

# A History of the Old Wallville School

*Perseverance & Progress*



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The content was developed by African-American History students at Patuxent High School, Calvert Elementary, and Calvert High School.

The Old Wallville School is located on the grounds of Calvert Elementary School on East Dares Beach Road (Rt. 402) in Prince Frederick.

Tours may be arranged by contacting:  
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For more information, visit:  
[OldWallvilleSchool.org](http://OldWallvilleSchool.org)





## African-American Education following Emancipation

Emancipation brought new worlds of opportunity into the lives of African Americans. While enslaved, African Americans were denied many opportunities, including the right to receive an education. With emancipation, African Americans in many communities, including Calvert County began to focus on the importance of educational opportunities for their children.



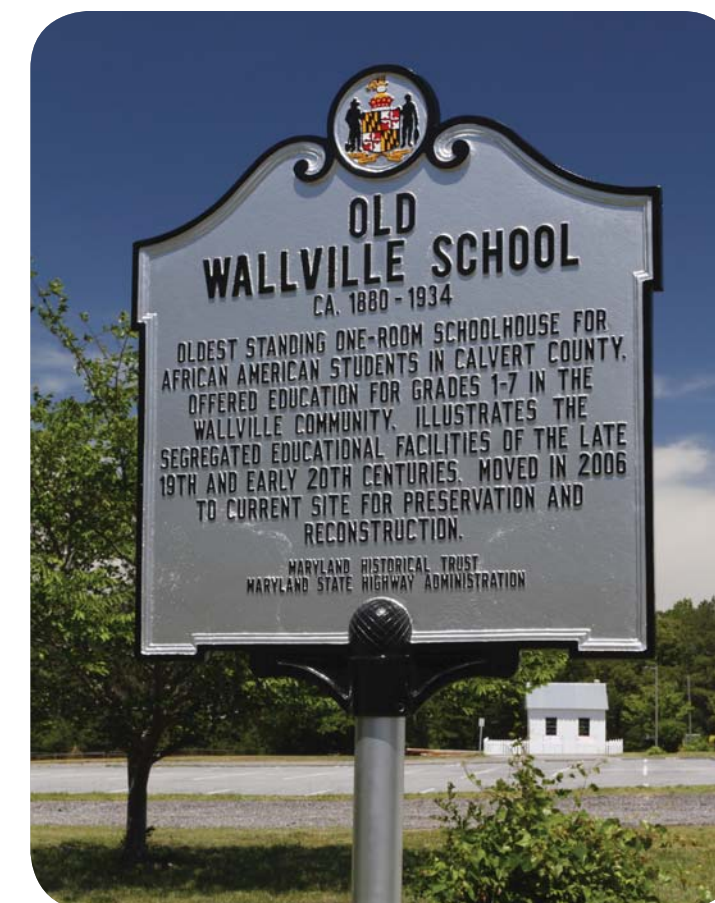
While the Freedmen's Bureau provided some materials for the construction of African-American schools following the Civil War, these materials were either stolen or burned to prevent the schools from being built. As a result, African Americans initially schooled their children in churches. Then, in the 1880's Calvert County's African-American residents began to obtain the use of buildings formerly used to teach white students. One of these buildings, the Wallville School, would serve generations of African-American students in Grades 1 through 7 until it finally closed in 1934.

### 13th Amendment

*Section 1: Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.*

## Preserving the Old Wallville School for Future Generations

After years of idle use, the Old Wallville School began to decay and by the late 1990's was faced with imminent demise if something wasn't done to preserve the structure. In 2006, salvageable portions of the building were moved to the grounds of Calvert Elementary School as part of a cooperative agreement between the Friends of the Old Wallville School and Calvert County Public Schools. The school was restored as a monument to the value African Americans placed on educating their children in the face of numerous challenges. The school now serves as a center for learning for students and the Calvert County community.





## The End of an Era



The Wallville School closed its doors as an active school in 1934 when a new, larger building became available. As the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum in the 1950's and 60's, African Americans gained greater access to educational opportunities. In 1966, the Calvert County Public School System was finally integrated as a result of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in Brown vs. Board of Education.

## Johnson Series COMMON SCHOOL SPELLER

## Life at the Wallville School

The interior of the one room Wallville School was a cramped 18'x18' area. The younger students who attended the school would typically have been seated three to a desk, while older students would sit two to a desk. On overflow days, half-rounded wood logs served as extra desks on student's laps as they sat in the middle aisle of the classroom. The building was heated by a wood burning stove and there were no indoor restrooms. The restroom was an outhouse.



Class began about 8:30 in the morning. "The older boys would come to school early to light the wood stove. Wood wasn't always plentiful," shared Elizabeth Gross. "Sometimes we would have to forage for our own wood. One day, I had to close school because there wasn't any wood to be had."

Supplies were scarce in all African-American Schools. "All our primers were used and there were often missing pages," said Elizabeth Gross. Teachers started the school year with a register (roll book), water bucket and dipper, broom and dust pan, box of chalk, hand held chalk boards and little else.



**1865** Slavery abolished by the 13th Amendment to U.S. Constitution

**1922** Central Industrial School, first multi-room school for African Americans in the county, opened in Prince Frederick, constructed with assistance from the Rosenwald Fund.

**1872** First state appropriations for African American schools

**1939** W. Sampson Brooks High School, the first one for African Americans in the county, opened.

**1966** After a period of "voluntary integration," schools in the county were officially desegregated.

**1954** U.S. Supreme Court in Brown vs. Board of Education invalidated separate but equal doctrine regarding schools and other public facilities, thus decreeing an end to segregation.

**1864** Slaves in Maryland freed by the amended State Constitution

**1896** U.S. Supreme Court in Plessy vs. Ferguson provided the legal foundation for the separate but equal doctrine, thus perpetuating segregation in schools and other public facilities.

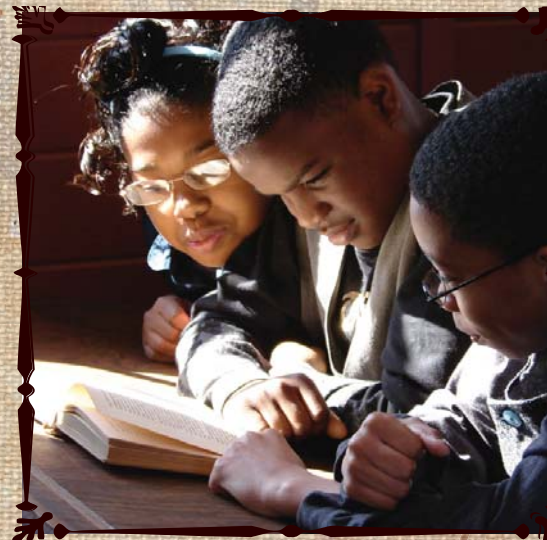
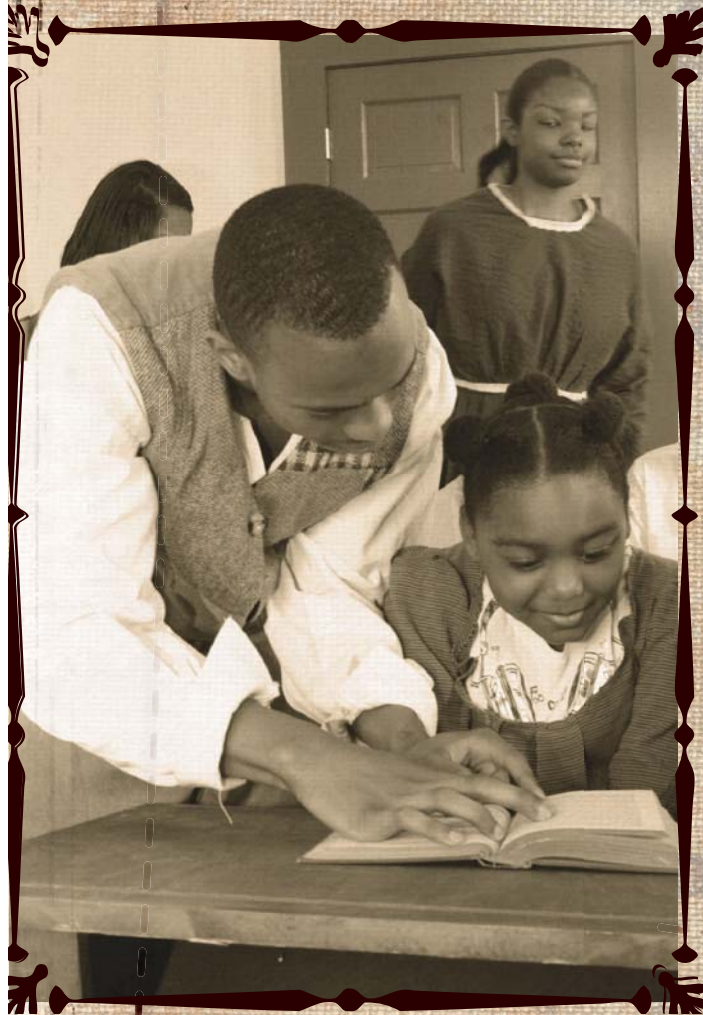
**1937** H. Elizabeth Brown successfully sued the county for equal pay for African American teachers whose salaries averaged about 30% below those of white teachers. The suit was handled by Thurgood Marshall, special counsel for the NAACP.



## Learning at the Wallville School

The school would sometimes service over 40 students in Grades 1 through 7. The day would begin with a prayer and then students in a particular grade would come forward and stand in a line facing the teacher. They would recite lessons, receive instruction and answer questions from the teacher. Meanwhile, students in other grades would do seat work. When

the teacher was busy, older students would step in and provide support for younger students. Other instruction during the day might include a summary of current events happening in the nation and the world. Students would then typically be divided into groups and taught mathematics, reading, history, geography and science. There would also be games, music and art instruction. The school day began around 8:30 a.m. and would end at 3:00 p.m.



## Teaching in a One Room School

The Wallville School had only one instructor to serve the learning needs of young children who were just learning how to read and teens who were learning to be young adults. In a 1996 interview, Regina Brown, the last teacher to serve at the Wallville School, reflected, "I was principal, teacher, secretary, custodian and trouble shooter. The teaching methods

we used were later called individualized instruction and team teaching. My team was made up of three seventh-grade girls."

Despite their many contributions, African-American teachers were only paid half of what their white colleagues received. This inequity in pay would end in 1939 when, as a result of a lawsuit brought by Elizabeth Brown, the Calvert County Board of Education agreed to pay African-American teachers the same wages as their white colleagues.

Philadelphia  
Tribune — November 1937  
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### Philadelphia Girl Center Of Md. Court Fight Seeking Equalization Of Teachers' Pay Local Normal School Graduate Gets Salary Of \$600 Annually, Compared To \$1,100 For Whites

PRINCE FREDERICK, Md.—A petition seeking a writ of mandamus to compel the board of education of Calvert county "to adopt and establish salary schedules for teachers and principals in Calvert county without distinction as to race or color of teachers or as to the school taught" was filed in the Circuit court here on November 10 by attorneys acting for Elizabeth Brown, a teacher in the Mount Hope colored elementary school.

The order was signed by Judge W. M. Loker. The petitioner, Elizabeth Brown, sets forth that she is a graduate of the Philadelphia Normal School and has taken courses at Hampton Institute, holds a first grade certificate of the first-class, issued by the state department of education in Maryland and is in her eighth year of teaching experience in the state of Maryland.

The petition declared that she is being paid \$75 a month for eight months or a total of \$600, whereas white teachers in Calvert county with the same qualifications and experience and performing the same duties receive a salary at the rate of \$1,100 annually.

The petition avers that the differentials in salaries between white and colored teachers are based solely on race or color and that the enforcement of the salary schedule "is unlawful and arbitrary and in violation of the constitution of the state of Mary-



"I was principal, teacher, secretary, custodian and trouble shooter."

—Regina Brown