

## HUME SCHOOL REUNION

By  
Doris C. Bangs

On Sunday, April 20th, 1980, the Arlington Historical Society entertained teachers and students of the former Hume School, at a reunion tea.

The school, built about 1891, was closed in 1956 and was used for storage until 1958. At that time, in accordance with the provisions of the will of the late Frank Hume, who had deeded the land on which the school stood to Arlington County, with the stipulation that if the building ceased to be used for educational purposes the property would revert to his heirs, the land once again became the property of the Hume family. It was only through the generosity of the Humes, the cooperation of the Arlington County Board, the fund-raising efforts of a few dedicated individuals, and an outpouring of community support that the Arlington Historical Society was able to obtain the school building. It was then renovated and decorated and reopened as a museum, filled with Virginia and Arlington artifacts.

Since its dedication as a museum in 1963, the building has been so utilized. It is opened regularly by volunteers to the visiting public, and by appointment to group tours of students and clubs. It also serves as the meeting place for the Society.

In 1977, through the interest of Mrs. Donald Orth, then President of the Society, efforts were mounted to have the school put on the national and state registers of historic landmarks. In June, 1979, the building became the recipient of these designations, and Herbert R. Collins, President, conceived the idea of inviting as many of the former teachers and students as could be located to an unveiling and a celebration of this historic moment.

The committee met for preliminary planning in January, 1980. In the beginning, the search for former students and teachers proceeded solely by word-of-mouth, and, throughout the search period, that proved to be the most productive method. Hume School had been in operation approximately sixty-five years, and had served, roughly, the triangle bounded by I-95 and Jefferson-Davis Highway and 20th Street S.; then along both sides of Arlington Ridge Road to 23rd Street; and the Oakcrest and Ft. Scott sections. During most of that time, it was a two-room, six-grade school; three grades being taught simultaneously in each room. Class size had varied over the years from one to twenty-five.

The homes to the east and southeast of Hume are in the Virginia Highlands section of Arlington. Virginia Highlands is made up of small, single family dwellings, the majority of which were constructed between 1920 and 1950. It has always been a cohesive community, and many of the homes are still

occupied by second and third generation family members. Some of the families had been large, and many of those who attended Hume in the twenties and thirties kept in touch with school friends, even after they moved from Virginia Highlands. Therefore, most of the names suggested to the committee were of children who had lived in that section.

As class photographs were sent in, the committee attempted to identify the children and teachers pictured, and then tried to discover addresses for them. Of course, many were deceased, or had moved from the area.

Eighty-nine questionnaires were sent out, and others were posted on bulletin boards in the libraries and churches nearby, and telephone calls too numerous to recall were made. Forty-five questionnaires were completed and returned, and those forty-five students received invitations to the tea. Forty students attended. Including families and the Historical Society members who were there, approximately 150 attended.

Meanwhile, a parallel search for former teachers had been going on. With the enthusiastic help of Mrs. Kit Massie Bryner, still living nearby, the names and addresses of five other teachers were obtained. Among the addresses was one for Miss Virginia Gardner, the teacher who taught at Hume for the longest period — from 1929 to 1950. Miss Gardner lives in Williamsburg, Virginia, and it was a special hope that she would be able to come, but, unfortunately her attendance was prevented by illness.

However, finding additional teachers proved more difficult than we had anticipated. Arlington County does not have any school records for the Jefferson Magisterial District. They have been lost, and this seriously hampered search efforts.

On the day of the event, the meeting room in the museum had been freshly painted, and exhibits of the Hume School photographs and artifacts had been prepared. Special name tags and corsages were provided to assist alumni and teachers in identifying each other. The Green Valley Garden Club donated flower arrangements, and refreshments were contributed by the always generous Society members. Parking was a difficult problem, so a shuttle school bus was provided to transport guests from the parking lot of the Gunston Community Center to the schoolyard. Approximately fifty members of the Wakefield High School Band, led by Mr. John Pickerel, were on hand to provide the music.

The program was planned for the outdoor schoolyard, and therefore, the committee had spent anxious hours pondering the vagaries of April weather. However, the 20th was lovely — an unseasonably warm, sunshiny day.

The program was as follows: The Wakefield Band rendered a patriotic selection, which was followed by the ringing of the school bell by Mr. Edward Evans, a former student. Following *The Star Spangled Banner*, Kurt Wise, a Junior member of the society, and a member of Troop #143, Boy Scouts of America, led the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Herbert Collins, President of the Arlington Historical Society, welcomed the guests and introduced the Hon. Joseph L. Fisher, U.S. Congressman from the 10th District of Virginia.

In his address, entitled "Past, Present, Future", Mr. Fisher paid tribute to Frank Hume, civic leader who donated the land for the school playground, and, in discussing the continuity of things, reminded those present that "we aren't the first ones to come along and have an idea or two, and do a thing or two. But there are those before us who made significant contributions and did some things (as when Frank Hume donated land) that have been important to the community." Congressman Fisher commented on the esthetically charming architecture of the school, on the delightful nature of local history, and on the fact that the happenings of local history, community after community, school after school are the building blocks of history on the larger scale. He closed his remarks by saying, "We are hoping that all citizens present, even those that never had the chance to go to this lovely school, are also feeling the small scale thrill and satisfaction of local history at its best, the sweep of the past, the change from one use to another, and now the prospect of many years into the future having here the Hume School historical museum where we, our children and grandchildren, even unto the most distant generations, if you like, can come and reflect on the past, and on the present, and on the future — no matter when they come."

As the band played *School Days*, the former students lined up, in the chronological order of their attendance.

Mr. Collins introduced Mrs. Ann Broder, Chairman of the Arlington School Board. Mrs. Broder, in turn, introduced the former teachers, and each of these teachers shared a brief reminiscence of her time at Hume. The teachers were: Mrs. Jean Vass (Miss Abendschein) '49-'50; Mrs. Marion Mears '47-'50; Mrs. Leon Bryner (Kit Massie) '44-'50; Mrs. Worth Dunlap (Elizabeth Warren) '39-'42; Miss Gardner and Mrs. Laura Mills '43-'44 both being absent, due to illness.

Following these introductions and comments, Ethel Kidwell Henretty, who attended the school from 1914 to 1919, unveiled the plaque which designates the Hume School building a National Historic Landmark site.

The students filed forward, as the bell was rung again; this time each to introduce him or herself, and to give attendance dates. Mr. Collins presented each alumnus present with a watercolor picture of the school, and with an article, written by Sara Collins, about the school. The article contained a brief biographical sketch of Frank Hume, told something of the history of the school, and then told of its transformation into a museum. It asked that the students help fill in some of the many gaps in the school's history by sharing with the Arlington Historical Society any memorabilia or recollections of the school.

The former students present on April 20th, 1980, and their dates of attendance were:

Hazel Shaw McCarten	'13-'16	Betty Simpson Barbee	'38
Vivian Allwine Ford	'14-'19	Margaret Noe Ewald	'35-'40
Harold Kidwell	'19-'25	Jean Carver Price	'36-'42
Bessie Hale Porter	'21-'27	Patricia Gray	'39-'42
Sarah Moore Burns	'23-'25	Richard Ford	'43-'49
Edward Evans	'22-'24	Eugene Payne	'46-'47
Ruth Logan Magruder	'28	Louis Ford	'47-'50
Doris Campbell Bangs	'25-'31	Stuart Steele	'48-'49
Leonora Callaham Davis	'29	Betsy Bryner Peyton	'47-'50
Gordon Welch	'25-'28	Betty Mann Gates	'44-'48
Lucille Welch Loveless	'25-'28	Eileen Ford	'49-'50
June deGrouchy Tingen	'26-'31	Sidney Lee	'53-'55
Leona Timmons Jackson	'21-'27	Don Allman	'53-'55
Louise deGrouchy Moore	'24-'25	Gary Peed	'54-'55
Helen deGrouchy Tremper	'28-'31	John Purvis	'54-'56
Mildred Sheehan Luzier	'29-'35	Patricia Lee Tippet	'55-'56
Pat Noe Cardarella	'29-'35	Frances Gill Webb	
Betty Sheehan Brunner	'38	Robert Lee	
Charles Gill	'38	Willard Shaw	
Catherine Simmons Luzier	'38		

At the conclusion of the program, refreshments and recollections were the order of the day.

And, finally, as the last guest departed, it seemed that the purpose of the reunion had been fulfilled: to enhance the "presents" of those attending by this brief contact with their "pasts", and to reassure their "futures" with the knowledge that a tangible portion of that past would be retained and preserved.