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EASTERN SHORE NEWS

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'Historic jewel'



A new exhibit at the Cape Charles museum tells the story of the Cape Charles Elementary (Rosenwald) School.

Cape Charles exhibit highlights Rosenwald school

CLARA VAUGHN Special to Delmarva Now | USA TODAY NETWORK - DELMARVA

In May of 1928, the town of Cape Charles purchased 2.5 acres from the Pennsylvania Railroad to build a new African-American school. A new exhibit at the Cape Charles Museum and Welcome Center tells the story of that four-classroom schoolhouse during the era of legal segregation. "Building a Community: The Cape Charles Elementary (Rosenwald) School" shares first-hand accounts from former students and teachers to tell the story of the partnership between educator Booker T. Washington, businessman Julius Rosenwald and the local African-American community in the early 20th century.

See SCHOOL, Page 3A

If you go

"Building a Community: The Cape Charles Elementary (Rosenwald) School"

Where: Cape Charles Museum and Welcome Center, 814 Randolph Ave., Cape Charles

When: Through Nov. 24

Info: 757-331-1008



A historic photograph of the Cape Charles Elementary School taken around 1929 shows the building's brick architecture. One of more than 5,000 Rosenwald Schools—named for Julius Rosenwald, the businessman and philanthropist who helped fund them—the four-classroom schoolhouse is one of few of the schools still standing in good condition today. SUBMITTED IMAGES BY CAPE CHARLES HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Nandua High School student William Norman says his Confederate flag school project is about his heritage. WVEC IMAGE

Nandua student stands by his Confederate school project

Carol Vaughn Salisbury Daily Times USA TODAY NETWORK - DELMARVA
Chenue Her WVEC

A high school student has stood up for his controversial project, despite what his teacher told him.

The Nandua High School freshman, William Norman, claimed his teacher and principal asked him to redo the project one day before it was due. The controversy: he painted a Confederate flag on it.

It was a ceramic sculpture of a hand, with "Robert E. Lee, history not hate" scrawled on it.

He said his teacher had a problem with his project, saying it promoted racism. It was supposed to be displayed at the school.

"I was going to do what I planned. They can't approve it and then say you gotta change it after I worked so long on it. It's not fair to me, or anybody," said Norman.

He said his teacher had approved the design beforehand, but when he was close to completing it, she changed her mind.

The principal got involved and gave him a choice — repaint it the day before it was due or get an "F."

"I'm going to stand for what I think is right," Norman said.

Accomack County School Superintendent Warren C. Holland declined to comment on Thursday, saying it involved a student matter, and Nandua High School principal George Parker could not immediately be reached for comment.

Norman, his father, David Norman, and his mother, who lives in Florida, said they all stood by the project because it promoted their heritage and deep roots in the south.

"Robert E Lee was a third cousin," said David Norman.

"We were on the second ship from England that came to America, so my bloodline goes way back when America first started," William Norman explained to 3News Now.

After William Norman refused to repaint the project, his mother in Florida called and got involved. His dad, who he lives with on the Eastern Shore, also joined the discussion.

Eventually, the school agreed with William Norman, allowing his project to be displayed after multiple meetings.

"Everybody should be able to practice or display their heritage in a way they'd like," said Norman.

Norman's family said this shouldn't have been about race, and it isn't. Their pride in the Confederate flag is about heritage.

"I'm not a racist, the furthest thing

See PROJECT, Page 3A

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Sports.....1B
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Viewpoint.....4A
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A new exhibit at the Cape Charles Museum and Welcome Center tells the story of a four-classroom schoolhouse built during the era of legal segregation.

School

Continued from Page 1A

Named for its financier, Rosenwald, but also funded equally by the local black community, the school saw hundreds of African-American elementary students enter its doors between 1928 and 1966, when Northampton County consolidated its schools.

"The Rosenwald Schools were really a model for progressive ideas at the time," said Kimb Leake-Denny, executive director for the Cape Charles Museum, of the more than 5,000 similar institutions built across the rural South.

"The Cape Charles Elementary, among Rosenwald Schools, is really a jewel because it was built to such high standards," she said. "It really is a historic jewel."

Opening in 1929, the brick schoolhouse contained four classrooms and an auditorium and housed black students in grades 1 through 7.

Employing three teachers and a principal — who often doubled as an instructor — for much of its history, its enrollment reached 75 by 1950. That number nearly doubled by the late 1950s, Denny said.

The school closed in December 1966, when Northampton County consolidated its schools, four years before they were integrated.

Although they remained in segregated classrooms, students moved to the Cape Charles High School during the 1965-1966 school year, making Cape Charles one of the first school districts on Virginia's Eastern Shore to technically integrate.

The idea for the exhibit exploring the history of the school and desegregation came about a few years ago, when the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities commissioned an assessment of local museums, Denny said.

"One of their biggest observations was that the African-American community and their experiences were grossly underrepresented in the museums up and down the Eastern Shore," she said.

Drawing on an earlier oral history project by the Cape Charles Rosenwald School Restoration Initiative, the museum tells the story of the schoolhouse through first-person narratives.

"They have an oral history project called 'Voices from Over the Hump' (from several years back where they interviewed former students and teachers from the Cape Charles Elementary School," Denny said, "so we had a very rich lexicon to pull from ... as told first-person from the people who actually lived it.")

Narrators discuss topics from the school's history and education to hours spent at recess in the exhibit "to make it as accessible as possible to a wide range of ages," Denny said.

The exhibit also explores the history of desegregation in Virginia schools and gives information about Washington and Rosenwald, the men who helped build thousands of schools in rural African-American communities across the South.

The son of a German-Jewish immigrant who rose from apprentice to CEO of Sears, Roebuck & Company, Rosenwald established his Rosenwald Fund in 1917.

During the course of his lifetime, the fund contributed millions in matching dollars to construct schools, shops and teachers' homes in the South. The schools became informally known as Rosenwald Schools.

While Rosenwald provided financial backing, the African-American institutions were the brainchild of educator, author and orator Washington.

Building a nationwide coalition of middle-class blacks and white philanthropists and politicians, his goal was to build the African-American community's economic strength and pride through a focus on self-help and schooling.

In this way, he secured donors to fund "the hands-on approach that he referred to as industrial education," Denny said.

"The idea caught the imagination of Julius Rosenwald," she said, and the Rosenwald Schools were born.

Though Rosenwald invested in the schools, an equal portion of their funding came from the local communities they served.

"In keeping with Booker T. Washington's idea of self-help, the community helped provide labor to help build the schools," Denny said. "The Rosenwald Fund ultimately



The new exhibit at Cape Charles museum takes people inside the historic Rosenwald school in Cape Charles.

provided the least amount toward the building of these schools."

By the time the fund closed in 1932 with Rosenwald's death and was depleted by 1948, African-American communities had built more than 5,000 schools across the rural South.

Most Rosenwald Schools have disintegrated over time, but the Cape Charles Elementary School still stands today, thanks to its high-quality brickwork.

The building is privately owned, but individuals can read a historical plaque outside its location on Old Cape Charles Road, just a few hundred yards on the right after crossing "the hump."

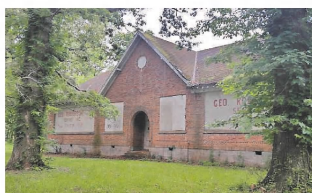
"It's in remarkably good condition. There's some repair work that needs to be done, but it's still beautiful," Denny said.

Learn more about the historic school at the Cape Charles Museum now through Nov. 24.

After that, its pieces will be offered to other Eastern Shore museums, Denny said.

The Cape Charles Museum is open weekdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays from 1-5 p.m. It is open later on Tuesdays, until 6 p.m., throughout the summer.

Admission is free to the museum on Randolph Avenue, in downtown Cape Charles, although



Opened in 1929, the Cape Charles Elementary School still stands in good condition today. SUBMITTED IMAGES BY CAPE CHARLES HISTORICAL SOCIETY

donations are welcome.

Call the museum at 757-331-1008 for more information.

"Building a Community: The Cape Charles Elementary (Rosenwald) School" was made possible by collaboration between the Cape Charles Historical Society, Cape Charles Rosenwald School Restoration Initiative and the Cape Charles-Northampton Heritage group, with a grant from Virginia Humanities.

Project

Continued from Page 1A

from it. My son's not a racist," said David Norman.

"People that may be racist might fly it, but to me, it has nothing to do with racism. It's my heritage, my blood, where I came from," William Norman explained.

The debate over whether to continue to display Confederate symbols, or whether to remove Confederate monuments in some localities, comes amid a larger national discussion about race relations.

Confederate symbols, including the flag and monuments, have been the subject of controversy in recent months in particular, after a woman was killed and others were injured during a demonstration against the proposed removal of a 1924 statue of Gen. Robert E. Lee in Charlottesville last August, when an alleged member of a white supremacist group drove his vehicle into a crowd of counter-protesters.

The Eastern Shore of Virginia has two Confederate monuments, which are among more than 200 public symbols in Virginia memorializing the Confederacy, according to an article in the Charlottesville Daily Progress.

A Delmarva Now reporter's request for Eastern Shore residents to discuss whether they think changes should be made to a Confederate monument erected in Parkley in 1899 elicited a barrage of more than 640 comments in less than 24 hours, with commenters expressing differing viewpoints on the matter.

The request for comments was made in August 2017, shortly after the Charlottesville incident.

Delmarvanow.com writer Carol Vaughn contributed to this article.

Alward Heating & Air
alwardheatingandair.com
George Alward
Owner
P.O. Box 334, Atlantic, VA 23003
6332 Maddox Blvd, Chincoteague, VA 23336
757-824-3122
757-336-3792
alwardheating@yahoo.com

MORTON BUILDINGS
Dennis Russum
Sales Consultant
Office: (717) 624-3331 Cell: (302) 222-1847
Fax: (717) 624-4045
dennis.russum@mortonbuildings.com
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VDOT Virginia Department of Transportation

Route 13 (Lankford Highway) Safety Improvements
Accomack County
Notice of Public Hearing
Monday, June 18, 2018, 4-7 p.m.
Arcadia High School
8210 Lankford Highway
Oak Hall, VA 23416

Come see plans to improve safety at the intersection of Route 13 (Lankford Highway) and Route 695 (Temperanceville Road) and the intersection of Lankford Highway and Route 175 (Chincoteague Road) in Accomack County.

VDOT is exploring the possibility of installing a traffic signal, speed reduction measures, additional signage, lengthened turn lanes and surface treatment at Temperanceville Rd. and Lankford Hwy. VDOT is also exploring the possibility of installing wider edge lines, lighting, shoulder rumble strips, additional signage and curbing at the intersection of Lankford Hwy. and Chincoteague Rd.

Review the proposed project plans and the environmental document in the form of a Programmatic Categorical Exclusion (PCE) at the public hearing. VDOT's Accomack Residency Office located at 23096 Courthouse Avenue, Accomack, Virginia 23001, 757-787-5856, TTY:700 711 or at VDOT Hampton Roads District Headquarters located at 1700 North Main Street, Suffolk, VA 23434, 757-925-2500, TTY:700 711. Please call ahead to ensure the availability of appropriate personnel to answer your questions.

Properly impact information, relocation assistance policies and tentative construction schedules are available for your review at the above addresses and will be available at the public hearing.

Give your written or oral comments at the hearing or submit them by no later than June 28, 2018 to Ms. Nancy Marshall, Transportation Engineer, Virginia Department of Transportation, 1700 North Main Street, Suffolk, VA 23434. You may also e-mail your comments to Nancy.Marshall@vdot.virginia.gov. Please reference "Rt. 13 Safety Improvements" in the subject line.

VDOT ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact Ms. Nancy Marshall at the phone number or e-mail listed above.

Lankford Hwy. at Temperanceville Rd.: State Project: 0013-001-695, CS01, P101, R201 Federal Project: NHP-001-5087) UIC: 117709
Lankford Hwy. at Chincoteague Rd.: State Project: 0013-001-694, CS01, P101, R201 Federal Project: NHP-001-5088) UIC: 117709