

Department of Historic Resources

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STATE HISTORICAL HIGHWAY MARKER "WEST END HIGH SCHOOL" TO BE DEDICATED

—Mecklenburg County marker highlights history of West End High School, which dates back to a 1935 school that served the African-American community—

—The marker's text is reproduced below—

RICHMOND – A state historical marker issued by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources that highlights the history of West End High School, which began in 1935 as an all-black school during the era of segregation, will be dedicated in Mecklenburg County.

The public ceremony to dedicate and unveil the new marker begins at 11 a.m., Saturday, September 27, at the sign's location near the intersection of Route 698 (Middle School Road) and Virginia Route 49, near Skipwith.

The ceremony will feature remarks by John Royster, president of the West End High School National Alumni Association, and Dr. Jennifer Loux, historian and coordinator of the historical marker program at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

The original West End High School was established in 1935 to serve Mecklenburg County's African American students. That school, located in Clarksville, was founded with the help of the Jeanes Foundation, also known as the Negro Rural School Fund. "In 1951," according to the marker, "the U.S. government purchased the West End property for the development of Buggs Island Lake."

In response, the county built a new West End High School about 7 miles north of Clarksville which opened in 1953. “The last class graduated in 1969, when the building became a junior high school,” in the marker’s words.

The West End High School National Alumni Association, which sponsored the marker, covered the costs of its manufacture and installation.

Virginia’s historical highway marker program, which began in 1927 with the installation of the first historical markers along U.S. Route 1, is considered the oldest such program in the nation. Currently there are more than 2,400 official state markers, most maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation, as well as by local partners in jurisdictions outside of VDOT’s authority.

Text of the marker:

West End High School U-94

Just to the east is the former West End High School, which served African Americans during the segregation era. With the help of Matilda M. Booker, Mecklenburg County’s Jeanes Fund supervisor of education for blacks, local parents first established the school in Clarksville in 1935. In 1951, the U.S. government purchased the West End property for the development of Buggs Island Lake. Using state funds set aside for a major school-construction initiative under Gov. John S. Battle, the county built a new W.E.H.S., which opened here in 1953. The last class graduated in 1969, when the building became a junior high school.

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