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FEATURED

## Historical Mecklenburg School demolished

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Zach Currin Photo

Demolition began last week on the former Park View Middle School located on Dockery Road in South Hill.

A new school building, East End High School, was built in 1953 just four miles outside of South Hill on what is now Dockery Road. East End served students from the Mecklenburg County Training School and all other black students on the eastern end of the county.

The original school was opened in 1916 in the old True Reformer Hall with students and teachers used rented desks and equipment. Mrs. Nancy Simmons served as the school's first teacher and in the spring of 1918, the School Board, with the financial aid of the parents,

erected the first three-room school building. This building became known as the Mecklenburg County Training School.

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East End High School started with an enrollment of 450 students in 1953. Students from the Mecklenburg County Training School and all black students from the Eastern End of the county attended the school upon its opening. The first principal was Mr. Emmett Taliaferro along with Assistant Principal O.G. Walker. The school was operating in what is now known as Park View Middle School on Dockery Road in South Hill.

In September of 2013, East End High School alumni celebrated 60 years with “a well- attended banquet”. According to alumni in attendance, “the highlight of the banquet was a presentation by Mrs. Lucille Hudson, deceased, a former elementary supervisor for Mecklenburg County Schools. Mrs. Hudson kept the audience spellbound as she covered the history of education in Mecklenburg County.”

When Virginia Public Schools became integrated, East End High School was changed to Park View Middle School for both black and white students.

In 2020, Park View Middle School earned a National Blue Ribbon Status under the leadership of Principal Jonathan Dixon and his staff.

“Earning a Blue Ribbon School Award is a great honor, and I congratulate the students and the dedicated teachers, principals and support staff of all of these schools for their commitment to excellence and to closing achievement gaps,” Superintendent of Public Instruction James Lane said. “Each of these schools is the center of a learning community dedicated to the success of

every child and our shared values of inclusion, excellence, service and optimism. I think it is especially important that we recognize and celebrate schools that are leading the way in achieving equitable outcomes for all students.”

On June 25, 2023, a Historical Highway Marker was placed along Highway 58 to honor the legacy of East End High School.

“East End High School opened near this location Sept. 1953 to serve African American students during the segregated era. Mecklenburg County built the school with a grant from the Battle Fund, established under Gov. John S. Battle as Virginia’s first program for providing direct aid to localities for school construction. Students came from Mecklenburg County Training School, the Thyne Institute, and other schools in the eastern portion of the county. E.N. Taliaferro was East End’s only principal. The last class graduated on 5 June 1969. Mecklenburg County schools were fully desegregated that fall under a federal court order, and the building became a junior high,” said Reverend Ogburn.

East End now has its place in the history of Mecklenburg County, along with the Thyne Institute, The Mecklenburg Training School and West End High School, to receive a historical highway marker.

The East End High School Historical Highway Marker Committee who worked on this project for over twelve months were: Patricia Holmes Lewis (1968), chairperson; Priscilla Jones Walker (1966), Willie Leon Simmons (1969,) Delores Hayes Jones (1961) and Jean Spain.

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