

Booker T. Washington High School Foundation

Booker T. Washington High School (BTW) in Columbia, South Carolina officially ceased operations in 1974. The historic high school was the second Black high school in South Carolina and the first Black high school in Columbia, SC, and operated for 58 years. Public school desegregation in the state and the expansion of the University of South Carolina (USC) led to the closing of and utilization of the school's facilities by USC.

Recognizing the exigency to preserve Booker T. Washington High School's tradition of academic, vocational, athletic, and cultural excellence, Doris Glymph Greene, Class of 1959, envisioned a foundation to keep the memory of the school alive. She drafted a concept proposal which the Columbia Pan-Hellenic Council unanimously adopted. The Council immediately set about establishing the Booker T. Washington High School Foundation (BTWHSF) in 1974, counseled by Franchot Brown, Esq. '61, who rendered his legal services pro bono.

The Columbia Pan-Hellenic Council (CPHC) is a collaborative organization of eight international historically African American Greek-letter fraternities and sororities: Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, and Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority. Many of the Council's more than 1,000 members are BTW graduates.

Considering it historically important that the Booker T. Washington High School tradition and her contributions to the city, county, state, and nation be commemorated by positive community action, the Pan-Hellenic Council prepared and funded an appropriate closing ceremony for the school. The 1974 Rededication to Booker T. Washington High School's Tradition of Service held at the Columbia Township Auditorium saw hundreds gather for the emotional farewell, which featured former principals Dr. Harry B. Rutherford, Sr., Stonewall Richburg, and Samuel A. Heyward. Former choraliers and band members rendered the music, and the Reverend John C. Williams, Class of 1955, aroused the audience with a poignant tribute.

In the summer of 1974, representatives from CPHC and BTW alumni elected the first Board of Directors of the Foundation. The Board committed to a twofold purpose: to preserve the rich history of Booker T. Washington High School, and to enshrine the school's memorabilia. The formation of an Alumni Association, the creation of a scholarship program and heritage banquet, the revival of the John Work Chorus, and the establishment of a building fund were the thrusts of the Board. The first alumni president, Dorothy Hollis Davis '49, chaired a task force that worked throughout the summer to identify, collect, and catalog artifacts to be housed in a museum. Richland County School District One provided storage space.

In June 1975, the first annual Heritage Banquet was held at the Masonic Temple. The first scholarships were presented to Sheila Bates and Walter Curry. Julius Jefferson '41, Catherine Thomas, Columbia Pan-Hellenic Council, and the Class of 1974 (the last graduating class) received the first Heritage Awards for outstanding contributions to the Foundation. The 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978 scholarships were awarded to students who would have graduated from Booker T. Washington High School and were zoned to A. C. Flora or Dreher High School. Fannie Phelps Adams '34 served as the first scholarship chairperson. In 1978, The Foundation established a

scholarship fund honoring Mrs. Fannie Phelps Adams who attended BTW, followed by a lifetime teacher/counselor/administrator career at her alma mater. Memorials include a scholarship offered by The Garrick family and Class of 1963 in memory of former Foundation committee member Beverly Garrick '63; and the Susan Brown Freeman Scholarship for a student attending Benedict College. To date, the Foundation has awarded more than two hundred college scholarships to qualifying BTW Legacy scholars.

Heritage Banquets have invited renowned alumni as guest speakers, including football standout J. C. Caroline, Federal Judge Matthew Perry '39, Kellogg Medical Scholar Dr. Carroll M. Leevy '37, Corporate Executive Gilroy Griffin, Jr. '55, Corporate Attorney Joshua Martin '62, Hall of Fame Coach George E. Glymph '61, and religious leader Reverend Joseph A. Darby, Jr. '69.

In 1984, the Foundation recognized ninety-two living faculty and staff who served at Booker T. Washington High School. In June 1985, fifteen families were recognized for their prolific number of BTW graduates. In 1986, the two South Carolina African American NASA astronauts were presented Heritage Awards: Dr. Ronald E. McNair, Ph.D. (physicist) of Lake City and Columbian Lieutenant Colonel Charles F. Bolden, Jr. (future Major General USMC and NASA administrator), the son of Ethel Martin Bolden '36.

The Foundation celebrated the 75th anniversary of Booker T. Washington High School in 1991. Two highlights were the Diamond Jubilee Comet publication and the 200-voice John Work Chorus performance. Janie P. Jones '67, researched and compiled the rosters of all graduating classes (1916-1974), which appeared as an insert in this collectible edition of The Comet.

Many people deserve special thanks for their lifetime dedication to fostering the goals of the Booker T. Washington High School Foundation. Several should be noted for their many years of service: Fannie Phelps Adams '34, Celia Phelps Martin '37, Alonzo Phelps '55, Mary Cooper '41, Inez Goines '41, M. LaNelle Kohn '68, and Eunice Primus Robinson of CPHC. Also: Geraldine Parker '64, Susie Brown Freeman '32, Pertell Nesbitt '61, Doris Andrews '64, Ida Spells English '65, Mary C. Hammond '51, James A. Green '58, Herbert Nelson '46, Josephine Hall '43, Ida B. Johnson '38, Wilbur Tucker '54, Robert Weston '52, Susie Mills '51, Doris Glymph Greene '59, Gus Roberts '61, Oretha Young '55, Agnes Richardson '41, Sylvia Watson '70, and Earl F. Brown of CPHC. During the organizing years, CPHC members Harold White, Catherine Davis Thomas and Edward E. Taylor rendered exemplary service. Mr. Taylor served as the Foundation's treasurer for more than 18 years.

The first major fundraisers were initiated by Isaac McGraw (doormats) and Julius Jefferson '41 (The Grandbaby Contest). For years, Nelson Squire '58 was designated the Foundation's official photographer.

The historic Monteith School (1921-1949), formerly part of the Hyde Park School District, was annexed by Richland County in 1947 and purchased by the Foundation in 2003 under the leadership of Henry Hopkins, President. Restoration of the newly acquired school building erected at 6800 North Main Street involved many phases during this period of 2004-2014. A multi-task committee was formed with Henry Hopkins, Project Manager; Albert Griffin, President; Annie Kelley, Chairperson, Geraldine Parker, Co-Chairperson and Treasurer, to spearhead many necessary tasks to complete the restorations interior, exterior and landscaping.

The Booker T. Washington – Monteith Center highlights the African American educators and students having ties to the Monteith School, and for affiliation with the former Booker T. Washington High School. An impressive black and gold “Booker T. Washington-Monteith Cultural Center” sign (spearheaded by Annie Kelley), was erected on the property. With the financial support of many classes and others, custom plantation window shutters were installed in 2014. Upgrades completed during this period included security lighting, audio-visuals, interior and exterior repairs, and painting of the building. In spite of everything, the Foundation continued the legacy of the annual Heritage Celebration which included a banquet, picnic and John Work Chorus with souvenir booklets... (Annie Palmer Kelley '60, chairperson and Geraldine Parker '64, co-chair (2004-2014). Agnes Richardson '41, chaired for over eight years prior to 2004.

Special thanks to the Restoration Committee during this period of 2004-2014: Henry Hopkins '50, Albert Griffin '55, Annie Palmer Kelley '60, Geraldine Parker '64, Martha Ruff '49, Dorothy Clark '52, Wilhelmina Kinard '57, Mary Davis William '57, Jestine Brown Coaxum '57, Sarah Griffin '56, Margaret Tipton '61, Pertell Nesbitt '61, John Bookhart '60, Jean Hopkins '50, and Linda Johnson.

The Vocational Education Building with the BTW Auditorium is the only original structure remaining on the campus. In 2013, this building was renovated and the iconic front facade of the original administration building was replicated on the Wheat Street side, and the street renamed Booker T. Washington Way. The construction project was funded by USC and a generous gift from Rev. Dr. Solomon Jackson, Jr. '71.

On Saturday, February 6, 2016, The Foundation participated in the 12th Annual KARAMU Statewide Black History Parade and Festival with a float, cars, and an exhibition booth. The 12th annual parade started at Harden and Gervais Streets and traveled south on Harden ending at Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, 2300 Green Street, where the Black History Festival was held at the park.

In 2016, the Foundation celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the school's founding with a series of events throughout the year. The Kickoff Ceremony was held Sunday, February 28, 2016, at BTW Auditorium on the University of South Carolina campus. USC President Dr. Harris Pastides, Millennium Society Legacy Builder, was on hand to give well wishes to alumni and friends. Dr. Pastides spoke of the friendship between USC and the Foundation.

A three-day extravaganza of a reunion mixer, picnic, banquet, prayer breakfast, and choral performance celebrated the Centennial Anniversary of BTW. The weekend celebration was held June 24-26, 2016. On Friday evening, June 24, 2016, the “Black and Gold Pride: A Grand Reunion Mixer” featured a tribute to former faculty, athletes, cheerleaders, band members, and Foundation scholars were held at Embassy Suites on Greystone Boulevard.

On Saturday morning until mid-afternoon, June 25, 2016, “Back on the Block: A Twist on Tailgating” celebrated BTW Tornado spirit with alumni, family, friends, and community. The event featured an open house of the BTW Auditorium, with vendors and food sales onsite at 1400 Wheat Street, USC campus. That night the Centennial Gala took place at Brookland Banquet and

Conference Center in West Columbia with hundreds attending, celebrating the history and perpetuating the legacy of Booker T. Washington High School. The highlight of the evening was the inaugural induction of The Millennium Society of alumni progeny and community leaders who will work to keep the BTW traditions alive. United States Congressman James E. Clyburn (D-SC) was among the inductees.

On Sunday morning, June 26, 2016, the Heritage Prayer Breakfast and Memorial Service celebrating our faith and commemorating our recent deceased alumni was held at the Columbia Marriott. Carolyn Glymph Walker '66 compiled and produced a moving and soul-stirring video to those who transitioned in the past year. Keynote speakers included Reverend. Simon P. Bouie '57, and Reverend Joseph A. Darby, Jr. '69. That evening, Dr. Carl R. Wells, legacy builder, directed the 100-voice Centennial John W. Work Chorus, celebrating 100 years through the tradition of Negro spirituals. Margaret Wilson Tipton '61 served as the chorus coordinator.

The Foundation participated in Benedict College's Annual Homecoming celebration with tailgating and a BTW exhibit booth at the Charles W. Johnson Stadium, 2047 Two Notch Road, during the Benedict Homecoming football game on Saturday, October 20, 2016.

On Saturday, December 3, 2016, the Foundation participated in the 63rd Annual Carolina Carillon Holiday Parade (South Carolina's Official Holiday Parade). BTW's entries included cars and a float festooned in Black and Gold. The BTW procession was led by former majorette Jacqueline Mitchem Evans '65, who wore a vintage BTW majorette uniform. The parade covered by NBC WIS-TV and broadcast statewide began at Gervais and Bull Streets and proceeded west on Gervais across from the State House and continued into the VISTA.

In 2020 the global coronavirus pandemic reshaped countless American rituals, to include commemoration of our Heritage Weekend, which could not escape unchanged. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the format was substantially different from previous events, with no in-person gathering, and the celebrations joined remotely from many locations across the country. The Foundation Board, the Alumni Association and the Millennium Society organized an interactive 45th Heritage Weekend and lived-streamed the festivities to alumni, scholars and the community by way of website and online programming. The Heritage Weekend was marked by several virtual events – Friday, June 26 (Welcome Mixer), Friday, July 31 (Virtual Banquet and Scholarship Program) and Sunday, August 30 (John Work Chorus, Memorial, and Millennium Society Induction).

The Foundation is currently headed by Gloria Susan Graham Boyd '65, having previously served as president from 1989 to 1994. Boyd succeeded Henry T. Hopkins '50, the Foundation's president between 2014 and 2016. The Foundation's other presidents include: Doris Glymph Greene '59 (1974-1984); Earl Felton Brown, Columbia Pan Hellenic Council, (1985-1989); Gus Roberts '61 (1994-2003); Henry Wolfe '72 (2003-2004), and Albert Griffin '55 (2004-2014). The BTW Alumni Association is back. The Alumni Association has been served by four presidents: Dorothy H. Davis '49, Oretha K. Young '55, Ida Johnson '38, and Matthew Addison '62.

The Millennium Society was organized in 2016 as a part of the Centennial Celebration. The Booker T. Washington High School Foundation Millennium Society is open to anyone who is

committed to perpetuating the legacy of Booker T. Washington (BTW) High School. The vision is a society of Alumni progeny and community leaders who will keep BTW traditions alive for generations yet to come.

The Booker T. Washington tradition flourishes through the Alumni Associator, The Millennium Society, Class Reunions, the Heritage Celebration and Scholarship Banquet, and John W. Work Chorus. The Reunion Weekend and the High School Foundation have served as prototypes for other historic Black schools lost to the confusion of desegregation. The preservation of the Booker T. Washington High School legacy thrives under the visionary leadership of the current Booker T. Washington High School Foundation Board of Directors.

Lest We Forget ...