



# PREPPING FOR FOOTBALL AT Mecklenburg County High



Former PV head coach Kelvin Hutcheson tapped to lead the Phoenix » Sports, B1

www.sovanow.com

today's lake level: 296.34 feet

# The Mecklenburg Sun

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## Happy 108th birthday!



Mrs. Bell

## Secret to a long life: 'Living right' — and heeding the Golden Rule

*(Editor's note: this article was submitted to The Sun by the family of Mrs. Virginia "Estelle" Phillips Bell, who currently resides at Pine View Assisted Living in South Hill.)*

Mrs. Virginia "Estelle" Phillips Bell, a lifelong resident of the North View community of South Hill, celebrated her 108th birthday on January 29.

She attributes her long life to "living right and treating people the way I want to be treated."

According to the Mecklenburg County Voter Registrar's office, Mrs. Bell is the oldest living active registered voter in Mecklenburg County.

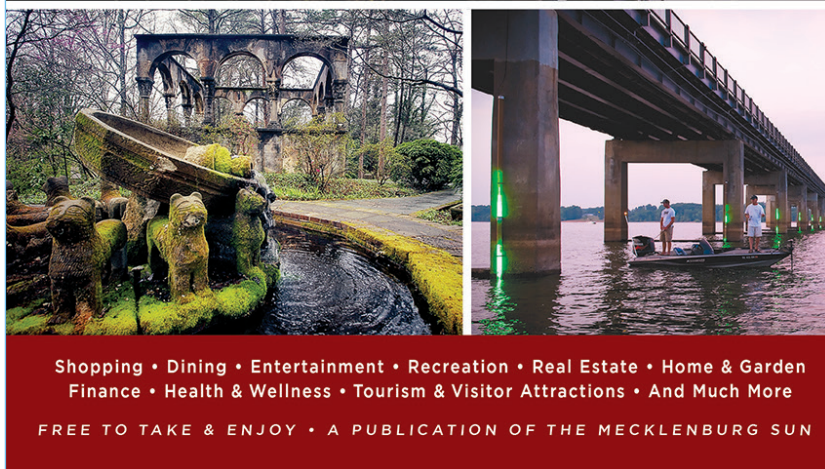
Born in 1914, Mrs. Bell attended North View School where she completed seventh grade, which was customary during that time.

On November 28, 1934, she married Henry Wilbur Bell and they reared four children: Freddie (deceased), Christine, Shirley, and Eugene. Their progeny include eight grandchildren, 18 great grandchildren and two great-great grandchildren.

Although sharecropping See 108th, page A9

## INSIDE TODAY'S SUN

Business & Services Directory For Kerr/Buggs Island Lake, Western Mecklenburg & Nearby Virginia and North Carolina



**2022 GUIDE TO LAKE COUNTRY** — The Sun's annual booklet on goods and services in the Lake Country of Mecklenburg County (Kerr-Buggs Island Lake) can be found inside today's paper to county subscribers. You can also pick up free copies of our 2022 Guide at local shops, offices, restaurants and other sites throughout the year. The 2022 Guide to Lake Country is the first of two booklets published by The Sun annually; coming soon, our Guide to South Hill & Lake Gaston. Contact our office at (434) 374-8152 or any Sun representative for details.

## Dominican boys lured to area by baseball camp, back home safe

Training program fails to materialize; youths tended to by South Hill hotel staff

Eight boys from the Dominican Republic have been returned home safely after being enticed to come to South Hill on the promise of attending a baseball camp that did not exist.

South Hill police were contacted Thursday by the manager of the Microtel Inn in South Hill about a group of boys between the ages of 15 and 18 who'd been left at the hotel by an unnamed adult.

According to the Microtel manager, who asked not to be named, the boys stayed there for several days. During their stay they had limited contact with the man who had assumed the role of their supervisor or guardian, according to Mecklenburg County Commonwealth's Attorney Allen Nash.

The manager stressed the boys were not causing problems, but he was concerned for them. For the most part they spoke no

English and had no money with which to purchase food. The hotel staff took care of the teens and kept them fed while they stayed at the Microtel.

Nash, who was involved in arranging the safe return of the boys to their homes in the Dominican Republic, said they appeared to spend their day outside the Microtel, honing their ball-playing skills. While they had warmer clothes than customary for their home country, Nash said he did not believe they were adequately dressed for the cold spell that descended on Southside Virginia over the past week.

Apprised of the situation, the South Hill Police Department reached out to Sandra Gregory, county director of the Department of Social Services, who in turn contacted Nash and Sheriff Bobby Hawkins. Together with South Hill See CAMP, page A10

## School Board lifts student mask mandate on 5-2 vote

By SUSAN KYTE Sun Staff Writer

In a split vote, the Mecklenburg County School Board moved last week to allow parents to choose whether their students will wear masks at school.

The 5-2 vote taken during a Jan. 26 special called meeting

went against the recommendation of Superintendent of Schools Paul Nichols. He said the advice from the school board attorney was to hold off on a decision until after the Virginia Supreme Court has ruled on the issue of parental choice.

The opt-out will not take ef-

fect until the school receives a signed authorization form from parents. Permission forms were sent home with the students on Thursday, Jan. 27. Individual copies are also available on the school division website, www.mcpsweb.org as well as in paper form at each school.

Trustees Gloria Smith and Lindell Palmer voted against changing the school division's current mask mandate. School Board Chair Gavin Honeycutt and trustee Glen Edwards were absent.

Wanda Bailey made the motion to amend existing MCPS COV- See MASKS, page A8

## From enslavement to awareness, led by a son of Southside



This is the first of four articles on African American history and culture during February, Black History Month. Dr. Angelita D. Reyes is founder and president of Literacy InterActives, Inc., a 501(c)(3) and proud sponsor of the Parker Sydnor historic preservation project located in Mecklenburg County. For more on the project visit <https://literacyinteractives.com>.

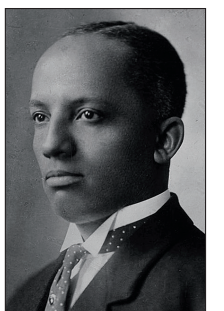
By ANGELITA D. REYES Special to The Sun

Many of us are familiar with February as the month that honors the multifaceted legacies of African American history. Some of us are experts about African American history and some of us are beginners, while others are somewhere in between expertise and new beginnings. There are, however, always new facts and truths to discover. And from generation to generation there are opportunities for all Americans to be introduced to, or to rekindle their knowledge about

African American history because it is woven into the fabric of American history and democracy.

In a 2016 speech at the Black History Month Reception hosted by the White House, President Barack Obama said, "Black History Month shouldn't be treated as though it is somehow separate from our collective American history, or somehow just boiled down to a compilation of greatest hits from the March on Washington, or from some of our sports heroes. It's about the lived, shared experience of all African Americans,"

See WOODSON, page A4



Buckingham native and famed educator, Carter G. Woodson (1875-1959)

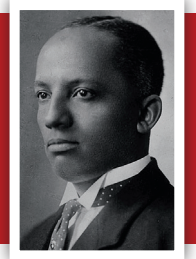


INSIDE: SCHOOL BOARD WRANGLES OVER VICE CHAIR VOTE | PAGE A8

2 sections, 20 pages ■ Obituaries, A2 ■ Opinion, A5 ■ Classified, B8-B10 ■ Comics, B4-B5 ■ Sports, B1-B3

**BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

# Carter G. Woodson, son of enslaved parents and founder of Black History Month



## WOODSON

From page A1

high and low, famous and obscure, and how those experiences have shaped and challenged and ultimately strengthened America. It's about taking an unvarnished look at the past so we can create a better future. It's a reminder of where we as a country have been so that we know where we need to go."

How did the acknowledgment and celebration of Black history begin? Who was responsible for proclaiming February as the month for celebrating African American achievements and contributions that, indeed, have helped to strengthen the meaning of American democracy? Surprisingly, we could say that the story about Black History Month began at a home place right here in southern Virginia, in the unincorporated Buckingham County community of New Canton — going north on what is now U.S. Route 15, we find that our destination is past Bear Garden Creek towards Liberty Church.

It was an unusually cold Sunday morning on December 19, 1875 in Buckingham County as devout churchgoers awoke before dawn to light hearth fires and get ready for church. At an old, almost forgotten but still occupied plantation at New Canton, many of the Black churchgoers were now sharecroppers — unremitting work that didn't offer much difference compared to the lives they had led during bondage. They had been enslaved only a few years back and they didn't like to speak or hear the word slavery because the word evoked too many living memories. They had not yet distanced themselves and "dismembered" that past. Therefore, they used the word "bondage," which empowered their affinity with the Exodus story in the Old Testament.

They were honorably called the "First Generation" — formerly enslaved women, men, and children who attained freedom through the Emancipation Proclamation. As newly freed people, those African Americans were the first generation to experience freedom and citizenship ratified by the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

During those last few years of Reconstruction (1865–77), First Generation African Americans continued living with renewed hopes and dreams — now their children and generations to come would at least be born out of bondage. And so, in a one-room cabin on a farm near the New Canton plantation, a healthy boy-child had just been born. After successfully delivering another baby into the world, the respected "granny midwife" moved about as she finished cleaning up and placing her midwifery supplies into her ever-present black satchel. Her movements were skillfully and caringly proforma. Mother and baby were asleep.

The mother, Anne Eliza Riddle Woodson, already had three children and this boy would become the fourth child among nine. The father, James Henry Woodson, stood tall, sturdy by the large stone hearth with its crackling fire that sent warmth throughout the tidy room. He was extra quiet because he had come into the room earlier than normally allowed for the man to enter and the midwife hadn't wanted him yet to join them. Like Anne Eliza, he was of the First Generation. By the time this son was born, James Henry was a landowning farmer (albeit a struggling one) because he knew, "You can't be a genuinely free person in this big country, in this farming country, without owning land." Considering that he had successfully escaped from slavery and had endured the Civil War when he joined a detachment of Union cavalry troops, being a Black landowner was remarkable.

Soon Anne Eliza was awake again and she sent a faint smile to her husband, the father of her already beloved son. Every



Above, a historical photograph of an African American midwife going on a call, carrying her black medical satchel. (1941 Library of Congress. Online at [www.loc.gov/item/2011661538/?locid=blogadm](http://www.loc.gov/item/2011661538/?locid=blogadm) )



The Carter G. Woodson Home National Historic Site, located in Washington, D.C., served as the home of the "Father of Black History," Dr. Carter G. Woodson from 1922 until his death in 1950. (National Parks Service photo)

mother thinks that her newborn baby is the most beautiful baby in the world. And in her kinship with global motherhood, Anne Eliza bestowed on her son an empowering name, Carter Godwin Woodson — an amalgamation of names in memory of revered paternal uncles and grandfathers.

Considering the real circumstances in time and place, the historical vignette gives a glimpse of how life would have begun for Carter G. Woodson (1875–1950), the famous educator and founder of Black History Month. Neither one of the parents could have dreamed that this boy-child would become renowned as a champion for the research and study of African American history. They could not have imagined that their son would become an educator, scholar, and civil rights activist who would proclaim and establish that African Americans had contributed to the narratives of American history. From the impoverished beginnings of life on the farm of twenty-one acres, their son would become known as the "Father of Black History." And certainly, they could not have dreamed that throughout the American nation there would be streets, parks, schools, museums, education centers, essay prizes, and organizations named in his honor; and that universities and even American presidents would acknowledge his legacy.

James Henry Woodson remained illiterate all his life, but instilled the passion for education into his children and demonstrated to them an unflinching work ethic. Mothers are the first educators of their children — it's from the mother that babies, for example, learn language for mastering advanced skills, hence, the first language of learning is through the "mother tongue." Anne Eliza Woodson had learned to read and write and passed

on the asset of literacy skills to her children. Undoubtedly, she played a major role that enabled Carter G. Woodson to pursue a lifetime of promoting education for African Americans.

After attending Berea College in Kentucky, Woodson worked in the Philippines as an education superintendent for the U.S. government. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of Chicago before entering Harvard for his PhD. In 1912, Woodson became the second African American to earn a doctorate from Harvard. He followed in the footsteps of the distinguished African American educator and scholar, W.E.B. Du Bois (1868–1963) who earned his doctorate from Harvard in 1895. Woodson was the only person of enslaved parentage to earn a PhD in history from any institution in the United States.

Woodson's biographers speculate on a range of reasons that directed Woodson's passion for devoting his life to the study and advancement of African American history and culture. According to Woodson, it was at Harvard that he received "in a negative way the inspiration for life's work." One of Woodson's famous professors, the Pulitzer prize-winning Edward Channing, announced in class one day that, "the Negro had no history." Woodson challenged his professor and countered that "no people lack a history." Woodson began researching, studying, and advocating for African American history at a time when African American achievements and contributions to the growth of the nation were ignored, belittled, negated, or judged inferior by prevailing racism, beliefs, and doctrines. The prevalent belief was that people of African descent had no history besides the subjugation of slavery.

In February 1926, the public demonstration of evidence that African American

history existed was the establishment of Woodson's first "Negro History Week," the precursor of Black History Month. Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month. Woodson chose February because the month contained the birthdays of both Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, two prominent men whose achievements African Americans knew about and celebrated.

Woodson recognized his poor, working-class background and he was intent on making African American history relevant and accessible to ordinary working-class African Americans and school children as well as to scholars and their learned organizations. Woodson was relentless in working to intersect the scholarship of African American history with what we refer today as public-facing research and study that focuses on all aspects of African American history and culture. Woodson launched the Journal of African American History and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, now known as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Inc. He was prolific in publishing on African American history, church history, culture, and civil rights. His most famous book is *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (1933). The book is still in print and available on Amazon and Kindle.

Carter G. Woodson worked for the study and acceptance of African American history to gain a following among the general public, K-12 education, and university-level teaching and research. Dr. Woodson must have known the extent to which he succeeded in his life's mission. We welcome Black History Month and pay homage to Dr. Carter G. Woodson.

## Did you know?

Dr. Charles Drew (1904–1950) was a renowned African American surgeon, medical researcher, and pioneer in the preservation of life-saving blood plasma. He applied his exceptional knowledge to developing large-scale blood banks during World War II. He was known as the "Father of Blood Banking."



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