

FOURCHE

God is with us all our Labors are in

THIBODAUX, PARISH OF LAFOURCHE, APRIL 4, 1918.

SEVENTY NEGROES LEAVE.

On April 18,
1918
Mrs. Cordelia
Wm. Matthew
Washington
Delivered this
amazing speech
to 70 African
Americans who
were departing
to serve in the
War. This ladies
and gentlemen
is the speech
which caused
the school board
to honor
"Cordelia"
by changing
the name
of the school.

When the war is won the colored citizens of Lafourche will come in for a good share of the honor, as many of them have gone forth, and it is said quite willingly, to defend America, their native land. Seventy constituted the delegation that started from Thibodaux last Saturday morning. At the depot the men were eloquently commended for their patriotism. Rev. T. J. Johnson acted as master of ceremonies and he first introduced Rev. H. C. Smith, of the Moses Baptist church, who invoked a blessing upon the men. Then followed Mrs. Cordelia Williams, who has a fine command of language and understands how to deliver her utterances effectively, being, we presume, about the best educated color-order woman in the parish. She was followed by Hon. A. J. Lasseigne, who made a very good address to the men. Alonzo Lewis, a young colored man, whose brother recently died in France, then gave the soldiers a brief talk. Dr. Thos. Stark, our sheriff, then called out the list of names. Each man answered promptly, thus demonstrating a willingness to serve.



Cordelia Matthews Washington
... early educator



Cordelia Matthews Washington

Students remember a remarkable woman...

By Todd Siegrist
Staff writer

This Fourth of July weekend people will arrive in Thibodaux to spend their summer vacation going back to school. Former students of the Cordelia Matthews Washington High School are returning to the site of their alma mater, now South Thibodaux Elementary, for the unveiling of a historical marker honoring the school.

"Negroes took a chance and pressed for education for Afro-American children," Velma Fleming Avery, a 1968 graduate from C.M. Washington High and now a school bus driver for Lafourche Parish, said. "That's why today, this is so important."

For many years, that school represented the only opportunity black children in Lafourche, Assumption and Terrebonne Parish had for secondary education.

"Education was very important at that time, because many parents had not graduated from high school, but knew they wanted that for their children," Jessie Fleming Paigo, a 1961 graduate from Washington and South Thibodaux Elementary School teacher, said. The marker comes from the Lafourche Heritage Society, thanks to a grant from the Loris Foundation.

A LITTLE PIECE OF BLACK HISTORY

Students remember a remarkable woman...

By Todd Siegrist

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The marker comes from the Lafourche Heritage Society, thanks to a grant from the Loris Foundation.

Washington was the first black in Thibodaux to have a bachelor's degree in education, having earned her degree at Straight College in New Orleans.

She established the Negro Corporation School on Nannerly Street at the turn of the century.

"Cordelia Matthews Washington took a seed and planted it with inspiration and courage," Avery said. "It's important that she

pioneered educational opportunities, not just in this parish but other parishes, Terrebonne and Assumption, for a school large enough to house and educate Afro-American children."

Washington died in 1937 at the age of 62. Five years later, the community recognized her contribution by renaming the Negro Corporation School after her. At that time, the school was for grades one through seven.

Classes for older children were added, creating the C.M. Washington Training School, which had its first graduates in 1943. A 12th grade education, however, remained unavailable to the local black community for a few more years.

Much of the history of the school is unavailable, as most of the records only date back to 1950. On Dec. 18 of that year, however, the C.M. Washington High School building was dedicated.

The school actually contained first through 12th grades. Professor Robert M. Harris was the school's principal, and Washington's daughter-in-law, Leola Washington, was the elementary school's first principal.

The high school's building became South Thibodaux Elementary after desegregation in 1968.

"You had some students come in from Assumption, and if they had family here (in Thibodaux), they'd stay at the relatives' house and go home on the weekends," Avery said.

Terrebonne Parish established Southdowns High School for black students in 1953. Later, Assumption Parish followed suit with W.H. Reed High School. For Lafourche Parish, however, Washington continued to be the only high school for blacks, who would come from as far south as Cut Off.



Cordelia Matthews Washington

What students remember best is the sense of community that pervaded the school.

"Being at an all-black school, there was a great connection between the students and the teachers," Paige said.

That sense of community kept the parents well informed on the behavior of their children.

"Some of the students and teachers were neighbors, so whatever you would do at school, whether positive or negative, your parents were informed by the principal or

homeroom teacher," Paige said. "By the time you got home, your parents knew."

The community involvement included fund-raisers held to make sure all the kids had the necessary materials.

"We had pencils, paper, everything was there," Avery said. "Our parents may have bought us backpacks, but you didn't need anything else."

That community involvement is one reason why Paige believes that the segregation laws of that era did not prevent her from getting a quality education.

"We had the things we needed to work with," Paige said. "I didn't see a deficiency (in materials)."

The only deficiency Paige noticed was the lack of blacks in the history lessons.

"A lot of things black people took part in were not in those books," Paige said. "It was not until after high school and college that I learned a lot of the heritage and contributions of black people."

"But even with these omissions, we still had our dynamic heroes, our role models," Paige said. "They were the administrators, the faculty, our parents and community leaders."

This summer's ceremony and reunion might help people remember some of those contributions.

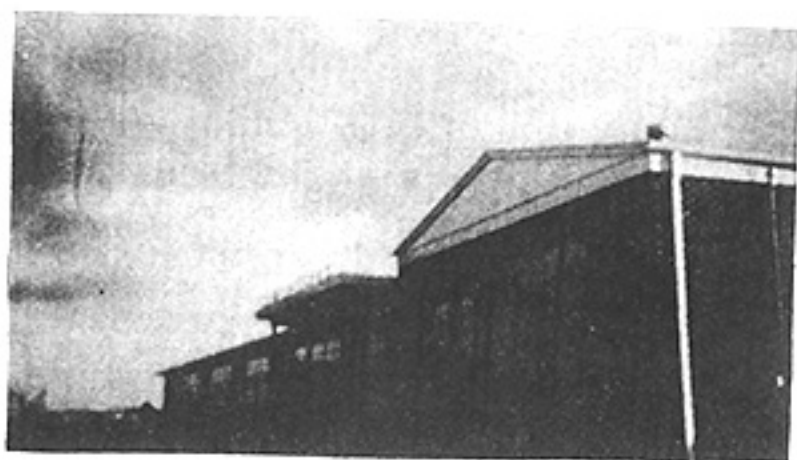
For more information about the reunion and ceremony, contact Avery at 483-8120.

Todd Siegrist is a staff writer for the Daily Comet. He can be reached at 448-7629 or by e-mail at todd.siegrist@dailycomet.com.

...and the school that changed so many lives.



South Thibodaux High School as it looks today. The building pictured above housed Cordelia Matthews Washington High School, the first black high school in Lafourche Parish, until 1968, when public schools were segregated.



Alma Mater

Dear C. M. we honor thee and give to you our service
true, We'll sing thy praises ever more and give our
loyalty to you,
Thy loving sons and daughters bow, and offer thee
thy homage true;
We will praise thy name forever more and strive to
keep thy banner pure.
O C. M. Hl., Dear C. M. Hl,
Thy banner raised up to the sky,
May gold and purple ever shine
And glory ever more be thine

Original Alma Mater of 1953



**Ms. Jesse Weber, C. M. Washington Librarian
Mr. Robert Bell, Shop Instructor
Historical Marker Plscement Ceremony, 2000**

Smith Thibodaux Elementary School

ROCK AND IRIS STREETS

POST OFFICE BOX 776

THIBODAUX, LOUISIANA 70301

March 28, 1969

Lafourche Parish School Board
Dr. Robert Doless, President
Thibodaux, Louisiana 70301

Gentlemen:

It has been my privilege to have been employed by the Lafourche Parish School Board for the past thirty-nine and one-half years. I would be somewhat remiss if I were to say that all the years have been without difficulties; however, the same would have been the case in any other occupation. I thank you for having given me the opportunity to be of service to my fellowman both as a classroom teacher and as a school principal.

Upon reaching retirement, I leave the school system with a feeling of ambivalence. While I shall be happy to relax and enjoy the rewards of long years of labor, at the same time I shall miss the equally rewarding experience of working directly with children and teachers.

It is of great concern to me that the schools of the parish continue to make steady progress. The efforts which are being extended point toward making our school system one of the best in the state and in the nation. I commend the school board and staff for your foresightedness.

Again, thank you for the privilege afforded.

Sincerely yours,

(Mrs.) Leola A. Washington

cc: Mr. W. J. DeFelice, Superintendent



C. M. WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

C. M. WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL



BUILDING "C" AND GYM-AUDITORIUM



CHECK PRESENTATION — Max Floger, far left, president of the Civitan Club of Thibodaux, presents a check to Mrs. Leola Washington, principal of the G. M. Washington elementary school. Also present are club member Clifton Murvatt, at center right, and Hubert Johnson, teacher of the elementary special

education class. The check will be used to buy materials and aids for the class. The club recently donated a check to the Thibodaux upper elementary special education class to be used for the same purpose. Floger said the history was taken from proceeds derived from the club's fruit cake sale.



New Music Building - C. M. Washington High School

Message from the Principal

Welcome Alumni! Greetings Parents and Friends, on this the Seventh Annual Homecoming of C. M. Washington High & Upper Elementary School. The Faculty and Student Body of this institution join with me in extending to you, one and all, a most cordial welcome to this festive occasion.

We have left no stone unturned in our efforts to make this Homecoming what you would want it to be. This is our way of letting you know that we all here at C.M. Washington appreciate the good will and unselfish co-operation that you, our Alumni, Parents and Friends have always given us.

T. W. Shanklin, Principal

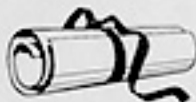


Daryl Washington Buggage & Mrs. Bertha Shanklin pictured with new laid C.M. Washington High School Historical Marker. 7/2000

Daryl is Cordelia's Greatgrandson & Mrs. Shanklin is one of our Elementary School Instructors & Wife to our former principal, Mr. Thomas Shanklin, Jr.



**REUNION 2000
HISTORICAL SITE CELEBRATION**



Velma F. Avery, Chairperson

June 28, 2000

Craig Webre, Sheriff
LAFOURCHE PARISH SHERIFF DEPARTMENT
200 Canal Blvd.
Thibodaux, La 70301

Dear Sheriff Webre:

As per your agreement with Kevin Smith, Commander of American Legion Post 513, we are requesting a favor of a much needed donation for the rental of the American Legion Hall on Saturday, July 1, 2000, as part of the festivities of "Reunion 2000, Historical Site Celebration of C. M. Washington High School.

Please contact myself at 493-8120 or Marcus Tardiff 446-0147.

Sincerely,

Velma F. Avery
Chairperson

C. M. Washington
"Panthers"

Annual School Reunion / Banquet



2010



THE ALUMNI BODY,
ADMINISTRATORS AND FACULTY
OF
C.M. WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

*Cordially invite you to the
Historical Celebration of Reunion 2000
and the unveiling of the
Historical Marker commemorating
C. M. Washington High School
as a Historical Site.*

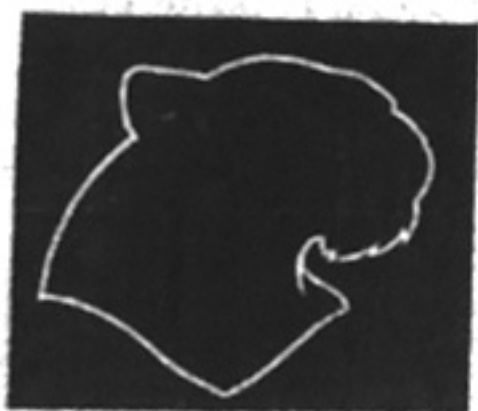
*Sunday, July 2nd, 2000
at 3 o'clock P.M.*

*at
C.M. WASHINGTON GYMNASIUM
(South Thibodaux Elementary Gym)*

TO GOD BE THE GLORY!

**C. M. WASHINGTON
RE-DEDICATION CEREMONY**

Panthers



Cordelia Matthews Washington

CMW

**C. M. W. E. S. Gymnasium
September 14, 2019
10:00-11:30 AM**

Re-Dedication Program

Welcome	Gina Johnson, C.M.W.E.S. Principal
Words from Superintendent....	Jarrod Martin, Interim Superintendent
Prayer.....	Rev. Larry Frank, Sr.
Pledge.....	C.M.W.E.S. Students
Introduction of Special Guests.....	Gina Johnson, C.M.W.E.S. Principal
Introduction of Alumni Present	Ms. Nancy Curole, Supervisor
Purpose of the Occasion	Ms. Nancy Curole, Supervisor
History/Biography.....	Ms. Marion Ellis & Gloria Thibodaux.
Unveiling of Painting -	Ms. Cordelia Matthews Washington Grandchildren
Poem.....	Ms. Velma Avery Berry
Proclamation/Resolution for the City-	Councilwoman Constance Johnson, District C
Proclamation for Parish/District.....	Councilman Jerry Jones
Acknowledgements.....	Gina Johnson, C.M.W.E.S. Principal
Closing.....	Jarrod Martin, Interim Superintendent
Alma Mater.....	C.M. Washington Alumni
Unveiling of School Marquee	School Officials
Benediction.....	Rev. Velma Berry Fleming
Refreshments	



C.M. Washington Alumni Association

P.O. Box 363
Thibodaux, LA 70302

August 6th, 2019

Dear C.M. Washington Alumni, Friends and Community:

We, the Cordelia Matthews Washington Alumni Association, the Restoration Committee and School Principal, Ms. Gina Johnson, cordially invite each of you to join us as we celebrate the restored name of C.M. Washington unto its proper place along with the unveiling of a portrait of our precious benefactor, Mrs. Cordelia Matthews Washington.

The date for the celebration is set in the month of September 2019. We will send updated information as it becomes available. * *September 14, 2019 @ 10 A.M. - 11:30 A.M.*

NOTE: C.M. Washington is once again in the hands of an African American: Mrs. Gina Johnson. Much of her family (the Every's) are graduates of C.M.W. We have included an order form for C.M. Washington Elementary Spirit Wear. Please consider the purchase of one or more of these items.

Contact #'s: Mrs. Velma F. Berry
 (985)614-0033

 Mrs. Jessie M. Paige
 (985) 449-0498

 Mrs. Ida Rainey
 (985)447-1224

Please mail order forms and funds to:

C.M. Washington Alumni Association - P.O. Box 363 - Thibodaux, LA 70302

Sincerely and Love To All

Mrs. Velma F. Berry
Mrs. Jessie Mae F. Paige
Mrs. Ida F. Rainey

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, the first Black Instructor in City of Thibodaux with a BA Degree in education.

WHEREAS, forerunner in the early 1900's especially 1901 through 1937 in which she became a pioneer for education unto Afro-American children. Her challenge; to secure land and funding for a school large enough to house and educate the Afro-American children of Lafourche Parish including Assumption and Terrebonne Parish.

WHEREAS, having successfully achieved this challenge in the year of Our Lord 1948, The Negro Corporation School was renamed;

CORDELIA MATTHEWS WASHINGTON COLORED HIGH SCHOOL

BE IT KNOWN, in the year of Our Lord, 1950, February 17th the name changed to its current name;

"CORDELIA MATTHEWS WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL"

Preceding its official dedication on December 18th 1950, at its new and present site.

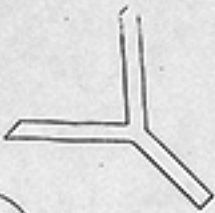
NOW AND THEREFORE, I Robert J. Bayou President of Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government on behalf of its citizens do hereby resolve, that this original proclamation be presented to the former Administrators, Faculty, and Alumni of **CORDELIA MATTHEWS WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL "C.M. WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL"**

IN WITNESS THEREOF, I do hereunto set my signature and have cause to be affixed the official seal of the Parish Government of Terrebonne, State of Louisiana, on this 2nd day of July 2000.



Septemb, 24, 1949

Mr. Reginald Anderson
626 1/2 Broudwick Street
San Francisco, Calif.



Dear Reginald:

We wrote to you sometime ago in regards to granting a right-of-way for a sidewalk along the northern boundary of your property on St. Charles Street. This proposed sidewalk would be of great service to the children in the St. Charles street area who will be attending the C. M. Washington High School that is being built on 12 acres of ground just back of your property.

I am asking that you please give this matter your immediate consideration and let us hear from you at once as we are most anxious to complete plans in connection with this proposed new school building. Please write to me at once and return the map we sent you with your signature, please.

Thanking you for your immediate attention to this request, I am

Yours truly,

R. O. MONCLA
Supt. of Education

ROM:blf

February 17, 1950

C. M. Washington Colored High School
Lettering - Change Order No. 3

Mr. Clarence Albert, Contractor
Thibodaux, Louisiana

Dear Mr. Albert:

This is to confirm to you a letter written by Mr. Moncla dated February 16, copy of which he sent you, to the effect that the name of the school is changed from C. M. Washington Colored High School to C. M. Washington High School. Please use the new name in the lettering, and advise us of any difference in the cost of same.

Very truly yours,

PAVROT, REED, MATHES & BERGMAN

HMF:eld
cc: Mr. R. O. Moncla

H. Mortimer Pavrot



STATE OF LOUISIANA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BATON ROUGE 4

August 22, 1953

SHELBY M. JACKSON
State Superintendent

Mr. R.O. Moncla, Superintendent
Lafourche Parish School Board
Thibodaux, Louisiana

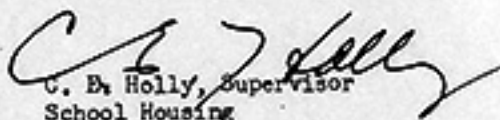
Re: C. M. Washington Colored High School
and Gymnasium

Dear Mr. Moncla:

You will find enclosed the State Department's final approval of plans and specifications for the proposed project, together with the original letters of approval by the State Fire Marshal and the State Board of Health. Under separate cover we are sending a set of the approved plans and specifications.

If we can be of any further assistance in this work, please do not hesitate to call on us.

Sincerely,


C. B. Holly, Supervisor
School Housing

CEH:ecr

enclosures ✓

cc: Roth & Olivier, Architects

C. M. WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL & GYMNASIUM

ALTERNATE NO. 3-B: Same as Alternate No. 3-A, but based on the exclusion of Classrooms 13 and 14; add the sum of:

Four Hundred $\frac{00}{100}$ Dollars (\$ 400.⁰⁰)

Receipt of the following addenda to plans and specifications, if any, is acknowledged, and they are made a part of this proposal. #1, DATED AUGUST 14, 1953,
#2, DATED AUGUST 26, 1953. (List by date

any addenda issued prior to bidding).

If the undersigned be notified of acceptance of this proposal within 30 days of the time set for the opening of the bids, he agrees to execute a contract for the above work for the above stated compensation and further agrees to furnish a surety performance bond in amount not less than 100% of his total contract price.

My bid is based on 360 calendar days starting from the execution of the performance bond.

Respectfully submitted,

FIRM NAME: PERRILLIAT-RICKEY CONST. CO. INC.

BY:

J. Henry Coates
J. HENRY COATES
VICE-PRESIDENT

SEAL: If bid is by corporation.

PROPOSAL

FOR PROJECT NO. 149-53

Lafourche Parish School Board
Thibodaux, Louisiana

Gentlemen:

In compliance with your invitation for bids, the undersigned, having fully examined all documents in conjunction with the Project entitled "C. M. Washington High School and Gymnasium", Project No. 149-53, all as prepared by Roth & Olivier, Architect, and having inspected the site and the conditions affecting the work, hereby proposes to furnish all labor, materials, equipment, tools, and appliances called for by said documents for the sum of:

BASE BID:

TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY-ONE THOUSAND & 00/100
Dollars (\$ 281,000.⁰⁰)

ALTERNATE NO. 1: If Classrooms Nos. 13 and 14 are entirely omitted, deduct the sum of:

SEVEN THOUSAND FIVE
HUNDRED & 00/100 Dollars (\$ 7,500.⁰⁰)

ALTERNATE NO. 2: If quarry tile, same as specified in other toilet rooms is provided in Boy's and Girl's Locker Rooms, add the sum of:

ONE THOUSAND TWO
HUNDRED & 00/100 Dollars (\$ 1,200.⁰⁰)

ALTERNATE NO. 3-A: If cement coloring is entirely omitted and 1/8" thick 9" x 9" standard grade asphalt tile in group "B" colors is substituted wherever "colored cement" is scheduled, in the "Schedule of Finishes", except at Boy's and Girl's Locker Room and Gear Rooms 1 and 2, based on the inclusion of classrooms 13 and 14, add the sum of:

FIVE HUNDRED & 00/100 Dollars (\$ 500.⁰⁰)

ROTH & OLIVIER
ARCHITECTS

CORNER CANAL & MARONGE
THIBODAUX, LOUISIANA
PHONE 4512 - P. O. BOX 289

CHANGE ORDER NO. 4CLARENCE ALBERT, CONTRACTORLAPOURCHE PARISH SCHOOL BOARDOWNER

Dear Sir:

Under your contract dated September 8, 1953 with the Lafourche Parish School Board, represented by J. E. Toups, President, Owner for C. M. Washington High School and Gymnasium, Project No. 149-53, we are authorized by the Owner, only when he has affixed his signature to this instrument to hereby direct you to: furnish all labor and materials for erecting all sidewalks as per detail drawings, and to furnish four (4") inch concrete pipe under sidewalk only at all downspouts, and to add to the contract, in accordance with the Contract, the sum of: One thousand five hundred fifty dollars (\$1,550.00)

ORIGINAL CONTRACT AMOUNT - - - - -	\$ 274,110.90
CHANGE ORDER NO. 1 - - - - -	\$ 9,475.04
CHANGE ORDER NO. 2 - - - - -	\$ 592.76
CHANGE ORDER NO. 3 - - - - -	\$ 2,488.43
CHANGE ORDER NO. 4 - - - - -	\$ 1,550.00
REVISED CONTRACT FIGURE TO DATE - - - - -	\$ 288,207.13

APPROVED: Aug. 2, 1954

Lafourche Parish School Board

By R. M. Ancla, OwnerA. G. Oliver Jr., ArchitectACCEPTED: August 2, 1954Clarence Albert by T. L. Madue Jr., Contractor

Very truly yours,
ROTH & OLIVIER, ARCHITECTS

BY: A. G. Oliver Jr.

April 9, 1954

Roth & Olivier
Architects
Thibodaux, La.

Gentlemen:

I am giving you excerpt from minutes of regular meeting of Lafourche Parish School Board held on April 7, 1954 as follows:

"On the motion of Mr. Riviere, seconded by Mr. Naquin, it was decided to name the stadium at the new C. M. Washington High School BRYANTS STADIUM after Dr. G. C. Bryant and his wife, Mrs. Cornelia Bryant, pioneers and leaders in Negro education in the Thibodaux area, dating back to 1895. The existing buildings, as well as the other new additions, are to remain under the name of the C. M. Washington High & Elementary School, named after Cordelia Mathews Washington, also a pioneer and leader in Negro Education in Thibodaux area from 1901 to 1937."

I should like to discuss with you gentlemen a plan for putting the name BRYANTS STADIUM at some convenient place on the stadium.

Sincerely yours,

R. O. MONCLA
Supt. of Schools

ROM:bfj



STATE OF LOUISIANA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BATON ROUGE 4

October 18, 1949

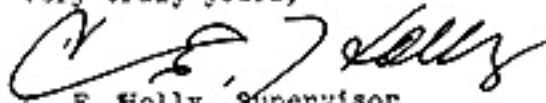
Mr. R. O. Moncla, Superintendent
Lafourche Parish School Board
Thibodaux, Louisiana

Dear Mr. Moncla:

We are enclosing the State Department's final approval of plans and specifications for the high school building for the C. M. Washington Colored High School, together with the original letters of approval by the State Fire Marshal and the State Department of Health. Under separate cover we are sending a set of the approved plans and specifications.

If we can be of any further assistance in this work, please do not hesitate to call on us.

Very truly yours,


C. E. Holly, Supervisor
School Housing

CEH:jbr

Enclosures

cc: Favrot & Reed
New Orleans, Louisiana



STATE OF LOUISIANA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BATON ROUGE 4

October 17, 1949

School	C. M. Washington Colored High
Type of work	High School
Parish	Lafourche
Superintendent	R. O. Moncla Thibodaux, Louisiana
Architect	Favrot & Reed New Orleans, Louisiana
Date of Approval	<u>October 18, 1949</u>

Final Report

The School Plants Section of the State Department of Education recommends approval of the plans and specifications covering the proposed high school building for the C. M. Washington Colored High School, in line with recommendations and approval of the State Fire Marshal and the State Department of Health, copies of which are attached and made a part of this report.

Section on School Plants


Supervisor

APPROVED:


State Superintendent of Education



DEPARTMENT

STATE FIRE MARSHAL

HUGH W. STEWART
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

NEW ORLEANS 16

August 31, 1949

RE: C. M. Washington
Colored High School
Thibodaux, Louisiana

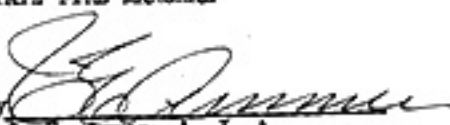
Mr. C. E. Holly
Supervisor of School Housing
Department of Education
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Dear Mr. Holly:

This is to advise that we have reviewed plans and specifications prepared by Pavrot and Reed, Architects, for the above captioned building and that same meet with the approval of this department.

Sincerely,

HUGH W. STEWART
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

By 
C. E. Amson, A. I. A.
Consulting Architect

A/D: HWS:rm

cc: Pavrot and Reed, Architects

State of Louisiana



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
CIVIL COURTS BUILDING
New Orleans 7

S. J. PHILLIPS, M.D., M.P.H.
STATE HEALTH OFFICER

October 14, 1949

Mr. C. E. Holly
Supervisor of School Housing
State Department of Education
Baton Rouge 4, Louisiana

Re: C. M. Washington School
(Colored)
Thibodaux, Louisiana

Dear Mr. Holly:

Letter from Favrot and Reed, Architects, for this school, dated October 4, 1949, in reply to my letter of October 3, is sufficiently explanatory relative to my comments.

This project is approved, therefore, with the provision that 200-watt bulbs be used in the corridor in place of the 150-watt bulbs shown on the plan.

This approval refers to sanitary features only and is not to be taken as an approval of structural details except insofar as they may affect sanitation.

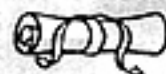
These plans and specifications are being sent to you under separate cover.

Yours very truly,

John L. Porter
John L. Porter, Assistant Director
Division of Public Health Engineering

JLP:rms

cc - Favrot & Reed, Architects
Mr. Robert O. Moncla, Supt.
Lafourche Parish Health Unit
Mr. A. B. Ritter



C. M. WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

By Kenri J. Every - Son of James & Velma Every-Berry

It began as a land of opportunity with the situation at that time.
Outsiders turned their backs and said, "Oh they're a never- mind."

Years came, and years past, but at the end of every year
there was still a wonderful, happy, inspiring class.

Whether it was academics, sports, chorus, or the band,
all people of this institution received fame,
due specifically to its name.

Thirty plus years of laughs and pains, and sunshine and
rain, or things of its kind.

These memories still live in every administrator and
alumni's mind.

Now, that is quite an impression that people would hold on
and not let go.

No one could understand why the name was changed,
and they closed the door.

From the time the first door opened, the halls were
filled with joy and pride.

There is no mistaking, I am speaking of
C. M. WASHINGTON HIGH!!!

Alumni group seeks to change school's name

Raymond Legendre

Staff Writer

Published: Monday, July 14, 2008 at 3:00 p.m.

THIBODAUX – More than four decades ago, the mere mention of the name C. M. Washington triggered feelings of pride among black people in this community, due to the school's reputation of excellence in academics, athletics and music.

But in 1968, with segregation ended in schools, the Lafourche Parish School Board changed the formerly all-black school's name from that of its founder, Cordelia Matthews Washington, to a geographically descriptive one, South Thibodaux.

Former C.M. Washington teachers and students say the School Board gave no warning of the change.

The C.M. Washington Alumni Association plans to ask the Lafourche Parish School Board to change South Thibodaux Elementary's name back to C.M. Washington.

So far, there are no indications as to when that matter might come before the board.

Lafourche Schools spokesman Floyd Benoit said board rules dictate the group would have to appear before the board to ask for the change.

They might face long odds once they do so, he noted.

"It's kind of hard to get a school named after somebody," Benoit said, adding W.S. Lafargue in Thibodaux is the lone exception. "There's only one in the entire parish, and that's because it was grandfathered in."

Prior to its name change, C.M. Washington had existed for 20 years as the only black K-12 school in Lafourche Parish. Students from Assumption and Terrebonne also attended.



Abby Taber/Staff

C.M. Washington High School graduates pose Sunday afternoon outside South Thibodaux Elementary School. (From left) Melvin Johnson, Caroline Owens, Bertha Robinson Shatkin, Marion Toney Ellis, Alma Owen Douglas, Louise Jones Williams and Bernice Williams Johnson aim to change the school's name back to C. M. Washington.

Members of the alumni group say the change robbed them of part of their history and has kept younger generations from learning much about the school.

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"It's only right that this name would be put back," said Bertha Shanklin, a former teacher and student at C.M. Washington, whose late husband, Tom Shanklin, served as the school's final principal. "That's all we had as far as history."

"Our kids coming up need to know where C.M. Washington is and what happened to it," added Alma Douglas, a graduate of the school and the alumni association's secretary. "We don't have anything except a sign they put on the property."

That is problematic, Shanklin noted, because there are countless photos and other school artifacts that need a place for safekeeping. Shanklin, the alumni association's first vice-president, added she is hopeful someone will donate land in the city to the group.

Though she said she doesn't dwell on the name, Shanklin says that if the school board restored it, she would be thrilled.

"I would really like to see the name back there. Why not? Who is that hurting?" Shanklin said.

Honoring Outstanding Service to The Community



*Ceremony honoring
individuals in Our Community*
C.M. Washington School
*dedicated to
Knowledge, Power & Peace*

Lighting of Candles Darryl Buggage & Family
Thomas Shanklin, Jr. & Family

Remarks Billy Pitre, President
Lafourche Heritage Society

Remarks/Acknowledgments Velma Fleming Avery
Chairperson, Graduate 1968



RECESSIONAL - UNVEILING OF MARKER - ALMA MATER

Benediction Reverend Leroy Carr
Graduate 1961

REFRESHMENTS - WALK DOWN MEMORY LANE

C. M. WASHINGTON
ALMA MATER

HAIL TO THEE DEAR C.M. W.

HOW WE LOVE THY NAME
WITH THY BANNER EVER FLYING
WE TO THEE GIVE FAME.

WE ARE ALL THY LOYAL STUDENTS
GUIDED BY YOUR HANDS
WORTHY STUDENTS HONORED BRIGHT ALL
HAIL TO BLUE AND WHITE

HAIL TO THEE OUR ALMA MATER
ENTWINED WITHIN GOD'S ARMS
MAY HIS BLESSINGS EVER BE WITH YOU
KEEPING YOU FROM HARM.

Special thanks to the Lafourche Heritage
Society, Ms. Velma F. Avery and to every
one who helped to make this memorable
event successful and meaningful to all who
were dedicated to, involved in, attended and
taught, and labored at this great school.
TO GOD BE THE GLORY!

C. M. WASHINGTON

REUNION 2000

HISTORICAL SITE CELEBRATION



CORDELIA MATTHEWS WASHINGTON

Sunday, July 2ND, 2000

3:00 P.M.

Alma Mater

Hail to thee dear C.M.W.
How we love thy name
With thy banner ever flying
We to thee give fame.

We are all thy loyal students
guide by your hands
Worthy students, honored bright all
Hail to blue and white.

Hail to thee our alma mater
Entwined within God's arms
May his blessings ever be with you
Keeping you from harm.