

The Stories and Histories of Diamond Hill

Waddell Elementary – 4th Grade VA Studies
June 2017

ERIC WILSON

LEXINGTON CITY SCHOOLS

ROCKBRIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

KIM HICKMAN, MARGARET SWISHER, KATEN REYNOLDS

Starter Questions

What is Local History?

How does it relate to 4th Grade VA Studies?

How will it help me in 5th-6th Grade US History? 11th Grade?

What's History really good for?

Poll Questions:

Raise your hand if YES.

You can answer YES for more than one

Starter Questions

Who likes reading books?

Starter Questions

Who likes writing stories?

Starter Questions

Who likes movies?

Starter Questions

Who likes taking pictures?

Starter Questions

Who likes listening to music?

Starter Questions

Who likes to dance?

If you raised your hand for one of those...

Raise your hand ... AGAIN!!

Stories
Histories
Visual Arts
Performing Arts

Researching is Searching
Searching is Curiosity

So where are we going?

State: 4th Grade Virginia Studies

City: Streets of Lexington

Neighborhood: Diamond Hill

Sites: Church, Home, Social Hall and Store

Where is Diamond Hill?

Main St. → Lewis St.

Diamond St. → Washington St.

the areas of neighborhoods change over time
(Diamond Hill, Green Hill, Mudtown ... VMI buys up land)

One Place, Many People:

Lived Histories
Lively Stories

“The House of Fun”



Knights of Pythias Hall
(On North Main Street, Diamond Hill behind)



Knights of Pythias Hall
also known in the day as ...



“THE HOUSE OF FUN”

These Musical Stars

Internationally Celebrated,

Performed at the foot of Diamond Hill in ...

The House of Fun!!



Duke Ellington – Pianist



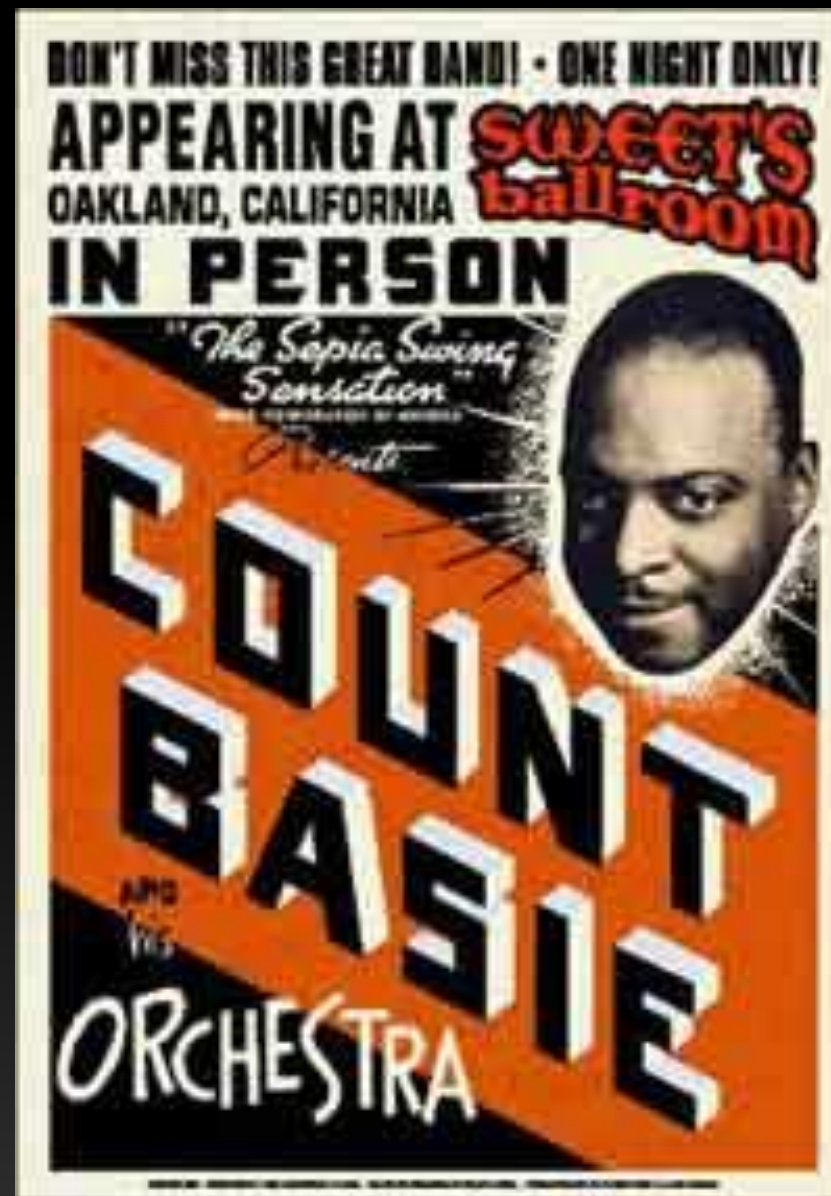
Duke Ellington – Time’s “Man of the Year” -- 1956



Duke Ellington Orchestra -- 1937



Count Basie – Pianist and Orchestra Conductor



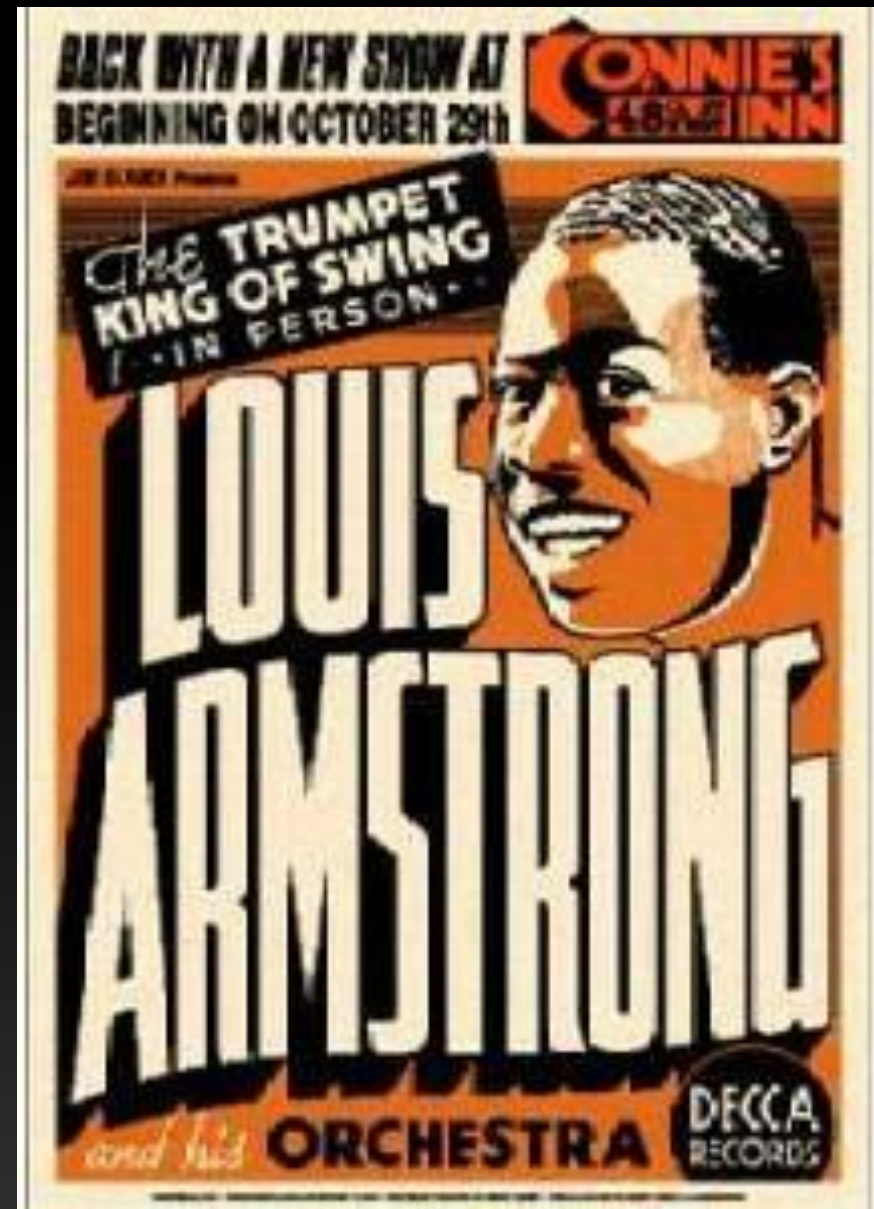
Count Basie – Pianist and Orchestra Conductor



Cab Calloway – Singer and Conductor



Cab Calloway – *“Hi-De-Hi-De-Hi-De Ho !!!”*



Louis Armstrong – Trumpeter and Band Leader – “King of Swing”



**Louis Armstrong – aka ‘Satchmo’ with his Big Blowin’ Cheeks
Singer of “What a Wonderful World”**



Louis Armstrong – another TIME “Man of the Year”



**All Played for Local Audiences at
Knights of Pythias Hall...
aka “THE HOUSE OF FUN”**



What did folks dance to???

The Lindy Hop

1930s-1940s Dance Craze

Imagine this at Pythias Hall, 'House of Fun'

The Lindy Hop

Hip-Swiveled Swirling, Leaping, Athletic Pairs

To Rotating Sequence of Pairs: 'Dance Battles'

To Chubby Checker's solo-swivel, foot-grounded 'Twist'

... to the Beatles' "Twist and Shout"

The Lindy Hop

Costumed Movie Sequence (1941)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahoJReiCaPk>

“Keep Punchin’” (1948)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyRMuCFxePw>

The Twist

“The Twist”: Chubby Checker:

Around the world, adults take a run at the 1960s Dance Fad
and add their own twists

Do you think you can Twist like THIS??

Or THESE Moves?!?!

Hips Keep Movin', Kids Keep Hoppin'....

... and Art and Music and Dance and History Keep Evolvin'!!

NOW ... the local buildings you'll soon **draw** ...

... and **walk** to, Downtown, next Wednesday.

Try to imagine how people **lived** and **learned** there
how they **wrote** and **played** and **prayed** there.

And ask yourself: how **YOU** might use such spaces **differently**
if **YOU** could choose

Buildings You'll See

Knights of Pythias: Social Hall

Blandome: Private Home

First Baptist: Church

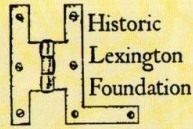
Willson-Walker House: Store and Restaurant

Where is Diamond Hill?

Main St. → Lewis St.

Diamond St. → Washington St.

the areas of neighborhoods change over time
(Diamond Hill, Green Hill, Mudtown ... VMI buys up land)

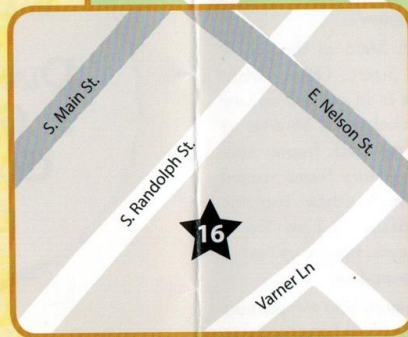


Post Office Box 901
 Lexington, VA 24450
 540-463-6832
 hlf@rockbridge.net
 www.historiclexington.org

Generously sponsored by:



Note: Locations 16 and 18 are located outside the area covered by the general map. Some patrons may choose to drive to the address listed in lieu of walking.



Cover top left to right: Patrick Payne, VMI cook in the 1890s, courtesy of VMI Archives; Blandome; marching band on N. Main Street; Lylburn Downing School



Historic Lexington Foundation Map of Historic Diamond Hill homes and Structures: 2012

11. **109 Henry Street** With the construction of the railroad following the Civil War, the area's Irish immigrant population grew. In 1873, St. Patrick's Parish was formed in Lexington. The same year, construction began on the parish church at 109 Henry Street. Irish immigrant John Sheridan played a major role in the establishment of the parish and construction of St. Patrick's Church.

12. **103 N. Main Street*** The present First Baptist Church building was completed in 1896. The Negro membership of the Lexington Baptist Church (now Manly Memorial) requested and received letters of dismission in 1867 in order to found the Lexington African Baptist Church. For 25 years, worship services were held in a frame building on a lot adjacent to the present building. One of the first financial contributions to build the 1896 church came from Lylburn Downing, Lexington-born African-American minister at Roanoke's First Avenue Presbyterian Church.

13. **29-35 N. Main Street** The Sheridan Livery Stable was completed in 1887 for John Sheridan. Sheridan had the responsibility for carrying the mail and operating the stagecoach line between Lexington, Staunton, and Hot Springs. In 1919, the building became the Rockbridge Steam Laundry Corporation.

14. **23 N. Main Street** The John Ruff House was built in 1811 and served as the Ruff family residence and hat factory for the next 70 years. In 1883, Lexington Lodge No. 2461, G.U.D. of Odd Fellows, established residence in the building. The Grand United Order was the African-American Odd Fellows organization founded in 1843, whereas the Independent Order of Odd Fellows was the white counterpart.

15. **30 N. Main Street** The Willson-Walker House was built in 1820 as the residence of Captain William Willson, local merchant, postmaster, and treasurer of Washington College. In 1911, Harry Lee Walker acquired the property and turned the ground floor into his butcher shop, while the family lived above. He would subsequently purchase Blandome (see 101 Tucker Street) and move his family to Tucker Street.

16. **118 S. Randolph Street** In 1864, the black and white members of the Randolph Street Methodist Church separated. The white congregation built a new church, while the black congregation retained the frame church building on Randolph Street. The congregation tore down this building in 1892 and replaced it with the present brick structure. Andrew Carnegie donated half of the cost of the church's pipe organ.

17. **300 Diamond Street*** Now a community center, the school was dedicated on September 11, 1927 in honor of the African-American minister Lylburn Downing. Downing was born in 1862 in Lexington in the household of wartime Governor James McDowell. The school served Lexington's black students grade 1 through 10 until 1944, when it added grades 11 and 12. It was only then that black students in Lexington could graduate from high school without having to leave Lexington.

18. **321 N. Main Street** In 1927, Progressive Lodge No. 266 of the Knights of Pythias purchased this property and built the current structure. The African-American Knights of Pythias was a secret society founded in Richmond in 1864 and dedicated to the principles of Friendship, Benevolence, and Charity. After the lodge failed to make payments during the beginning of the Great Depression, the building was purchased at auction by Knights of Pythias Trustee John B. Thompson. It continued to operate as the Knights of Pythias and was a major center of the African-American community. Members of the Count Basie Orchestra are said to have jammed there during one Fancy Dress performance. Following John Thompson's death, the property was sold in 1977 to American Legion Post 291.

**Listed on the National Register of Historic Places*

THE DIAMOND HILL & GREEN HILL COMMUNITY OF LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA

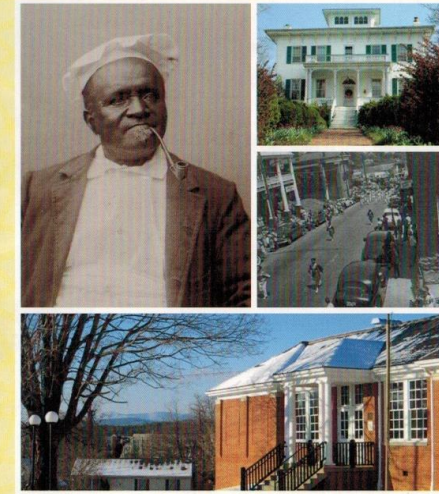
Diamond Hill is the story of people. It is the story of African-Americans, such as William Hayden Holmes, Harry Lee Walker, John B. Thompson, and Zach and Arlena Franklin. It is also the story of European-Americans like Irish immigrant and Civil War veteran John Sheridan, who lived on Diamond Hill and helped in its development.

Diamond Hill is also a lesson in 19th and 20th century architecture, from the elegant "Blandome," an Italianate villa built in the late 1820s, to numerous vernacular styles of the early 20th century. Additionally, the neighborhood and nearby North Main Street is home to several late 19th century churches and a National Register designated building constructed in the late 1920s as Lexington's "Colored School."

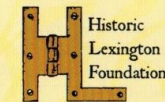
Following the Civil War in 1865, nearly 4,000 African-Americans in Rockbridge County had been freed, and they joined several hundred others known as free blacks. Many came to Lexington to seek work and an education. They settled mainly along north Main Street and eastward along Randolph Street. Across from VMI lay a largely open hill that became known as Diamond Hill. The origin of its name is unknown.

In 1883, a street from North Main to the top of the hill was called Diamond Street. Other streets followed. Fuller Street had begun as an antebellum lane where Jacob Fuller, a classical scholar and librarian at Washington College, built a large brick house, later known as "Blandome." In 1883, Maury Street, named after oceanographer Commodore Matthew Fontaine Maury, was also laid out. On top of the hill, Lewis Street, named for attorney William C. Lewis, was recognized in 1912 as the town's northeastern boundary.

John Sheridan, local land speculator, who owned most of the upper hill, created the Green Hill Subdivision in 1925. With its fifty lots, it became the nucleus of the town's black community. Other African-Americans also lived on Davidson and Moore Streets and along North Main Street. After World War II, most of Diamond Hill's lots were filled.



WALKING TOUR OF THE DIAMOND HILL & GREEN HILL COMMUNITY Lexington, Va

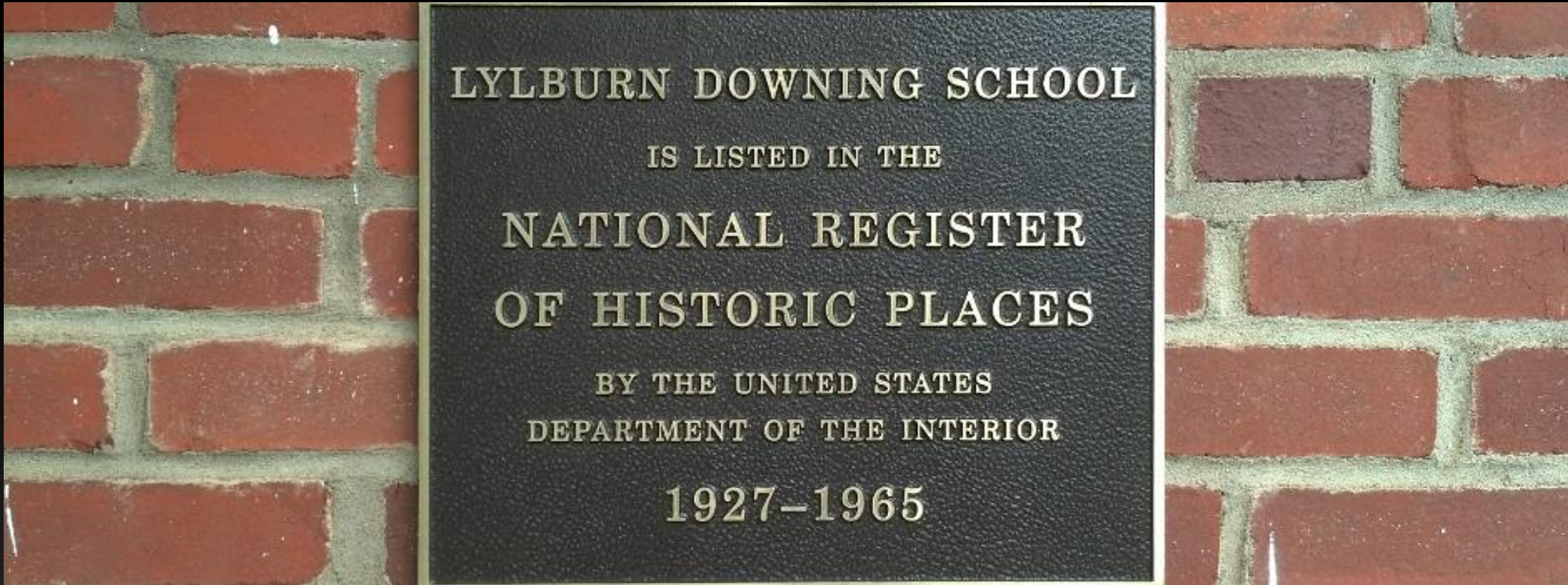


Where is Diamond Hill?

From 2014 → 2016

Your School was Part of the
Diamond Hill Community

*WHERE OTHER SCHOOLS HAVE COME BEFORE...
WHERE OTHER BUILDINGS HAVE CHANGED AND EVOLVED*



Lylburn Downing School (1946)

**Founded in 1927 for Lexington's African-American Students,
Now recognized as a National Landmark**

YOU will be part of a growing tradition when you become LDMS Trojans too



Rev. Lylburn L. Downing

Presbyterian Minister and Educator (1863-1937)

Born in Lexington to enslaved parents who attended Stonewall Jackson's "Colored Sunday School"



**Lexington Colored School – S. Randolph St.
1865-1920s**

Lexington Colored Graded School

LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA

Robert Lee Clark

having completed the prescribed Course of Study for

Grammar Grades in this School is hereby declared a Graduate of the Lexington Colored Graded School.

In testimony whereof this Certificate is now presented to him

Given at Lexington, Virginia, this 12th day of May, 1914.

W. N. P. Harris

Principal.

Lexington Colored Graded School Diploma - 1914



E.W. COFFEY, JR. & SON
FRESH MILK KILLED WIT





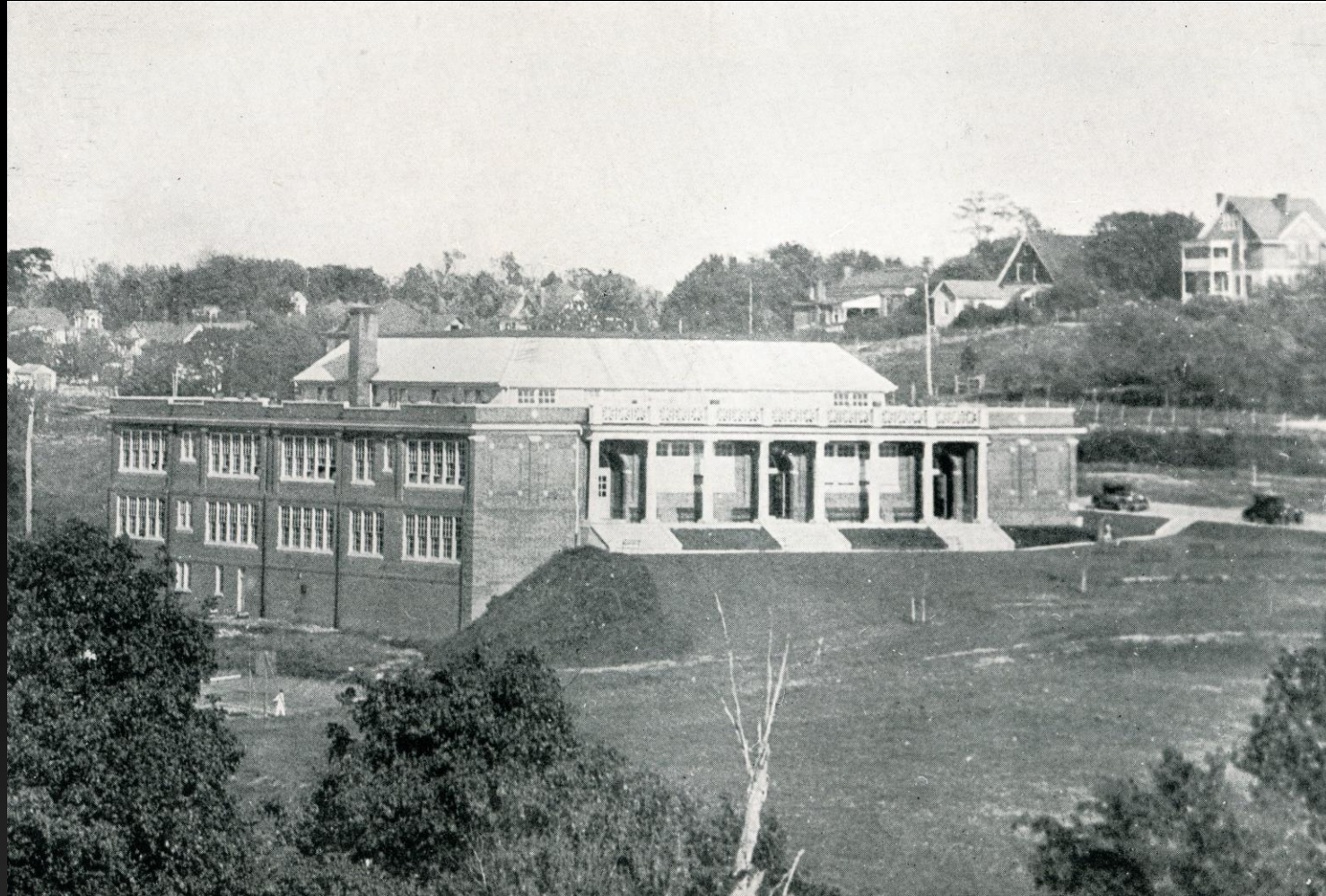
*First Day of Class at Lylburn Downing, 1946
Tiny Richardson is in the striped suit; Mrs. Rucker is on the right.*

Lylburn Downing School (1946)

**Founded in 1927 for Lexington's African-American Students,
Lylburn Downing Middle School opens after de-segregation in 1965**



Lylburn Downing Baseball Team – 1948
Will YOU want to play on an LDMS Trojans Sports Team too?!?



Lexington High School 1927-1960
Waddell Elementary School 1970 - 2014



Seth Eastman – 1849 (looking South to Lexington)
Diamond Hill will develop on the hill at left



Lexington from VMI

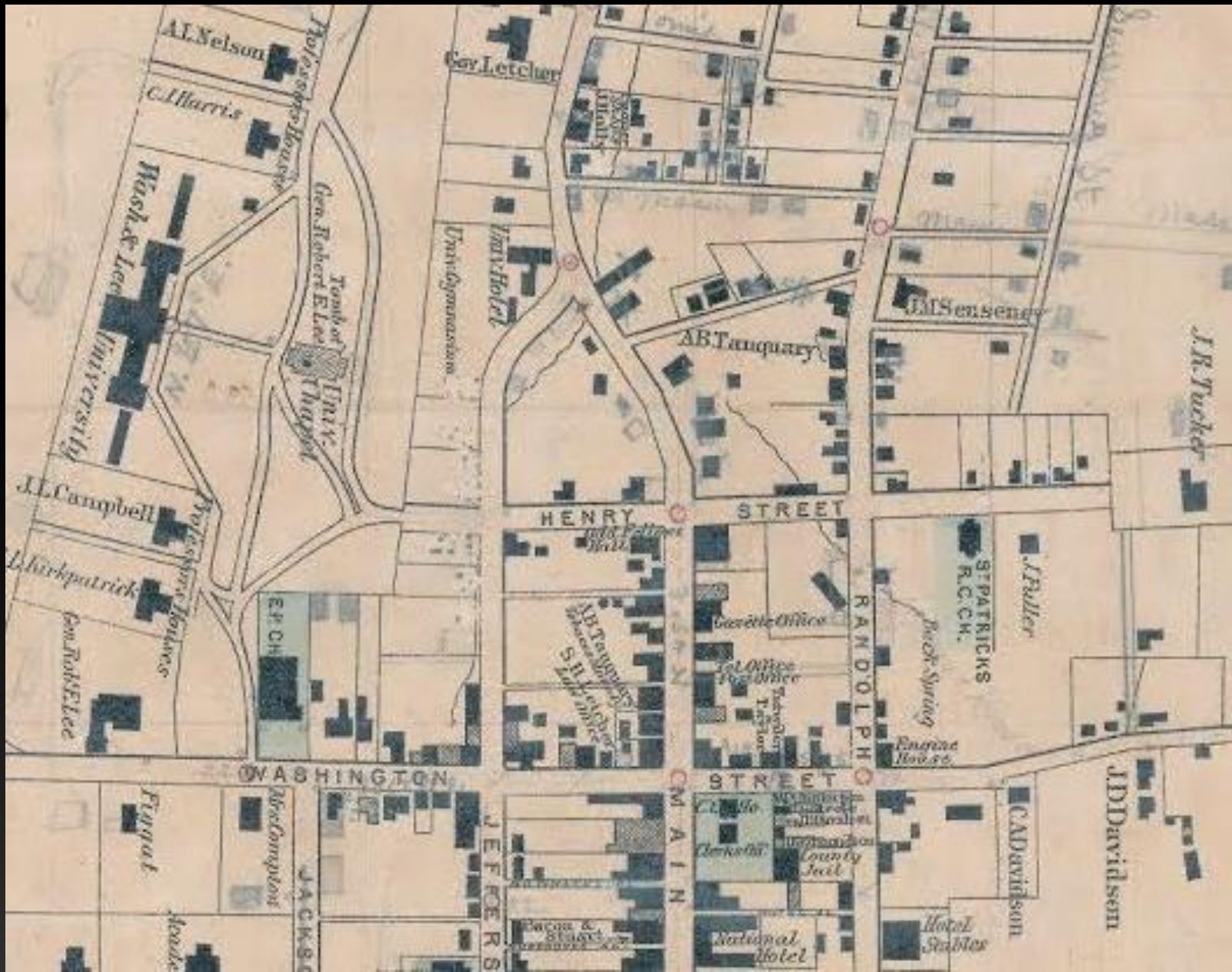
(Late 1800s, photo by Michael Miley: look for his sidewalk stone next week)



VMI from Diamond Hill
(can you figure out where the photographer is standing??)



**1867 – Two Years After the End of the Civil War,
Four Years after Emancipation Proclamation
Lexington's First Baptist Church, now a State Landmark**



This is an 1877 Map of Lexington: Where is First Baptist Church?



**First Baptist Church, N. Main Street
2009**

The First Church Met in a Tobacco Barn

When the Brick Church and Steeple were built, the wooden planks from the congregation's first church building were used to build a house on the corner of Fuller and Massie Streets.

You can still see this house, and those boards.

If you were to re-use one building to make another,
what would you make?

WHY??



**First Baptist Church – N. Main
Brick Church Built 1896**



**First Baptist Church, N. Main Street
2009**



**First Baptist Church, N. Main Street – 2015
After Steeple Renovation (supported by HLF and City of Lexington)**



**First Baptist Church, N. Main Street -- 2015
After Steeple Renovation (supported by HLF and City of Lexington)**



**First Baptist Church, N. Main Street -- 2015
After Steeple Renovation (supported by HLF and City of Lexington)**



**First Baptist Church, N. Main Street -- 2012
As painted by Beverly Tucker**



**Across from First Baptist Church, 1894
Main Street Parade with Elephant and Camel**



Knights of Pythias Hall -- 1926
Recently wheeled a half-block down Main Street, 2014
(VMI Construction at Bottom, First Baptist Spire, at Right)



Knights of Pythias Hall
(On North Main Street, Diamond Hill behind)

PROGRESSIVE
LODGE K. OF P. 266
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
J. B. THOMPSON. G. G.
NOLAN BROOKS. P. G.
J. A. PETTIGREW. P.
GODFREY WASHINGTON. M. E. G.
JOSEPH SCOTT. O. G.
J. B. ROANE. SECT.
1926

Knights of Pythias Hall

(Dedicated 1926, one year before Lyburn Downing School is built)



Knights of Pythias Hall
also known in the day as ...



“THE HOUSE OF FUN”



**Knights of Pythias Hall -- 2012
2nd Floor Dance and Music Hall**



**Knights of Pythias Hall -- 2012
Lights are Gone Out...**



Knights of Pythias Hall – Basement 2012
What Next???



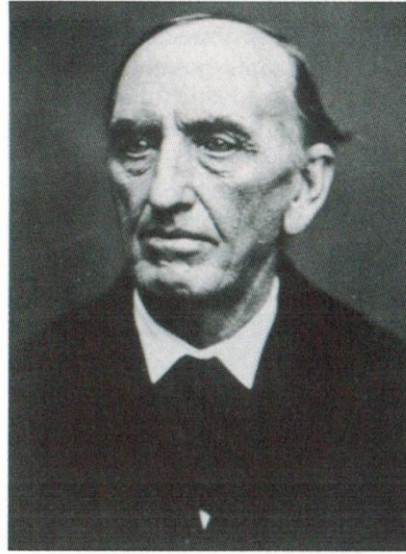
Knights of Pythias Hall – Moved, 2015
To Build, or Not to Build?

WHY?



Blandome

101 Tucker St.
National Historic Register Photo



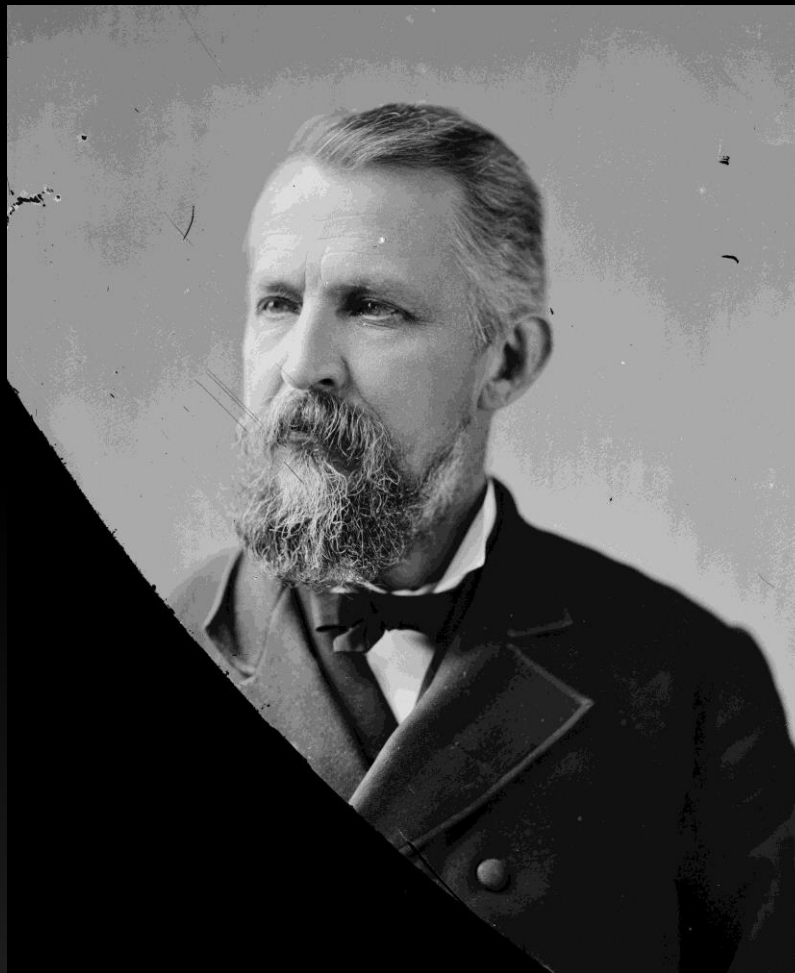
Jacob Fuller

Jacob Fuller (1816–1890) is remembered primarily as a classical scholar, teacher, and librarian at W & L. Born in Lexington and educated at Washington College, he spent his first few years after graduation as the head of the college's preparatory department. Then he established his own classical school that was designed to tutor young men who hoped to enter college but first needed to improve their knowledge of the classics. Fuller's school, which still stands just east of the old Catholic Church on Henry Street, remained an educational institution until the early 1880s, and the *Lexington Gazette* regularly reported its special activities and annual closing exercises, treating them as time-honored institutions in Lexington. Fuller was a remarkably successful teacher as well as an earnest scholar, and he won the admiration of many of the students he guided safely into college.

Jacob Fuller

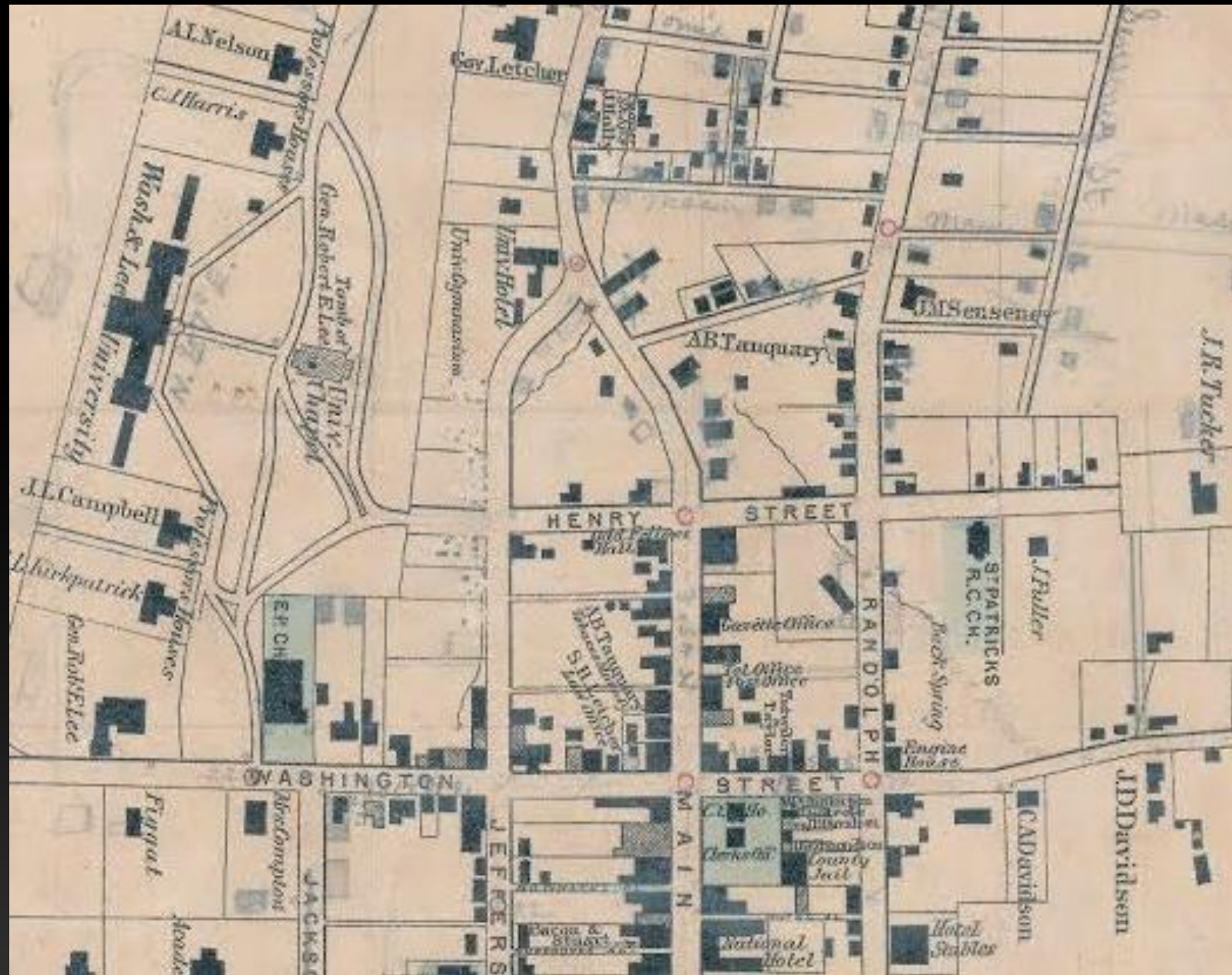
Built Blandome 1850s

Fuller Street (City Hall) named for him in 1883



John Randolph Tucker

Bought Blandome in 1872
(Tucker Street named for him in 1912)



Can you find where Mr. Tucker's House on Henry Street?



**Main Street at Henry Street looking Uphill
From 'Sheridan Livery' and First Baptist Church to Blandome**



Harry Lee Walker

Successful Lexington Businessman

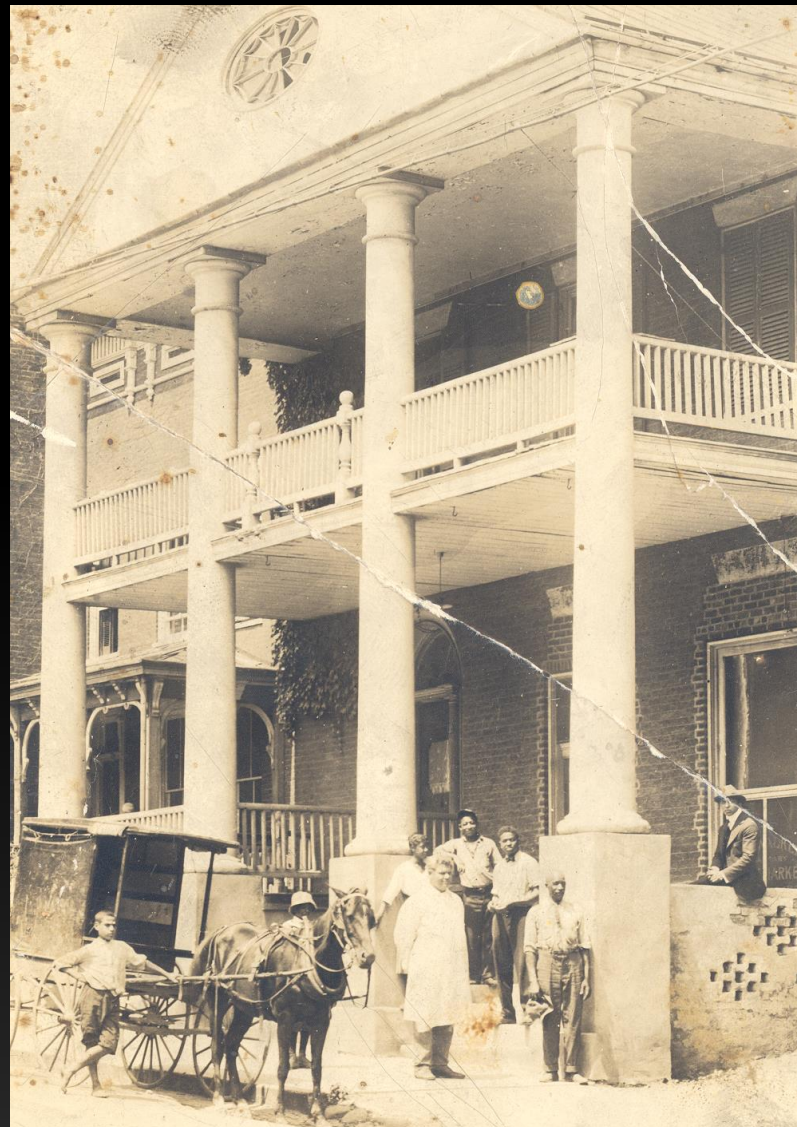
Purchased “Macado’s” Building in 1911 for his Butcher’s Shop and Store

Purchased Blandome in 1917



Walker & Wood Brothers Store @1910s

Among the most successful local African-American Businesses
Supplied meat from their farm on Buena Vista Road, to feed VMI Cadets

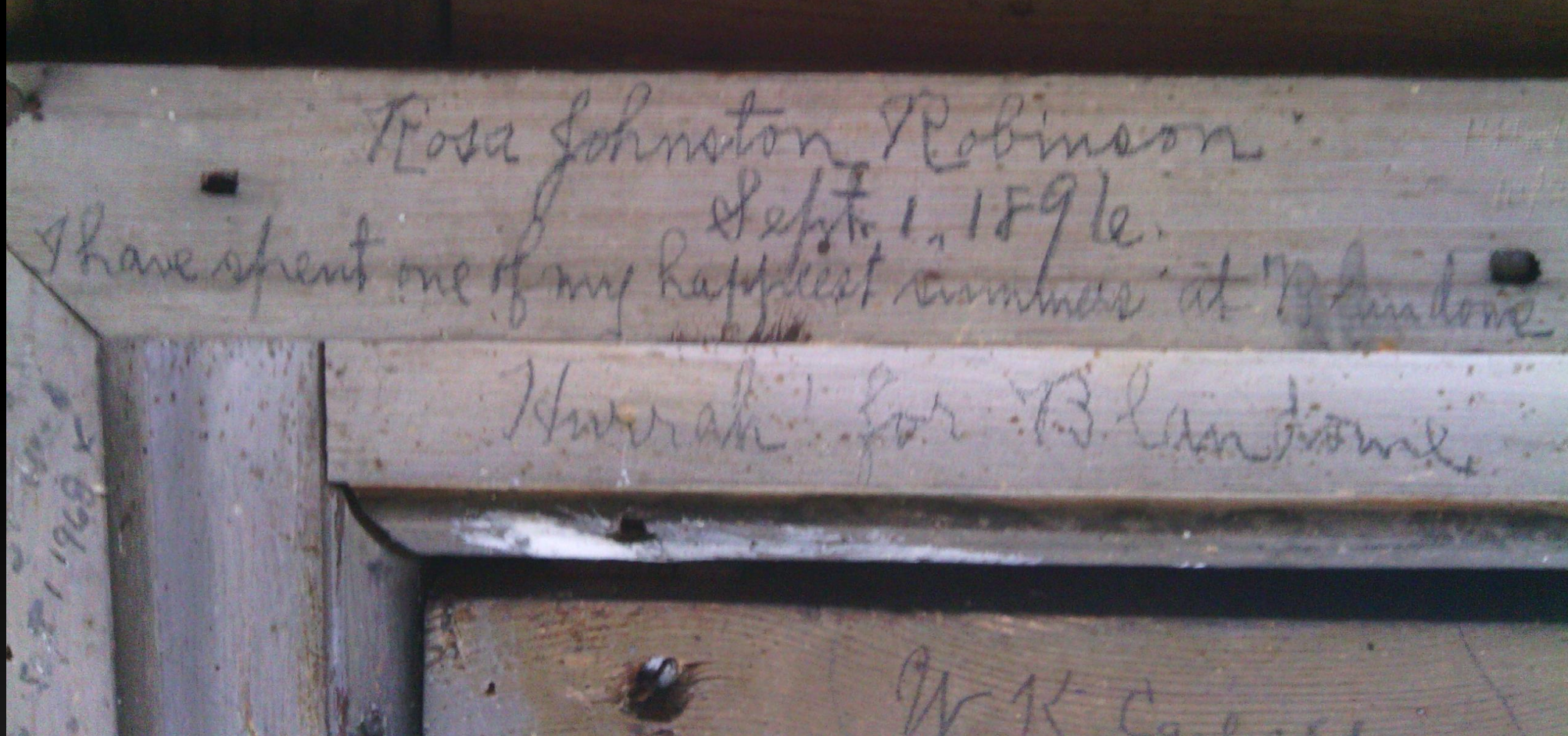


Walker & Wood Brothers Store @1910s
Among the most successful local African-American Businesses
Supplied meat from their farm on Buena Vista Road, to feed VMI Cadets



Blandome

**Purchased by Harry Lee Walker in 1917
The family of his daughter, Mrs. C.M. Wood was important
in the founding of Lylburn Downing School in 1927 for the City's African-American Children**



**“I have spent one of my happiest summers at Blandome...
Hurrah for Blandome”**

**Rosa Johnston Robinson, Sept. 1, 1896
Inside ‘Cupola Window’ on top of Blandome**



“Willson-Walker House”:

Built in 1812 by Robert Willson as a family Home

100 years later: Harry Lee Walker buys to use as a Store

Eliza Walker writes from here to Build and Orphanage, Better Lexington Schools

100 years later still: Macado’s serves Lexington as a Restaurant



Eliza Bannister Walker
Social Reformer, Poet, Singer



**1921: VA Federation of Colored Women
Meets at Blandome**



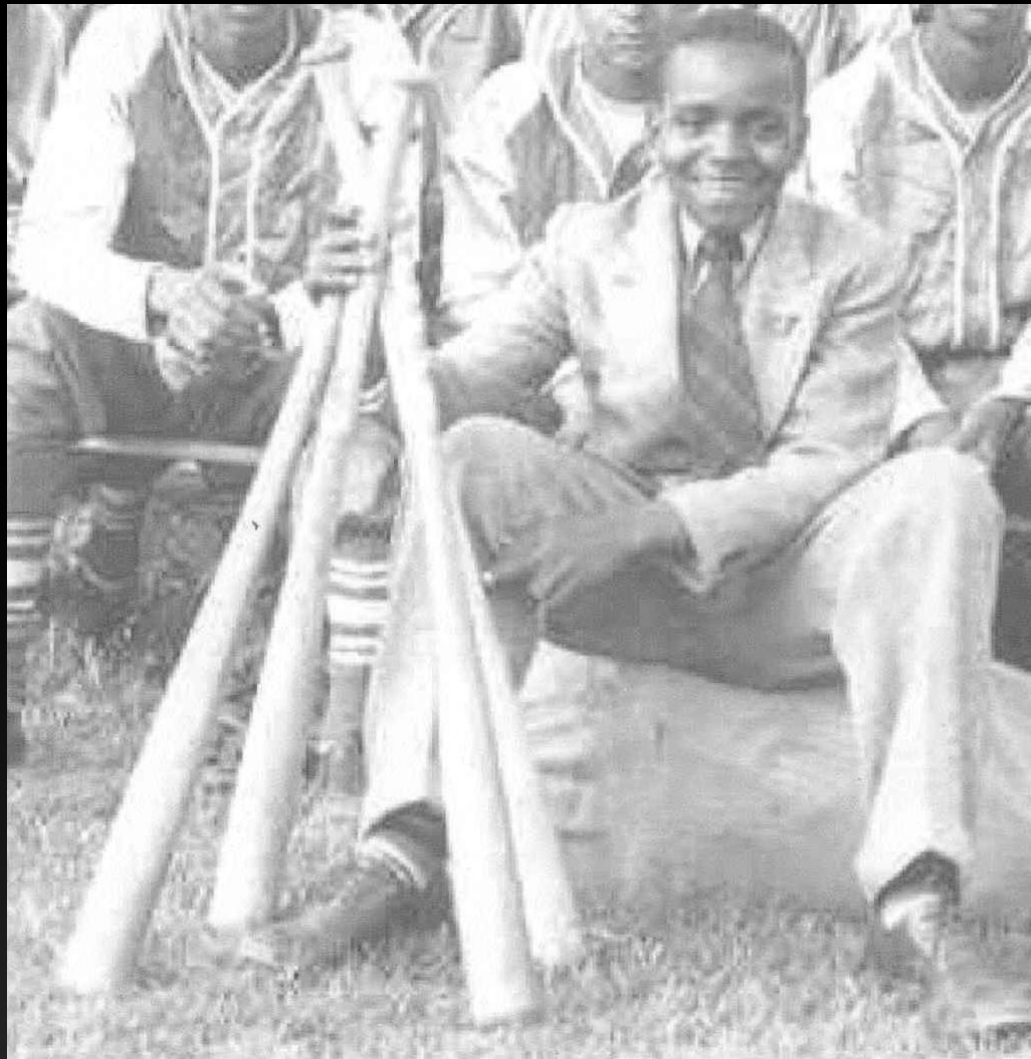
Eliza Bannister Walker: Building an Orphanage

1) *Violet, born without hands* 2) *Virginia, cannot walk* 3) *Annie, cannot talk*



*If you owned this building in 20 years...
What would you do with it?*

WHY???



*I'm lucky to see so many wonderful smiles at Lylburn Downing & Waddell each day.
But every day that I teach, I look at this smile, and it always makes me glow.*



Imagine for a second...
What's making him so happy at his school??
In his neighborhood?



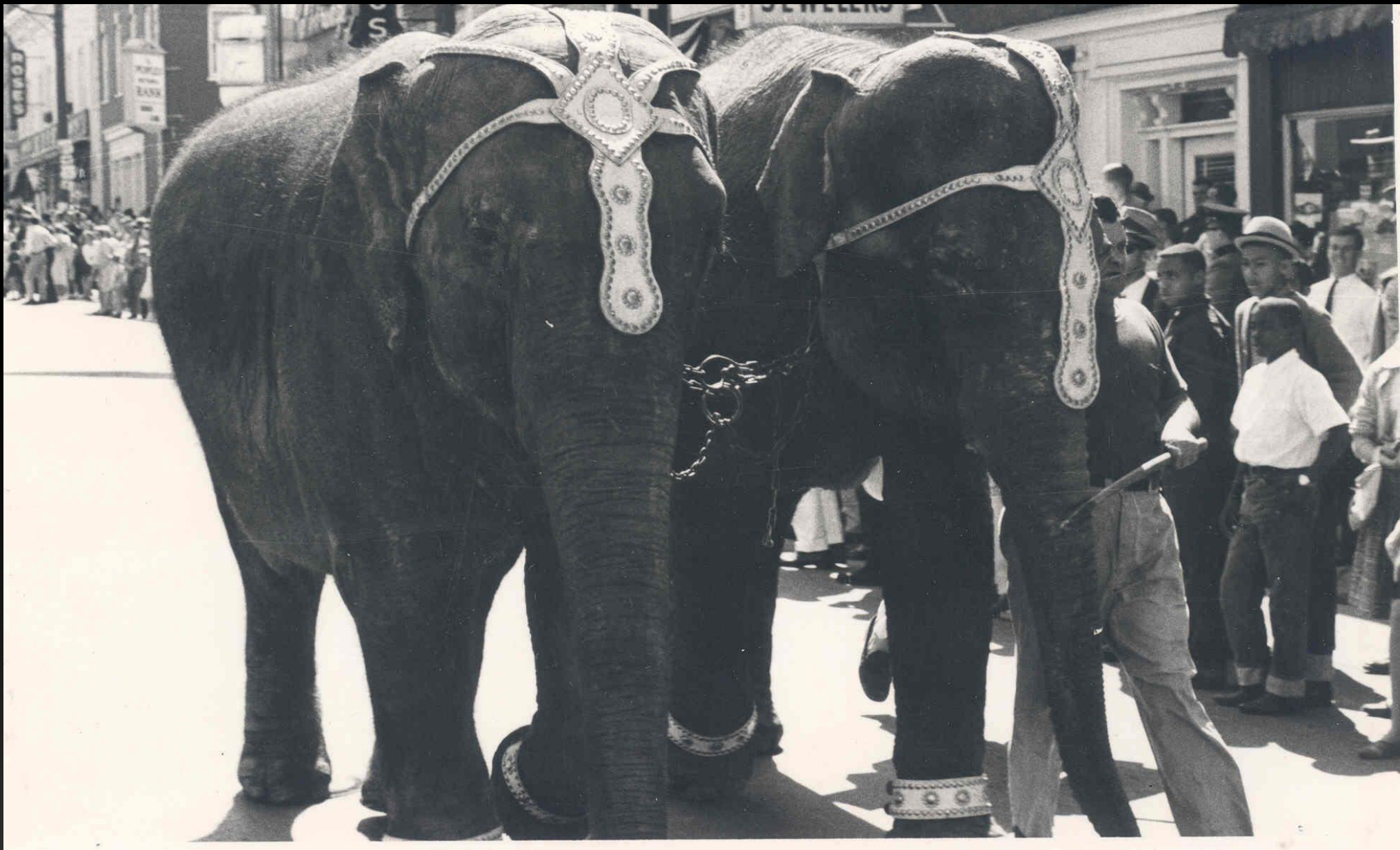
**And what makes you feel that good ...
in your neighborhood....
and in your school?**

Let's Explore!!!

Thank You, Bulldogs!!



**Weinberg's Store – 1909
across from Lexington Hotel (R.E. Lee Hotel)**



Elephants on Parade



... still coming