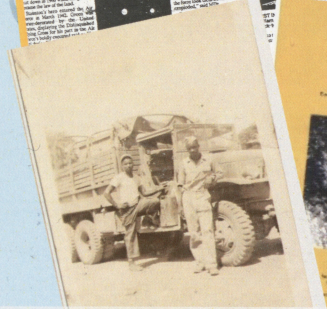
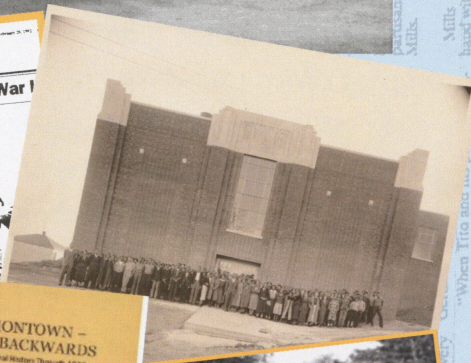


September 15 & 16, 2012

# African-American Heritage Festival



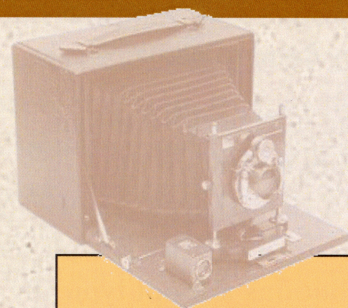
## Snapshots from the Past:

Revealing Historically Significant Aspects of the African-American Experience in Staunton

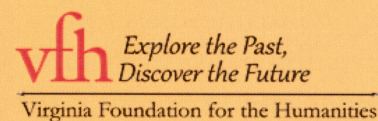


## History of Staunton's African-American Heritage Festival

*In 1988, Mrs. Marye J. Christian, a Staunton resident, saw a need for "more exposure of the heritage of African-Americans." She presented this idea to the City Council, hoping to enhance the cultural environment for African-Americans in Staunton. In 1989 in the small space located in front of the historic Wharf area, with just one food vendor, a fashion show, a few other vendors, and a group discussion, the African-American Heritage Festival was born. Over the next couple of years, increased interest in the event, along with growing participation, prompted the City of Staunton to offer the Festival a bigger space in the heart of the City's downtown area. Because the Festival Committee realized the importance of the church in shaping African-American culture, and at the request of many, the Festival added a day of worship services to its line-up in 1995, making it a two day event. This additional day proved to be a success, as many local churches begin to close their doors on this day in an effort to support and contribute to this event. Fast forward to September, 2012; The Festival is now held in it's permanent location of the Gypsy Hill Park area of Staunton, where it hosts about 40 food, arts & crafts, and non-profit vendors and many cultural, educational, and entertainment events. Festival goers represent all races, ages, and religions. The oldest festival of its kind in the western part of Virginia, the AAHF continues to grow with the help of a group of dedicated volunteers and support from the local community.*



This publication was made possible by a grant  
from the



and was designed and created by  
**Makeba Robinson**  
for the  
**African-American Heritage Festival  
2012**

We thank the following individuals/organizations  
for pictures, professional discourse, and information  
on the subject matter:

*Staunton Parks & Recreation, Dr. Julius Gaines, Jr., author of Old Uniontown-Glances Backwards, Dr. Amy Tillerson-Brown, History Professor at Mary Baldwin College, Nancy Sorrells, historian and President of the Augusta County Historical Society, Friends of Fairview, Moonyene Jackson-Amis, Esq, James R. Howard, Bertie Pannell, Eugenia Taylor, Dwan Wormsley, and Maria Louise Pannell Gantt .*



## *Introduction*

*Amy Tillerson-Brown, Ph.D., Mary Baldwin College*

Staunton, Virginia, with its rolling hills and Victorian styled architecture is a small southern city nestled in the Shenandoah Valley. Staunton also has a rich African American history. While most acknowledge the critical role Blacks played in establishing America, specific contributions are not typically discussed. This publication, *Snapshots from the Past: Revealing Historically Significant Aspects of the African American Experience in Staunton* provides descriptive vignettes and images of landmarks and Staunton natives. Pictures selected represent Black Staunton from the late 1800s/early 1900s, the period that historian Rayford Logan coined “the Nadir” or “the long, dark, plateau” for Blacks; through the 1960s the decade that heralded essential Civil Rights legislation which substantively marked the end of legalized discrimination. Thoughtful interpretations of the “snapshots” broadens understanding of not only Staunton, but also Virginia and her place in national history.

The reversal of Reconstruction required Blacks to live in conditions that were arguably worse than slavery. During the Nadir, the American power structure considered Black life worthless as evidenced by the nation’s highest reported lynchings, disproportionate numbers of Blacks doomed to the convict leasing system, the maintenance of White economic superiority through sharecropping, tenant farming and the like, and inequitable legal representation. It is no wonder that James Weldon Johnson described this as the period that for many Blacks, “hope unborn had died”. Like most southern communities from after the Civil War through the mid-twentieth century, Staunton abode by segregation laws sanctioned by the 1896, *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision. Segregation established separate spaces for Blacks and Whites and inherently regarded the former as inferior. Legally sanctioned separate

spaces were obvious, as in the cases of school buildings, churches, business entrances, water fountains, etc.; and also conjectural, because laws have never been able to control or prevent certain liaisons between the races. However, this was also the period that ushered in the rise of the Black middle class. This group, and those who aspired to exude middle class characteristics, believed and appreciated the promise that America provided. They had a genuine love of country, and proved this by risking their lives as soldiers. Throughout America, despite debilitating racism, Blacks networked to establish thriving communities, which included churches, schools, businesses, and parks. Staunton, VA was no different.

*Snapshots* provides images of Staunton’s landmarks like Uniontown, a Black community established soon after the Civil War and home to more than sixty families in the late 1800s; Fairview Cemetery, founded in 1869 by Augusta Street United Methodist and Mount Zion Baptist Churches and was then located in the African American Sandy Hollow Community which like Uniontown, no longer exists. As the 20th century marched on, Staunton’s Blacks cooperated to sustain thriving public schools and created recreational spaces for their children to enjoy. Former Black Booker T. Washington High School is a building that for many Stauntonians represents the epitome of community as it was not merely a place they came for academic training, but also a second home with teachers and administrators who cared deeply about their total well-being and became surrogate parents. Similarly, Montgomery Hall Park, known as the “other park” was a place that provided swimming lesson, jobs, and safe places to socialize.

Black life in Staunton, Virginia is representative of a larger historical narrative. Snapshots, brief by design, pricks the interests of those interested in Black History, History of Virginia, or Southern History. This work provides many opportunities for further research and analysis.



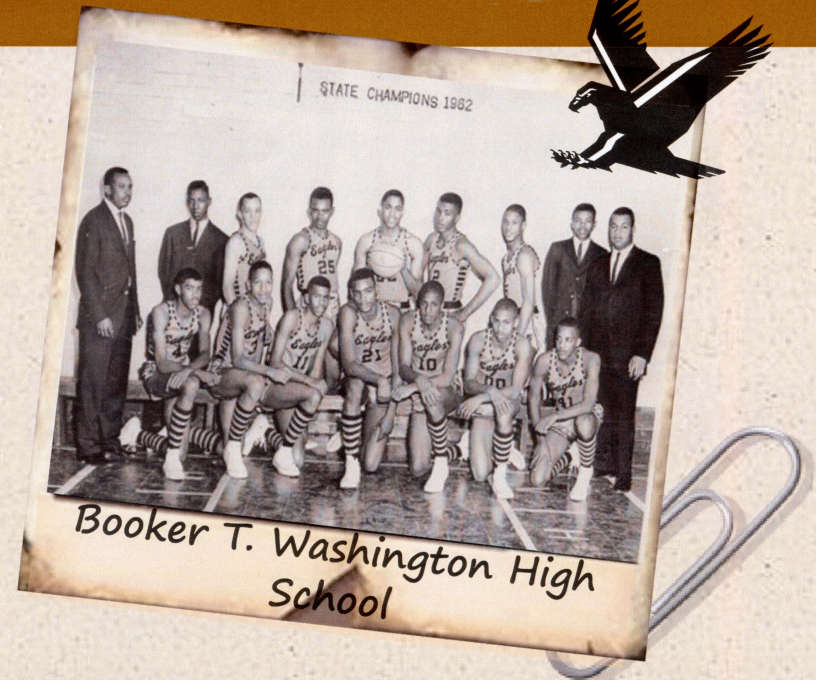


Montgomery Hall Park

Montgomery Hall Park was one of only two public parks in the entire Commonwealth of Virginia where African Americans could gather during the Jim Crow era. This park, which was established for the sole purpose of African-American usage, hosted busloads of African American families who visited the park regularly, coming from as far away as Richmond to enjoy family picnics, a pool, baseball games, and the outdoors. The swimming pool was one of it's main attractions because it was the only public pool in the area where blacks could swim and receive lessons.

*Photo courtesy of Staunton Parks & Recreation*

Location: 1000 Montgomery Ave, Staunton, VA



Booker T. Washington High School

Used today as a community center run by the City of Staunton, this building once served as a segregated black high school from 1937 until it closed its doors in 1966 as a result of integration. The school and building's legacy has been guarded by a dedicated group of alumni, who have conducted monthly meetings there since 1976. Many alumni success stories have been attributed to the genuine care and exceptional education received from teachers and principals at Booker T. Washington High School.

*Pictured: The 1962 Booker T. Washington High School State Championship Team w/coach, Alphonso Hamilton  
Photo courtesy of BTW Alumni Association*

Location: 1114 W. Johnson St., Staunton, VA



Fairview Cemetery is an important vestige of the African American community in Staunton and Augusta County, Virginia. It was established in 1869 on six acres purchased from Simpson Taylor. Trustees of Mount Zion Baptist Church and Augusta Street United Methodist Church purchased the land and still own it. Fairview is much more than a burial ground. It is a reservoir of memories, holding generations of stories and many clues to local African-American heritage. In the mid-19th century Fairview was outside the city limits in an area known as Sandy Hollow, one of several black communities in Augusta County. The names and contributions of many of those buried here are recognized around the globe.



**Fairview Cemetery**

*Photo courtesy of Friends of Fairview*

Location: 11 Lambert St. Staunton, VA

*"There has been much speculation on the Village of Uniontown's origin and particularly regarding how much the former section of Augusta County, now part of east Staunton, got its name. Who settled the land? How and why did it become a predominantly black community?"*

This excerpt is from Dr. Julius Gaines Jr.'s book entitled, Old Uniontown-Glances Backwards. Now mostly dilapidated and abandoned fixtures, from the latter part of the 19th century through the early 1900's, Uniontown was a self-contained primarily African-American neighborhood that boasted a black school and several black-owned businesses, including three stores. Many of the residents of Uniontown were buried onsite at Uniontown Cemetery.

**TL: C&O Bridge, removed in 2001, once connected north and south Uniontown.**

**TR: Gravestones in Uniontown Cemetery**

**BL: A residential home in Uniontown**

**BR: A black-owned store in Uniontown where residents could purchase items such as eggs, candy, & dried beans.**

**Photos courtesy of Dr. Julius Gaines, Jr.**



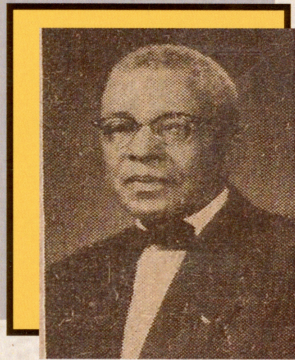
**Uniontown**

Location: The area bounded by Rt. 250, National Ave., Anthony St., and Young St. in Staunton, VA



## Faces of the Community

### ALONZO HARDEN



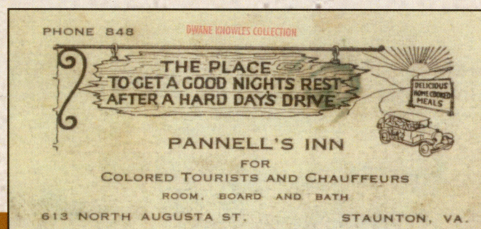
Born in 1885, Alonzo Harden became one of the faces in the forefront of carpentry in the Staunton area. His resume includes working as a stage rigger at the Newport News Ship Building Co. during WWI, but much of his work was completed in the Staunton, VA area. In the early 50's he joined his brothers, John and Burton, and James and Julius Gaines to form Harden & Gaines Bros. Known as a dedicated and trustworthy businessman, Harden worked on several noteworthy projects, including several in Staunton. It is noted that at one point he employed as many as 35 people.

### THE PANNELLS

Rev. Robert Carson Pannell was pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Staunton, VA for 49 years. His three sons, pictured, all became doctors in the early 1900's: Dr. Philip E. Pannell, pharmacist; Dr. Wilbur E. Pannell, MD; Dr. Robert C. Pannell, Jr., Veterinarian. Morris Pannell, brother of Rev. Pannell, was the first black physician in Staunton, VA. Nathaniel Pannell, who was also a brother to Rev. Pannell, owned Pannell's Inn. The only lodging place for blacks in the area, the Inn hosted popular black acts including the legendary Mills Brothers. The Pannell family also ran the *Pannell Bros Pharmacy* on N. Augusta St. in Staunton.



Photos courtesy of Bertie Pannell



## Faces of the Community

### QUEEN ELIZABETH MILLER & WILLIAM ASHBY MILLER



Photo courtesy of Maonyene Jackson & James R. Howard

The Queen Miller Home, originally named The Rutherford B. Hayes Memorial Industrial School & Orphans' Home was founded in 1910. Queen Elizabeth and William A. Miller rescued and nurtured over 300 destitute children and families. The home officially closed in 1950. Queen was educated at Virginia Theological Seminary in Lynchburg, Virginia. She home schooled her children enabling them to enter public school in the third grade. William was a farmer and manager, providing the food resources and the children's training in farming and animal husbandry. They educated eight girls and one boy through college with their own resources. Others served honorably in various branches of the United States Armed Service, or learned trades.

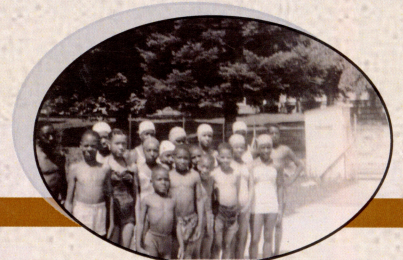
### EUGENIA TAYLOR

After receiving her certification for swimming and lifeguarding in Nashville, TN, Eugenia moved back to Staunton where she worked at the Montgomery Hall Park Pool beginning in 1950. While there, she taught over 200 people to swim, including Girl Scout troops and the elderly. The only place in the area where blacks could both receive lessons and swim, the MHP pool and its staff became staples of the community.



Photos courtesy of Eugenia Taylor

Please send additional suggestions for "Faces of the Community" to:  
[stauntonaahf@yahoo.com](mailto:stauntonaahf@yahoo.com)





## *Creating an African-American Legacy*

**Nancy T. Sorrells, President Augusta County Historical Society**

African Americans, both free and enslaved, have been part of the Staunton-Waynesboro-Augusta County community since the first settlement in the 1720s. In fact, evidence suggests that a group of escaped slaves established a small village in the area before any other permanent settlement. And, since the beginning, African Americans made their mark upon the society and culture just as any other ethnic group did.

One would be hard pressed to find many grand places to point to as African-American landmarks. But anyone who looks around will see the spirit of the African-American culture in the very buildings, landscapes, and soul of the Valley. More often than not it was African-American crafts people—seamstresses, cobblers, and blacksmiths—who ensured that man and beast were properly clothed and shod. Blacks worked side-by-side with whites to harvest crops and tend livestock, and with housewives in kitchens to feed families, both black and white.

Blacks, some free and most enslaved, were found in every mill, distillery, and ironworks in the Valley. They were the masons and carpenters who built the houses. On their own time, they raised extra garden crops or made baskets and sold them. With that money they opened accounts with merchants and bought personal belongings.

Maintaining a sense of dignity and self-respect while building a culture built upon the strength of the family was done in the face of unimaginable hardship. Every day until the end of the Civil War meant waking up to the reality that you could be separated from your family and sold. The end of slavery did not mean equality. It would be another century before African Americans in the South could walk in the front door of a restaurant or drink from the same water fountain as whites.

Therein lies the incredible story: despite living in a society

where they were treated legally and socially as “belongings” for almost 150 years and despite living where they then had to fight for an education and the right to vote, African Americans here created a powerful culture and community. The bedrock of that community can be seen in the black churches that sprang up around the area after the Civil War (separate black churches were illegal in antebellum Virginia). Those are the most enduring landmarks of the black community: Allen Chapel, Hatton Pond, Augusta Street, and Ebenezer just to name a few. Very often these churches doubled as schools. Here the community came together spiritually and intellectually in a world that didn’t always give back fairly.

These communities produced some amazing people: William Sheppard, born shortly after the Civil War ended to newly freed parents, became a successful missionary and explorer in the Congo who faced down the King of Belgium in exposing human rights violations in Africa. Fighter pilot William Green, Jr., part of the Tuskegee Airmen, an African-American unit that had to fight for the right to fight for their country. Willis Carter, an educator and civil rights leader, who edited an African-American newspaper in Staunton.

There were many other heroes in the community—people like Mabelle Franklin Lewis, known affectionately as Big Mama. Not only did she raise 13 children, but also she mothered the rest of Cedar Green’s children who stayed with her after school so their parents could work. Her scrapbook contained the school photos of every child.

Clearly, the enduring legacy of the African-American culture is reflected not as much in places, but in faces of a strong and resilient community created in spite of great odds. The places are certainly there not only in the ordinary landscape of buildings and industry, but in landmarks like Montgomery Hall Park. But it has always been the faces of the community that created the legacy.



# **2012 AAHFF Board**

**LaLaura Wayland, President**

**Dwan Wormsley, Vice President**

**Theodore Maddox Sr. Treasurer**

**Esquewie Jones, Finance Secretary**

**Marguerite Johnson, Secretary**

**Margaret Lyle, Assistant Secretary**

**Makeba Robinson, Correspondence Secretary**

**Thelma Brown, Publicity Chairperson**

## **Members**

**Janie Durette**

**Toni Morgan**

**Odessa Pryor**

**Lewis Bolen**

**Cecil Brown**

**Shirley Jones**

**April Casey**

**Dr. Julius Gaines**





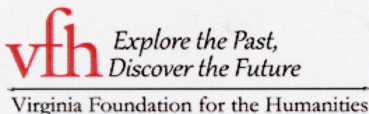
**S**taunton's African-American Heritage Festival began in 1989 and is the oldest festival of its kind in the western part of Virginia.

Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution (payable to "AAHFF, Inc.") to help this event to continue. We are a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

African-American Heritage Festival Foundation, Inc.

P.O. Box 2041  
Staunton, VA 24402

**The 2012 Festival was made possible with the support of the following sponsors:**



**Dominion Resources**





**Staunton's 23rd Annual**

# **African-American Heritage Festival**

**Saturday & Sunday  
September 15 & 16 2012**

**Snapshots from the Past:  
Revealing Historically  
Significant Aspects of the African-  
American Experience in Staunton**

**Special Appearance by the  
Luray Buffalo Soldiers**

- ◆ **Music**
- ◆ **Ethnic Foods**
- ◆ **Community Service**
- ◆ **Arts & Crafts**

**Come and Celebrate With Us**





Staunton's 23rd Annual  
**African-American  
 Heritage Festival**

**SATURDAY OPENING CEREMONY**

11:30 AM

Host, Mrs. Esquewie Jones

Welcome	Mrs. Esquewie Jones
Opening Song	Mrs. Inez Sims
Greetings	Mayor Lacy King
Greetings	Min. Shelia Wallace Christian Women Fellowship
Prayer	Deacon Curtis Smith, Smokey Row Baptist Church
Selection	Mrs. Inez Sims
Presentation	Mrs. Nancy Sorrells, Pres. Augusta County Historical Society
Presentation	Ms. Dwan Wormsley
Selection	Mr. Robert Mott
Remarks	Esquewie Jones

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15th**

Hostesses  
 Mrs. Clara Sheffey  
 And  
 Ms. Odessa Pryor  
 Welcome

12:15	Julius W. Gaines, Jr., PhD Local Author
12:30	Arthur Thomas, Local Historian
1:00	Joe Pettus & The Fantastic Soul Shakers
2:30	Stable Roots
4:00	Groove Train



**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 16th**

10:00 AM Worship Service  
 Rev. Dr. Charles Brown

Afternoon Host & Soloist  
 Mr. Marvin Scott

12:45	Ophie Kier, Staunton City Council
1:00	J Crew
1:30	Joe Pettus and Levis Johnson
2:00	Stephanie Clark
2:30	George Taylor
3:00	Men of Zion
3:30	Camilla Alexander
4:00	Union Baptist Church, Glasgow
4:30	Marvin Scott & Co.
5:00	The Gospel Voices
	Closing Remarks by Mrs. Janie Durette
	Closing Prayer Rev. Steve Durette



Staunton's African-American Heritage Festival began in 1989 and is the oldest festival of its kind in the western part of Virginia. If you would like to volunteer, please contact any Festival Officer. **We** appreciate your support.

Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution (payable to "AAHFF, Inc.") to help this event to continue. We are a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization. African-American Heritage Festival Foundation, Inc. P.O. Box 2041 Staunton, VA 24402

*The African American Heritage Festival Foundation, Inc. extends its gratitude to the many volunteers who have made this event possible and to the following:*

*City of Staunton, City of Staunton Parks and Recreation  
Fisher Auto Parts Professionals  
Virginia Foundation for the Humanities  
Dominion Resources  
Target  
Wedding of the Century Family  
Mt. Zion Lodge No. 18 F&AM  
Hershey's Chocolate of Virginia, Stuarts Draft  
Smokey Row Baptist Church  
Staunton Convention and Visitors Center  
Augusta County Historical Society  
Julius W. Gaines, Jr., PhD  
Amy Tillerson-Brown, PhD  
Blue Ridge Community College  
The Hosts for the Weekend  
The Community Churches, Ministers, Pastors, Choirs,  
Musicians, & Ushers*

**Visitor Assistance:**  
**Staunton Visitors Center**  
35 South New Street  
Staunton, Virginia 24401  
540.332.3971 [www.VisitStaunton.com](http://www.VisitStaunton.com)

**STAUNTON**  
AS YOU LIKE IT.

## Staunton's 23rd Annual

### *The African-American Heritage Festival Foundation, Inc.*

#### **2012 Officers**

LaLaura Wayland	President
Dwan Wormsley	Vice President
Theodore Maddox	Treasurer
Marguerite Johnson	Secretary
Assistant Secretary	Margaret Lyle
Makeba Robinson	Correspondence Secretary
Esquewie Jones	Financial Secretary

#### **Committees**

Publicity	Thelma Brown
Tents	Theodore Maddox
Vendor Relations	Margaret Lyle
Exhibitors	Janie Durette
Children Activities	Makeba Robinson
Hospitality	Marguerite Johnson
	Toni Morgan Odessa Pryor
	Lewis Bolen Cecil Brown
	Shirley Jones April Casey
Health Regulations	Esquewie Jones
Sunday Program	Esquewie Jones & George Hunter