

Public Schools in Arlington District of Alexandria County, Virginia 1870 - 1905

By C. B. ROSE, JR.

On July 11, 1870, the General Assembly of Virginia adopted a plan for public schools in the Commonwealth. This implemented the directive of the new Constitution of 1869 that the General Assembly was to "provide by law, at its first session under this Constitution, a uniform system of public free schools and for its gradual equal and full introduction into all the counties of the State by the year 1876, and as much sooner as possible." The Constitution itself had made provision for a State Superintendent of Public Instruction to be elected by the General Assembly, and for a State Board of Education to consist of the Governor, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Attorney General, with the power to appoint County Superintendents of Schools.

Virginia had been moving in this direction ever since the first legislation was enacted in 1796 to establish free schools on a highly permissive basis—which was never used. The first State financial aid (for poor children only) was voted in 1810; in 1829, the program was liberalized to permit State funds to be used for school building construction. In 1846, legislation was enacted which removed the restriction that free public education should be limited to the poor, but its extension remained permissive, the citizens of each locality being required to vote in its favor. Such an election was held in Alexandria County (as Arlington was then known), in 1849 but the results were not recorded. The "Minutes" of the governing body, the County Court, however, show that in that year appointments were made to replace certain School Commissioners who had resigned. The presumption, therefore, is that a rudimentary system of free education was then in existence in the County.

Whatever the legislation on the books, the fact remains that during the pre-war years, those who could afford it sent their children to private schools or had them tutored at home. Many who could not, avoided the stigma of "poor" by not sending their children to school at all. The result was a high rate of illiteracy in the Old Dominion. After the war, many who previously could have afforded private schools could do so no longer; moreover, the Negroes, formally barred from the schools, were in a position to take advantage of public facilities.

The 1870 legislation provided for the establishment of public free schools under a three man Board of Trustees in each district, known at that time

and until 1875 as townships, into which the counties were divided. The district boards of trustees together formed a county school board, and the county Superintendent of Schools was the coordinating officer. The members of the district boards of trustees were appointed by the State Board of Education for three year terms, the first group on a one, two, three year term basis so that thereafter the terms would be staggered.

Some State financial support was provided through the interest on the Literary Fund, the capitation tax, and a State property tax. Local funds could be provided from a tax of not over five cents per \$100 assessed value and a capitation tax of not over fifty cents. The local supplement, however, was permissive. The State funds did not begin to become available until December 1870, and then in an uncertain amount.

It was with this background of untried legislation, uncertain financing, and dubious citizen support, that the Arlington District School Board met to organize on October 29, 1870.

Organization and First Steps

Arlington County, then known as Alexandria County, had been divided into three Districts: Jefferson, Arlington, and Washington.¹ The "Minute Book" of the School Board of Arlington District from 1870 to 1905 has survived, and forms the basis for this article.²

At the first meeting, on October 29, 1870, the three Trustees, George R. Adams, Garrett Wibirt, and Harvey Bailey met at Balls Cross Roads and were sworn in by the Justice of the Peace for Arlington District, Allen Pearce.³ Adams was elected Chairman, and Bailey, Clerk. They ascertained that the Good Templars Hall could be rented for school purposes from George Mortimore for \$50 a year. Apparently the offer was accepted. The Clerk was directed to take a census of the school children in the District. (The 1870 total population of the District was 1,374.) On December 27, the Board met again and recorded that no instructions had yet been received from the State Superintendent, so they adjourned subject to the call of the Chairman.

On January 4, 1871, the next meeting of the Board was held at the "Columbia School House" (on Columbia Pike) where a private organiza-

¹ "The Map of Arlington in 1878—Places and People," by C. B. Rose, Jr. in *The Arlington Historical Magazine*, Vol. 2, No. 2.

² The author wishes to acknowledge the generous cooperation of the late Dr. Edward J. Braun, Clerk of the Arlington County School Board, in making this record available. A typed copy of the "Minutes" is now part of the Archives of the Arlington Historical Society. It was possible also to consult the "Minute Book" of this Board continuing from 1905 to 1915.

³ Pearce had been a member of the County Court in 1869 when he was appointed by General Stoneman to fill a vacancy. He served as Delegate to the General Assembly for the sessions of 1871-72 and 1872-73. He died of cancer on November 24, 1873.

tion had been conducting a school. The trustees had invited the District Board to see if satisfactory arrangements could be made whereby a public school could be established at that place. The Board offered to pay \$100 toward the salary of a teacher for five months if the trustees of the Columbia School House would contribute a like sum and allow a public school to be opened in their building. This matter was taken under advisement but finally settled on January 11 when a counter offer which included \$25 rent was accepted. (For the 1871-72 school term of five months the scarcity of funds dictated a total rent of \$20.)

On January 9th, the Board met at Freedmen's Village but "there being no preparation made for a meeting," adjourned. On the 11th, the Board met there again and this time the "Minutes" record "there seemed to be quite an interest among the colored people, as there were quite a number of the Parents and friends present, who seemed anxious for a Public School." The Board agreed to open a school, the "Union League Hall" being offered for sale at \$75. On January 16th, this is referred to as "Arlington School House," taking its name from the Custis-Lee Arlington estate on which Freedmen's Village was located. In subsequent meetings, the Board made arrangements to purchase desks, benches, books, and fuel for the use of all the schools.

Toward the end of January 1871, the public schools of Arlington District of Alexandria County finally got underway. On January 25, James Doherty was appointed teacher of Columbia School at a salary of \$35 per month and the school was opened for public use. On January 30th, James F. Green was appointed teacher at "Balls X Roads" at a salary of \$40, and the school was ceremoniously declared opened. The Arlington School was opened on February 1st with the appointment of Miss C. C. Anderson at a salary of \$40 a month, after "some very appropriate remarks were made by Messrs. Adams and Wibirt." At the meeting of the Board on February 9, 1871, it was directed that the Columbia School should be known as Number 1, Arlington School as Number 2, and "Walker" School as Number 3. The Board had spent \$179.79 on repairs to buildings and supplies to put the various schools in readiness for use.

Meetings and Minutes

It is difficult to tell, especially from the early "Minutes," just how often and when the Board met. The table below gives the number of meetings by years for which minutes are recorded. It seems obvious, from the content of the minutes, that there must have been other occasions on which the members of the Board made decisions on the operation of the schools. Even in the later years, when more formal records were kept, they apparently do not "tell all."

The site of the meetings varied. Usually they were held at one or another

of the school houses. Sometimes they were held at the home of the Chairman or one of the members. Sometimes they were held after a meeting of the County School Board⁴ which seems to have taken place at the Court House. This was in Alexandria City until 1898 when the new County Court House was completed at the present site. During one period, they were frequently held at the office of one of the members in Washington, D. C.

On only two occasions do the minutes reflect any attempt to set up regular meeting dates. On February 9, 1871, it was noted that 7 o'clock on the first Monday evening in each month was to be the regular meeting date of the Board. On October 4, 1904, it was resolved that the Board would hold regular monthly meetings on the last Saturday night of each month at the Columbia School Building. The reason given for the selection of the site was: "said Columbia building being accessible and convenient by railway or otherwise to all the members of the Board, while the Ballston building is so accessible to only one, and the other buildings are not accessible at all." Ballston had been generally favored until the new Columbia building was completed, and one of the Trustees at this meeting proposed alternating meetings between the two sites but was outvoted.

Meetings of Arlington District School Board

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>
1870	2	1880	†	1890	†	1900	5
1	24	1	1	1	1	1	6
2	4	2	1	2	3	2	13
3	3	3	3	3	5	3	39
4	3	4	1	4	10	4	24
5	1	5	9	5	9	5*	10
6	1	6	1	6	3		
7	3	7	†	7	6		
8	†	8	1	8	5		
9	†	9	1	9	6		

† No minutes recorded.

* To end of volume, August 15.

⁴ The relationship between the District and County School Boards never comes through clearly. Property was held in the name of the former which also decreed the length of the school year and appointed teachers. The early records of the County School Board have not survived but judging from the activities recorded for the District Board, the County Board seems to have had only a small role to play until the district boards were abolished in 1922.

70
Balls & Roads Ass^{ns}
Oct. 29th 1870

Pursuant to a call of Richard L. Carré Esq
Supt Public Schools for Alex Co.

Geo R. Adams, Garrett Tribitt, & Harvey Bailey
Trustees of Public Schools for Arlington Township
met at Good Templars Hall.

Balls & Roads this day at 11 A. M. being duly
sworn by Allen Pease Justice of Peace, organized
by electing George R. Adams, Chairman and
Harvey Bailey, Clerk, whereupon the Board
proceeded to business, a proposition was made
by Mr George Mortimore to let the trustees
of Public Schools have the use of "Good Templars
Hall" for a Public School for one year for
(\$56.00) fifty dollars, whereupon a vote was taken
and carried unanimously, on motion of
Mr Tribitt the clerk was requested to take a
census of the children in the township, and
report to the Com^r Superintendent at the
earliest moment, there being no other business
the Board adjourned subject to the call of
the Chairman.

H. Bailey,
Clerk.

First Page of Minute Book of Arlington District School Board

Members of the Board and Superintendents of Schools

Until 1877, district school boards were appointed by the State Board of Education. Thereafter, the peculiar Virginia institution of a "School Trustee Electoral Board" selected the members. This Board was composed, during this time, of the County Superintendent of Schools (himself selected by the State Board of Education), the Commonwealth's Attorney, and the Judge of the County Court or a freeholder selected by him. In practice, it appears, that the Judge usually delegated this authority. All the members of the Arlington District Board of School Trustees were prominent citizens of the community during the period covered by this record.

The members of the first Board are cases in point. George R. Adams, who served until July 30, 1873, was a substantial farmer who had come to the County in 1865; he had been a member of the Commission to lay off the lines of the Districts into which the County was divided in 1870. Garrett B. Wibirt, also a member of this Commission, was a Registrar and Judge of Elections in 1870, and was appointed Assessor for Arlington District on August 1, 1870.

Harvey Bailey deserves special mention. Born on June 26, 1829, the son of Lewis Bailey of the family for which Bailey's Crossroads is named, he operated a fruit and berry farm with his home at what is now 3219 7th Street, South; his house was torn down only recently. Among other activities he was a Director of the Arlington Turnpike Company in 1870.⁵ Selected as Clerk of the Board at its first meeting, he served in this capacity until his death on May 27, 1903; he was recorded as present at a meeting on May 20 although apparently in poor health for some time theretofore. After his death his colleagues adopted a resolution (the only one of its kind in this "Minute Book") which speaks of his devotion to the school interests of the District and the County, and mentions that "he was ever ready and prompt in the discharge of his official duties, though oftentimes wearying and irksome in their details," and that "he bore no small part in the placing of Alexandria County schools among the foremost in the State. Of a quiet and retiring disposition always courteous and kind he won and held the esteem and love of his former and present companions on the Board."

The gaps in the "Minutes" make it impossible to give a complete chronology of members of the Board. The following account has been pieced together from the information given. On July 30, 1873, John Febrey took the place of Garrett Wibirt and served until 1877. Mr. Febrey lived on the County line in the Falls Church area near Dr. Gott. He was born in 1831,

⁵ Considerable information on many of the individuals and families mentioned in this article may be found in *Arlington Heritage*, by Eleanor Lee Templeman, and *Falls Church by Fence and Fireside*, by Melvin Lee Steadman.

a son of Nicholas Febrey and Belinda Ball, and died in 1893. After his service on the Board, he was County Superintendent of Schools.

On August 6, 1881, Dr. Louis E. Gott is mentioned as Chairman of the Board. He was a well-known doctor of the area, born on August 29, 1838, died October 29, 1916, who served during the Civil War in the Confederate Army, and thereafter rendered outstanding service as a medical practitioner in his community.

The minutes of November 2, 1882, mention Benjamin Austin as Chairman, a post he held until 1884; he continued to be a member of the Board until sometime in 1886-87. He had been a member of the Commission to lay off the road districts in 1875, a Justice of the Peace for Arlington District in 1875, and County Clerk from July 1, 1879, until June 29, 1886. The same minutes of November 2, 1882, mentions W. C. Reeves as a member of the Board. No other information about him is available and his name does not appear again.

On September 13, 1884, Dr. [T. M.] Talbott is listed as a member of the Board. He was a physician in Falls Church, the son-in-law of John Febrey. His service lasted only until the end of the year, probably because it interfered with a busy medical practice and insurance business. He did not die until May 3, 1940.

On January 21, 1885, A. P. Douglas joined the Board and was elected Chairman at his first meeting. He resigned on September 30, 1907, and during almost this entire period was Chairman. Indeed, on one occasion when the Board organized in his absence and Benjamin Austin was chosen Chairman, he protested, declaring the action illegal because the Superintendent of Schools had been in the chair during the election. Unfortunately there is a gap in the "Minutes" at this point so they do not reveal whether or not he carried his point. At any event, in 1888 he was again Chairman. An indefatigable Board member, especially in the interest of the school at Ballston, he could be counted upon to uphold the conservative side of any issue.

William Barcroft was a member of the Board when a real estate transaction was recorded in 1890.⁶ On July 25, 1892, the members of the Board were Douglas, Bailey, and J. E. Clements. The latter had been a teacher at the Walker or Ballston School, and later became Superintendent of Schools for the County. A year later, Clements was off the Board and his place was taken by George W. Veitch who had been a Supervisor for Arlington District from July 1, 1885, to June 30, 1887. Before that, in 1871, he had held the post of Superintendent of the Poor. Veitch served for at least a year.

The minutes of August 8, 1899, record William Ball as a member of the

⁶ Arlington Deed Book L⁴, page 61.

Board. He lived in what is now Clarendon and his calling was that of carpenter. He appears in the minutes on various occasions as bidding on and doing work on the different school buildings. He was the father of Senator Frank L. Ball. Born in 1842, he survived until 1920.

On August 15, 1902, Dr. Charles B. Munson joined the Board. He was a dentist with a practice in Washington, D. C. who lived on Columbia Pike. His family had first come to the area in 1851 and settled at what is still known as Munsons Hill. After Harvey Bailey's death he was elected Clerk of the Board, a post he held until 1906. (In 1907 he became Chairman. He was forced off the Board in 1913 by the School Trustee Electoral Board which declared him a non-resident of the County and his seat therefore vacant.)

The last member of the Board whose name we learn from the "Minute Book" of 1870-1905 is William C. Shelley. Col. Shelley served from June 10, 1903, to May 1906, one of the busiest periods in the Board's history. Shelley Road, now South Uhle Street from South Court House Road to 2nd Street, South, was named for him. He was a lawyer with offices in the "Kellogg Building" in Washington, D. C.

It is quite possible that the record of the names of Superintendents of Schools is not complete in these "Minutes." Certainly the dates of their tenures is not revealed with exactitude. Those mentioned are: Richard L. Carne (1870-1877); Geo. R. Adams (1881); Stephen B. Wibirt (1882); A. B. Grunwell (1885); John E. Febrey (1891); James E. Clements (1893-1905, and 1906-); Julian P. Baldwin (1905).

It was fortunate that an educator of stature and ability had been chosen to serve during the initial difficult period of establishing a County-wide public school system. Richard L. Carne was a well-known figure in Northern Virginia when he was appointed to the post of Superintendent of Schools for Alexandria County. Principal of St. John's Academy in Alexandria for many years, the first school to be built in Washington District of the County was named for him.

George Adams presumably was the same individual who had served on the Arlington District School Board. Stephen B. Wibirt did not hold the job long, dying in office on May 9, 1882. Because of the gap in the "Minutes," there is no disclosure from this source of who succeeded him.

A. B. Grunwell who was Superintendent in 1885, later became a member of the County Board of Supervisors from Washington District, serving from 1887 to 1889 and again from 1895 to 1897. On both occasions he was chosen as Chairman. John Febrey's tenure may have been terminated by his death in 1893.

James E. Clements held the position of Superintendent of Schools longer than anyone else during the thirty-five year period. He first appears in the record as a teacher at Ballston School from 1875 to 1881. He was Com-

monwealth's Attorney from 1883 to at least 1891 and again in 1903. Indeed at one time, he is referred to as "Acting Commonwealth's Attorney" at the same time that he was Superintendent of Schools. He had extensive real estate interests in the County. Those who knew him recall him as a colorful figure; he appears to have aroused controversy since in 1905 the Arlington District School Board felt constrained to adopt a resolution urging his reappointment, and a petition was circulated in the County to the same effect.⁷ The effort appears to have been in vain, however, since Julian P. Baldwin was appointed Superintendent in 1905 and served for a time but Clements returned in 1906 and served until 1909. Baldwin is mentioned a number of times elsewhere in the "Minutes" as contracting for carpentry or other construction work on the schools of Arlington District.

School Buildings

Provision of proper plant is a perennial problem for school boards and the case of the Arlington District School Board was no exception.

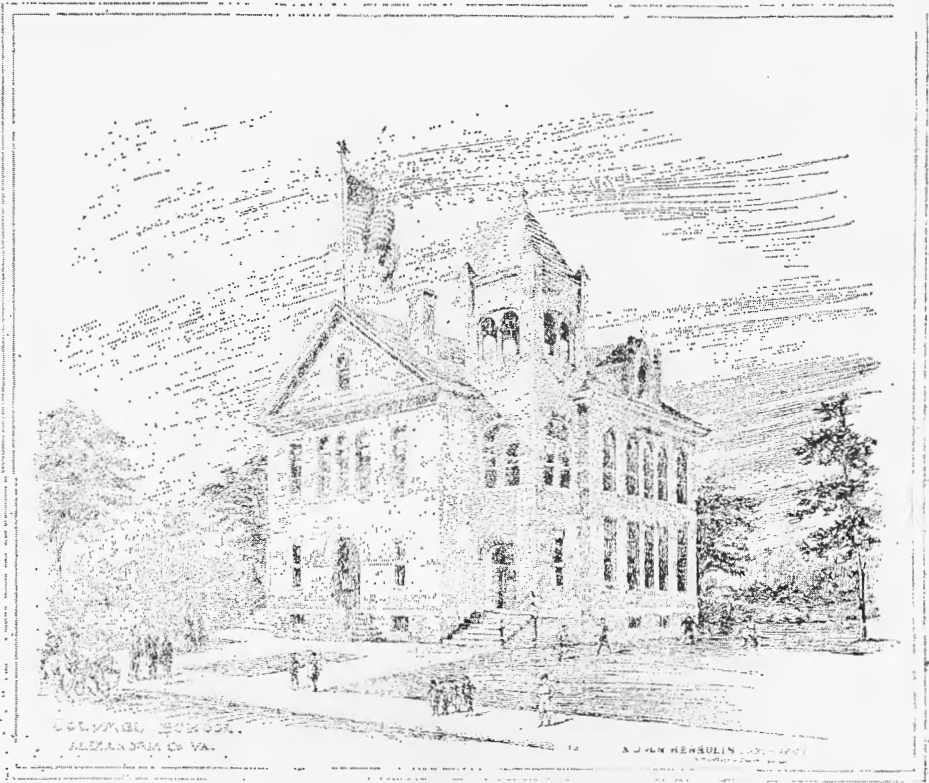
Columbia School Number 1

The only one of the original buildings which was not a makeshift was the Columbia School which stood on half an acre of ground on Columbia Pike at the corner of what is now South Wayne Street. It was rented from a private school association until 1892 when the School Board purchased it for \$1,000. Toward the close of the century, the school population in that area had increased so much that thought began to be given to a replacement. On July 31, 1899, the Board appointed a Committee consisting of Mr. Ball and the Superintendent to arrange for plans for a new school, and on August 8 of that year authorized Eugene Bradbury to draw plans and specifications. It was not until five years later, after much dissension in the community and the unraveling of legal intricacies, that the Board accepted a new building from the contractor.

The first steps seemed easy. The Board approved Bradbury's employment as architect on October 17, 1899, but decided to postpone construction until Spring. On April 4, 1900, his plans were approved. Apparently the original intention had been to rebuild on the same site. But the center of population had moved further out the Pike, and doubt was cast on whether the Board had a clear title to the Wayne Street property. A new site was offered by C. B. Munson on an exchange basis.

On May 14, 1900, an informal poll was taken of the citizens present at the Board meeting; 22 voted in favor of rebuilding on the present site and only 5 for another. Obviously discouraged, the Board adopted a motion on

⁷ In 1909, however, the Arlington District School Board was urging the State Board of Public Instruction to appoint as Superintendent "an efficient schoolman trained to his work," and Clements was replaced by William Hodges.



July 18, 1900, that “in view of the lateness of the season, the condition of finances, and other matters” selection of a site would be deferred until Spring and the old building was ordered put “in comfortable condition” for the coming school year.

The delay was longer than anticipated since it was not until June 11, 1901, that Harvey Bailey was directed to see whether he could locate a suitable site “near the cross roads at Grey’s corner” (intersection of present Glebe Road and Columbia Pike). A week later he reported failure to do so and the matter was again dropped. Title to the Wayne Street property still had not been cleared by March 1902,⁸ but in April the Board resolved to purchase the “Phillips” property of 2¼ acres (in Terrace Heights subdivision) for \$850. Discussion of the site and title clearance was still going on in June. On August 21, 1902, a duly advertised election was held to get citizen approval of a site; there was a majority of 16 for the “Brown” lot (on Columbia Pike just west of present Walter Reed Drive).

⁸ County Court Judge Love approved the title on July 5, 1902. This was confirmation of a previous approval by the Circuit Court Judge.

The losers, however, took advantage of a provision in the State law under which any five residents and heads of families in the District might call for creation of an appeal board composed of the Superintendent of Schools, and a member of the School Board from each of the other Districts. The decision of such a "Special Appeal Board of Reference" was final. The Board⁹ met in January 1903, viewed the five sites proposed, held hearings, and decided in favor of the Brown lot. An injunction was sought in the Circuit Court which finally ruled that such a challenge had no legal standing.

In May 1903, the Arlington District School Board requested estimates on the cost of grading and draining the "Brown" lot, and advertised for construction bids on the basis of Bradbury's plans. Late in that month, however, Harvey Bailey died. For some time Dr. C. B. Munson had urged that a new competition for plans for the new building be held. This view now prevailed and bids for plans were again asked for. They were to cover a two story brick structure with slate roof and tower, with two rooms on the first floor and a large hall above, two cloak rooms and arrangements for heating by furnace. On August 3, 1903, meeting in Trustee Shelley's office in Washington, D. C., the Board accepted the plans of A. O. Von Herbulis.¹⁰ He was asked to draw up specifications and advertise for construction bids with a ceiling of \$6,500. These were duly opened on August 22; not only were all considerably higher than the stipulated maximum but the Board found itself in the embarrassing position of not having a site on which to build, negotiations for the purchase of the Brown lot still going on. Consideration of the bids was postponed.

Finally the legal underbrush was cleared away and on October 1, 1903, the Board moved to pay for the Brown lot. This did not pass without a last protest from Trustee A. P. Douglas who voted for the motion since the matter had advanced so far, but who entered in the record a statement explaining his opposition.¹¹ At this same meeting, the plans of Von Herbulis as slightly modified to reduce the cost, were approved, and the contract in the amount of \$8,650 let to Augustus Davis, Jr.

All this time, of course, the school population of this area had been growing. The teacher at Columbia School pled vainly for the appointment of an assistant. The Board's solution to the overcrowding and heavy teacher

⁹ W. N. Febrey was the School Board member from Washington District and George E. Garrett from Jefferson.

¹⁰ That the completed building bore a marked resemblance to the new County Court House, erected in 1898, was no accident. Von Herbulis, a resident of Falls Church, was the architect for both projects.

¹¹ He asserted, among other things, that drainage conditions were bad (an allegation that was to prove only too true), the cost excessive, and the location next to the trolley line dangerous for the children.

load (65 students in different grades and "daily additions") was to direct that the younger children should be dismissed at noon.

Once the building was under way, new questions arose. Should the Assembly Hall be finished? This required an addition to the contract. Then it was decided to install metal ceilings, another extra. At long last, on April 8, 1904, the Board met in the Hall of the new building. Acceptance of the structure from the contractor on July 22 did not finish the story. On August 17, 1904, bids were requested for the construction of two privies, for concreting the basement, and grading the grounds. In September, bids for a fence were called for, and in October, bids for steam-heating the building.

It is impossible to total the cost of the New Columbia School from the figures scattered through the records. Davis operated on the basis of "acceptances," sending the School Board orders against the installments due him in favor of his various suppliers. The amounts of the "extras" and subsequent necessary expenditures are elusive. It is safe to say, however, that the cost escalated from the original \$5,000 appropriated on August 22, 1902, for site and building, the "above named sum [to] cover every transaction and all expenses and all incidentals connected with said ground and building," to well over the sum of \$10,515 to which the mentioned costs of the land, grading, and construction contract total. (A newspaper story on Arlington schools in 1905 gives the cost of the New Columbia School as \$12,000 and says its erection caused some complaint on account of its cost and size.) The Arlington District School Board did, however, have a building of which it was proud and which was acknowledged to be one of the finest school buildings in the State.

Arlington Number 2

The school established in the Union League Hall, purchased by the School Board for \$75 in 1871, continued to be operated until the school year of 1888-89 when it was closed and the building sold to Nelson Wallace for \$85 on September 23, 1889. This school, on the Arlington estate, had been established for the children of Freedmen's Village. During the '80's, the population of that community had gradually resettled as the installation was closed out, so that a school was no longer needed in this vicinity.

Walker School Number 3 (Ballston)

The Good Templars Hall apparently served adequately for some years. On March 9, 1877, the Board considered the "propriety of erecting a building near Balls X Roads for the use of the Walker School." A foretaste of the difficulties to be encountered many years later in selecting a site for the Columbia School was experienced in the disagreements which immediately arose when a particular location was mentioned. At this March meeting the Board received an offer from one Thomas Syford to donate one acre if within 400 yards of the Crossroads, and the Board moved to secure a piece

of property belonging to Mrs. Cathcart. At the same time it selected a plan for a frame building from "C. Thurston Chase's work on school houses" to accommodate not less than forty "Schollars." A week later, the Board reconsidered when it received an offer from Mrs. Donaldson to sell part of her lot for \$200.

Citizen pressure was brought to bear upon the Board. It was claimed that seven-eighths of the pupils attending Walker School lived "north of the Georgetown Road [Wilson Boulevard] and many of them being small would be unable to attend the school on account of the increased distance" if the Cathcart site were chosen. A map spotting the residences of the pupils was shown. A citizen petition was presented urging great caution in selecting a site, and one unnamed individual was quoted in opposition because the Cathcart site was within 400 yards of his home. Mr. Syford said he would not donate the cost of the Donaldson site but gave the Board the choice of five others for any of which he would pay.

By the next day, two members of the Board (Bailey and Febrey) were able to report that they had interviewed all the people residing near the proposed sites and that none of them had made any objections. They had also viewed the lot near the church and recommended its purchase as a most desirable location. The gap in the "Minutes" at this point makes it impossible to pinpoint the moment of final decision from this source, but a deed was recorded on April 27, 1877, transferring one acre from Elizabeth Donaldson to the School Board for \$150. This fronted on what is now Wilson Boulevard at what is now North Randolph Street, and is shown on the Map of 1878.

Fifteen years later, the School had outgrown its quarters and Superintendent of Schools Clements was authorized on July 25, 1892, to procure plans and specifications for enlarging Walker School. The minutes are silent on whether or not this was done, but on June 1, 1893, it was decided to sell the existing building and build a new one of brick with two rooms and a hall. It was when the construction contract was let on July 27, 1893, that this was first referred to as the "Ballston school house." Henceforth "Walker"¹² drops out of the picture. The old building was sold at auction on October 9, 1893. The Superintendent of Schools bought it for \$214 and was given ten days in which to remove it. He seems to have been slow to pay, however, since he did not settle with the Board until April 11, 1895. In the meantime, the Board had had to pay George Mortimore \$13.50 on November 4, 1894, for removing the old building.

The location of the new building on the property must have been in a different spot from the old for the Board met in the new school house before

¹² There is nothing to show why "Walker" was chosen in the first place. Most of the Walkers in the County lived in Washington District.

the old one was sold. The new structure, apparently, was in an unfinished state for at least the first year of its use, since in 1894 the Board was calling for bids for painting and plastering, putting weights on the windows and bolts on the doors, and agreed to pay Allan Nourse and William Ball \$130 to finish the woodwork. (The carpentry work was still unfinished in 1897.) On April 11, 1895, the Board indicated that it wanted to borrow \$1,500 "to finish Ballston School House." The plan that had been chosen was a twin of the Hume School being built in Jefferson District at the same time, which leads to the suspicion that this was a stock plan from somebody's "work on school houses."

Some of the workmanship on the new building seems to have been inferior since even before it was finished the Board was paying bills for repairs to the roof. In 1903, it was decided to embellish the building with metal ceilings ("design No. 199 of the catalogue"). Here again the Board ran into trouble, the successful bidder failing to complete the job and the Board having to undertake it itself.

The stoves at Ballston, the pump, and the fence seem to have been constant headaches, continually needing repairs. In 1904 the privies had to be replaced. Finally, in August 1905, the Board contracted to have some major improvements made. These included excavating the cellar, breaking a coal chute through the wall (possibly in preparation for furnace heating), and partitioning the large upstairs room into two classrooms. This building, sold by the County School Board and converted for business purposes, is still standing.

Kemper Number 4

On October 4, 1875, "certain colored men residents of Arlington requested another colored school be opened in order to be accessible to those living in the southern part of the district," i.e., in what is now known as Green Valley or Nauck. The Board accordingly arranged to open a school in the A.M.E. Zion Church at Convalescent Camp, paying \$25 a year rent. By 1881, this school was being referred to as Kemper School.

The Board agreed on March 26, 1883, to buy three-fourths of an acre from J. D. Nauck for \$62.50 for the purpose of building a school in the area.¹³ On July 8, 1885, it called for bids for constructing a frame, one story building, 24' by 36', to be completed by August 25. Mr. Hall's bid was accepted on July 15 and it was noted that the lease on the building theretofore used had expired. Mr. Hall met the deadline with time to spare and on August 19 the new building was inspected by the Board, approved, and accepted. The site may not have been wholly suitable since in 1892,

¹³ Mysteriously enough, the plat of the Town of Nauck, recorded in 1876 or seven years earlier (Arlington Deed Book B⁴ page 441) shows a "colored county school" at that location.

the Board was asking for bids on changing the course of water running through the grounds, "as it will in time so wash out as to endanger the building."

The next year, at the same time that it was undertaking to replace Walker School with a brick building, the Board decided to build a new two story brick structure for Kemper at a cost of \$1,500. Originally only the two lower rooms were used, but in 1903 the upper story was finished off for classrooms.

Rosslyn Number 5

Many of the families displaced from Freedmen's Village settled in Rosslyn, and by the Fall of 1888 the Arlington District School Board found it necessary to establish a school in that area for colored children. Other than that space was rented from the trustees of a church, and one notation in 1892 that the attention of those trustees had been called to the necessity of having outbuildings put up at the church for the school, the record is bare of details.

The Arlington Deed Book (L⁴ page 61) shows that on October 3, 1890, a deed of trust was recorded to secure a note for \$300 given by the Trustees of the First Baptist Church in Rosslyn to the School Board. As part of the terms of the deed, the Trustees agreed to apply rents received to the repayment of the note.

Glencarlynn Number 6

Since the Rosslyn School in effect replaced the abandoned Arlington School, the first net addition to the number of schools in the Arlington District after the establishment of Kemper, occurred in 1895 when, in response to citizen requests, the Board agreed to open a school in Glencarlynn. It stipulated that it would pay the teacher \$25 a month, she to provide all that was necessary for running the school, and that it would make no further contribution. As others before and after have found, "in for a penny, in for a pound." The very next month the Superintendent of Schools appealed for a blackboard for the Glencarlynn School and the Board grudgingly appropriated "not over \$1.50" for that purpose. The next year, the Board found itself paying \$35 a month for a teacher and rent besides, but attempted to hold down costs by setting the term for this school at six months only. Of course, later, it "decided to see if there was enough money to keep the school open the whole term," and one can imagine that in the face of citizen uproar the money was found somehow. In 1898, the Board was paying not only for a teacher and \$5 a month for rent, but for three tons of coal to heat the rented room.

For some reason, the original quarters could not be used for the 1899-1900 school year, and that willing horse Harvey Bailey was directed to find

a place to house the school. The rent for "suitable rooms" had risen to \$6 a month by 1900; in 1902, the "Minutes" record that there was "no room in sight" for the Glencarlyn School. This forced the Board to take action and on August 22, 1902, it appropriated \$2,500 for the purchase of a proper site and erection of a building. A month later it adopted plans for a school drawn by the firm of Harding and Upman; another month and it was rejecting construction bids as too high, but revisions in the plans made it possible to accept a bid of \$2,102 from J. H. Chilcott on October 21, 1902. It was to rue the day.

Since a teacher was employed for this school throughout this period one must have been held, but there is nothing in the record to indicate where. At the end of April 1903, the Board received a complaint that the work on the new Glencarlyn School was not satisfactory. It appointed a committee to make an inspection; it reported that such indeed was the case. In June, it decided not to pay the contractor any more money until he made good his promise to remedy the defects. This led to further difficulty since he had assigned a portion of the sum due him to W. H. Smoot & Co. to pay for materials used on the job; eventually Smoot took legal action against the Board. By September the Board was having to call for bids to correct the poor work of Chilcott and his sub-contractors. This involved excavating around the entire foundation, pointing up the stonework and cementing the walls to the height of the water table, work on the roof, replastering and completing the woodwork as well as eliminating a dangerous condition where the stove pipe going through the wall was not properly insulated.

Since the Board was unable to secure temporary quarters for the 1903-04 school year, the students were forced to move into the uncompleted building. Such a situation has not been unknown even in more recent times in Arlington. Once completed, however, the building has had a long and useful history, serving as a school until the early 1950's when it was turned over to the community having been replaced by a new structure on a different site.

Fort Myer Heights

For a period of some three years at the end of this volume of the "Minutes" of the Arlington District School Board, there is the recurring intrusion of citizen demand for yet another school, this one to serve the area of Fort Myer Heights. On March 23, 1902, a Committee presented a petition which the Board ordered filed. A year later, on April 29, 1903, a new deputation urged that a school be provided there. The Board agreed in June to make an investigation for a suitable site, but in September laid on the table a resolution relating to "the long-delayed and much needed school house" in that area. So far as the "Minutes" reflect, the matter appears

to have been dropped until February 1905 when another group of citizens appeared before the Board on the same quest. A month later, a site was offered but not accepted, and in May another citizen delegation turned up to plead the cause.

During the years 1902-04 the Arlington District School Board had its hands full with the problems surrounding the construction of the new Columbia School, not to mention the Glencarlyn School imbroglio, and can hardly be blamed for warding off other potential headaches. For this is what this school, too, turned out to be. Not to leave the story hanging in the air, even though it means going beyond the record under immediate scrutiny, the "Clarendon" school (now the Woodrow Wilson School on Wilson Boulevard) was finally built and opened in 1910 but not until after what appears to be the inevitable wrangle about sites, plans, and contracts.

Teachers

The heart and soul of any school system, of course, is the faculty. Here, over the years, the Arlington District School Board appears to have met with varying success in securing suitable teaching personnel. Sometimes turnover was rapid; other devoted individuals served for years. Throughout the thirty-five year period, however, the only teacher whose eventual departure moved the Board to adopt a resolution of esteem was Miss Hannah Moore.¹⁴ Her first appearance at Walker School is lost in the gap in the records but it was before 1888. On her resignation at the end of the 1902-03 school year, the Board placed on record: "our large appreciation of Miss Moore, both as a friend and as an accomplished instructor and tender to her in parting our sincerest wishes for her present and future happiness."

Columbia School

The first teacher appointed, James Doherty, was declared incompetent by the parents and lasted only two months. He was succeeded on March 29, 1871, by Miss J. E. Mosher. For the following school term, Mrs. Julia E. Foster was appointed. The record shows that "Mrs. Going from Alexandria" was considered for this post on July 30, 1873. In 1881, Miss Mary Reed was the teacher at Columbia. Thomas R. Langster was appointed September 14, 1883, and reappointed the following year, but resigned on February 14, 1885. Somewhat apologetically the Board appointed Miss Emma O. Austin to fill his place, explaining that she was the only qualified teacher available. The defensive position no doubt grew out of the fact that Benjamin Austin was Chairman of the Board at the time and the presumption is that she was related. She served through the 1888-89 school year at least.

¹⁴ cf. "The Arlington I Have Known," by Senator Frank L. Ball in *The Arlington Historical Magazine*, Vol. 2, No. 4.

For the years 1891-93, E. S. Stalcup was the teacher at Columbia. He was succeeded by "Miss Nevitt" who became a subject of controversy in 1896 but nonetheless was reappointed by the Chairman (the other two members of the Board dissenting) for one more year and reappointed in 1897, to be followed by H. L. Petty, her earlier rival for the post. (Miss Nevitt was transferred to Glencarlyn). Mr. Petty had been teaching less than a month when he demanded an assistant. The Board compromised by raising his salary to \$45 a month and authorizing him to have his daughter, M. E. Petty, assist provided that she would also teach music and "the junior branches." In 1900, she became a full-fledged assistant with her own salary but in 1901 no assistant was appointed for this school. Mr. Petty left after the 1901-02 year; it was probably at this time that he went to Jefferson District to teach in the Hume School.

Miss M. E. Kidwell was the teacher at Columbia in 1902, and in 1903, Miss M. F. Grigg was appointed. It was she who requested an assistant and was turned down. The following year, "Prof." A. P. R. Works was transferred to Columbia from Ballston; he had entered the system as the teacher at Glencarlyn. At this time, there seems to have been a demand from the patrons of the schools for male teachers, at least in the larger institutions. Miss Grigg was made his assistant. It is not quite clear when two assistants were first appointed for this school but in 1905 M. E. Petty again appears on the payroll as an assistant at Columbia in addition to Miss Grigg. The 1905-06 budget called for three assistants.

Arlington School

The first teacher appointed here, Miss C. C. Anderson (elsewhere named "Celinda D.") served until some time in 1873. The teacher in 1881 was Mr. G. W. Smith. On March 26, 1883, Henson Butler is referred to as the assistant teacher at Arlington. For two years (1883-85) R. M. Whiting taught here to be followed by W. H. Jordan. During the final years of this school, Jacob J. Wright was the teacher.

Walker - Ballston School

James F. Green served only the first year. His successor, Wm. R. Bushby, held the post only one month, resigning October 23, 1871. His replacement was Samuel A. Howard. Wm. F. Greenwell was the teacher at Walker in 1873, but parent dissatisfaction and low attendance encouraged acceptance of his resignation on December 3 of that year.

According to a later note, James E. Clements "took charge" of the school in January 1874 and served until the completion of the 1880-81 school year. His successor was Miss Minnie Wibirt. On September 14, 1883, Florence M. Robertson was appointed. Her resignation is noted on January 8, 1886, when I. H. Trumbull was appointed to take her place.

On September 3, 1888, the "Minutes" record that the "same teacher" as the previous year had been appointed and name Miss Hannah Moore. Miss Moore was given an assistant in 1894; this position was filled by Miss M. G. Douglas until 1899 when she declined reappointment. In 1898 there had been a clamor for a male teacher but it was not until the next year, "simply to meet the demand of the people of this growing town," that A. P. R. Works was brought in from Glencarlyn. Miss Moore became "Prof." Works' assistant "with no change in salary." This arrangement held until Miss Moore's resignation when Mrs. Jennie L. Thornton succeeded her. When Mr. Works moved to Columbia, "Prof." H. W. Rinker took his place with Miss Annie Gresham, formerly teacher at Glencarlyn, as his assistant.

School had been underway barely a month when a clash appears to have occurred between the Principal and his assistant. The Board took Miss Gresham to task, pointing out that as Principal, Rinker was in charge of the school as its representative. Presumably Miss Gresham resigned, though this is not noted. "Prof." Rinker must have been a difficult individual with whom to get along, since the resignation of Miss Lilian Kendrick as assistant is recorded only two months later. Whatever the assistants, pupils, and patrons of the school thought of Mr. Rinker, he seems to have had the confidence of the Board since at the conclusion of one of the only two cases of parent complaint extensively reported in the "Minutes," the Board upheld his hand although he had as much as admitted that he had threatened to whip the complaining parent (Mr. C. B. Rees) along with his boys. Although Rinker subsequently asked the Board for a testimonial, hinting that he might be leaving, he was reappointed for the following year. As in the case of Columbia School, the 1905-06 budget called for three assistants at Ballston.

Kemper School

Teacher turnover at this school was exceptionally low. From 1881 through 1905, so far as the record goes, there were only four different teachers. The first one, Miss Ida Grey, was appointed on August 6, 1881. Isaiah Hutton was first appointed to Kemper on September 14, 1883, and served until the end of the school year in 1901. On June 17, 1901, Sumner G. Holmes was appointed. His salary was \$5 a month less than that of his colleagues, and the explanatory note is inserted that this was in view of his youth. He was the son of the long-term Commissioner of the Revenue, H. L. Holmes. While he taught at Kemper he was putting himself through medical school. Upon his graduation he served as a well-known physician in Arlington until his death in 1930. Mr. Holmes was succeeded by Miss Ella M. Boston in 1904, with his sister, Miss Marie Holmes, as her assistant.

Rosslyn School

The same gap in the record which makes it impossible to state with cer-

tainty just when Miss Hannah Moore began teaching in Arlington clouds the date of Miss Jennie Nelson's first appointment as teacher of Rosslyn School. On September 3, 1888, she was "reappointed" and probably served until Miss Ella Boston began her tenure in 1891. The latter remained until she moved to Kemper School in 1904 when she was succeeded by Mrs. Blanche L. Holmes. It was this Miss Boston for whom the present Hoffman-Boston School was named in part.

Glencarlynn School

The first teacher here, the one who had to provide all necessities for the school from her salary of \$25 a month, was Mrs. Eleanor Simms. The following year, Miss C. R. Gurley was the teacher. She was succeeded by Mrs. S. R. Maxwell who resigned part way through the school year. Her immediate successor is not noted but on September 2, 1898, A. P. R. Works became the teacher at Glencarlynn. When he moved to Ballston in 1899, his place was taken by Miss Bettie Nevitt who would appear to be the "Miss Nevitt" who had been displaced by Mr. Petty at Columbia School.

Miss Annie Gresham succeeded Miss Nevitt for the 1903-04 school year. When she moved on to Ballston and her disagreement with Prof. Rinker, she was succeeded by Miss Florence Mountjoy.

Salaries and Appointment Dates

In the early days of the school system, appointments appear to have been made at the last possible moment before school opened. It is a wonder that the School Board was able to secure teachers with any competence whatsoever under these circumstances, but probably this was general practice. Later the appointment date was moved forward to sometime in August. In 1901, for some reason, appointments were made as early as June 17. Teachers were expected to appear en masse before the School Board to sign their contracts.

Originally, according to State law, teacher salaries depended upon how many pupils were enrolled in their schools. The stipends actually paid by the Arlington District School Board were predetermined figures, however, and do not seem to have varied with the enrollment. In the beginning, all salaries were the same whether for men or women, for white or Negro teachers. Gradually distinctions began to appear. "Prof." Works was the first whose demand for increased salary is recorded. Principals of the larger schools (who happened to be men) began to get a higher salary than their female colleagues. Although salaries seem incredibly low, even in the light of the general level of earnings of the times, the trend was slightly upward over the thirty-five years, even for the lowest paid. The Board appears to have been not unsympathetic to requests for increases but was caught between the Scylla of need for capital improvements and the Charybdis of inadequate funds.

Of the first three teachers appointed, one (a man) received \$35 a month, and two (one a man and one a Negro woman) received \$40. The budget adopted for the 1905-06 school year proposed salaries of \$60 a month for the Principals of Columbia and Ballston Schools, each to have one assistant at \$40 a month and two others at \$30. The Glencarlyn Principal (with no assistant) was scheduled at \$40 a month. The Kemper Principal was to receive \$45 a month and her assistant, \$35. The Rosslyn Principal, who had no assistant, was to get \$40.

Finances

Only scant information on the finances of the public school system is contained in the "Minute Book," especially during the early years. The taxpayers of the District appear to have voted the special school levy permitted by law, but no statement of the resulting revenue is given. The total amount which the Arlington District School Board had on hand to begin with was noted on January 24, 1871, as \$50 turned over by the Sheriff (the tax collector under the former system of county government organization) to be used for "the purchase of books, fuel, etc."

There can be no question that the early years were difficult ones financially. On October 19, 1871, George R. Adams was appointed to call on the County Treasurer and ask his reasons for not paying checks drawn by the Board upon their presentation. A month later Adams reported that the reason given by the Treasurer was that "he did not always have the money on hand." Similar complaints were received in 1874. Lack of funds limited the school year initially to five months. In February 1872, it was discovered that "the Treasurer had made some mistake in regard to the school funds for this district and there was now funds on hand to reopen school." Only two of the three schools of the District could be reopened, however. This led to a petition from the "principal property holders and taxpayers" praying that both the white schools might be continued in the next school year, asserting that they were willing to be taxed sufficiently to support them.

The District system automatically established attendance boundaries; these seem to have been disregarded by some border-line children who went to the school nearest them. The Board believed the School Board of the District in which they lived and where they should have gone to school should contribute to the cost of their education. Apparently this boundary-crossing later was regularized by each Board giving permission to those applying, if they felt the circumstances warranted, to attend school in another District. The Boards paid a sum set by the County School Board (presumably the estimated per pupil cost) to the host Board for children to whom they had issued permits. In 1903 (the only time an amount is mentioned) this was \$4.50.

The members of the Board served without compensation. The custom

seems to have grown up, however, of paying them something for services in supervising school construction. In 1885, Douglas and Bailey each received \$10 on this account, and in 1894, Bailey was granted \$25 for overseeing construction at Kemper, and Douglas \$55 for the same service at Ballston. In 1904, however, Trustee Shelley objected when Douglas asked for \$2.00 a day for two day's supervision at Ballston, along with reimbursement for some brooms, dippers, and other supplies he had purchased for the school. Douglas then testily withdrew his request saying that if he were not to be paid for his services he would not accept reimbursement for his expenses. At this time, apparently the Clerk to the Board was receiving a small stipend allowed by law.

The ambitious school construction program begun in the 1890's plunged the Board into renewed financial difficulties. On March 5, 1894, there is a hint that the funds of Arlington District were again overdrawn and "the Chairman was instructed to see Mr. Clements [at that time Superintendent of Schools] and try to borrow \$1,000." The next week a nine months' loan for \$1,000 was negotiated with Burke and Herbert, bankers in Alexandria. This does not seem to have gone far enough, however, since in December of that year the Board paid for the plastering job on Ballston with warrants payable 12 months from date. A month later, the Board was again discussing ways and means for raising money to pay bills then due, and the County Treasurer (who was present at the meeting) was requested to see if the Board could borrow \$500. In March, the Superintendent was authorized to see if he could negotiate a 6% loan of from \$1,000 to \$1,500 for the purpose of completing Ballston. Indebtedness began to weigh heavily on the Board which ordered the school term curtailed to eight months. In April the Board was still trying to borrow money. The Superintendent was instructed to get an opinion from the Attorney General on whether the Board could borrow money to build and furnish school houses without the money passing through the hands of the Treasurer. This does not necessarily imply lack of confidence in that officer, but like all the other Constitutional officers at that time, his compensation was from fees based on a percentage of all funds passing through his hands. Loan proceeds thus were not fully available for the purposes intended.

In 1899, the Board requested the Judge of the County Court to order an election on the amount of the school levy, proposed at forty cents per \$100 of assessed value to raise an estimated \$3,000 needed for the next school year. A ceiling on the levy was still set by State law, and this was the maximum amount permitted. The School Board had to bear the cost of the election. The levy appears to have been voted on favorably, and was continued at that level for several years although in 1903 Trustee Douglas opposed the proposed budget and moved a levy of thirty-five cents per \$100. By this time the levy was being set by the County Board of Supervisors and

did not require popular approval. This was the one year when the "Minutes" reveal that the Treasurer reported a balance to the credit of this District—a very healthy \$8,500.

The first real budget proposal for the schools of Arlington District given in the "Minutes" was that for the 1904-05 school year. As adopted, it totaled \$5,000 including \$1,400 for a new school at Fort Myer Heights, and required a levy of fifty cents per \$100. The 1905-06 budget went up to \$9,338.50 with \$2,000 to be set aside for the new school. In six years estimated school expenditures had more than tripled!

* * * * *

The opportunity given by the preservation of this "Minute Book" to gain an insight into the early days of the public school system in Arlington County casts light on what must have been going on elsewhere in the State. The chances are, however, that even then Arlington was setting the pace, and that the degree of citizen support which the School Boards here received was exceptionally high. Additional research might well result in giving deeper meaning to the case study reported here.