

Fairmount Heights



Prince George's County, Maryland

Prince George's County public schools celebrate National African-American History Month each year by recognizing prominent individuals and communities who have made significant contributions to society.

This year, the Office of Communications presents a look at the history of Fairmount Heights, Fairmount Heights Elementary and Fairmount Heights High School. Prince George's County Public Schools honors the contributions of the early African-American communities in Prince George's County, and is proud to share their stories.

Fairmount Heights has the distinction of being the largest and oldest Black community in Prince George's County. The earliest settlers were Black families who purchased small plots of land between Addison and Sheriff Roads in 1903, acting on their desire for affordable, low cost, single-family houses in a community that would be governed by themselves. The residents established a Citizen's Association and worked diligently to improve the town. The first attempt to incorporate was in 1922, but it was not until 1935 that the process was completed. Fairmount Heights is now a thriving residential community.

Fairmount Heights was home to several pioneers and achievers who made significant contributions to the town and to Prince George's County. James F. Armstrong, the first Supervisor of Colored Schools in Prince George's County and later a member of the town council, built his home there in 1904. Prominent architect William Sidney Pittman built his home on Eastern Avenue; his wife, Portia, was the daughter of Booker T. Washington, founder of the Tuskegee Institute. Doswell Brooks moved into the community around 1928. He was the first Black Supervisor for Colored Schools in Prince George's County and the first African-American member of the Board of Education. Robert Gray was a very active citizen of Fairmount Heights. He was the principal of the first school built in the town, Fairmount Heights Elementary. He also served as president of the Fairmount Heights Federal Credit Union, clerk-treasurer of the town, deputy mayor, and mayor from 1977 to 1989.

The spirit of the early settlers of Fairmount Heights still exists today. Officials continue to seek ways to improve the quality of life in the town. Despite the changes that Fairmount Heights has experienced, desire, vision, courage, and perseverance remain constant in the makeup of its residents.

Source: <http://www.mdmunicipal.org/cities/index.cfm?townname=FairmountHeights&page=home>



This 59th Avenue house was home to Judge James Taylor, who became Prince George's County's first Black judge in 1969. (Photo: Emilie Sommer For The Washington Post, Nov. 8, 2003)

Fairmount Heights or Fairmont Heights???

In 1979, Fairmount Heights Mayor Robert Gray, explained the discrepancy between the spelling of the town and the school. The case of the missing “u” dates back to 1934, one year before the town of Fairmount Heights was incorporated.

A contractor from Chicago, rushed to complete construction of the town’s elementary school, installed a sign, “Fairmont Heights Elementary School,” minus the “u.”

“I was principal of the school at the time,” said Gray. “What happened was that when the letters came in from Chicago, the “u” was left out. Since the contractor was leaving soon and couldn’t wait for the correction, he put up what he had.”

This omission has plagued spelling sticklers ever since.

A community grew up around the school and soon was called, “Fairmont Park,” after the nearby school.

When the high school was constructed in the 1950’s, the “u” also was dropped from the name, and the name has remained that way.

In an attempt to right the wrong, the town succeeded several years ago in restoring the “u” to the name of Fairmount Heights Elementary School, said Gray. The school has since been demolished.

From an article in the PG Journal by Phyllis Gruen, 1979

FAIRMOUNT HEIGHTS

BOUNDARIES: Sheriff Road to the north; Eastern Avenue to the west; Balsamtree Drive to the east; and 62nd Avenue, Addison Road and Jefferson Heights Drive to the south.

SCHOOLS: Robert R. Gray Elementary, G. James Gholson Middle, and Fairmont Heights High Schools. (The name of the town and the high school, opened in 1950, are spelled differently.)

WITHIN 10-15 MINUTES BY CAR: FedEx Field and Wayne K. Curry Sports & Learning Center, Addison Plaza, Capital Beltway, and the District of Columbia



*Fairmount Heights Municipal Center
717 60th Place
Fairmount Heights*

Fairmount Heights Landmarks



The World War II Monument was erected in 1946 to honor the citizens of Fairmount Heights who served in the armed forces during the war.

World War II Monument
59th Avenue at 59th Place
Fairmount Heights



Pittman House
505 Eastern Avenue, Fairmount Heights
Built in 1907 by William Sidney Pittman

The **Pittman House** is a modest front-gabled house which stands on high ground overlooking the boundary between Prince George's County and the District of Columbia. This modest house is not immediately noticeable for its form; it is typical of the dwellings built on the small lots of developing urban subdivision. It is, however, a landmark in Fairmount Heights because of its historical associations. It was designed and built as his family home by architect William Sidney Pittman in 1907, the year in which he married Portia, daughter of his former mentor, Booker T. Washington. Pittman (1875-1958) had attended Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and then received a degree in Architectural and Mechanical Drawing from Drexel Institute in Philadelphia in 1900. He returned to Tuskegee to teach until 1905, at which time he opened his own architectural office in the Shaw neighborhood of Washington, D.C. After their marriage in 1907, the Pittmans moved into the house (known to the family as "Little White Tops") that he had designed in the developing suburb of Fairmount Heights. The Pittmans moved to Dallas, Texas, at the end of 1912, where Pittman spent the rest of his life. His house in Fairmount Heights became a boarding house with a dance pavilion on the grounds, and later a private residence. Typical of the suburban dwellings which were being built in the early years of this century, the Pittman House is significant because it was designed and occupied by one of the area's first and most prominent Black architects.

The **Nichols House** was certainly one of the community's most beautiful and substantial houses when it was built in 1908. The house was built by John F. Collins, who sold the house and two lots in 1909 to Robert S. Nichols. Nichols had come to Maryland from Texas and worked in the U.S. Pension office in the District of Columbia. He settled with his young family in this new house on White (now 58th) Avenue and soon became active in community affairs. He headed the citizens committee which pursued and brought about the establishment of the public school in Fairmount Heights, and in 1912 served on the building committee of that school. Nichols worked toward the incorporation of Fairmount Heights and, in 1935, when the town was incorporated, he was elected as its first mayor. He served two consecutive one-year terms. The house remained in Nichols family ownership until after the death of Robert Nichols in 1960. It is still a familiar and noticeable feature of the Fairmount Heights community.



Robert S. Nichols House
802 58th Avenue
Fairmount Heights

The **Washington House** was built between 1922 and 1924 on property purchased by **Prince Albert Washington** in 1921 in the West Fairmount Heights subdivision; this was the fifth subdivision (platted in 1911) to make up the community of Fairmount Heights. Washington spent the next two years with the help of friends, building a house (Model 3085) with the plans and materials ordered from Sears, Roebuck and Company. This model was nearly identical to Sears' popular "Westly" model; plans and materials cost the owner/builder approximately \$2,460. The result was a particularly appealing example of a side-gabled 1920's bungalow.



Prince Albert Washington House
949 Eastern Avenue
Fairmount Heights

Prince Albert Washington had moved to Washington, D.C., as a child in 1902, and had served in the armed forces during World War I before beginning work at the Department of the Interior. He purchased the Fairmount Heights property, began the building project, and then moved into the house with his new bride in 1924. His descendants still own and occupy the house. It is a particularly fine example of a Sears, Roebuck and Company house, and a significant illustration of the importance of the mail-order houses in the development of residential subdivisions of the period.



Bungalow Row
62nd Avenue between Foote Street and
Addison Road, Fairmount Heights

In 1920, developer Robinson White had 19 small frame bungalows, of identical form and style, built on lots on both sides of a block of Fairview (now 62nd) Avenue in the original Fairmount Heights subdivision. These one-story, four-room dwellings closely resemble the "Rosita" style of bungalow being produced by Sears, Roebuck and Company during this period, and it is likely that they were all built from Sears material. Each had a hipped roof and central chimney and a shed-roof porch sheltering the three-bay principal facade. Most were built into a slope and rested on a high basement; others were built on more level ground and rested on a simple foundation. Robinson White began to sell these small, inexpensive dwellings as soon as they were completed; by 1926 he had sold seven of the bungalows and by 1929 three more. He rented to tenants some of the unsold bungalows, gradually selling all the rest by the time of his death in 1939.



"Rosita" Model (by Sears, Roebuck and Company)
Probable model for the bungalows of "Bungalow Row."

Thirteen of the 19 original bungalows now survive, several of them in deteriorating condition. There are several other examples of the same dwelling type in Fairmount Heights, notably along Addison Road near the northeast end of 62nd Avenue. Another identical bungalow, also built in 1920 by developer White, stands at 904 59th Avenue; it was purchased by the Town of Fairmount Heights. These small bungalows illustrate the importance of mail-order houses in developing communities of the post-World War I era, and represent a significant trend in the development of Fairmount Heights.

Fairmount Heights

Famous Residents

Long before Prince George's County became one of the nation's most affluent majority-Black suburbs, Fairmount Heights was home to prominent African-Americans. Circa 1900 Victorians and 1920s bungalows share Fairmount Heights streets with split-foyer houses built during the last 12 years.

The home that Portia Washington Pittman, daughter of Booker T. Washington, shared with architect William Sidney Pittman after their marriage in 1907 remains on Eastern Avenue. The home of Doswell Brooks — the county's first Black Superintendent for Colored Schools, beginning in 1922, and a past mayor of the town — still stands on Foote Avenue.

Henry Pinckney, White House steward for President Theodore Roosevelt, lived on 60th Place. James Taylor, who became the county's first Black judge when he was named to the circuit court in 1969, lived on 59th Avenue in a classical revival-style house built in 1910.

William Sidney Pittman



William Sidney Pittman
1875 - 1958

William Sidney Pittman, prominent architect, was born in Alabama on April 21, 1875. He attended Tuskegee Institute, where he completed programs in woodwork and architectural-mechanical drawing in 1897. He then entered Drexel Institute in Philadelphia, where he completed the architecture and mechanical drawing program in 1900. From late 1900 to 1905, Pittman worked at Tuskegee Institute as head of the department of architectural drawing. In late 1903, he left Tuskegee to establish a private practice in Washington, D.C. Between 1905 and 1909, he designed public schools, college facilities, and hotels and gained recognition as one of the most accomplished Black architects in America. During this period, he was commissioned to prepare design and construction documents for the Negro Building at the Jamestown Exposition, the world's fair held in Virginia in 1907. Pittman was also involved in community development in Fairmount Heights, Maryland, where he lived. He organized and was elected president of the Fairmount Heights Improvement Company, an investment organization geared toward fostering an alternative to the inner-city ghetto. He was president of the Fairmount Heights Citizens Committee and the Washington Chapter of the Negro Business League, for which he edited the *Negro Business League Herald*.

In 1907, Pittman married Portia Washington, daughter of Booker T. Washington, founder and principal of Tuskegee Institute. In 1913, the Pittmans moved to Dallas, Texas, where they raised two sons and a daughter. Between 1911 and 1927, Pittman operated his architectural practice from his home. He was the first practicing black architect in Texas. During his sixteen-year practice in Dallas, he designed at least seven major projects in the city, as well as projects in Fort Worth, Houston, San Antonio, and Waxahachie.

He died in Dallas on March 14, 1958.

Portia Marshall Washington Pittman



Portia Marshall Washington Pittman
1883 - 1978

Portia Marshall Washington Pittman, musician and teacher, was born in Tuskegee, Alabama, on June 6, 1883, the only daughter of Booker T. and Fanny Washington. Her father was the founder of Tuskegee Institute. Portia was already a fairly accomplished pianist by the age of ten. After grammar school, she returned home to take classes at Tuskegee Institute; in 1901, she attended Wellesley College in Massachusetts. She continued her piano studies and became the first black person to obtain a degree from the Bradford Academy in 1905. Upon graduation, Portia traveled to Berlin to study under master pianist Martin Krause. In 1907, she returned to the United States and married Sidney Pittman in the chapel of Tuskegee Institute.

Pittman set up an architectural practice and built their home in Fairmount Heights, Maryland. Between 1908 and 1912, Portia gave birth to her three children. Portia made her concert debut in a joint recital with Clarence Cameron White in May 1908 in Washington, and periodically toured on a concert circuit.

In later life, Portia oversaw the establishment of the Booker T. Washington Foundation to provide academic scholarships for Black students, and worked to have her father remembered as a great African-American leader. She died in February 1978 in Washington, D.C.

Doswell E. Brooks



Doswell E. Brooks
1894 - 1968

Doswell E. Brooks was the Supervisor of Black schools for 34 years in Prince George's County beginning in 1922. He was born in Virginia but raised in Baltimore, Maryland. He attended Hampton Institute to become a teacher. World War I took him to France. After the war, he came to Prince George's County to supervise 43 schools. A year later, he helped to start the first high school for Black students in Upper Marlboro.

Doswell Brooks helped to buy the first school bus for Black students and worked hard to see that students had new books. He worked with parents to buy a building for their countywide Parent/Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. He also served on the Fairmount Heights town council and was elected Mayor in 1955. In 1956, he was appointed as the first Black member of the Prince George's County Board of Education.

Doswell Brooks served as Mayor until shortly before his death in 1968. He is buried at the Baltimore National Cemetery, Baltimore City, Maryland.

Doswell E. Brooks Elementary School, in Capitol Heights, Maryland, was renamed in his honor in 1968. The school was erected in 1929.

Robert R. Gray



Robert R. Gray
1910 - 2003
First Principal of Fairmount Heights Elementary School

Robert Ridgley Gray grew up in Lakeland (later College Park), Maryland. He attended Armstrong High School in Washington, D.C., and graduated in 1927. Three years later, he received his teaching certificate from Bowie State College. In 1949, he received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Elementary Education from Morgan State College in Baltimore, Maryland, and, in 1951, he earned a Master of Arts Degree in Administration and Supervision from New York University. In addition, he attended George Washington University and took courses in administration and supervision.

His career as a school administrator began in 1930, when he served as principal of a two- and four-teacher school in Talbot County, Maryland. He started to work in Prince George's County in 1934 as principal of Fairmount Heights Elementary School. He left Fairmount Heights to serve in the United States Army from 1942-1946, and returned to continue serving as principal at the school until 1970.

Robert Gray was also an active volunteer in the Fairmount Heights community. He served on the administrative board of his church, Grace United Methodist; assumed several leadership positions in the Elks Club; volunteered as the Maryland Congress of PTA's Recording Secretary from 1936-1940; acted as the Town of Fairmount Heights Clerk Treasurer from 1953-1959; and served as a town Council member, and finally, Mayor from 1977-1989.

Robert R. Gray Elementary School, in District Heights, Maryland, opened in August 2001, and was dedicated April 20, 2002.

Fairmount Heights Public Schools

Fairmount Heights Elementary School

Fairmount Heights Industrial School (established 1911)
737 61st Avenue
Fairmount Heights, MD



The building that housed the original **Fairmount Heights Elementary School** is one of the largest of the historic buildings in Fairmount Heights, and a focal point in the community. It was designed by architect W. Sidney Pittman, and built in 1912 on several lots in the Fairmount Heights subdivision.

In January 1911, a group of residents approached the Board of School Commissioners and requested that an elementary school be built in the community. The Board agreed, a building committee was appointed, and Pittman was chosen to submit a design for the school. In April of 1911, the Board ordered that the school be erected in accordance with Pittman's plans and specifications. In September 1911, the Board purchased four unimproved lots at the corner of Chapel Avenue and Addison Road. The school, to be known as "Colored School" #1 in District 18, opened in 1912. It was a large, two-story frame building with a hip roof, the interior divided into two large classrooms on the first story, connected by hallways at right angles, and a side staircase. Similar classrooms on the second story were completed in 1914.

In August 1914, the Board ordered the establishment of an "industrial department," and the Fairmount Heights Elementary School became the first

school in the county to offer industrial training for Black students. James F. Armstrong was named Director of Manual Training. By 1915, enrollment had increased to 160 pupils, with five teachers, four classrooms, three hallways, and a carpenter shop.

With the development of the community and the increase of the local student population, the new school was soon overcrowded. In 1922, James Armstrong began to press the Board of Education (which had superseded the Board of School Commissioners) for the construction of an addition to the school building. The one-story addition was completed in 1923.

This building served as the public school for Fairmount Heights until 1934, when a new eight-room brick school was built at the corner of Addison and Sheriff Roads. At that time, the old school property was purchased by the Mount Zion Apostolic Faith Church, which continues to hold services there. Although the Fairmount Heights Elementary School has undergone significant changes in the last 60 years, it still reflects its original use and its important role in the formation and growth of the Fairmount Heights community: it exemplifies the social, educational, and historic heritage of the county in its urban communities. In addition, it is identified with two important individuals who influenced society: architect William Sidney Pittman, who not only designed the building, but played an important role in the community's early development; and James F. Armstrong, teacher and first Supervisor of Colored Schools in Prince George's County. In spite of exterior changes, the building still embodies, with its general configuration and detail, the distinctive character of the institutional foursquare form and craftsman detail of the early twentieth century.

Eight-room brick school, built 1934, at the corner of Addison and Sheriff Roads. Replaced the original building designed by W. Sidney Pittman.



Fairmont Heights High School



In 1952, Black children for the first time were given access to education from the first to the twelfth grade. Previously, unlike White children, they only had access to eleven grades. Fairmont Heights High School had the first twelfth grade class of Black Students.

(From an interview with Clement Martin and Barbara Fletcher Martin
Like A Phoenix III Rise by Alvin Thornton and Karen Williams Gooden)

Fairmont Heights High School opened in September 1950 as Fairmont Heights Junior-Senior High School. It was one of two high schools for Black students in Prince George's County and replaced the Lakeland High School. Its purpose was to serve the Black students in western Prince George's County. Enrollment on opening day was 738 students.

Fairmont Heights' opening was the fulfillment of a dream for Black citizens who had campaigned actively for many years for a modern high school in the county. Because of the great hardships that had been endured, a deep sense of pride in the building and what it represented was early affirmed by residents of the school's community as evidenced by the support it received.

By early 1960, the enrollment had increased to more than 1,900 students, with portable classrooms accommodating the overflow. In 1961, Mary McLeod Bethune Junior High School was built two blocks away, and the 7th and 8th grade students were transferred to this school. The following year, the 9th grade students moved to Bethune and Fairmont became a senior high school.

G. James Gholson, the school's first principal, was appointed Administrative Assistant to the Assistant Superintendent of Schools at the central office in 1969 and was replaced by Alvin V. Fortune. School morale began to decline as teachers were transferred to other schools in the county to achieve racial balance. At the end of his second year, Fortune was transferred to a junior high school. Dr. Donald A. Kiah became Fairmont Heights' third principal in 1971.

As a result of the 1972 Desegregation Order, many of the faculty and students were transferred to other schools, and the curriculum was changed drastically to comply with Board requirements. In the next few years, there were five separate attempts to close Fairmont Heights and send its students to neighboring schools.



PTA Executive Board (1951)

First Row, Left to Right: Myrtle A. Fentress, Clarisa B. Johnson, *Vice President*, Evelyn Cole, *President*, Agnes M. Edwards, Mabel Lockett

Second Row, Left to Right: Daniel Bell, L. W. Jackson, G. James Gholson, David Washington, Rev. William H. Thomas



William S. Schmidt
Superintendent of Schools when Fairmont Heights HS opened in 1950.

Each time the School Board proposed a plan to close the school, the community rallied together, and with the aid of local political leaders, including alumni Tommie Broadwater, Nathaniel Exum, and Decatur Trotter, was able to convince the Board that the school was considered a landmark by the Black community and must be allowed to survive. The first elected Black member of the School Board, Jesse Warr, was also instrumental in ensuring the survival of Fairmont Heights. Despite the uncertainty and numerous court suits, Fairmont continued to produce outstanding athletic teams, held various championship titles, and provided the first elected student member of the Board of Education.

In 1978, Clarence McDonald became principal, a position he held for 17 years. A fire at Fairmont Heights High School on January 4, 1980, caused \$500,000 in damage. In 1981, Fairmont Heights moved into the unused Kent Junior High building while the school's interior was completely renovated at a cost of \$8,400,000. Fairmont Heights reopened in its original location in August 1983, a modernized, air-conditioned plant with many windows, a new library media center, exercise and weight training rooms, data processing centers, music facilities, refurbished classrooms, and bright hallways. During the renovation period, Mary McLeod Bethune Junior High closed and Fairmont Heights became, once again, a four-year high school.

In 1995, Dr. Carolyn D. Blue was appointed Chief Educational Administrator (CEA), a title for principal under the Cluster Concept used during Superintendent Jerome Clark's administration. Dr. Blue served from 1995-2003.

Richard Jones was principal at Fairmont Heights High School from 2003-2005, followed by the current principal in 2005, alumnus Peggy Nicholson.



G. James Gholson, first principal of Fairmont Heights HS, speaks at the first graduation ceremony.



Fairmont HS Faculty (1951)

First Row, Left to Right: S. M. Gross, B. Fletcher, E. P. Campbell, G. M. Chappelle, E. M. Jones, T. E. Roane, N. Lewis, A. M. Edwards, L. W. Jackson, Vice Principal, G. J. Gholson, Principal, A. W. Parker, D. M. Edelin, V. M. Ford, M. A. Fentress, E. Greaux, M. Owens, M. B. Jeffries

Second Row, Left to Right: C. J. Brown, L. H. Brown, M. C. Greene, T. D. Luck, E. S. Shelton, B. H. Crisp, E. M. Spriggs, G. H. Ginyard, R. Tasco, C. N. Denson, E. P. Green, V. L. Davis, D. L. Smith, I. Z. Spencer, E. Gladden

Third Row, Left to Right: J. L. Jeffries, J. E. Hairson, R. Buckner, F. M. Maxwell, W. K. Freeman, Jr., G. W. Jones, E. B. Wells, J. E. House, S. Peterson, E. G. Curry, G. T. Farmer, L. Gaskin, D. Washington, J. L. Burrell

Fairmont Heights High School Faculty and Alumni



G. James Gholson
1912 -
First Principal of Fairmont Heights HS

G. James Gholson

G. James Gholson continues to be a giant in public education, a scholar, master teacher, administrator, and an advocate for the children of Prince George's County. Gholson has established an enviable record of distinguished service.

He received his bachelor and master of science degrees from Hampton University in 1945 and 1946, respectively, and continued extensive graduate work at New York University, George Peabody College, Columbia University, the University of Maryland, and Penn State University.

He began his career as a teacher in 1943 and was appointed Principal of Fairmont Heights High School in 1950. During his tenure in the Prince George's County public school system, Gholson was nationally recognized for profoundly influencing the frontier of human knowledge and the moral development of young people in the nation's public schools.

On the county level, Gholson served as Administrative Assistant to the Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education where he was the master architect of the system-wide desegregation plan and played a key role in the implementation process. He was recognized in *Newsweek* magazine for his role as the architect and engineer of the desegregation plan, and co-authored an evaluation instrument for administrators in Prince George's County Public Schools which has been replicated in the public schools in Louisville, Kentucky; New Castle and Wilmington, Delaware; Laurel, Mississippi; and Seattle, Washington.

G. James Gholson Middle School, in Landover, Maryland, was dedicated on May 2, 2003.

Ralph Paden

Ralph Paden has been a fixture on the Fairmont Heights sideline for more than 30 seasons, most of those years spent as the Hornet's head coach. No other active coach in Prince George's County has ruled the county as long and no other active coach has won as many games. His record includes county championships, regional championships, state playoff appearances and state runner-up finishes.

Several times, various organizations have named him "Coach of the Year." Numerous players on his teams have received college football scholarships.

He was born December 5, 1943, in Greenville, S.C. He graduated from Moriah Central High School in Port Henry, NY. In that town, he earned a reputation as a track star and he went on to be a miler in college at Maryland State (now UMES). His fastest mile was clocked at 4:17. He excelled in the classroom as well, where he obtained a Bachelor's Degree.

He began teaching in 1967 at the now defunct Mary McLeod Bethune Junior High School in Capitol Heights. In 1972, he took a job down the street as a physical education teacher at Fairmont Heights High School. From 1972-74, he was an assistant football coach before he took over the program in 1975.

Ralph is married with two sons who are graduates of Prince George's County Public Schools and the University of Maryland. He's also played a vital role in the lives of countless young men who have come through his program.



Ralph Paden
Fairmont Heights HS Football Coach
2002 Md. Hall of Fame Inductee

John J. Williams – President of Alumni Association

Teaching Career:

Richmond County HS, Warsaw, VA (1959-1962)

Fairmont Heights HS (1962-1992)

Full-time Substitute at Central HS (1992-1999)

Full-time Retiree-Rehiree (2000-present) at Oxon Hill HS & Flintstone ES

Post-Graduate Education:

George Washington University, M.A. degree in French Language and Literature

University of Maryland Overseas, Certificate in German

Morgan State University, Certificate in Spanish

Latest Profession:

My last profession was teaching French, Spanish, and English; my current profession is teaching ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) at Flintstone Elementary.

Activities I was involved in:

While a teacher at Fairmont Heights High School, my activities included: co-sponsor of PG County Chess; sponsor of the first funded mentoring program in PGCPSS; sponsor of the school newspaper; senior class sponsor; I wrote the curriculum for French cooking class; sponsor of student trips to England, France, Spain, Germany, and Russia.

Fondest Memories:

“My fondest memories at Fairmont Heights High School are (1) filing as the lead plaintiff in the 1972 Desegregation Suit vs. Prince George’s County Schools, my boss, (2) having a scholarship named in my honor, (3) advising one of my students, Barbara Flynn, to marry the famed Richard Pryor, (4) meeting Marvin Gaye, who attended Fairmont Heights High School, (5) making Michael Jordan an honorary member of the Fairmont Heights High School Alumni Association, and (6) having five of my students become principals, including Peggy Nicholson, current Fairmont Heights High School principal.”



John J. Williams
President of Fairmont Heights HS
Alumni Association

Elizabeth Vivian Smith Gordon – 1952 Graduate

Post-Graduate Education:

Temple Business School and Cortez Peters Business School.

Latest Profession:

I am retired from the Federal Government where I was employed as Liaison Officer in the Office of Finance for the General Services Administration. After retirement, I went to work as a receptionist for the Department of Environmental Resources for Prince George’s County, but have since retired.

Activities I was involved in:

Chaired the Fundraising Committee for the Alumni Association for 15 years, which provides scholarships for graduates from Fairmont Heights High School.

Fondest Memories:

“My fondest memory is coming to Fairmont Heights HS in 1950 after the closing of Lakeland High School. It was a brand new school, with caring teachers like Ms. Fentress, Ms. Owens, Mr. Well, Mrs. Robertson, Ms. Boyd, Mr. and Mrs. Jefferies, Ms. Carroll, and a principal by the name of G. James Gholson, who was a no-nonsense principal. When he spoke, we listened! The brand new gym was a place to go to watch our teams play basketball. We had a great athletics department.”



Ernestine M. Jones (Beatty)
1953 Fairmont Heights HS Graduate

Ernestine M. Jones (Beatty) – 1953 Graduate

Fairmont Heights Resident:

I lived one block away from Fairmont Heights HS in Chapel Oaks.

Post-Graduate Education:

Morgan State College and the University of Maryland.

Latest Profession:

I worked for 42 years in the Federal Government at the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (DHEW), beginning as a clerk-typist, and later retired as a Senior Program Analyst in the Health Care Financing Administration.

Activities I was involved in:

Safety Patrol (I remember we were a junior high school as well as a high school), Chemistry Club (Eureka), yearbook staff, and Glee Club.

Fondest Memories:

“There are many fond memories for me while a student at Fairmont Heights High School. First and foremost were the teachers. The teachers were excellent, dedicated, creative, and caring. Some of my more prominent teachers were Ms. Myrtle Fentress (History), Ms. Marie Owens (English), Mrs. Thelma Boyd-Nash (Home Economics), Mrs. Edwards (Math), and Mr. and Mrs. Jeffries (Wood Workshop and Librarian). Mrs. Boyd-Nash took me to the National Theatre to hear concert pianist Hazel Scott. It was my first time going to a concert theatre to hear a professional concert artist. I would be remiss if I did not talk about Mr. G. James Gholson, the first principal of Fairmont Heights High School, and his able assistant, Mr. Lawrence Jackson. Mr. Gholson and Mr. Jackson were strong and effective leaders and Mr. Gholson is also credited with hiring some of the best teachers in the county.

We had a curriculum called “CORE.” It was an experimental program in selected schools in the State of Maryland. “CORE” replaced the traditional “history” courses. One of the assignments in “CORE” was a very comprehensive study on the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The class of 1953 was the first class to take a senior trip. We went to New York City. For many, including myself, it was the first train trip and many of the other activities were a “first” as well. We attended a Broadway play, and saw the Rockettes and a professional play (Doris Day in a play, “By the Light of the Silvery Moon”). We also had a wonderful tour of the city, China Town, and the Statue of Liberty – all for only \$35!

I am very grateful for the teachers and administrators at Fairmont Heights HS. I give the teachers credit for my successes and achievements in life. I thank them for their positive influences, their instructions, their wisdom, their patience, and for their caring attitudes. I shall always be grateful!”

Michael Leo Marshall – 1963 Graduate

Post-Graduate Education:

Associate degree in Avionics Technology

Latest Profession:

Previously, I worked as an Electronics Technician. Currently, I am working as a Security Guard.

Fondest Memories:

“The teacher who influenced me the most in my decision-making for a career choice was Mr. W. Battle. I joined the Air Force, where I received vast amounts of training in the electronics career field. I retired after 22 years, and worked for the USPS as an Electronics Technician. I retired after 15 years.”



Michael Leo Marshall
1963 Fairmont Heights HS Graduate



Lavata Regina (Wilkinson) Wood
1958 Fairmont Heights HS Graduate

Lavata Regina (Wilkinson) Wood – 1958 Graduate

Fairmount Heights Resident:

I resided in the community of Cedar Heights which is located next to Fairmont Heights HS.

Post-Graduate Education:

Bowie State University, Majoring in Elementary Education, BS degree - 1962.

Latest Profession:

I taught in Prince George's County for 42 years, retiring in 2004.

Activities I was involved in:

Library Club, Cheerleading, Future Teachers of America, Student Government, Junior Prom Committee, Senior Class Officer, Homecoming Committee. I was an honor roll student, graduating in the top ten of my class.

Fondest Memories:

"My fondest memory at Fairmont Heights High School was being selected to represent our school with others in the "Governor's All Maryland Students Conference" at Morgan State College and with our senior trip to New York City. I was greatly influenced by my CORE teacher, Elise Spriggs, and my Civics and Social Studies teacher, Myrtle Fentress. They were ideal role models and mentors. Our principal, G. James Gholson, was especially great in encouraging excellence and high standards, which I carried on to my students over the years. As an alumnus of Fairmont Heights High School, I am always proud to share my educational experiences that I received as a student with great dignity and pride."



Peggy Boozer Nicholson
1968 Fairmont Heights HS Graduate

Peggy Boozer Nicholson – 1968 Graduate

Post-Graduate Education:

Morgan State University, BA and MA

Latest Profession:

Current/ Principal – Fairmont Heights High School

Activities I was involved in:

Student Government, Choir, Dance Troupe, National Honor Society, Foreign Language Honor Society, Yearbook Staff

Fondest Memories:

"One of my fondest memories, among many, was of Ms. Dessie Smith, chorus teacher, who encouraged me to consider music as a college major. During my senior year, she provided me the opportunity to direct the school choir singing Duke Ellington's "Mood Indigo." I still have, to this day, the bronze treble and bass clef bookends that she awarded me. The school was a learning environment where all teachers encouraged students to accept challenges and to excel."



Walter Mario Williams, Jr.
1990 Fairmont Heights HS Graduate

Walter Mario Williams, Jr. – 1990 Graduate

Are you or have you been a Fairmount Heights resident?

I lived in the Fairmount Heights community for the first 25 years of my life. My father, a 1962 graduate of Fairmont Heights High School, has lived in the same house in Fairmount Heights all of his life, and still lives on Farmingdale Avenue to this very day.

Post-Graduate Education:

University of Maryland Eastern Shore, BS in Business Education - 1995

Latest Profession:

After graduating from college in 1995, I returned to Fairmont Heights HS and replaced the keyboarding teacher (Mrs. Campbell) that taught me how to type.

Activities I was involved in:

While at Fairmont Heights HS, I was a member of the following organizations: Future Teachers of Maryland (FTM), Student Government Association (SGA), Future Business

Leaders of America (FBLA), and Students Helping Other students. Also, I played the following sports: Baseball and Football.

Fondest Memories:

“Growing up in Fairmount Heights and being a student at Fairmont Heights High School, I noticed a mentality and attitude of hopelessness among my peers. I have always believed that if I could return to Fairmont Heights HS, I would be able to help the students rid themselves of the perpetuated negativity, and to see life beyond Prince George’s County.”

“Shortly after the passing of my mother during my ninth grade year, I found in one of my teachers the comfort of a mother. Although Mrs. Rebecca Lewis became my Art teacher during my sophomore year, she became much more to me. Mrs. Lewis became my mentor and lifetime friend.”

Stacy M. Wake – 1995 Graduate

Post-Graduate Education:

Morgan State University , Bachelor of Science (Electrical Engineering) - 1999

Cornell University , Master of Engineering - 2000

Latest Profession:

Senior Software Engineer

Activities I was involved in:

Class President, Student Government Association, Spanish Club, Honor Society, Biotechnology Program

Fondest Memories:

“My fondest memory at Farimont Heights High School is being a class officer (Class President) for three years (Sophomore, Junior, and Senior years). There was always a lot of work to be done, but the end result always made it worthwhile! A lot of great memories and friendships were created from the many class fundraisers and all of the Spirit Week activities in preparation of Homecoming. Some of my favorite memories are from working on the class hallway and float for Spirit Week in preparation for Homecoming each year.

A lot of time was spent with the Class of 1995 sponsors, Mrs. Allen, Mrs. Malloy, and Mr. Martin. They were always quick to help and support us in all of our multiple projects and ideas. It was a lot of work but it always ended up feeling like a lot of fun! That’s what I remember most about Fairmont, great friendships, great teachers, and great fun!”



Stacy M. Wake
1995 Fairmont Heights HS Graduate

Principal's Note

Fairmont Heights High School is a highly regarded community school that celebrated its fifty-fifth anniversary this year. The school enjoys a rich history that has provided the educational foundation for alumni who serve the larger community in a broad spectrum of capacities, including public office, business, education, authorship, law, medicine, sports, film, and more. The school is cherished by a supportive alumni association, community and faculty, committed to providing students the academic foundation for college and career entry-level competencies.

The curriculum is a highly-structured, comprehensive liberal arts program of study that is enhanced by a JROTC Program, an Academy of Finance, and a biotechnology contextual learning program. Fairmont Heights is a community school for students enrolled in the comprehensive program; however, students who are admitted to the biotechnology program are transported from throughout Prince George's County to access this specialized program of study.

Students are delivered tightly-organized curricula in algebra, biology, reading/English language arts, and government that are designed to prepare students for the Maryland State High School Assessment (HSA) testing. All students are required to test in the required courses; however, the class of 2009 is required to pass the four assessments. Students are administered quarterly benchmark assessments that measure growth and direct instructional focus.

Supported by a full-time Technology Coordinator, students are the benefactors of the County's Computer Refresh Initiative that seeks to increase the pupil-computer ratio throughout the school.

Students may access the Wellness Center, an on-site medical facility, operated under the auspices of the County's Health Department. Students visiting the Wellness Center may receive medical and counseling services upon request.

At Fairmont Heights, students interact with a highly qualified and diverse faculty, committed to the success of its students. Teachers spend long hours supporting students in a variety of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities that include The Royal Chef Club, Literary Magazine, Modern Dance Troupe, Chess Club, Step Club, Spanish Club, Drill Team, and Yearbook. The school and cheerleading.

The administration maintains an "open door" policy for parents and students and welcomes parent volunteers to assist the school with a variety of activities. Parents interested in assisting teachers in the classroom setting are encouraged to make application via the Board of Education's web site.

Fairmont Heights High School Facts

Region:	Region 2
Address:	1401 Nye Street, Capitol Heights, MD 20743
Phone/Fax:	301-925-1360 / 301-925-1371 (Fax)
Website:	pgcps.org/~fmhts
School Hours:	8:30 a.m. - 3:10 p.m.
Projected Enrollment:	1,243
Student Capacity:	1,355
Number of Teacher's Aides:	78
Uniform Policy:	No
Principal:	Peggy Nicholson
Assistant Principals:	Frederick Rivers, Michael Austin, Tracy Malone, Lori Taylor
Regional Assistant Superintendent:	Dr. Bruce Katz
Regional Director:	Oretha Bridgwaters
School Mascot:	Hornets
School Colors:	Gray and Maroon
Special Programs:	Bio-Technology, Finance Academy
PTA/PTO/PTSO:	PTSA
Business/Community Partners:	Giant, Safeway, Fed Ex, The Redskins

While the school is a historical icon, we believe that it is at the brink of a new beginning. We promote the ideal that our school is an environment where the rights of others are to be respected and that education is a personal investment, yielding life-long rewards.

My hope for the future of the school is to provide the students of Fairmont Heights a strong liberal arts program of study that includes a variety of elective offerings. By doing so, students will have the foundation and competitive attributes to be successful in their post-high-school college and career choices. In this way, Fairmont Heights High School will continue its history of producing citizens who positively impact the overall quality of life in Prince George's County.

Fairmont Heights High School Events



Michael Jordan visits Fairmont Heights HS in Spring 2001, seen here with Principal Carolyn Blue.



Lt. Governor Michael Steele speaks with Fairmont Heights HS Principal Richard Jones in 2003.



Rapper Jay-Z at Fairmont Heights HS, November 2002, becomes "Principal for a Day."



From the 1997 Fairmont Heights HS Yearbook – "Fairmont Dives In Making New Waves." After 45 years, Fairmont Heights has added swimming to its traditionally prominent athletic program. The team is headed by Coach Sweet and consists of nine male and four female swimmers. Pictured: Brian Drummond, Patricia Escobar, Tewdros Makonnen, Jennifer Davis, Stacey Jacobs, Nicole Smith, Curtis Harwood, and Jonas Makonnen.



Rapper Jay-Z with Principal Carolyn Blue, November 2002.



Chris McCray, co-captain, Univ. of MD basketball team, at his 2002 HS Graduation, with Principal Carolyn Blue.



Portrait of G. James Gholson, first principal of Fairmont Heights HS, is unveiled at the 1999 Graduation ceremony.



Montel Williams speaks at Fairmont Heights HS in Spring 1990.

Fairmont Heights High School Anniversary Celebrations



At the school's 50th anniversary celebration, former music teacher, Dessie Smith, remembers how famed R&B singer Marvin Gaye would travel to Fairmont Heights HS as a youth to take music lessons from her.



First Principal G. James Gholson speaking at the 50th anniversary celebration for Fairmont Heights HS in November 2000.



Fairmont Heights HS Class of 1953 - 83 at the 50-year anniversary celebration.

Fairmont Heights High School Principals – Past and Present



G. James Gholson
1950 - 1969



Alvin V. Fortune
1969 - 1972



Dr. Donald A. Kiah
1972 - 1978



Clarence McDonald
1978 - 1995



Dr. Carolyn D. Blue
1995 - 2003



Richard Jones
2003 - 2005



Peggy Nicholson
2005 - Present

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