

Paper 1: Racial Motivation of Public School Names in Board Minutes (1950-1975)

Research by CHANGE THE NAMES SHENCO SCHOOLS STEERING COMMITTEE

AFRICAN AMERICAN students first entered Stonewall Jackson High School in the 1963-64 year, almost a decade after Brown v. the Board of Education. This was in the wake of state tradition visibly resisting integration. School board minutes reveal that the school's name was a racially motivated decision.

- In 1950, Virginia's General Assembly gave The Battle Fund to school boards intended for both White and Negro schools, in order to “eliminate inequalities between the races.”¹
- In Shenandoah County that fund in amount of \$491,878.75 was used solely to build three high schools, noted as serving the “White” race².

| | Race | Elem. Sec. | Pupil Capacity | Cost | Remarks |
|------------------------|-------|------------|----------------|---------|---------------|
| Stonewall Jackson H.S. | White | Sec. | 500 | 600,000 | New Building |
| Ashby-Lee H.S. | White | Sec. | 600 | 650,000 | New Building |
| Stonewall Jackson H.S. | White | Sec. | 500 | 600,000 | New Building |
| Stonewall Jackson H.S. | White | Elem. | 690 | | Repairs, etc. |
| Ashby-Lee H.S. | White | Elem. | 690 | 20,000 | Repairs, etc. |
| Stonewall Jackson H.S. | White | Elem. | 500 | 123,770 | Additions |
| Ashby-Lee H.S. | White | Elem. | 325 | 75,350 | Additions |
| Stonewall Jackson H.S. | White | Elem. | 600 | 20,000 | Repairs, etc. |
| Ashby-Lee H.S. | White | Elem. | 325 | 61,150 | Additions |

Illustration 1: May 23, 1958 School Board Minutes

- On January 12, 1959, Gordon Bowman stepped aside as chairman to move that the South Area high school be named “Stonewall Jackson.” Bowman was also on the committee that oversaw construction of Ashby-Lee Elementary, referred to as Stonewall Jackson Primary until 1975³.
- The 1960 SJHS annual shows the Confederate battle flag flown as the school foundation was laid.
- Meanwhile, the African American community pressed for better school buildings, discussed or tabled for almost 3 years⁴. A committee was finally appointed on April 10, 1961, to find suitable sites for negro schools. Throughout 1961⁵

talk hinged on condemning negro school sites (words never used in the school board minutes for white school sites).



Illustration 2: Confederate flag held over SJHS in 1960 school annual

- On August 13, 1962, “The Board discussed problems that might arise regarding integration;” and voted, “as in former years, buses be provided to transport negro students to high schools in Harrisonburg and Winchester.”
- A year later in 1963, the board began planning a commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the battle of New Market; voting to close schools in honor of the Confederate victory on May 15, 1964, include the high schools' bands to be part of a program, and use New Market School for a ball.
- The Civil Rights Act of 1964 strengthened enforcement of school desegregation by allowing for lawsuits and withdrawal of federal funds. On January 11, 1964, the board signed “the Civil Rights pledge for Shenandoah County.”

SIMILAR TO THIS PLEDGE, Shenandoah County school board adopted a Resolution against racism in June 2020. Following an appeal by Gov. Northam for localities to change names of public schools honoring Confederate leaders, they voted in July 2020 to retire the public school names of Ashby-Lee Elementary, Stonewall Jackson High (Generals), and the mascot, Rebels, of North Fork Middle, under board policy §22.1-78: “the Board may rename a school or school facility upon determination that it is appropriate to do so,” and §22.1-79: “final decisions on the naming of school facilities and the dedicating of areas of school facilities or grounds shall rest entirely with the Board.”

December 29, 1961.

1 Dorothy E. Davis, Bertha M. Davis and Inez D. Davis, etc., et al., Appellants v. County School Board of Prince Edward County, Va, et al. US 191 (1952), p. 20.

2 School board minutes from January 7, 1955; April 9, 1956; May 23, 1958.

3 School board minutes from August 1, 1965; June 9, 1969; July 14, 1969; October 13, 1969; January 8, 1973; February 12, 1973; March 1, 1973; August 6, 1973; August 6, 1973; October 8, 1973; April 10, 1974; September 9, 1974; December 9, 1974; April 14, 1975. The school board minutes show no formal vote on the name of the elementary school.

4 School board minutes from November 9, 1959; December 18, 1959; February 8, 1960; March 14, 1961.

5 School board minutes from July 7, August 14, December 11,

Paper 2: Forced to Integrate, SCPS's Resistance to Equal Education

Research by CLAIM THE NAMES – SHENCO SCHOOLS

VA GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S BATTLE FUND was issued to local school boards as part of a statewide massive resistance against desegregation. Funds were intended to “eliminate inequalities between the races”¹ by giving expenses for both “White” and “Negro” schools, a decision that promoted *Plessy vs. Ferguson* (1896), which stipulated separate, but equal educational facilities for the races. In Shenandoah County, the Battle Fund was only used for schools serving the “White” race². The *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954) ruling required integration of public schools by 1955. And yet, in Shenandoah County, not only were educational facilities not equal, but total integration didn't occur until after threat of a lawsuit.

In Shenandoah County, school board minutes show educational opportunities were not equal.

- On Jun 11, 1937, ME Zion church petitioned to tear down old Woodstock colored school building and re-use the lumber to construct a new school.
- In 1938, three primary schools existed for African American children: Strasburg (Sunset Hill), Woodstock (Creekside), and Mt Jackson.
- According to board minutes, Mt Jackson colored school had small enrollment, but continued until 1940 with New Market students transported there. The board elected to pay half the insurance policy covering liability for the children³.
- Beginning Aug 22, 1941, local citizens transported African American students from Mt Jackson and New Market to Creekside; and, African American high school students outside the county. This continued until 1962, when the Board recommended, “as in former years, buses be provided to transport negro students to high schools in Harrisonburg and Winchester”⁴.
- On December 2, 1941, the board requested the superintendent to “express [their] appreciation...to the Regional Board of Control of the Regional High School at Manassas, Va for their invitation to enroll colored pupils on a similar basis as those

from Warren and Rappahannack counties, and state that we are considering the possibility of educating...our negroes in their school next year.”

- On Oct 2, 1944, the board informed parents of three African American students in Strasburg they are no longer willing to pay for them to attend, due to excessive cost. Additional costs were to be defrayed by parents.
- On Nov 3, 1952, in regard to county African American students attending Winchester, the board moved for superintendents “to work out some agreement on the expenses of these children.”
- Nov 9, 1959, four years after *Brown* was in effect, the school board pursued a study of consolidating primary colored schools⁵. These schools were condemned and sold as of 1964.

Superintendent W. W. Robinson reveals the lack of equality in educational facilities in 1962:

“The Strasburg Elementary School has twenty-three classrooms plus the cafeteria, gymnasium, library and other auxiliary features. There are at least three teachers per grade. It is primarily an old building but comfortable and well maintained. The Sunset Hill School is a small frame and cinder block two room school, it is heated by oil stoves, has indoor toilet facilities, but has no facilities for cafeteria purposes. There is a special milk program at this school but no school lunch. The playground is small and the school is difficult to get to by car, however, it is comfortable, clean, and well maintained”⁶.

Also in 1962, NAACP filed a lawsuit for an African American student to attend Central High School, stating:

“Negro children entering school for the first time are initially assigned to a school which none but Negroes attend and upon their graduation from elementary school they are routinely assigned to an all-Negro high school...which is not located in Shenandoah County”⁷.

Although withdrawn, this case led to the total integration of Shenandoah County, just as it had in Grayson in 1960.

The State Pupil Placement Board (1957-1966), assigned students to a school. Total integration of Shenandoah, the second VA county to do so, was the decision of the Placement Board, according to *The Progress Index* of Jul 9, 1964, and not “at the request of the county school board.” Our county was forced to integrate.

1 Dorothy E. Davis, Bertha M. Davis and Inez D. Davis, etc., et al., Appellants v. County School Board of Prince Edward County, Va, et al. US 191 (1952), p. 20.

2 Board minutes: Jan 7, 1955; Apr 9, 1956; May 23, 1958.

3 Board minutes: Nov 8, 1938; Aug 8, 1939.

4 Board minutes: Aug 13, 1962; also Sep 14, 1937; Aug 8 1939; Aug 22, 1941; Sep 8, 1942; Oct 6, 1942; Oct 6, 1943; Sep 10, 1945; Dec 1, 1947; Dec 5, 1949; Feb 6, 1950; Sep 8, 1958; Nov 9, 1959; Mar 11, 1963.

5 Board minutes: Dec 18, 1959; Feb 8, 1960; Mar 14, 1961; Apr 10, 1961; Jul 7, 1961; Aug 14, 1961; Dec 11, 1961; Dec 20, 1961; May 14, 1962.

6 Letter to Hilton of Pupil Placement Board, Mar 22, 1962.

7 US District Court, Civil Action No. 641, Sep 19, 1962, p.6. The lawsuit was not part of school board minutes.

Paper 3: Massive Resistance, A Tactic for Slowing School Integration

Part I, Laying the Ground-Work

by CLAIM THE NAMES - SHENCO SCHOOLS RESEARCH COMMITTEE

WHILE SHENANDOAH COUNTY WAS the second county in Va to fully integrate, it happened slowly. In an effort to circumvent *Brown vs. Board of Education*, Va politicians incorporated legislative actions to impede integration in a strategy known as massive resistance. At an annual orchard picnic in August 1958, Senator Harry Byrd, Sr. "listed three main reasons for Virginia's massive resistance policy: It seeks to (1) preserve the state's constitutional rights, (2) to preserve 'our racial and social structure,' and (3) preserve 'the greatest number of children white and Negro alike.'" (*Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 31 August 1958).

1954

- *Brown vs Board of Education* decision rendered, separate is not equal.
- Va Governor Stanley created the Virginia Public Education Commission (known as the "Gray Commission") to study "the school problem".
- Organized by Delegate V.S. Shaffer, an integration meeting was noted in *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Sep 30: "Balloting as individuals and not as a group, 80 members of the Woodstock Parent-Teacher Association, meeting ... in the Woodstock High School, voted 48 to 32 against integration of the races in public schools in Virginia."

1955

- *Brown* decision clarified, integration should move with 'all deliberate speed'.
- The Gray Commission report, *Public Education: A Report of the Commission to the Governor of Virginia*, "proposes the selective repeal of the compulsory school attendance law in an effort to slow desegregation in Virginia."
- The organization, The Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties, formed and published *A Plan for Virginia*¹. It states, "[U]nless something be done now, integration will begin in Virginia, and once begun, it, like every other vile pestilence, will spread to the point where it has covered the whole body politic. Whether it come in our day, our children will see the death of our Anglo-Saxon civilization."

1956

- Interposition becomes an argument to oppose *Brown vs. Board*. The contention was that the Supreme Court was attempting to amend the constitution [specifically the 14th amendment] without approval of the states. This gave an air of legitimacy to maintaining segregated schools.
- Using interposition as a starting point, Senators Strom Thurmond and Richard Russell wrote the "Southern Manifesto"². All local Va members of Congress, Harry Byrd, Sr, A. Willis Robertson, and Burr Harrison, signed in support of this document.
- On Aug 25, just before a Va General Assembly Special Session, Senator Byrd, Sr. said at his annual orchard picnic, "[The destroyers of schools are] those who try to force mixed schools upon us —something a large part of Virginia will never take" (*The News Leader (Staunton)*, 26 August 1956).
- This Special Session resulted in "The Stanley Plan" incorporating Gray Commission recommendations and creating a state-level Pupil Placement Board to handle school transfers, among other legislation.

1957

- W.W. Robinson was appointed Shenandoah County superintendent, replacing B.S. Hilton, who became the executive secretary for Pupil Placement Board.
- J. Lindsay Almond was elected governor. Shenandoah County voted: 2,318 for Almond; 2,308 for Dalton; and 11 for a third candidate. Byrd, Sr. campaigned for Almond. The margin is similar to the Woodstock P-TA vote on integration in 1954.
- Gov. Almond said, after the election,³ "I will not yield to that which I know to be wrong and will destroy every semblance of education for thousands of the children of Virginia."

UNTIL 1963-64, SHENANDOAH COUNTY maintained segregated schools; other counties closed schools rather than integrate; and, the courts had to intervene in order to force desegregation.

¹ The full pamphlet can be accessed here:
<https://dc.lib.odu.edu/digital/collection/npsdp/id/1149>

² Full text: <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/marshall/manifesto.html>

³ For audio: <https://edu.lva.virginia.gov/dbva/files/original/9f12d074db2542c8ef0ffe89d1bae8ca.mp3?fbclid=IwAR3FgZgGD2ayt-jCZRAzlTSgq3J28BTurdlmle9Vpwlq79Y-xs6jtUhPJlc>

Paper 4: Massive Resistance, A Tactic for Slowing School Integration

Part II, Implementation

by CLAIM THE NAMES - SHENCO SCHOOLS RESEARCH COMMITTEE

WITH GROUNDWORK LAID for procedures to close schools in order to prevent integration, and other tactics and policies, such as the Pupil Placement Board, in place to either slow integration to a halt or put it off as long as possible, Massive Resistance was ready for action. These events followed the election of Governor J. Lindsay Almond in 1957.

1958

- The Va General Assembly creates the Virginia Civil War Centennial Commission.
- At his annual orchard picnic in August 1958, "Byrd [Sr.] listed three main reasons for Virginia's massive resistance policy: It seeks to (1) preserve the state's constitutional rights, (2) to preserve 'our racial and social structure,' and (3) preserve 'the greatest number of children white and Negro alike.'" (*Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 31 August 1958)
- Governor Almond orders school closures in Front Royal / Warren County, Charlottesville, and Norfolk to prevent desegregation.

1959

- The Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals and the U.S. District Court overturn the decision of Governor Almond to close schools in Warren, Charlottesville, and Norfolk. These counties decide to integrate. Prince Edward County schools however, decide to close to prevent desegregation.
- Executive Director of the Civil War Commission, James Geary, writes to Shenandoah County's circuit court clerk: "no Civil War Centennial committee has been named in your locality to plan for local observances and to work with this commission as requested by Governor Almond"¹.
- Shenandoah County School Board unanimously names South Area school, "Stonewall Jackson," one of three consolidated White high schools. Black students continue to be bussed outside county jurisdiction for high school. At that time, Shenandoah County was one of only 18 counties in Virginia with no high school for Black pupils.

1960-1963

- Segregated schools persist in Shenandoah County.

- As in other Va counties, a lawsuit is filed in 1962 for a Black student to attend Central. This was integral to starting integration in our county. A few Black students were approved by the Pupil Placement Board to attend Strasburg and Central high schools during the 1962/63 school year.
- Shenandoah County's Civil War Centennial Commission members appear before the School Board to discuss commemoration plans.

1964

- Federal Civil Rights Act is passed; Title IV of the law focuses on desegregation of education. Local representatives vote against this legislation.
- Shenandoah County public schools fully integrate.
- Virginia State Senator Harry Byrd, Jr.² participates in SJHS's graduation ceremony, presenting an award to the valedictorian.



Illustration 1: graduation ceremony featuring Va State Senator Harry F. Byrd Jr. Photo from the Jacksonian Heritage, 1964.

OPENING CONSOLIDATED WHITE-ONLY high schools in Shenandoah County occurred amid a fight over desegregation, and during a period when schools named for Confederate leaders spiked³ significantly. Thus, Massive Resistance impacted even our county.

² Harry Byrd Jr would replace his father, Harry Byrd Sr in the U.S. Senate in 1965.

³ For visualization see

https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/com_whose_heritage_timeline_print.pdf

¹ Letter dated Oct 13, 1959.