

Section Two: Short Biographies

Short Biographies



*Fig 1. the Shoemaker family outside of the
G. D. Hulfish Buggy Wagon Works Shop in Silcott Springs,
Courtesy, Leah Brower.*

The redesign for the 2020/2021 edition has added a section of short biographies of people who either lived in Loudoun or who influenced our county through business, education, religion, or other means. The biographies focus on Leesburg activist and former Planning Commissioner Doris Kidder, who helped create the Martin Luther King March in Leesburg, Evangelist Jennie Dean, and three former educators: Oscar L. Emerick, John Chris Walker and Edith Ophelia Harris. Emerick was the Superintendent of Loudoun County Public Schools, 1917-1957. The latter

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two pioneered secondary education for Blacks in Loudoun County.

This section will be with each new issue, so readers are encouraged to submit text and photos now for future publications. People need not be famous, just interesting. Color photos and short text can be added to our Facebook page. Photos for the Bulletin should be in sepia or Black and White.

Send to dfvcontact@gmail.com.

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Biography One: Doris Kidder



Fig. 3 Doris Kidder and Dudley, courtesy of KD Kidder

Artist and activist Doris Kidder (1927 – present) was born in Queens New York and studied art at the Pratt Institute. She ended up raising her two children in McLean, Virginia when her husband was stationed at the Pentagon. Her daughter KD always remembered her noticing when things were not right and then taking action to correct them, such as in 1962 when KD was in 5th grade in public school in McLean. KD's brother was in

private kindergarten for special learning challenges and Doris noticed a chauffeur that always had his son with him. She asked if he wanted his son to attend classes as well but was told the school did not allow Blacks to attend, so Doris rallied the other parents and the rules were changed.

As Chair of the League of Women Voters Planning Committee, Doris conducted the Erosion and Siltation study in Fairfax County, which led Fairfax to adopt the first in the nation Erosion and Siltation Ordinance. That led to her receiving the Soil and Water Conservation Service Citizen of the Year Award and the



Fig. 2 Mexican Lady by Doris Kidder, courtesy, KD Kidder.

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Washington Star Citizen of the year award in 1967.

Doris also Co-Chaired the Fairfax Zoning Procedures Committee with the Vice President of Reston Corporation. The Committee was appointed to develop the zoning procedures for the creation of Reston. Doris is the reason Georgetown Pike did not get straightened and turned into 4 lanes. Instead, she convinced the government to declare the pike an historic byway. Doris was also hired as a consultant by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to attend and report on a joint conference with the Department of Agriculture. She won the Federal Blue Pencil Award for best technical publication that year titled *Soil, Water and Suburbia*.

Doris was a member of the one percent of women at that time in a senior level position in the Federal Government. She organized and was first President of the HUD Women's Caucus, which brought needed attention discrimination of women in the workplace. She was appointed to the newly created position of Federal Women's Program Coordinator for HUD headquarters responsible for coordinating upward mobility, executive training, and tracking systems for the five thousand women at headquarters. She served in that position for two years until 1976. From 1976 to 1988 she moved to Florida and became Interior Design Editor for Palm Beach Life Magazine.

Doris moved to Loudoun in 1988 and worked at Photoworks in the Historic District of Leesburg specializing in Art retouching and Restoration.¹ During that period, she wondered why there was no celebration for Martin Luther King in the town. As a result, in 1992 she founded the Annual Martin Luther King March, which is still today one of the county's largest social and non-partisan political events. To accomplish the task, she approached and obtained sponsorship with the Bluemont Concert Series, the Loudoun County NAACP, the Douglass Alumni

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Association, and Northern Virginia Baha'i Faith. Later, Doris thought Native Americans should be included. Working with Rizwan Jaka of the Adams Center, she made that happen. She has been an active NAACP member ever since, serving in the various positions of Assistant Secretary, Secretary, Vice President, and even filling in one term as President. She is also a Lifetime Member.

Doris was a member of numerous Downtown Business Associations over the years, including being a charter member of the Downtown Committee chaired by Karen Jones, which resulted in a comprehensive report and recommendations to the Town. In the mid-1990s when Mayfair Commons on Plaza Street was called Loudoun House, it was plagued with crime, run down houses, and unsafe conditions. The Northeast Coalition of various social organizations and reps such as Chris Jones from the police department met once a week with residents to discuss their problems and needs. Doris represented the NAACP at these meetings and provided services such as tutoring for students and assistance with civil rights issues.

In 2008 Doris was appointed to Leesburg Planning Commission and spent several years as Chairman. She then resigned in 2019 due to health issues; but has remained active in all Town matters involving quality of life issues such as conservation and the environment, equal opportunity, planning and zoning, public Arts, and plain good government. In 2015 she was awarded the Public Art award by the Town of Leesburg for promoting and advocating for the Leesburg Arts and Cultural District. In October 2016 she was honored to receive the first Ann Robinson Social Justice Award.

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Biography 2: Jennie Serepta Dean



Fig. 4 Evangelist Jennie Dean, Edwin Washington. Collection.

Jennie Serepta Dean (April 15, 1848–May 3, 1913)² is an interesting Black Reconstruction era historical figure for many reasons. Despite being enslaved at birth, she refused to let that beginning to inhibit her. At age 30, she started a Sunday school in Prince William County and later started the Manassas Industrial School for Colored Youth, which for many years offered Blacks in Loudoun and Prince William counties and the environs one of the few opportunities for an industrial high school education. However, her legacy is far larger. She also set up small religious schools which developed into formal church congregations. In Loudoun, this was the Prosperity Baptist Church in Conklin, on Braddock Road, supported by Dean's family, who still attend the chapel. Today, the sign in front displays the chaise Dean used on evangelistic missions.

Dean was not a licensed pastor, however, according to ancient Christian custom, because she was a true, recognized evangelist, she was the first female Black priest to operate in Loudoun, of which we are aware. The term priest is appropriate because “evangelist” is a “gospeler,” in simple terms a preacher of the *evangel* or *gospel*, or the “good message”. (Ephesians 4:11-12). Paul wrote to Timothy, “Do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” (2 Timothy 4:5). While Dean was a lay minister, not ordained, given the time she lived in, the fact that a Black woman would stand tall in a world run mainly by men was remarkable. We must also recognize her efforts as

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political achievements because they aimed to elevate a race! It is for these reasons that Dean is honored here.

To build the Manassas Industrial School, Dean spent five years raising money and developing plans. She even worked as a cook in Massachusetts to raise funds. Frederick Douglass then spoke at the dedication in 1894. The school offered regular academic classes along with occupational courses such as carpentry, shoemaking, and sewing. Dean served as the school's matron for a time and sat on its board of directors. It became so successful that Dean, students, and faculty met with President Theodore Roosevelt at the White House in 1906. The institution became a regional high school in 1938 and operated until 1959. In 1995 the Manassas Museum System dedicated the Manassas Industrial School and Jennie Dean Memorial at the institution's former location.

The Editors enthusiastically recommend that readers visit Prosperity Baptist Church for its warm comradery, connection to earlier times but also to witness how they support people with financial challenges. The church also contains an archive with documents on Conklin village and the "Conklin Colored School," which educated local Black youths. The Edwin Washington Project (EWP) has its origins at Prosperity. The church commissioned a study of their village and school. That led to Loudoun County Public Schools commissioning a major effort to document the history of Black education in segregated Loudoun.

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Biography 3: Oscar L. Emerick

Oscar Emerick (Jan 25, 1889 – Feb 13, 1969) of Brass Roots Farm in Purcellville was Superintendent of Loudoun County Public Schools from 1917 to 1957, a time of great economic and civil rights turmoil.

Jim Crow laws and segregation in general were constant challenges.

He faced massive hiring hurdles brought on by the needs of the military in World Wars One and Two, as well budgetary restrictions throughout his career, especially

during the Great Depression. Still, by the time he retired, and for years after, Emerick was considered by many to be the most influential man in Loudoun County, gained in no small measure by his struggle to keep the schools open during segregation, and to support advances in teaching and administration techniques. But his career was also controversial.



Fig. 5 Emerick in 1956. Courtesy, the Edwin Washington Project

The laws and politics of the time supported racial segregation. Emerick also supported segregation, even making speeches in favor of the resistance movement to Brown vs Board of Education (Brown). However, according to John Tolbert,³ one of Loudoun's most revered Black elders, "We continuously brought the school needs of black students to the attention of Superintendent O.L. Emerick. He was for the most part on our side. He knew that the situation with Black students was bad..."⁴ Of course, Emerick was walking a tightrope. If he had supported integration, he would have been fired, as happened to many teachers in Virginia; but he also felt that the future of inequality, as he thought of it, was grim. We found evidence of this in an important memo to Loudoun's School Board a decade before Brown was decided by the U.S. Supreme Court. He e argued against "discrimination,"

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meaning in his mind, inequality between the races, but not segregation.

“We have housed most of our white school children in reasonably comfortable buildings with central heating plants, drinking fountains, indoor toilets, etc. Nearly all colored elementary school children are housed in comparatively poor buildings. During the next four years the school board will either make plans for improvements in the housing of colored children voluntarily or can expect to be required to do so by court action. Very clearly there has been discrimination here.”⁵

Emerick began his career as an educator after graduating from Eastern College in 1907; but quickly took up the call of the US Army to serve in the Philippine Islands as a surveyor from 1908 to 1911, a skill he used time and again buying and selling school properties in Loudoun, as well surveying the fire station in Ashburn. After leaving duty in Baguio, he returned to America and along the way toured many of the great cities of Europe. He then asked his girlfriend Carrie to join him in the colony, where life was excellent and less expensive than in the States. Carrie refused to leave her native Purcellville, so Emerick relented and became Principal of Round Hill High School. This is the building which now houses the Edwin Washington Archives. 1917 then saw Emerick promoted to Division Superintendent, where he served until retirement.

In summary, Emerick’s career was a mix of administrative skill and political acumen. He was also commended by some Black leaders but criticized by others for not going far enough on equality. He was also one of the most important threads in the fabric of education as Loudoun moved from a rural, low populated, segregated economy to

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a modern, wealthy, heavily populated, and sophisticated society.

Biography 4: John Chris Walker

John Chris Walker (August 31, 1871 – 4 June 1953) and was an early pioneer in Loudoun's Black education. He was also the brother of Winston Walker, a teacher at Waterford. By the time he retired in 1941, he had served for 55 years!⁶ He graduated from Virginia Normal and Industrial in Petersburg, later known as Virginia State University, and took his first examination to be an instructor in 1892, despite having prior experience.⁷ He should also be understood as a prominent political figure in the Black community of Leesburg.

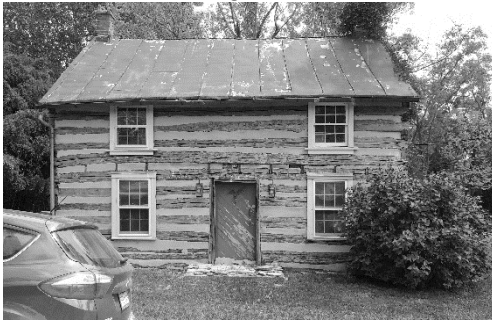
By Academic Year 1904/05 Walker was appointed Principal of the Training Center in Leesburg, which was the first year that the eighth grade were offered.⁸ The 8th grade was considered upper branch training, another term for high school; however upper branch level lectures had been offered Blacks in the one room school houses as well in a very limited way. At least as early as 1916, he was President of the Colored Teacher Institute, an association designed to enhance teaching techniques, but which also focused on access to medical care, sanitation, and other civil rights matters of interest to the Black community.⁹ He was also very likely involved in the series of three Colored Teacher Institutes in 1893,¹⁰ perhaps even as their leader, though we can't be certain, since minutes have not survived.

Walker was deeply religious and according to the records of the Mt. Zion United Methodist Church in Leesburg, the facility had a large church school which met every Sunday before services in the Fellowship Hall. Walker served as Superintendent. The other teachers were his wife Hattie, Miss Annie Harris (a teacher), Ms. Carrie Valentine and

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Ms. Mamie Waters (a teacher). Special programs were presented for Children's Day, Easter, and Christmas. The teacher of each class arranged the programs and every child had to recite their parts from memory. The performances were accompanied with special music provided by the children, and every Christmas each child received a special treat of oranges and candy.¹¹

Walker is perhaps best known for starting access to limited non-accredited high school level lectures in 1920 on the



*Fig. 6 Home of Beatrice Scipio, 2020
photo courtesy Larry Roeder*

second floor of the Training Center in Leesburg, which would lead to a formal High School curriculum in 1930, led by Edith Harris of Pennsylvania. Walker also started Black participation in County School Fairs in 1921. This

was a movement throughout the southern states that encouraged a new generation of farmers to use modern techniques to stem the threat of an impending famine. Walker's efforts focused on Black academic achievement and brought into the fold most of the Black schools.¹² His team was led by the cream of Black education at the time, including:

- **Beatrice Scipio**, Secretary, then serving in Bluemont in her 11th year as an instructor.¹³ Scipio was also an aunt for Rosa Carter, one of Loudoun's more revered instructors, as was Scipio. Scipio's home still stands as a beautiful log cabin on Foggy Bottom Road.
- **Bushrod W. Murray**, 1st Vice President, then serving at Mountain Gap, in his 32nd year.¹⁴

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- **Annie E.B. Harris**, Treasurer, then serving at Leesburg in her 29th year.
- **Mary E. Peniston**, Supervisor and Executive Secretary, then serving as Loudoun's first "Colored Supervisor," and Jeanes Teacher, with 16 years' experience. Her hiring was at the insistence of Oscar Emerick and with the support of the League of Women Voters.¹⁵ Her salary was supported in part by the Jeanes Fund.¹⁶

Biography 5: Edyth Ophelia Harris



Fig. 7 Edyth Harris and her dogs. Courtesy, Edwin Washington Project

Edyth (Edith) Harris (Oct 5 1905 – Unk) and started the first formal high school program in Loudoun in 1930. She was educated at the University of Pittsburgh and Virginia State College and her zeal to educate Blacks knew few peers. Harris's 1930 program began on the second floor of the Training Center in Leesburg in Union Street, building efforts by John C. Walker. Thanks to her valiant work, by the time the program was closed to make way for Douglass High School, her project was accredited, making the second floor program the

first accredited Black high school in Loudoun, and even included classes in chemistry and French.

Blacks had demanded access to high school (upper branch) level training since the public schools started in 1870 and received some such lectures in Quaker schools prior to that. In February, 1931, Harris complained to the Superintendent that she had been teaching a double load

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in order to accommodate high demand, apparently two grades of high school.¹⁷ A third class was also needed, as the load then was 39 pupils and more were expected. To handle this, she requested increased compensation, an additional room and teacher. Likely had public transport been provided, many more Black children would have attended; but the School Board resisted until 1938. A second high school teacher was added to the roster in 1934/35. This was Welton Henderson from Richmond, who had graduated from Virginia Union University. At the time, Edyth operated on a Special Elementary certificate; but Welton operated on a College Professional certificate for English, French, History, Social Studies, Math and Elementary studies.

In addition to pushing a proper curriculum in the High School program, Harris was politically active. In 1937 she joined with others demanding the hiring of a Jeanes Supervisor for Black Instructors. These supervisors were crucial to upgrading the techniques of all teachers, as well as improving social services, encouraging students to attend school rather than dropping out to be farm hands, etc. They were also advocating for the entire teaching community. The effort was not successful at first but did bear fruit in 1938 when Gertrude Alexander was hired. Ms. Alexander proved to be formidable, stimulating the creation of the County Wide League of Black PTA's¹⁸ and Douglass High School. She also worked closely with the Dean of Howard University's Law School to study transportation, safety, sanitation, and high school needs for Blacks across the county.

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Endnotes:

¹ The co-owner of PhotoWorks is Neil Steinberg, a member of the Town Council. He is also a significant volunteer with the Edwin Washington Project, digitizing and restoring old photos. In addition, he is conducting a photo essay on surviving white and Black schools from the segregated era.

² The biography of Jennie Dean was co-authored by Larry Roeder and Pastor Carlos Lawson of the Prosperity Baptist Church

³ Mr. Tolbert selected the sites for Banneker and Douglass Elementary Schools and established the business program at Douglass High School. He was also a liaison between the black and white communities on integration. For his many efforts on behalf of racial equality, the John W. Tolbert, Jr. Elementary School in Leesburg was named after him.

⁴ Within the Iron Gates: Loudoun Stories Remembered (1925-1975) by Frank Raflo, Loudoun Times Mirror, Leesburg, 1988. Pg. 348

⁵ EWP Archives: 1.1.1 Yr. 1944. Emerick on Resource Inequality.

⁶ Table 10 for 1907 in 1907 in EWP Archives: 3.3 Annual School Reports 1887 to 1918.

⁷ Files on the examination can be found in the Edwin Washington Archives. See EWP: 4.7 Yr. 1892. Teacher Exams

⁸ Table 1: Pupils in AY 1903/1904 EWP Archives: 3.3.1 Yr. 1887 to 1918 Annual school Reports.

⁹ See <http://edwinwashingtonproject.org/catalogue/4-teacher-files/4-2b-colored-teacher-institutes/>.

¹⁰ See report by Superintendent of Public-School Shumate in EWP Archives: 4.2B Yr. 1893 Colored Teacher Institute.

¹¹ Records of the United Methodist Church of Leesburg, as recounted by James Green, Jr. on 8/16/2019. See also Colored Sunday School Social in Loudoun Mirror, October 22, 1915.

¹² The County School Fair Movement, by Larry Roeder, Bulletin of Loudoun County History, 2019 Edition, pp. 86-126.

¹³ See <http://edwinwashingtonproject.org/schools/bluemont-colored-school-mt-gilead-district-loudoun/>. The land is still owned by Loudoun County Public Schools; but is in ruins. Reference Loudoun PIN 649-48-9304. Title To Bluemont Colored School Property. Address: The school property is

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about .25 acres and is known as Parcel 649-48-9304, just south of Snickersville Turnpike and SE of Bluemont Village Lane.

¹⁴ There were two Mountain Gap schools. The White school still stands on Rt 15 and is painted Red. It operates as a museum. The "colored" school was on Gap road, around the corner and burned in the 1980's.

¹⁵ Editorial Staff. "Graduates and Ex Students." In *Southern Workman*, Volume 49, by Editorial Staff, 482. Hampton: Hampton Institute, 1920. See also Editorial Staff. "Graduates and Ex Students." In *Southern Workman*, Volume 50, by Editorial Staff, 381. Hampton: Hampton Institute, 1921. Also EWP Archives: 5.11 1921 League of Women Voters Supports Supervisors.

¹⁶ The Jeanes Foundation was a philanthropy started by Anna T. Jeanes with help from Booker T. Washington in 1907. Along with other funds, it supported Black education in the rural south for the most part from 1908 to the 1960's and was very important to the evolution of Loudoun's Black schooling.

¹⁷ EWP Archives: 2.5.A Yr. Feb 7, 1931 Edith Harris wants help at Training Center.

¹⁸ County-Wide Associations of Black PTA's were an innovation of the Negro Organization Society in many counties.