

The Marriott School Restoration Project

Historical Timeline of the Marriott School in King & Queen County, VA

This local landmark represents the role of education in rural King and Queen County as well as Virginia. It also tells the story of segregated education in Virginia, the responses to desegregation, and the ultimate integration of Virginia's public education system. The Marriott School is a prime example of early 20th Century public school architecture.



- 1770** Captain Obediah Marriott and his wife Elizabeth, of Bewdley, declared that part of their estate would be used to provide education of the poor and orphaned children of St. Stephen's Parish.
- The bequest included 1,000 acres – divided into ten acre lots – given to the Vestry of St. Stephen's Parish to administer.
- 1819** The land was administered by the Parish until Virginia enacted a law authorizing overseers of the poor to administer the fund.
- 1870** The Uniform School Act passed the Marriott estate over to the County's school officials.
- 1908** After much legislation, the lots were sold and the funds were divided between Stevensville and St. Stephens communities to pay for high schools.
- 1909** Citizens interested in building a new high school (which would be added to the existing grade school) were informed by the School Board that if they could raise \$200, the School Board would raise the remainder - \$1,316.51 (with some additional money from the Marriott Fund). Thus, a one-story, four room wood framed school house was built near Biscoe (located where the present Ruritan Club building exists), on the Old Tappahannock-Richmond Post Road, approximately one mile from the present Marriott School building.
- 1909** Opened as a high school, it was initially called Biscoe High School, but was quickly named Marriott High School in honor of the original land bequest. King and Queen County was segregated and the first Marriott High School was designated a white high school serving that part of the County.
- 1911** The first class graduated from the original Marriott High School. A two room building was added, but later moved only to be eventually torn down.

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- 1922** Because enrollment had grown immensely, it was decided that a new modern high school building, which also housed elementary grades, would be erected near St. Stephens Church on St. Stephens Highway on 5 acres of land purchased from Mr. J. W. Simpkins. This new school building was ready for the fall of 1923.
- 1937** The second Marriott School building (erected in 1922-23) was completely destroyed by fire on February 24, 1937.
- 1938** A new brick school building was constructed at the current site approximately one mile from the location of the original one room school building. This third and present Marriott School was constructed to educate students in western King and Queen County and originally functioned as the only public school in that area of the county.
- 1954** *Brown v. Board of Education* declared that “separate but equal” facilities for black and white citizens, upheld in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), were unconstitutional.
- 1960s** “Massive resistance” (opposition to public school desegregation) was practiced in King and Queen County until the 60s. After integration, The Marriott School continued as a combination elementary school and high school when the County’s “freedom of choice” plans were in effect (African American children could attend either King and Queen Elementary or Marriott Elementary.)

The “freedom of choice” plans were declared unconstitutional and subsequently, the Marriott High School closed after the 1969-1970 academic year. It was the last remaining white high school in the County. Central High School was selected as the sole high school for the County. Pleasant Hill High School became King and Queen Elementary School which continues to presently house grades K-7. The Marriott building became part of Lawson-Marriott Elementary School: a brick Lawson School was built and housed grades K-3 while the Marriott building housed grades 4-7.

- 1992** The Marriott School building closed when students were transferred to the recently expanded Lawson School (the current Lawson-Marriott Elementary School.)
- 1999** A series of community meetings were held in each of the five districts in the County. The preservation and adaptive reuse of the Marriott School was noted a priority thus; a vision for a cultural arts/community center began.
- 2001** King and Queen Community Development Corporation, Inc. was incorporated by the Commonwealth of Virginia to serve as the developer of this project and future community development projects within the County.
- 2007** The Marriott School received listings on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places in February.

Phase one of the Marriott School Project began with demolition and stabilization work in May in preparation for the adaptive reuse of the building as a community/cultural arts center.

