1940

This home, now the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Jock Engle in Murrill Hill, was used as Mannings School for grades one and two from 1935-1940. When Blue Ridge Elementary was erected in 1940, the building was no longer used.

Built 1877

Wiltshire School



The school pictured was the Wiltshire School located on the right, one mile off the Leetown Road on the Brownshop-Bardane Road. This picture was loaned to this paper by Camilla O. Wiltshire, the daughter of J. B. Wiltshire on whose land the school was built.

This picture was taken sometime around 1916. First row left to right are Elsie Busey, George W. Fritts, Derwood Fritts, Annie Smallwood, Marie Fleming, Elizabeth Fleming, Dorothy Busey, Eleanor Bane, Charles Busey, and Leah Wiltshire Hammond, teacher. Second row: Charity Smallwood, Otis Bishop, Nelson Coleman, Camilla Wiltshire, Elizabeth Busey, Grover Smallwood and William Harris.

It is not known the exact date the Wiltshire School was built but it was sometime before the 1890's. J. Ernest Watson, N. George Street, Charles Town, says that he attended the school in the early 1890's.

Camilla Wiltshire says that this school was the second school in the area. Before the Wiltshire School was erected, another school stood directly across the road. Miss Wiltshire also says that the Wiltshire School was for a time used as a Sunday School by the Charles Town Presbyterian Church.

The school was closed in 1923. In the early 1930's, it was rented by the Middleway District Board of Education as a school for black students in the Johnstontown area.

In 1934, the school building was sold to J. B. Wiltshire, on whose land the school stood, for \$50. Today the property on which the school stood belongs to James Brown of Charles Town. The school was torn down about four years ago.

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Superintendent . . . Harold L. Pickens
President of the Board . . . Richard Neal
Editor Mary Stocks

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Mr. Ferd Snyder
Miss Camilla Wiltshire
Mr. Jesse Boyd
Mr. George Turner
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ZOAR SCHOOL

One of the earliest public schools built in Jefferson County was the Zoar School which was located behind the Zoar Meeting House (now the home of Mr. and Mrs. D. E. McMillan) on the Flowing Springs Road.

The land for the school was deeded in 1848 to the Charles Town District Board of Education by a Jacob Miller.

An interesting account concerning the Zoar School occurs in the 1926 Board of Education minutes.

Parents of children attending the school asked that Zoar be closed and the students be sent to Charles Town Graded School. The Board denied the request on the grounds that the Charles Town School was already overcrowded.

Instead the Board ordered that Zoar be closed and the students transported by "motor bus" to Shenandoah Junction School. However, the parents persuaded the Board that this move was not satisfactory and so the Zoar School remained open.

The school did not close its doors until 1933. At that time the students of the Zoar area were transferred to the Shenandoah Junction School.

BARDANE SCHOOL



Today the building pictured is the well-kept home of Mrs. H. R. Blackford of Bardane, but the building was built in 1904 as the Bardane School.

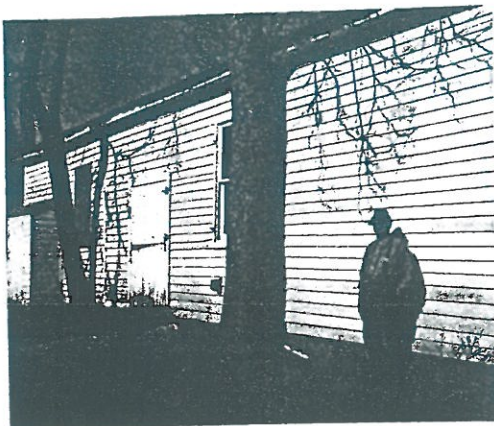
A contract was awarded in September, 1904, for \$713 to J. T. Blackford of Shenandoah Junction to build the school.

However, there was an earlier school in Bardane which was located at the end of the Brownshop-Bardane Road, before crossing the railroad tracks at Bardane. A deed recorded in the Jefferson County Court House for the year shows that in 1885 a lot was purchased from a Moses Burr for a school in Bardane.

In 1923, the school built in 1904 was ordered closed and students were to be transported to Shenandoah Junction. The Board of Education could not secure transportation for the students so the school remained open.

Bardane School was finally closed in 1933 when students were transferred to Kearneysville. In 1935 the building and lot were sold to H. R. Blackford for \$120.

RAMEY SCHOOL



Strother Stickel is pictured beside the Ramey School which he moved to his property on the Summit Point Road several years ago.

The Ramey School was located on the right before crossing the railroad tracks on the Senseney Road (off Rt. 51 going west from Charles Town). The school stood on what is now the Thomas Magaha farm.

It is not known exactly when the one-room school was built, but according to Kathryn Trussell, granddaughter of W. C. Ramey, who had the school built upon his property, the school definitely dates back to 1875 or before.

Miss Trussell's mother, Mary Ellen Ramey Trussell, was born in 1875 and was a student at Ramey school. Mary Ellen Ramey was the youngest in a family of 10 children. Miss Trussell believes that probably some of the older brothers and sisters born before 1875 also attended the school.

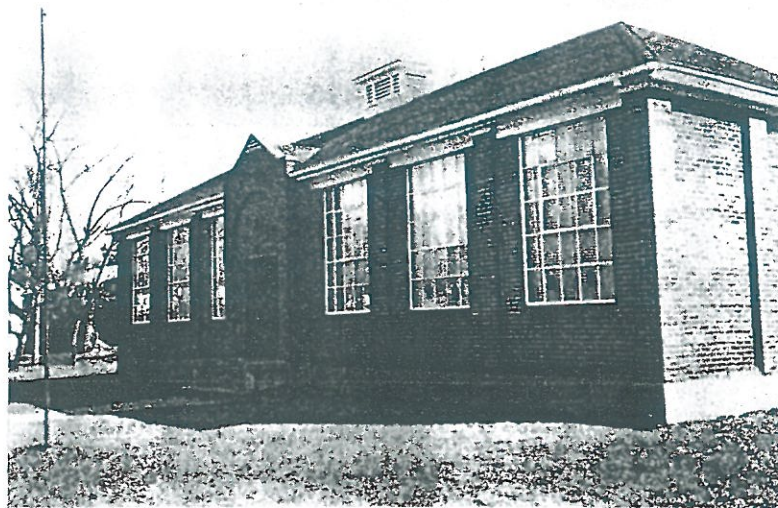
The school closed in 1927. Some years later Strother Stickel who lives on the Charles Town-Summit Point Road bought the school building.

Stickel tore the building down, moved it to his farm, and rebuilt it almost exactly as it was originally.

Stickel says that when he tore down the school, he found that it had a double floor. Evidently when the first floor had begun to wear, the Board of Education ordered that a second floor be laid without removing the first.

Stickel uses the old school as a garage. He has added some partitions and garage doors on the front, but essentially the building remains the same to the extent that the original tin roof covers part of the building.

Ranson School - 1924



Students of the Ranson area attended Charles Town public schools until 1918. At that time, a teacher was employed to teach in a rented building in Ranson but the location is not mentioned in the Board minutes.

The following year, in 1919, the first floor of the Ranson Post Office (now the Ranson Town Hall but from 1893-1912 was the Charles Town Graded and High School) from a Gerard Moore for \$100 a year. Moore had originally purchased the building from the Board of Education in 1917.

In 1922, land was purchased for \$1050 on Fifth Avenue for a Ranson school. However, when the bids for construction were all deemed too high by the Board, the new school plans were halted.

Two years later, in 1924, the Board again initiated plans to build the school. The construction contract was awarded to Whitmore Lumber Company.

The building is still used today for kindergarten classes as an extension to the Ranson Elementary School built in 1958. Currently an addition is being added to the 1958 school. With the completion of the addition, the kindergarten classes will move there, and the 1924 Ranson School will finally close its doors.

Riverside School

A stone foundation is all that remains of Riverside School which was located 1½ miles off St. Rt. 9 south on the Bloomery Road. The school stood on the right, just past the sharp curve going toward the power plant. Today the home of Harold Fritts is close to the ruins of Riverside School.

The school, probably built sometime in the second half of the 19th century, did not close its doors until 1921. It was a one-room school for grades 1-8.

Harold Fritts, who attended Riverside, remembers his teachers traveling to school by horse and buggy. He served as janitor of the school when he was a student. He says that he went out into the woods every evening to pick up pine burrs to use to start the fire in the pot belly stove every morning.



Harold Fritts, once a student at Riverside, stands on the remains of the well top on the former site of Riverside School. He remembers his teachers traveling to school by horse and buggy.