

Luther Hilton Foster High School



Historical Marker Dedication Ceremony

Saturday, July 20, 2024

12 Noon

Nottoway High School Complex

5267 Old Nottoway Road

Crewe, Virginia 23930



Dr. Luther Hilton Foster, Sr.
(1888-1949)

We want to extend a heartfelt thank you for attending this historical event.

Luther H Foster High School Alumni Association

Mission Statement: To preserve the memory and promote the legacy of Luther Hilton Foster High School.

Website: lutherfoster alumni.com Phone: 804-690-1487

Email Address: Lutherhfoster@gmail.com

The Luther Hilton Foster High School Historical Marker Dedication Ceremony

Master of Ceremonies..... Deacon David Neal
(Seating of Former Teachers and other Distinguished Guests) Class of 1965

Invocation..... Deacon Gilbert Hurte
Class of 1964

Scripture..... Reverend Evelyn Fortune Morgan
Class of 1965

Musical Selection..... Springhill Baptist Church Choir

Welcome..... Mrs. Sandra Farrar Branch
President
Class of 1966

Guest Speaker..... Dr. Jennifer R Loux, Ph.D
Highway Marker Program Manager
Department of Historic Resources

School History..... Mr. James Clarke
Class of 1967

Recognition of Elected Officials and Teachers..... Mrs. Eta Booker Neal
Class of 1965

Alumni Association..... Mrs. Sallie Berniece Ligon Rich
President Emeritus
Class of 1959

Scholarship Program..... Mrs. Doris Eland Farrar
Class of 1967

Memorial Tribute (teachers/staff/students)..... Mrs. Lanette Robinson Harris
Class of 1958

Musical Selection..... Springhill Baptist Church Choir

Remarks..... Mr. William "Elly" Coleburn, Editor
Courier Record
Mr. Steve Bowen
Nottoway County Administrator

Unveiling Marker	Mrs. Sandra Branch, President Mr. William "Billy" Coleburn, Editor
Marker Statement.....	Mrs. Susan Smith Hawkes Vice President, Class of 1966
Prayer of Dedication.....	Deacon Jean Booth Thornton Class of 1963
School Song.....	Hail Foster High
Remarks.....	Mrs. Sandra Branch, President
Benediction/Blessing of Food.....	Reverend Roger Coleman

HISTORY OF LUTHER HILTON FOSTER HIGH SCHOOL

Luther H. Foster High School, located on Highway 460, one mile from Nottoway Courthouse in Nottoway County, VA, was completed in 1950 at a cost of approximately \$680,000. The building contained 18 classrooms, and a complete Home Economics Department (five rooms and bath), Industrial Arts and Agriculture Shops, a science laboratory. The auditorium seated 650 and had a motion picture booth. The library had a special conference room and a workroom. There were special rooms for music, art, and visual aids. The school had a cafeteria and a clinic.

The school was dedicated on June 6, 1950. It was named the Luther H. Foster High School in memory of Dr. Luther Hilton Foster, deceased, former President of Virginia State College at Petersburg, Virginia. Dr. Foster served the college as president from 1943 to 1949. Before his appointment as president, he served as business manager for many years. At the dedication exercises, Mrs. Foster spoke to the assembly and Dr. R. P. Daniels, President of Virginia State College delivered the major address.

On June 6, 1950, the first commencement exercises were held in the school auditorium, even though the building was still incomplete. The last graduating class of the old Nottoway Training School was the first to march down the aisles of the auditorium. There were 64 graduates. This class planted the maple tree outside of the home economics department.

In September of 1950, the first class met in the building. There was a teaching staff of 17, including Mr. James B. Woodson, Principal; John L. Collins, Physical Education; Marie Goodman, Music; Mrs. Elizabeth Barbour, English; Mrs. Doris Williams (Strode), English and Dramatics; Rufus M. Gant, Industrial Arts; Alan Thornhill, Business; Mrs. Alice H. Birckhead, Home Economics; Miss Ruth M. Johns (Pegram), Home Economics; Margaret Bizzell, Science; Theresa Taylor (Oliver), Math; Emma Sykes (Davis), Librarian; W. L. Carter, Agriculture; Mrs. Grace Womack, English; Mrs. Blanche Newkirk (Penn), French; Mrs. Almuida Lomax (Smith), Chemistry. Approximately 350 pupils were enrolled. The first Parent-Teacher Association was organized and Miss Almuida Lomax served as president. The first Cadet Teachers were Miss Princess Kelsaw and Miss Eliza Ann Fisher. Miss Fisher later joined the staff.

.In June of 1951, the first graduating class of Luther H. Foster High School held its commencement exercises in the auditorium. There were 72 graduates; Anna Jones was valedictorian and Martha Carter, salutatorian. An increased enrollment in the elementary schools of the county made it necessary to move the seventh grade pupils to Foster in September, 1952. At this time, four elementary teachers and three high school teachers were added to the teaching staff. Enrollment increased to 457 pupils.

HISTORY OF LUTHER HILTON FOSTER HIGH SCHOOL (continued)

In 1951, the 5th year was added to all four year high schools in Virginia. All pupils entering high school in September of 1951, and thereafter, would spend five years instead of four at the Luther Foster High School. As a result, there was no graduating class in 1955, but a diploma was awarded to Mr. Henry (Chick) Townes of Crewe, who had returned from the Armed Forces. Through the years, many changes occurred. The first clinic room was changed into a private office for the principal and the second one was later changed to the guidance office; the conference room of the library was converted to a bookstore; the art room used for physical education. The drafting room of the Industrial Arts Department became the agriculture classroom; the former agriculture classroom was used for boys physical education classes. The teaching staff grew from 18 to 27 and for the first time, in the year 1965-66, Miss Martha Singleton was appointed as full-time guidance counselor. The enrollment increased from 350 to 549. There were 64 graduates in 1951, there were 90 graduates in 1965.

In 1958, Mr. J. B. Woodson resigned to become principal of Walker-Grant High School in Fredericksburg, VA, and Mr. Joseph B. Pervall, former principal of the Luther P. Jackson High School in Cumberland, VA, became principal of Luther H. Foster.

School Song, Colors, Team Name: "Hail Foster High" was composed in 1951 by Miss Florence Marie Goodman, the first teacher of music at Luther H. Foster. It was sung to the tune of "Danny Boy" or the "Londonderry Air". Miss Goodman (Mrs. Charles Hunter) is a native of Richmond, VA, and a 1950 graduate of Virginia State College. The school colors maroon and white, were adopted 1950-51. Mr. David Maynard of Burlington, NC, succeeded Mr. J. L. Collins as coach in 1951. He began the search for a name for the athletic teams. The faculty and students liked the sound of "The Bulldogs" and the "Foster Bulldogs" came into being.

School Annual: The class of 1954, the last four year graduates, were the first to request a yearbook. Time did not permit them to publish one. However, the final edition of the Foster Star (the school paper) was dedicated to this class and carried a picture of each graduate. (The Foster Star was published from 1950-1959 under the sponsorship of Mrs. Theresa Taylor Oliver). Among the graduates at that time were Miss Rose Marie Chatmon, Miss Emily Williams and Mr. Norris Johnson, who later became faculty members. The first edition of the Bulldog, the school yearbook, was published in 1956. It was dedicated to the principal and the faculty. Barbara Lewis and Clarence Williams were co-editors. The sponsors were Mrs. Elizabeth Barbour, Miss Mary E. Griffin (Mrs. West) and Mrs. Bernice Woodson. Luther H. Foster High School existed until 1970.

Written by Mrs. Alice H. Birckhead for the Luther H. Foster High School Alumni Association in 1995. Addendum to L. H. Foster history: The old Luther H. Foster High School building is still in use and is being utilized as the Nottoway Intermediate School.

Current Officers 2024: Sandra Farrar Branch, President; Susan Smith Hawkes, Vice President; Eta Booker Neal, Secretary; Jessie King, Treasurer; Ralph Branch, Assistant Treasurer

Appointed Committees/Committee: Lanette Harris, Chair, Sick and Bereavement; James Clarke, Historian; Eta Neal, Library Assistant; Doris B. Farrar, Susan S. Hawkes and Sandra Branch, Scholarship Committee; Michael Bagley, Edith Smith, Jean Thornton, Patti Vaughter; Teacher's Collage by Jessie King, Class of 1966

Class Representatives: 1950 Vacant; 1951 Vacant; 1952 Lola White; 1953 Lessie Jennings; 1954 Lawrence V. Harris; 1955 Henry "Chick" Townes (D); 1956 Clarence Williams; 1957 Mary Woodson; 1958 Shirley Rather Allen; 1959 Sallie Ligon Rich; 1960 Vacant; 1962 Edith Hill Smith; 1963 Jean Eboth Thornton; 1964 Patti Sterns Vaughter; 1965 Eta Booker Neal; 1966 Susan Smith Hawkes; 1967 James Clarke; 1968 Ralph Harvey Lee Branch; 1969 John Pettis; 1970 Michael Bagley, Pauline Fowlkes Whirley

Spring Hill Baptist Choir: Alice Barner, James Elount, Sandra Christopher, Gwendolyn Johnson, Tommie King, Brenda Marshall, Olander Marshall, Sue Mitchell, David Neal, Diane Pritchett, Christine Smith, Mande Smith, Patti Vaughter, Charles Vaughter, Nannie Watson, Clara White, Frances Wilson, Shirley Wilson, Ruth Williams

In Memory Dr. Luther Hilton Foster, Sr.

Luther Hilton Foster, Sr., was born on May 26, 1888, in the little town of Clover in Halifax County, Virginia. He was the son of Oliver and Mary Elizabeth Bailey Foster. His father was a farmer who also operated a small country store on the highway just outside of town. His mother had been a slave child. Theirs was a family of ten children, with Luther the fifth of six boys and four girls. Luther attended the grades taught in one- and two-room county schools. He liked arithmetic and studied it during the summer months, using a plank portable blackboard borrowed from the school. He made his first desk from rough plank. It had a top which he kept locked to keep his papers and belongings secure.

During these formative years he was engaged in part-time farm work and worked in his father's store. That was the beginning of his life's work. In his late teens and early 20's he attended St. Paul's Oral & Industrial Institute (St. Paul's College) in Lawrenceville, Virginia. Following graduation he taught for one year in the public schools, after which he returned to St. Paul's to serve a three-year apprenticeship in the institute's business office. From 1911 to 1913 he was employed as head bookkeeper at St. Paul's under the supervision of Daniel Crawford Smith, CPA, of New York City, auditor for the institute.

On September 9, 1912, he married his classmate, Daisy Octavia Poole of Surry, Virginia, who was at that time secretary to St. Paul's principal. In 1913, Luther left St. Paul's to begin work at Virginia Normal & Industrial Institute (Virginia State University) in Petersburg, replacing the retiring Treasurer-Business Manager

Luther had a keen and inquiring mind that never left a question unanswered. This brought him in contact with many outside the academic world. Over the years, he was offered employment by schools and foundations and was asked to manage a major city's black housing project. As Virginia State College's (Virginia State University) Treasurer-Business Manager from 1913-1944, and President from 1944-1949, it was his responsibility to assure the maintenance of a physical and academic environment where teachers could teach and students would come wanting to learn. That he did for 36 of his 61 years.

Luther died of natural causes in Petersburg, Virginia, on July 6, 1949, and was buried in Blandford Cemetery, Petersburg. His wife Daisy and their three children, Luther Hilton Jr., Virginia Poole, and Mary Allen, survived him. His living descendants include 2 children, 5 grandchildren, 8 great grandchildren and 3 great-great-children. In June 1950, the newly completed Luther H. Foster High School in Nottoway County, Virginia, was dedicated in memory of Luther H. Foster; Virginia State University's Luther Hilton Foster Hall student activities building was dedicated in 1954. Historian Rayford Logan (1897-1982), in the *Dictionary of American Negro Biography*, edited with Michael Winston, cited highlights of the life's work of Luther H. Foster, Sr. Several excerpts follow: Along with serving as college administrator from 1913 until his death in 1949, Luther Hilton Foster, Sr., was a pioneer in educational financial planning and management. He applied much of his attention and expertise to assisting Negro higher educational institutions improve their business operations from 1929 to 1949 as consultant for the General Education Board and the Julius Rosenwald Fund.

It was Foster's work at Virginia State College—where he served as treasurer and business manager (1913-1943), as acting president (1943-1944), and as president from 1944 until his death—that brought him wide acclaim as an astute administrator and financial "wizard." Those who knew and were associated with him at Virginia State characterized Foster as a "person of high integrity and demanding standards, whose passion for work set an outstanding example for faculty and staff as well as students of the college."

In Memory Dr. Luther Hilton Foster, Sr. (continued)

When Foster became associated with Virginia State College in 1913 it was a normal school without accreditation. During his thirty-six-year tenure—with extended leaves of absence to pursue further study at the University of Chicago—Virginia State strengthened and expanded its program to offer Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, and Master of Science degrees, and received full accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. For thirty years as treasurer and business manager of the college Foster had responsibility for all financial operations, including planning for capital additions, preparation and justification of operating and capital expenditures to state officials and other agencies from which funds were secured. While Foster was at Virginia State the plant grew from \$285,000 to \$5 million in value; the endowment fund increased from zero to \$173,000; the operating budget expanded from \$36,000 to \$1.4 million; and the annual income from public funds increased from \$16,500 to \$635,000. At the time of Foster's death in 1949 the college had a resident enrollment of 1,500 students; the junior college division—established in Norfolk in 1944—enrolled 800 students. In addition, the college offered a number of services to adults in the state through home study and extension courses, workshops, and special institutes. Despite offers to take positions at other institutions—including Howard University, Hampton Institute, Tuskegee Institute, and Kentucky State College—Foster chose to remain at Virginia State College. He wrote to one of his friends in 1942:

"I have remained here because I have been interested in and fond of the work which I have tried to do here. We have had good Boards under which to work during the last 30 years. There has been a growing tendency toward more liberal support of this College, and I have been happy to work under the several Boards and with my associates here looking toward the coming of brighter days and better things. To say that I feel encouraged and rewarded over the results would be expressing it very mildly."

For twenty years—from 1929 until his death—Foster was financial adviser for all Negro institutions which received funds from the general Education Board. He was also a specialist in business administration for the Julius Rosenwald Fund. The board was making modest grants to some of the Negro colleges and needed to be assured that the money would be used with maximum effectiveness in carrying out a carefully developed educational program in each instance. His services as consultant to the General Education Board included visits and evaluations of programs at the colleges, in which he was often joined by board officers as well as by business officers from other Negro Colleges.

In Foster's work with Negro Colleges to improve their fiscal operations, the need for better trained business officers was evident to him. He established an internship for college business officers at Virginia State College—with financing from the General Education Board—and a number of promising young men were associated with the program for several months to learn the Virginia State College system and the business management techniques employed so effectively by Foster.

In 1939 Foster joined with the treasurer of Howard University, and the business manager of Hampton Institute in establishing the Association of Business Officers in Schools for Negroes. He served as the association's first president and as a member of its executive committee until his death. In 1947, he obtained authorization for the establishment of a senior ROTC at Virginia State (Thomas D. Pawley to R.W.L., Feb. 13, 1976). From 1946 to 1949, Foster was president of the Association of Presidents of Negro Land Grant Colleges; was administrator of the Virginia Graduate Aid Fund for out-of-state study by Negro students; served as a member of the Virginia State Planning Board, the Board of Trustees of Bishop Payne Divinity School in Petersburg and of St. Paul's Institute. He was active in the YMCA, the United Service Organization during World War II and was a life member of the NAACP. He was also a member of the Masonic Order, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Iota Sigma Lambda Fraternity, and Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity.

In Memory Dr. Luther Hilton Foster, Sr. (continued)

An Episcopalian, Foster served as vestryman at St. Stephen's Church in Petersburg and was a member of the executive board of the Diocese of Southern Virginia, and of the subcommittee, Division of Domestic Missions, National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Foster received honorary Doctor of Laws degrees from Morris Brown College in 1943 and from Virginia Union University the same year. His name was included in the Honor Roll of the Richmond, VA, Times-Dispatch in 1942, and in 1944 he was awarded a certificate of merit by Camp Lee, VA, for his community college-army cooperation during World War II.

Sources: Personal papers and notes of family members, including excerpts from Rayford W. Logan and Michael R. Winston, Editors, *Dictionary of American Negro Biography*, Norton, 1982

Written by Laura Hendrick Foster Charity, Granddaughter

Dr. Luther Hilton Foster, Sr. Family



Mary Elizabeth Bailey Foster (mother)



Dr. Luther H Foster (1909)



Luther H Foster & Daisy Octavia Poole Foster



Front L-R Luther H Foster, Jr. (son), Laura Virginia Hendrick Charity, (granddaughter), Daisy Octavia Poole Foster, (wife/widow), Mary Allen Foster Burleigh, (daughter), and Virginia Poole Foster Hendrick, (daughter) Back left Luther Hilton Foster, III, (grandson), Janet Marie Foster, (great-daughter)



Mary Allen Foster, daughter



L-R Luther H Foster Jr., Luther H Foster, Sr. and Virginia Poole Foster



Luther Hilton Foster High School

HISTORICAL MARKER INSCRIPTION

This school, built at a cost of more than \$600,000, provided secondary education to Black students from 1950-1970, when Nottoway County fully desegregated its schools. Although planning for the new high school had begun by 1946, the county proceeded with urgency in 1948 after a federal court ruled for the plaintiffs in equalization lawsuits elsewhere in VA. The school was named for Halifax County native Dr. Luther Hilton Foster (1888-1949), a nationally known figure in Black higher education and former president of what is now Virginia State University. Despite racial discrimination, many graduates became educators, attorneys, physicians, civil servants, and military service members.



The Mighty Bulldogs



Luther Hilton Foster High School

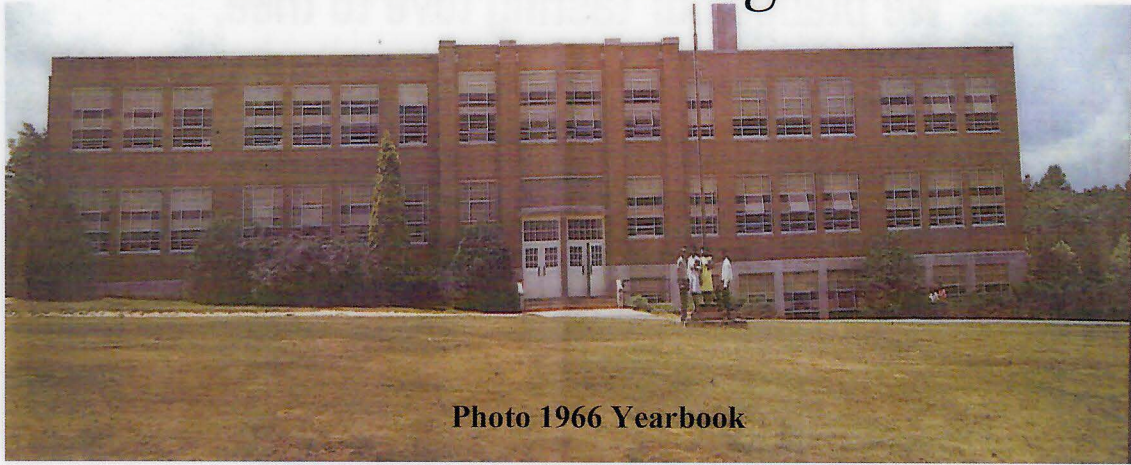


Photo 1966 Yearbook



The Mighty Bulldogs



Nottoway Intermediate School



Photo by Ralph Branch, III

FORMERLY LUTHER H. FOSTER HIGH SCHOOL

Hail Foster High!

We pledge our lasting love to thee,
Our voices raised; we'll ever sing your praise,
With open minds, we'll learn, we'll know no other,
Thy name alone; we'll proudly cheer and raise.

Hail Foster High!

Your portals stand so steadfast,
True to humanity and brotherhood
We'll stand with you, forever and forever,
Your cause is just so kind, so true and so good.

Hail Foster High!

Erect with structure bold and great,
Your beauty, we will always keep preserved,
You stand in tribute to the welfare of mankind,
It's us dear school; it's us you've nobly served.

Composed 1951 by: Mrs. Marie Goodman Hunter
Tune: Danny Boy