

The Davis Bottom History Preservation Project

Carver Community Center

Some students from Davis Bottom attended two public schools located on the site of The Carver Community Center at 522 Patterson Street. Patterson Street School and George Washington Carver Elementary schools operated at this site from 1883 to 1972. Their history is closely tied to Pleasant Green Missionary Baptist Church, which stands one block north on the corner of Patterson and West Maxwell Street.



Figure 1: Carver Community Center, 2013.

Pleasant Green School

Historic Pleasant Green Missionary Baptist Church is one of the oldest Baptist church congregations west of the Allegheny Mountains. Organized in 1790, Pleasant Green served the African American community for decades before moving to its present site at 450 West Maxwell Street. In 1874, the congregation established the third school for African Americans in Lexington in the basement of the "old" church, which was replaced by the present building in 1929. By 1883, the Pleasant Green School had grown to an enrollment of 108 students and needed to expand. (Cooper 1969; Leader, 1983, 1994, 1972; Peoples 1990)



In 1883, a "school committee" from Pleasant Green Church raised \$900 to purchase a lot "at the lower end of Lower Street" near an old quarry. The Lexington City Commission provided funding to construct of a two-story, brick building on the lot owned by Historic Pleasant Green Missionary Baptist Church.

Figure 2: Historic Pleasant Green Missionary Baptist Church, 2012.

Patterson Street School (No. 3)

Patterson Street School (No. 3) opened in 1883. The two-story, public school served African American students from grades one through seven. Patterson had seven classrooms, each heated by a "pot-bellied" stove. The building stood about twenty feet from a freight line owned by The Cincinnati Southern Railway. Freight trains rumbled past the school several times a day, causing the suspension of lessons "until the noise subsided and the building stopped shaking" (Cooper 1969). In the 1930s, Patterson Street School was demolished for construction of a larger school built farther from the train tracks.



Figure 3: Patterson Street School in 1931 from "Comprehensive Plan of Lexington, Kentucky & Environs." Courtesy, Lexington Public Library.

George Washington Carver Elementary School

George Washington Carver Elementary School was built with federal funds from The Works Progress Administration (WPA). Opened in 1934, the school had ten classrooms for students from kindergarten through seventh grade (Cooper 1969). The original building had an auditorium, cafeteria, small library and principal's office. In 1957, three more classrooms and a larger library were added. A larger cafeteria was built in 1965. The school had an enrollment of 260 students in 1969 with a staff of thirteen classroom teachers, a librarian, and specialty teachers for physical education, music and the language arts. A "teacher corps" composed of interns and student teachers also supported the full-time faculty.



Figure 4: The historic entrance to George Washington Carver School, 2012.

Fannie Hathaway White



Fannie Hathaway White served as a teacher and principal at both Patterson and Carver during her long, distinguished career in education. Fannie White was the daughter of Robert Elijah Hathaway, a prominent Christian minister who lived on West Pine Street. She was also the sister of Isaac Scott Hathaway, a nationally recognized artist and professor. Some of the other principals at Carver Elementary School, include Miss Adam Withrow, Mrs. Oliver Lockhart, Mrs. Clara Stott, Mrs. Lucille Weathers, Mr. Sanford Roach and Mrs. Dorothy Cooper (Cooper 1969).

Figure 5: Fannie Hathaway White, [date unknown]. Courtesy, Robert H. Williams Children's Home and Cultural Center.

There are few historical records about Patterson and Carver schools beyond a two-page description written by principal Dorothy Cooper in 1969. The Lexington Public Library archives dozens of newspaper articles about school events. In 1970, Carver Elementary School was partially integrated, but 1972 Carver, Douglass, Jefferson Davis, and Constitution elementary schools were all closed as part of a final desegregation plan for Fayette County's public school system. During oral history interviews, Davis Bottom residents spoke fondly about the school, and their confusion as students over such issues as school desegregation and busing having grown up in such a tight-knit, integrated neighborhood (DBHPP 2011). In 1976, the building was transformed into The Carver Community Center, which houses several non-profit organizations and youth programs such as Tubby Smith's Clubhouse. The Carver Center remains a focal point for residents who gather each summer for Community Unity Day.



Figure 6: "Carver Safety Patrol Started," *The Lexington Leader*, November 10, 1951. Caption: "City Patrolman Prather Walker instructs members of the new safety patrol which was actuated at George W. Carver school Friday." Courtesy, Lexington Public Library.

Contributing scholars:

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"Davis Bottom History Preservation Project"

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