

## Essential Understandings and Their Support Documents

1. Until the Emancipation Proclamation and the ratification of the 13th Amendment, Virginia was a slave state. Although the relationship between slaves and their owners cannot be described in simple terms, with job descriptions and treatment varying from place to place, slaves were by definition *not free*, and were considered property.

Loudoun County, **Virginia Birth Register**, 1853-1879, lists the birth of slaves owned by Elizabeth O. Carter. Mrs. Carter was the largest slaveholder in Loudoun County listed in the 1860 census.

A listing of the **34 largest slave-holding families** in Loudoun County, compiled by Wynne Saffer, from the 1860 U.S. Census, available at the Thomas Balch Library.

### Distribution of slave ownership

A chart listing the distribution of **slave ownership** in Loudoun County in 1860 and other information about the population of the county, from Charles Poland's *From Frontier to Suburbia*.

**Runaway slave advertisements** (4) from *The Genius of Liberty* [for a brief description of this newspaper, [click here](#)]:

**William Lee**, August 18, 1819

**Lewis Berry**, June 13, 1826

**Moses**, August 6, 1836

**Edmund Baylie**, August 13, 1842

“**John W. Jones**,” from *The Essence of A People I*.

From a publication of the Black History Committee of the Friends of the Balch Library, this is the story of a man who escaped from slavery in 1844, settled in New York, and through his work on the Underground Railroad, assisted 800 slaves in gaining their freedom. Jones also retained an unusual connection to Loudoun County.

**The Will of Mary Marks**, widow of Abel Marks, September 1827: Margaret Humphrey (daughter of Mary and Abel) was given “the Negro, Presley.”

**The Will of Margaret Humphrey**, freeing Presley Roberts, and willing another slave, Lewis, to her sister.

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2. Although the institution of slavery was firmly in place in Loudoun, some families in the county had no slaves at all; further, some groups, such as the Society of Friends (Quakers) actively opposed it.

From Abstracts of Loudoun County, Virginia, **Register of Free Negroes**, an

excerpt.

### **Record of Free Negroes** from the office of Loudoun County's Clerk of the Circuit Court

A **Certificate of Freedom for Joseph Trammell**. A free man needed to carry this certificate at all times, as proof of his status. Joseph Trammell was the great-great-grandfather of local historian Elaine E. Thompson, who allowed us to use a copy of this document at this site.

*Ye Meetg Hous Smal, a Short Account of Friends in Loudoun County, Virginia 1732-1980*, by Werner and Asa Moore Janney, an excerpt. (The Society of Friends, sometimes known as Quakers, had settled in Waterford in the 1830's, and soon afterward, in Lincoln, Loudoun County.)

### **The Loudoun County Auxiliary of the American Colonization Society**

In 1817, the American Colonization Society (ACS) was formed by a group of prominent Virginians. A **Loudoun Auxiliary** of the ACS was organized that same year. The Society sought to free slaves and then transport them out of the country to form their own society. By 1830 freed slaves had established Liberia on the west coast of Africa. Through the extended family of Dr. James Heaton, a founding member of the Loudoun group, two slaves, Jesse and Mars Lucas, were emancipated. The colonization society in Loudoun eventually made it possible for the **Lucas family to emigrate to Liberia in January 1830**. To read more about the Loudoun Auxiliary of the ACS and the Lucas family letters, **click here**.

### **Lucas-Heaton Letters**

Between 1830 and 1836, the Lucas brothers corresponded with their Loudoun County family, both "white and colored." Two letters, courtesy of the Loudoun Museum, can be read here. One is from **Mars Lucas**, and the other is to both brothers from the Lucas' former owner, **Albert Heaton**. An original letter from the Lucas-Heaton collection can be seen in a current exhibit at the **Loudoun Museum**.

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**3.** In ante-bellum Virginia, some blacks were free. However, free blacks were subject to Black Laws enacted by the Virginia Legislature. While some of these laws protected free blacks, most limited their freedom. Despite these limiting conditions, some free blacks worked to resist the enslavement of their brethren.

### **An Overview of Black Laws** by Joan Peters.

Karen Hughes White of the Afro-American Historical Association kindly gave us permission to use this excellent overview of Black Laws, written by Joan Peters as an introduction to June Guild's *Black Laws of Virginia*, and published through the association (AAHA). You will find this an invaluable resource in understanding the legal relationship between blacks and whites in Virginia before and during the

Civil War.

***Black Laws of Virginia***, Excerpts

These excerpts provide many specific examples of black laws; as the teacher you can help students understand how these laws reflected the attitudes of whites toward blacks (both slave and free) during the ante-bellum, emancipation, and reconstruction eras.

“**Harriet Cook**,” by Allison Myer from *The Essence of A People II*.

From a publication of the Black History Committee of the Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, this is the story of one woman’s petition to remain in Loudoun County despite a black law of 1809, which required free Negroes to leave the state within 12 months of their emancipation.

“**William Obediah Robey**” by Betty L. Morefield from *The Essence of A People II*.

From a publication of the Black History Committee of the Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, this is the story of a free black man “who succeeded against all odds both before the [Civil] war, and afterwards, when he worked for the community as a schoolteacher and minister.

“**Leonard Andrew Grimes**” by Deborah A. Lee from *The Essence of A People II*.

From a publication of the Black History Committee of the Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, this describes a man who was born free in Loudoun County. He assisted slaves in escaping to the North, and, after moving to Boston, became part of a network providing assistance to fugitive slaves.

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**4. The Emancipation Proclamation** (January 1, 1863) freed some slaves, but the Thirteenth Amendment freed all slaves, while the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments insured their citizenship. The documents from the time immediately after the Civil War reflect efforts by various groups to solve post-war problems and adapt to the new political, social, and economic order. Nevertheless, the adjustments of both blacks and whites to this reconstruction environment proved challenging.

A photograph of **Amelia (Millie) Weaver Roberts**, a slave freed at emancipation, wife of Presley Roberts. A **second view** features Amelia with her seven children, and a photograph of her husband.

A photograph of **Dr. Joseph Roberts**, the son of Amelia and Presley Roberts, and a prominent physician in Philadelphia in the early 1900s.

A photograph of **Basil Turner**, a slave at Oatlands Plantation before the war, Basil Turner was set free as a result of the Emancipation Proclamation . After emancipation, Mr. Turner remained at Oatlands as a hired worker until his death.

*Black Laws of Virginia*, Civil War excerpts.

Certain black laws defined Virginia's status as a Confederate State; others relate to laws that renounced that status, and ensured Virginia's return to the Union.

**June 14, 1865**, An article in *The Mirror* from *The New York Herald* [for a brief description of *The Mirror*, [click here](#)]:

Military headquarters in Lynchburg, Virginia **clarified the relationship** between former slaves and their owners with regard to property. *See article.*

**June 29, 1865**, An article in *The Mirror* from *The New York Herald*:

A reporter described **conditions in Virginia**, especially counties surrounding Loudoun, in the wake of the war. He commented on "the people" including "Negroes." *See article.*

**August 2, 1865**, An article in *The Mirror* from *The National Intelligencer*:

A reporter described the **living conditions of freed slaves** in nearby Washington, D.C. *See article.*

**September 7, 1865**, from *The Mirror*:

An article described the death of a **beloved servant**. *See article.*

**September 14, 1865**, from *The Mirror*:

The Postmaster General gave a **contract to a "colored man"** to transport local mail. *See article.*

**September 14, 1865**, from *The Mirror*:

A meeting at the courthouse in Leesburg made it public: **slavery was dead**; the Union was forever. *See article.*

**October 26, 1865**, from *The Mirror*:

The newspaper editor called for an **end to resentment** regarding the war. *See article.*

**April 4, 1865**, from *The Mirror*:

The newspaper printed the testimony of **Robert E. Lee** before the Committee on Reconstruction, including his answers to inquiries about the future of African Americans in the South. *See article.*

**February 7, 1866**, Two items from *The Mirror*:

An editorial praised the work of the "**Colored Men's Aid Society**," while another small item reported the "thrashing of a teacher in a Negro school" for perceived "**sedition speech**." *See article.*

**February 14, 1866**, from *The Mirror*:

*The Mirror* reported **the visit of African American representatives** from several states, headed by Frederick Douglass, to the White House. *See article.*

**May 23, 1866**, from *The Mirror*:

The Presidential Commissioner's report on the work of the **Freedmen's Bureau** in the state of Virginia. *See article.*

**June 22, 1866**, An article in *The Washingtonian* from the *Alexandria Gazette* [for a description of *The Washingtonian*, [click here](#)]:

In Loudoun County, William E. Robey, an African American minister, was granted the **right to solemnize marriages** under the laws of Virginia. *See article.*

**March 26, 1867**, A *Freedmen's Bureau Report*:

This report covered the **establishment of schools** for African American children in the area. *See article.* To read about a school opened by the Friends (Quakers) in Waterford, VA in 1866 under the auspices of the Freedmen's Bureau, [click here](#)

**September 31, 1866 - February 27, 1867**, from the *Freedmen's Bureau Reports*:

In compliance with an order by the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands in Richmond, a local Freedmen's Bureau officer reported to a local district superintendent on the **status of freedmen in the area.** *See article.*

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5. Although amendments to the U.S. Constitution promised blacks the same rights as other citizens, blacks were often denied the right to vote, restricted in their access to public places, and required by law to attend segregated schools that were inferior to those offered to whites. Despite these limiting conditions, black communities developed strong institutions of support, including the church.

*Courage, My Soul. An Introduction.*

Historian **Elaine E. Thompson** was guest curator of the Loudoun Museum's February-April, 2000 exhibit: *Courage, My Soul: Historic African American Churches and Mutual Aid Societies*. Her introduction to the exhibit's catalog describes the crucial support provided by black churches and mutual aid societies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This informative piece is included at the site with permission from Ms. Thompson and the Loudoun Museum. (*See introduction*)

**Historic African American Churches and Mutual Aid Societies**

A **chart prepared by Elaine E. Thompson** shows the development of these important African American institutions in Loudoun County. (*See chart*)

**Photographs of Shiloh Baptist Church**

These photographs feature the Shiloh Baptist Church, which was one of thirty African American churches that were organized in Loudoun County between 1864 and 1900. The photographs are compliments of Elaine Thompson who curated the exhibit “*Courage, My Soul: Historic African American Churches and Mutual Aid Societies*.”

**July 31, 1872**, from *The Mirror*:

The District of Columbia passed a “**social rights bill**” having to do with the integration of public facilities. *See article.*

**1873**, Mutual Aid Societies

In the 1860s and 1870s various **mutual aid organizations** were formed by blacks, including one with a national affiliation. *See article.*

**September 17, 1873**, from *The Mirror*:

An article reported Northern men who were “**poisoning the mind** of the Negro against his former master.” *See article.*

**August 13, 1874**, from *The Mirror*:

The newspaper reported an effort on the part of the Washington, D.C. schoolboard to **integrate schools**. *See article.*

**July 8, 1875**, from *The Mirror*:

The newspaper reported **Independence Day celebrations** involving both blacks and whites. *See article.*

**April 11, 1876**, from *The Mirror*:

A **white man was convicted** and punished for stealing from a black man. *See article.*

**September 7, 1876**, from *The Mirror*:

The *Mirror* printed a letter from **Frederick Douglass**, black leader and Marshal of the District of Columbia, in which he criticized “the white Republicans” who had “misled” the “colored people.” *See article.*

**April 10, 1879**, from *The Mirror*:

A **mixed race couple** was sentenced to five years in prison. *See article.*

**September 11, 1879**, from *The Mirror*:

In a lengthy article, The *Mirror* covered **Frederick Douglass’ visit to Purcellville**, Virginia where he spoke to a crowd of 2000 people. *See article.*

**March 25, 1880**, from *The Mirror*:

A brief article announced a **Supreme Court decision** that allowed “colored men”

to serve as jurors. *See article.*

**May 18, 1883**, from *The Loudoun Telephone* [for a brief description of this newspaper, [click here.](#)]:

A group of blacks in Loudoun petitioned the county court for **the right to sit on juries.** *See article.*

**November 2, 1883**, from *The Loudoun Telephone*:

A newspaper article described a **race riot in Danville** and commented on who was to blame. *See article.*

**July 31-August 7, 1902**, from *The Loudoun Mirror*:

Two newspaper articles described the **arrest and subsequent lynching of Charles Craven**, a black man. *See article.*

**July/August 1902**, from the Diary of Ida Lee Rust:

Ida Lee Rust, whose father Edmund Lee was a first cousin to Robert E. Lee, lived in the Rockland estate north of Leesburg. In these diary entries, she expressed her opinions regarding the injustice of Charles Craven's lynching. *See article.*

**September 7, 1922**, from *The Loudoun Times*:

This article described “the **forty-sixth annual convention** of the colored Baptists Association of Northern Virginia” and commented on the “good behavior of the largest crowd of colored people” ever assembled in the area. *See article.*

“**Howard Willard Clark, Sr.**,” from *The Essence of A People*:

From a Black History Committee Friends of the Thomas Balch Library publication, this is the story of an important community leader. Among his many accomplishments, Mr. Clark helped establish the Loudoun County Emancipation Association, “whose aims were to celebrate the Day of Freedom, to cultivate good fellowship, and to work for the betterment of the Negro race.” The Reading Room at the Thomas Balch Library honors Mr. Clark.

**The Loudoun County Emancipation Association, Inc.:**

"A History of the **Loudoun County Emancipation Association, Inc.**", by Elaine E. Thompson from "*Let Our Rejoicing Rise, Emancipation Day in Loudoun County, The Loudoun County Emancipation Association, 1890-1970*", a publication of the Loudoun Museum.

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<p><b>6.</b> By the mid-1930s, certain activist African American organizations were stepping up efforts to ensure that the rights described in the U.S. Constitution were realized.</p>
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### **About the documents in this section of *Glimpse* :**

A series of letters exchanged in 1940 between black community leaders of the County-Wide League, NAACP attorney Charles Houston, and the superintendent of Loudoun County Schools provide the primary support for the Essential Understanding above. This correspondence, along with newspaper articles, and other related documents from the period, focus on the struggle of black citizens in the county to see a fully accredited black high school built in Loudoun, and to secure for their children other educational services enjoyed by white students, and guaranteed by the 14th Amendment.

### **Some background:**

In the introduction to *The Essence of a People: Portraits of African Americans Who Made a Difference in Loudoun County, Virginia*, historian Elaine Thompson provides an excellent summary of how in 1940 a black community association, the County-Wide League, took action to insure that African American children in Loudoun County would have full access to an education. In an excerpt from the introduction, Thompson notes:

. . . Increasingly, schools established by the Freedmen's Bureau become inadequate, and the school board found endless excuses not to improve them. Groups such as the Odd Fellows in Hamilton and the Willing Workers Club in Purcellville offered the use of their facilities. This tradition of the African American community providing actual school buildings and transporting students at its own expense lasted until the 1940s.

When Loudoun County finally hired an African American supervisor of elementary schools in 1938, she immediately recognized the injustice and unlawfulness of the situation. She suggested that all parent-teacher associations come together and work under the umbrella of the County-Wide League. This organization became the educational voice for African Americans in Loudoun County. Their most pressing concerns were to get the county to provide school bus transportation and to build an accredited high school. These requests were brought before the Loudoun County School Board, which routinely listened to the complaint of the community and made idle promises or gave excuses, but rarely took any action.

The idea of African Americans providing land for schools had been discussed for several years. In 1939, the County-Wide League, on behalf of Loudoun's African American citizens, purchased eight acres of land in Leesburg for the sole purpose of having the county build a high school. League members engaged Charles H. Houston, Dean of the Howard University School of Law and legal counsel for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, to help them. Houston was opposed to the "separate but equal" doctrine, but he decided that was the best route for achieving immediate relief. He advised the community to organize a branch of the NAACP and urged all citizens to pay the poll tax and vote.

A flurry of activity ensued. Inquiries were made, records examined, petitions presented, and the local NAACP received its charter. The year was 1940. . . . [To read more of Thompson's introduction, click [here](#).]

The "flurry of activity" that Thompson describes in her introduction can be seen in the

series of letters, and other related documents, at this site. To gain a better context for reading these letters and documents, consider clicking on the following resources:

**“Douglass High School: Legacy of a Changing Era”:**

In the February 2004 issue of *Loudoun Magazine*, Elaine E. Thompson’s article about the history of Douglass High School appears. This piece provides a rich backdrop against which to read the letter exchange at this site.

**Charles Hamilton Houston and Loudoun County:**

In 1940, Charles Hamilton Houston was a key figure in the activism that led to the building of the first black high school in the county. In a presentation at the Eastern Loudoun Regional Library in February 2004, Elaine Thompson painted a vivid portrait of this man’s contributions to civil rights initiatives in Loudoun. Her remarks provide further background into the struggle for a black high school, and the subsequent fight for full integration after the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

**Douglass High School: Statement of Significance: National Register of Historic Places:**

Douglass High School has been selected for the National Register of Historic Places. The justification for that designation provides the history of the school, including the work done by the County-Wide League, with the assistance of Charles Houston.

**Key Movers:**

As you read this series of letters and related documents you will be introduced to key black leaders who pressed the county officials to provide bus transportation to black students in Loudoun, build a fully accredited high school, and, eventually, fully integrate the school system. In *Essence of a People: Portraits of African Americans Who Made a Difference in Loudoun County, Virginia* many of these leaders are featured. With permission from the Friends of the Thomas Balch Library Black History Committee, these chapters appear at this site.

**John Wesley Wanzer**

In 1939, as president of the County-Wide League, Mr. Wanzer, along with other trustees, negotiated the purchase of land that would eventually be given to the county as a site for the first black high school. Although he feared the economic fall-out for blacks who dared to challenge the white community, and desired to move slowly because of that concern, Mr. Wanzer accomplished much as a key community leader in both the County-Wide League and the local NAACP.

**Elizabeth Johnson Quisenbury**

A leader in the County-Wide League, Mrs. Quisenbury pressed the school board

for an accredited high school in Loudoun. She worked with Charles Houston to document, through the receipts and disbursement of the county, the disparity that existed between black and white schools. She became a charter member of the NAACP in Loudoun.

### **Marie Moton Medley-Howard**

Believing that education was the key to full civil rights for all Americans, Mrs. Medley-Howard was a tireless leader in Loudoun. She pressured the school board to improve conditions at the Loudoun County Training School for blacks, the institution that preceded the building of Douglass High School, and eventually joined the fight with Charles Houston for a fully accredited high school. When Houston suggested that Loudoun black leaders form a chapter of the NAACP, she became its first president.

### **Howard Willard Clark, Sr.**

A leader in the development of the Emancipation Association, Mr. Clark also supported every effort for the educational advancement of black citizens in the Loudoun community, including donating money to purchase the land upon which Douglass High School is built.

### **William Nathaniel Hall**

A builder, and highly successful businessman in Loudoun County, when the County-Wide League wanted to buy land to build a black high school, Hall helped pay for it.

### **William McKinley Jackson**

Mr. Jackson was involved in early efforts to get equal education for black children in Loudoun. Having sent his daughter to a boarding school in Manassas because she did not have suitable educational opportunities in Loudoun, Mr. Jackson in 1940, on the advise of Charles Houston, petitioned the school board for reimbursement of the expenses he incurred. By 1962, Mr. Jackson was the president of the Loudoun chapter of the NAACP, and in that position brought suit against the Loudoun County School Board to fully integrate its schools. Of him it was said, "He was a force to be reckoned with in his tireless efforts to improve race relations."

## **Letters and Related Documents**

Note: the series of letters featured here are courtesy of the Springarn-Research Library of Howard University, Washington, D.C.

### **A Deed: November 4, 1939 to secure land to build a school:**

Members of the County-Wide League purchased land that would be held in trust for "the use and benefit of Negro public School children of Loudoun County. . ."  
To read about the private purchase of land by black citizens for African American

schools, [click here](#).

**A letter from A. G. Richardson, Virginia Assistant Supervisor for Negro Education, to O.L. Emerick, Loudoun County School Superintendent, December 15, 1939:**

Having inspected the current “Colored High School in Leesburg,” Mr. Richardson makes it clear that he thinks it is time for a new high school to be built and “the present school abandoned at the very earliest possible time.” He outlines what he considers a desirable academic program for the new high school.

**A letter from Gertrude Alexander, African American supervisor of black elementary schools, to Charles Hamilton Houston, February 27, 1940:**

Miss Alexander thanks Mr. Houston for a recent visit he had made to speak with black citizens [he had addressed the County-Wide League on February 18 during their commemoration of “Negro History Week”]; she says that “things are moving slowly” with regard to needed changes in black schools. Anticipating an upcoming board of education meeting, she says, “I am positive that if the Negro citizens are not considered they will use other methods of getting what they want.”

**A letter from Elizabeth R. Warner, a concerned citizen, to Charles Houston, March 8, 1940:**

Mrs. Warner complains that there is no bus transportation for her high school-age children.

**A letter from Eva Sanford, a member of the County-Wide League, to Charles Houston, March 10, 1940:**

Anticipating a session with the school board on March 12, Mrs. Sanford, representing the County-Wide League, requests a meeting with Mr. Houston, who “knows school laws.”

**A letter from Charles Houston to Carl Murphy of the *Afro-American*, March 10, 1940:**

Having requested a meeting with the Loudoun County School Board and the superintendent on March 12, Mr. Houston suggests that the newspaper editor assign someone to cover the meeting.

**A related article in the *Loudoun Times-Mirror*, March 14, 1940:**

Under the title, “Negroes Press School Claims to Educators,” this article describes a meeting of a “delegation of 30 or more local colored people headed by Charles H. Houston, colored, Washington attorney—the group stating its mission to obtain equal education opportunities for Negro children in public schools in Loudoun.”

**A related article in the *Loudoun Times-Mirror*, March 14, 1940:**

Titled: “School Board Adopts Budget of \$207,135,” this article includes a request

to the state Literary Fund for a loan of \$40,000 to build “a colored high school.”

**A letter from Charles H. Houston to John Wanzer, president of the County-Wide League, March 13, 1940:**

Mr. Houston suggests that the County-Wide League set up a series of Sunday meetings at churches “to link the struggle for education with the civic duty of paying poll taxes and voting.” He tells Wanzer, “I expect you to make the county hum between now and the meeting of the Board of Supervisors.”

**A letter from Charles Houston to William C. Harris and John Wanzer, March 15, 1940:**

Mr. Houston writes the presidents of both the Parent-Teacher Associations and the County-Wide League, outlining the pro-active steps their organizations need to prepare themselves for an important hearing before the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors, scheduled for March 18.

**A letter from Charles Houston to Mr. O.L. Emerick, March 16, 1940:**

One of three enclosures to Mr. Harris and Mr. Wanzer in the letter above, this was to be mailed by Harris and Wanzer to arrive on a “timely date.” It outlines in great detail the issues bearing on the education of black children in Loudoun: a concern that the school board’s request for money from the State Literary Fund will be an empty action because the fund itself is currently depleted; the dangers of black children continuing in a building which is a “death trap;” the lack of equipment in the current school; the absence of bus transportation for black children; the absence of courses such as home economics in the current black “training school,” etc. Mr. Houston further reminds the superintendent that his clients are not “floaters” but rather local citizens who have been “paying taxes in Loudoun County all of their adult lives.”

**A memo from Charles Houston to the County-Wide League and PTAs of Loudoun County, March 16, 1940:**

An enclosure in Mr. Houston’s letter to Misters Harris and Wanzer, this memorandum to the County-Wide League and PTAs warns black citizens that the recommendation for a loan from the State Literary Fund may be an “empty gesture,” since the literary fund is said to be already “exhausted.” He further states that immediate attention must be paid to the needs of the black community because the current school is a “fire trap.” He makes the point that some future promise for building a new school does not address the current dangers associated with the Training School. Not wanting citizens to be lulled into complacency by the promises of a literary fund loan, he urges them to “register and vote, and stick together for the next steps.”

**A letter from John Wanzer to Elizabeth Quisenbury, a member of the County-Wide League, March 19, 1940:**

Mr. Wanzer tells Mrs. Quisenbury that he has no reason to doubt that the board

will proceed to make the improvements the County-Wide League has asked of them. Regarding Mr. Houston's proposed meeting for that Saturday to review the minutes of the board, Mr. Wanzer states, "I hope you or nobody will go," and later says, "if there is any one you can persuade on them not going please do so." Mr. Wanzer expresses concern that Mr. Houston is presenting himself as "counselor for the County-Wide League and Parent-Teachers League," and adds, "we have not employed him as our counselor."

*Note: In a follow up letter to Mr. Houston, Mr. Wanzer further explains his concerns about the Saturday meeting. See below.*

**A letter from John Wanzer, president of the County-Wide League, to Charles Houston: March 19, 1940:**

Mr. Wanzer tells Mr. Houston that he is somewhat concerned about the relationship between the County-Wide League and Mr. Houston, and his concern seems related to increased pressure on the school board generated by this activist attorney. Wanzer lets Mr. Houston know that the superintendent, Mr. Emerick, has assured him that he will press for the \$40,000 loan from the literary fund to build the new school, and that on an individual basis, he has agreed to reimburse a local citizen for transportation expenses. On the matter of those from the County-Wide League whom Houston wants to attend a Saturday meeting to examine the minutes of the board, he says explicitly: "Some of the people are saying they think we better go slow on this matter as some of these get their bread and butter from them. . ." Further, Mr. Wanzer states that he needs to put the matter of bringing a suit against the school board before the County-Wide League for a vote, and worries about how Mr. Houston will be paid for his services.

**A letter from Charles Houston, a memorandum to Amanda Coe, Mr. and Mrs. James Monroe Allen, and John Wanzer, March 21, 1940:**

Mr. Houston notes that he has received the letters expressing the opinion that he should not press the district superintendent and the school board further. He says that he disagrees thoroughly with this idea. He notes that the district superintendent and the county board of education had "done more about Negro education within the last month than they have in all the years gone by." He adds: "This did not come through love alone." He answers Mr. Wanzer's concerns that the County-Wide League cannot pay him for his services, stating, "I am fighting for myself and I expect neither compensation nor gratitude." He says that certain citizens had agreed to come with him that Saturday to inspect the minutes of the board as "they are entitled to do under Virginia law." He reassures those concerned, that he will *not* say to the representatives of the board that he is acting for the County-Wide League.

**A letter from Charles Houston to O.L. Emerick, March 21, 1940:**

Mr. Houston informs Mr. Emerick that Mrs. Daisy Allen, Mr. John W. Wanzer, and Mrs. Amanda Coe have asked that he [Houston] take no further action until the board of education has had a chance to work out "a program for improving

Negro education in Loudoun County.” While he says he appreciates that position, and that he doesn’t want to start a fight, he notes that there had not been significant gains in education for black children in Loudoun, and warns, “This is not the point at which I can stand still.” He says that he will be in Leesburg on Saturday, March 23 representing “certain named clients in the Loudoun County Parent-Teachers Association,” and will “inspect the minutes of the Board of Education and the receipts and disbursement records of the Loudoun County Schools from 1930 to date.” He let it be known that Virginia law gives this privilege to every citizen of the county.

**A letter from Marie Medley to Charles Houston, March 21, 1940:**

Ms. Medley tells Mr. Houston that she will be pleased to be in his group at the Saturday [March 23rd] meeting. She gives him the “tip off” that this meeting has not been authorized by the Parent-Teachers Association or the County-Wide League.

**A related article from the *Loudoun-Times Mirror*, March 21, 1940:**

Although the headline of this article “Hike in Local Tax Levey” doesn’t reveal it, in fact, the text confirms that “the largest of the loans—that for a colored high school at Leesburg gained support of the board but encountered the same obstacles as did the proposed addition for the white school. The School Board’s request for approval of a \$40,000 loan was cut to \$30,000.”

**A letter from Charles Houston to John Wanzer: March 25, 1940:**

Having seen a copy of the letter John Wanzer had written to Ms. Quisenbury, Mr. Houston expresses his disapproval of Mr. Wanzer’s position in strong terms. Since Mr. Wanzer believes that the School Board will act in good faith regarding improvements in education for black citizens, he urges Mr. Wanzer to speak to the County-Wide League and explain to them exactly what improvements Mr. Emerick and the School Board have promised. Mr. Houston then outlines in detail the conversation he had with the superintendent on the previous Saturday, and his [Houston’s] perception that, based on that conversation, the School Board did not intend to do much of anything. In that conversation, according to Houston, he had let Mr. Emerick know that although he didn’t want to go to court, if he needed to he would file suit. Stating that he would go back to back to the board on April 19<sup>th</sup> to ask for the needed improvements for the upcoming school year, [those needed before the literary fund provided a loan for a new high school], he further emphasized that he would do this even if he could find only a single individual who wanted him to speak out in this matter.

Stating that he intended to get this letter out to others who want his representation — intimating that perhaps Mr. Wanzer won’t — he then added a “P.S.” to “Citizens,” urging them to pay their poll taxes. Noting that poll taxes go to support public schools, he quotes the statistic that “of 1628 adults Negroes in Loudoun County on the tax rolls. . . only 221 pay their poll taxes.”

**From Charles Houston, a memorandum to Negro Citizens: April 6, 1940:**

Mr. Houston writes a memorandum to be distributed through the churches and local organizations urging that black citizens in the county pay their poll taxes on April 8 or 9. Reminding them that at a Board of Education meeting scheduled for April 9 he will make requests for “improvements of Negro education beginning in September,” he adds that the Board will be much more inclined to make the improvements requested if we can show that Negroes are paying their taxes.”

**A related article in the *Loudoun Times-Mirror*, April 18, 1940:**

Howard E. Cole, the county Treasurer, places a reminder in the newspaper to “all unqualified voters” regarding the May 4th deadline for paying poll taxes.

**A related article in the *Loudoun Times-Mirror*, April 11, 1940:**

This article covers Mr. Houston’s appearance before the school board. Here he is making a plea for improvements to the existing black high school during the 1940-41 term.” The effectiveness of his presentation can be seen in the sub-headline, “School Board Votes Approval of Additional Funds to Equip Colored High School.”

**A related article from the *Afro-American*, April 20, 1940:**

This editorial seems directed at leaders in Loudoun County who feared the economic fall-out from filing suit against the school board for the equalization of teachers’ salaries and school equipment, should that be necessary. The editor says that “in choosing leaders they must pick from their own numbers men and women who are independent and responsible to no one but them.”

**An article in the *Loudoun Times-Mirror*, April 25, 1940:**

Titled, “Supervisors Approve \$1.05 County Levy,” this piece reveals that the supervisors turned down the School Board’s request for \$4500 to “improve high school facilities for the colored race” in Loudoun County.

**A letter from John Wanzer, president of the County-Wide League to the school board, December 13, 1940:**

Representing the County-Wide League, Mr. Wanzer informs Mr. Emerick that his organization will deliver a deed for the land set aside to build the new black high school just as soon as it receives a written statement from the board that “you will cause the Negro High School building to be erected on the said lot by September 1, 1941 at a minimum cost of Thirty Thousand Dollars (\$30,000).

**A deed from the County-Wide League Trustees to the County School Board, December 16, 1940:**

This deed transfers the County-Wide League’s property from Trustees John Wanzer, Howard Clark, Fred Lewis, Robert Ambers, John Washington, Eva Sanford, and Elizabeth Quisenberry to the County School Board of Loudoun

County. The property will be used strictly for “use and benefit of the negro public school children of Loudoun County as an athletic field and as the location of a public Negro school and other improvements to be constructed thereon.”

**An article from the *Afro-American*, November 8, 1941:**

Under “Virginia News”, the *Afro-American* covers the dedication of the new Douglass High School . The *Loudoun Times-Mirror* did not mention the dedication.

**G. William Liverpool, Principal of Douglass High School, to Mrs. Marie Medley, President of the Loudoun County NAACP, January 24, 1942.**

Mr. Liverpool lets NAACP president Marie Medley know that Douglass High School has been accredited, and ends the letter by saying, “long live the NAACP!”

**A photograph of Douglass High School circa 1942.**

Click here to review the summary articles that provide a context for understanding these letters and documents.

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7. During the 1950s and 60s, Supreme Court decisions and acts of Congress provided support for the language inherent in the 14th and 15th amendments. These decisions galvanized local civil rights and community groups as they continued efforts to guarantee “equal protection under the law” for American citizens.

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8. During times of war and peace, many Loudoun County African Americans have served their nation honorably in the United States armed services.