

CITY

SPOTLIGHT

The Military Road School

The Military Road School Alumni Association

has been leading an active effort to preserve what was in 1954 Washington, D.C.'s last country-style school. Patricia Tyson, Secretary of the Association, recently shared details of the building's rich history with the Historical Society.



May Day at Military Road School, 1953. Courtesy of the Military Road School Alumni Association.

What are the origins of the Military Road School?

In 1864, some thirty thousand ex-slaves were in the District and unfortunately, educational opportunities were far and few between. Yet, they were eager to pursue life's dreams. At first students attended school in an army barrack at nearby Fort Stevens, and an annex was added in 1865. Both buildings were demolished when the current structure was built in 1911. The new four-room red-brick school building with two basements was designed in the Italian Renaissance style by Snowden Ashford, the city's municipal architect, and constructed by the firm of Skinker & Garrett.

Why is the Military Road School an important aspect of Washington history?

For many years, the Military Road School was the only school for black children (Grades 1-8) in the upper northwest section of the County of Washington, now known as the District of Columbia. The school served not only Washington, but also students from nearby

communities in Maryland, including Silver Spring and Takoma Park. As an elementary school, Military Road gave every child, no matter how long or short the period of time he or she attended, a solid foundation to live and build on. In an era of inequality, the students of Military Road received an education unmatched in quality. When it closed in 1954, it was Washington's last remaining country-style school (where several grades were taught together in the same room).

Where does the name come from?

Very simply, the school was named after the road on which it is was located. This road, in close proximity to Fort Stevens, was used to transport soldiers and military equipment to and from the fort. This section of Military Road is now called Missouri Avenue.

Is the building a historic landmark?

The school is listed on the D.C. Registry of Historic Sites and is soon to be nominated for national recognition by the Historic Preservation Review Office.

What is the Military Road School Alumni Association hoping to achieve?

Although the Military Road School was closed as a public school in 1954, the handsome brick building has survived the urban development which continues to alter much of the city's original flavor. We want this facility to continue serving the surrounding community in an educational capacity to help children develop self worth and respect for others. In tribute to the excellent teaching that challenged us to make a difference in society, we are pursuing avenues to restore the building to its original beauty and expose inner-city youth to the basic riches of life we received there.

To learn more, join the Military Road School Alumni Association at the Historical Society on Thursday, May 2 at 6:30 p.m. for a special program and discussion!

For more information or to support the Military Road School Alumni Association, contact Patricia Tyson at 301-588-1475. ♦