



A SMALL PARK WITH A BIG STORY



An Administrative History of
the Booker T. Washington National Monument

Claudrena N. Harold

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Presented to Booker T. Washington National Monument

Prepared under a cooperative agreement between
The Organization of American Historians and The National Park Service
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CONTENTS

Figures	vii
Acknowledgements	xi
Introduction	1
Chapter One	13
<i>Up from Slavery: Booker T. Washington and the African American Experience in Virginia</i>	
Chapter Two	33
<i>The Booker T. Washington Birthplace Memorial</i>	
Chapter Three	45
<i>Civil Rights, the Politics of Memorialization, and the Establishment of the Booker T. Washington National Monument</i>	
Chapter Four	67
<i>The Formative Years of Booker T. Washington National Monument's Living History Program, 1967–1975</i>	
Chapter Five	85
<i>New Directions, 1976–1979</i>	
Chapter Six	99
<i>New Horizons: 1979–1987</i>	
Chapter Seven	117
<i>In Transition, 1988–1994</i>	
Chapter Eight	131
<i>Forging Ahead, 1995–2000</i>	
Chapter Nine	153
<i>More Than a Historical Park, 2000–2009</i>	
Chapter Ten	179
<i>At the Crossroads: Confronting the Challenges of the Twenty-first Century, 2009–2020</i>	
Selected Bibliography	201
Appendix A: Federal Legislation	205
Appendix B: Visitation Statistics	211
Appendix C: Chronological Listing of Superintendents	213
Appendix D: Chronology of Significant Events	215

FIGURES

Figure 1: Park Location Map.....	2
Figure 2: Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke tours the Booker T. Washington National Monument (BOWA) with Chief of Interpretation and Resource Management Timothy Sims and Park Ranger Brittany Lane.....	6
Figure 3: Booker T. Washington delivering a speech.....	7
Figure 4: Living History interpreter splitting shakes at Booker T. Washington National Monument.....	8
Figure 5: Booker T. Washington Family Reunion, 2000.....	12
Figure 6: Booker T. Washington at Tuskegee Institute.	13
Figure 7: The cabin where Booker T. Washington and his family lived in Malden, West Virginia.....	21
Figure 8: Booker T. Washington as a student at Hampton Institute.....	23
Figure 9: Tuskegee Institute, 1906.	26
Figure 10: Robert C. Ogden, Senator William Howard Taft, Booker T. Washington and Andrew Carnegie.....	29
Figure 11: Portia Washington Pittman and Sidney Phillips at the Booker T. Washington Birthplace Memorial.	33
Figure 12: Lifting the Veil Monument at Tuskegee Institute.....	34
Figure 13: Sidney Phillips, founder of Booker T. Washington Birthplace Memorial.	35
Figure 14: Booker T. Washington Elementary School.	42
Figure 15: US Representative Clair Engle, chief sponsor of the bill authorizing Booker T. Washington National Monument.....	46
Figure 16: Booker T. Washington Enabling Legislation.....	49
Figure 17: Chester Brooks, the first superintendent of the Booker T. Washington National Monument.....	52

Figures

Figure 18: Sketch from the Historic Structure Report (1959) showing location of the birthplace site and proposed reconstructed cabin in relation to the Burroughs house site.	54
Figure 19: Sketch from Historic Structure Report (1959) showing relation of proposed cabin reconstruction, Burroughs House, and locust trees.....	54
Figure 20: Vegetation and Historic Base Map, 1959.	55
Figure 21: Roll Road trail map.	57
Figure 22: Slave Cabin Replica, Booker T. Washington National Monument.....	58
Figure 23: Fred A. Wingeier, Superintendent of Booker T. Washington from 1961 to 1967.	59
Figure 24: Cover of Booker T. Washington National Monument Brochure, 1960.....	60
Figure 25: H. Gilbert Lusk served as Park Ranger-Historian and Acting Superintendent of Booker T. Washington National Monument during the late 1960s. ...	64
Figure 26: Tobacco stalks along Roll Road trail.	65
Figure 27: Albert Sidney Wright.....	72
Figure 28: Farmer Demonstrator John Jordan.	73
Figure 29: Park Ranger-Historian Fahy Whitaker.	75
Figure 30: Living History Demonstration.....	77
Figure 31: Sylvester Putman.	78
Figure 32: Living History at BOWA in the 1970s.	79
Figure 33: Robert M. Utley.....	80
Figure 34: Living History Program.....	83
Figure 35 : John T. Hutzky.	86
Figure 36: Lloyd Lillie’s “Emancipation” sculpture.	88
Figure 37: Lloyd Lillie’s “Booker T. Washington” sculpture.....	88
Figure 38: Visitors at a Booker T. Washington National Monument.	89
Figure 39: Jack Tale Players Performing, 1978.....	92

Figures

Figure 40: Youth Conservation Corps.	94
Figure 41: Ira Hutchinson, Geraldine Bell, and Richard Stanton.	96
Figure 42: Park Ranger Eleanor Long.	100
Figure 43: Park Ranger Alice Hanawalt.	101
Figure 44: Map of Plantation Trail and Jack-O-Lantern Branch Trail.	103
Figure 45: Map of Trapping Locations during the 1985 mammals survey at BOWA.	110
Figure 46: Booker T. Washington Symposium announcement.	113
Figure 47: Doy Norman and Sidney Wright.	115
Figure 48: William “Bill” Gwaltney).	124
Figure 49: Living History Demonstration.	126
Figure 50: Cover of the first issue of the <i>Grapevine Telegraph</i>	134
Figure 51: Ajena Rogers, Park Ranger at BOWA.	137
Figure 52: Tina Orcutt, Chief, Interpretation and Resource Management at BOWA, 1997–2002.	140
Figure 53: Park Ranger Timothy Sinclair.	141
Figure 54: Superintendent Rebecca Harriett delivering the welcome address at the 2000 Booker T. Washington Family Reunion (BOWA Archives).	142
Figure 55: Administrative Clerk Connie Mays.	156
Figure 56: James Comiskey, Network Coordinator, measuring tree DBH at Booker T. Washington National Monument.	167
Figure 57: Gills Creek.	175
Figure 58: Carla Whitfield, superintendent of the Booker T. Washington National Monument, 2009 to 2018 (BOWA Archives).	183
Figure 59: “Born Here, Freed Here” exhibit.	188
Figure 60: “Born Here, Freed Here” exhibit.	188
Figure 61: Juneteenth Celebration, 2013.	189

Figures

Figure 62: Flyer for “Harvest Time” event. 190

Figure 63: “An Old Virginia Christmas” event at BOWA. 191

Figure 64: Junior Park Ranger advertisement. 192

Figure 65: Alexandra von Bieberstein and Liza Rupp conduct archeological
research at BOWA. 193

Figure 66: Senator Mark Warner visits BOWA. 199

Figure 67: Timothy Sims, chief of interpretation and resource management,
and Senator Mark Warner. 200

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Claudrena N. Harold

INTRODUCTION

The Booker T. Washington National Monument (BOWA) is located in Franklin County, Virginia, twenty miles southeast of the city of Roanoke. The 239-acre park is dedicated to the preservation, commemoration, and interpretation of the birthplace and early childhood home of the internationally renowned educator, Booker T. Washington. BOWA is situated on a landscape of rolling hills and valleys. The site contains a visitor center, administrative offices located within a former school building, a tobacco barn, cultivated fields, livestock, two marked archeological sites, three cemeteries, and two walking trails. It also includes twentieth-century replicas of a slave cabin, smoke house, blacksmith shop, corn crib, horse barn, hog pen, and chicken and duck houses. The environmental setting of BOWA consists of fescue fields and successional habitat types (mixed pine and hardwood forests). Gills Creek runs along the southern edge of the park, while Jack-O-Lantern Branch runs along the eastern edge. The park's streams, forests, and fields provide habitat for a variety of species, including non-volant mammals, birds, fish, flora, amphibians, and reptiles.

BOWA's natural and cultural resources allow for a varied and multisensory experience. Whether participating in a ranger-guided walking tour, watching an orientation film on Booker T. Washington's personal journey from slavery to freedom, or taking a hike on one of the site's trails, visitors can learn about the role of race in the making and remaking of American democracy, reflect on the impact of the past on contemporary society, or enjoy the beauty and wonders of the natural environment. Over the years, park supervisors and staff have sought to enhance the visitor experience through the introduction of new interpretive programs, audiovisual materials, and special events. Though BOWA's enabling legislation defined the park's mission as the commemoration of Washington and the protection and preservation of his birthplace, the site's interpretive, educational, and outreach activities have expanded to include multilayered stories of the role of slavery in the development of the nation, the complex politics and meaning of emancipation, the importance of education in African Americans' quest for freedom and equality, and the centrality of race in shaping the nation's ever-evolving democratic experiment.

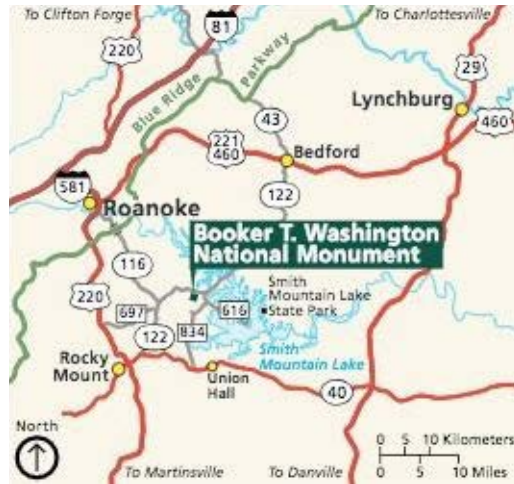


Figure 1: Park Location Map, BOWA Archives.

Scope and Purpose of the Study

This administrative history of the Booker T. Washington National Monument documents the site's origins, details the major shifts in its interpretive practices and resource management policies, and highlights how innovative employees and volunteers grappled with the hard truths and sharp edges of the nation's past. Organized chronologically, this study consists of ten chapters and is written primarily but not exclusively for current and future park managers and staff.

The first chapter explores the life of Booker T. Washington, situates his upbringing within the larger context of the legacy of slavery and race in Virginia, and illuminates the interpretive power of the Burroughs plantation. It builds on a large body of scholarship on slavery in Piedmont Virginia. This chapter also relies on an ever-growing body of work on the life and times of Booker T. Washington, a complex figure whose political and social activities defy simplistic characterization. The past decade has witnessed the publication of more nuanced histories of Washington,¹ and like many of BOWA's interpretive activities and exhibits, this study reflects that nuance.

The second chapter examines Sidney Phillips and his founding of the Booker T. Washington Birthplace Memorial in 1945. It chronicles Phillips' efforts to reestablish Washington's place in the popular imagination during a time of great political change. It also details his efforts to improve the site and the extent to which other African Americans

¹ See Robert Norrell, *Up from History: The Life of Booker T. Washington* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Rebecca Carroll, *Uncle Tom or New Negro? African Americans Reflect on Booker T. Washington* (New York: Random House, 2011); Kenneth M. Hamilton, *Booker T. Washington in American Memory: The Death and Commemoration of an Iconic Figure* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017).

supported his endeavors. Spanning the years from 1945 to 1956, this chapter includes a discussion of the construction of the Booker T. Washington Elementary School on the site of the Birthplace Memorial. The school's opening in 1954, and subsequent closing in 1966, was inextricably linked to larger developments in the Civil Rights Movement.

The third chapter charts the first ten years (1956–1966) of the National Park Service's management of the Booker T. Washington National Monument. It details the efforts of early administrators, staff and volunteers, and historians to preserve and enhance this commemorative site. It opens with an analysis of the congressional hearings calling for the establishment of BOWA and considers what they tell us about elected officials' views on historic preservation, development, natural resources, and racial politics. It highlights such accomplishments as the completion of the slave cabin and the construction of the visitor center under the NPS Mission 66 program.

The fourth chapter examines the Booker T. Washington National Monument's living history program in the years between 1968 and 1975. Using Barry Mackintosh's 1969 administrative history, planning documents, and the annual reports of BOWA's superintendents as primary references, this chapter considers how the park's interpretive agenda reflected larger developments and tensions not just within the NPS but also in the wider fields of US social and African American history. Indeed, a recurring issue for Superintendents Stanley C. Kowalkowski, William Webb, and Sylvester Putman was how to render a balanced account of Booker T. Washington, the impact of his Virginia roots on his political philosophy, and his interactions with other African American leaders. For example, the site's 1972 Master Plan expressed concern that the park's interpretation of Washington lacked depth and nuance: "Presently the story is too romantic and covers only the non-controversial aspects of Washington's life."²

The fifth chapter covers the period between 1976 and 1979 with detailed attention to the tenure of Superintendent John T. Hutzky. Over this three-year span, many important developments occurred: the dedication of the Environmental Education and Cultural Center; the arrival of Eleanor Long, a longtime employee of BOWA who began her tenure at the park as a park technician in 1976; the installation of a new exhibit anchored by Lloyd Lillie's statue of Booker T. Washington as a boy; and the park's new partnerships with Ferrum College and the Youth Conservation Corps. This chapter also discusses Hutzky's efforts to increase African American involvement with and patronage of the NPS. Twenty years after its formation, BOWA still struggled to attract African Americans to the site. To remedy this problem, Hutzky reached out to various African American groups, including the Mary McLeod Bethune Women's Club in Rocky Mount and the Black Student Union at Ferrum College. Along with discussing BOWA's efforts to make inroads within the African American community, this chapter also highlights an issue discussed in previous

² Booker T. Washington National Monument Master Plan, Denver Service Center, Part II, 1972.

and subsequent chapters: the staff's commitment to engaging the visitors' interest in certain living history demonstrations while fulfilling the park's larger purpose of educating the public on Washington's life. This complex negotiation of interests was evident in a superintendent report submitted to the national office in 1979: "Although an active small farm operation is very popular with visitors, we are still searching for a balance between the farm where Washington lived and the focus on Washington the man."^[2]

The sixth chapter spans the years (1979–1988) of Geraldine Bell's tenure as superintendent and the arrival of three important figures in the history of the park's administration and management: Richard H. Saunders, Jr., who served as chief ranger from 1983–1991; Alice Hanawalt, who began her employment at the park as a seasonal ranger in 1981 and remained there until her retirement in 2001; and Connie Mays, who began her career at BOWA in 1987 and now serves as its Administrative Officer. This chapter documents how the monument solidified its status as an institutional anchor of Franklin County's cultural and educational life through the introduction of new programs and events. It also details the budget constraints under which the site operated during the 1980s.

The seventh chapter focuses on the years between 1988 and 1994. During this six-year period of administrative flux, the park had sixteen superintendents. Of those sixteen superintendents, four were permanent and twelve were acting. The tenure of William Gwaltney and his transformation of BOWA's interpretive focus receives substantial attention in this chapter. During his short time at BOWA, Gwaltney implemented many changes in its interpretive program. To realize his interpretive vision for the site, Gwaltney revamped the living history program, established new partnerships, and revised the site's special activities: "I auctioned off the [arts and crafts] materials and brought in a historian from the University of Virginia to convince the staff of what they were there to do. We had a bigger responsibility to the American people."³ Tempting as it might be to present the years between 1988 and 1994 as a period of constant change, it bears noting that the park benefitted immensely from the stabilizing presence of Eleanor Long, who held the position of Administrative Technician during this period, Connie Mays, who in 1990 moved from the Interpretive Division to Administration, and Ranger Alice Hanawalt, who worked closely with an impressive group of new employees. These new employees included Daniel Young, Timothy Sims, Betsy Haynes, Ajena Rogers, and Queferi Colbert.

Since Gwaltney was at BOWA for only one year, his vision was largely carried out by his successor, Rebecca Harriet. Harriett's tenure is covered extensively in chapter eight, which spans the years between 1995 and 2000. This chapter provides summaries of several key park research and planning documents, including but not limited to the following: Willie Baber's *Ethnographic Overview and Assessment*, Amber Moncure's *Archeological*

³ <https://www.westword.com/news/black-to-nature-5060202>.

Overview and Assessment, and the 2000 General Management Plan. This chapter also details how public education standards in Virginia shaped the interpretative challenges and possibilities of the park. In response to the implementation of the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs) in public schools, the park, under the direction of Tina Orcutt (chief of interpretation and resource management), developed educational programs to encourage area teachers to bring students to the park to learn about Washington. This new standard, coupled with support from school districts for student field trips, provided the park with a unique opportunity to introduce Booker T. Washington to a younger audience. However, this opportunity also presented the park with certain challenges. The staff had to create content-sensitive education programs differentiated by age and grade level which would incorporate the SOL objectives into students' experiences at the park. Interactive activities were employed to engage elementary-aged students, while discussions about Washington in the context of slavery and emancipation were facilitated by park staff to engage middle and high school students. As the SOLs shifted curricular attention to various African American historical figures, school-aged groups ebbed and flowed in their visits to BOWA. Navigating these changes to the SOLs and resources allotted for school field trips pushed the park to make their educational programming adaptable to a variety of learning objectives and goals across grade levels.

The ninth chapter focuses on the years between 2000 and 2009, a period of revitalization and growth for the park's natural resource management program. While primarily known for its cultural and historical significance as the birthplace of Booker T. Washington, BOWA also contains an array of species in its aquatic and forest habitats. Before the early 2000s, BOWA's natural resource management was guided by the need to protect the park's historical features and settings. Scientifically-based studies on the park's ecosystem were few and far between, leaving managers with limited knowledge about the park's natural resources. However, the launching of the Natural Resource Challenge in 1999 inaugurated a new phase in the history of the natural resource program at BOWA. As a member of the Inventory and Monitoring Mid-Atlantic Network (MIDN), the Booker T. Washington National Monument benefitted immensely from the NPS's increased focus on natural resource management. During the first decade of the 2000s, BOWA conducted baseline inventories of non-volant mammals, vertebrates, vascular plants, the avian community, amphibians, and reptiles. It also participated in important vital sign monitoring, partnering with a host of institutions, including the Virginia Division of Natural Heritage, University of Virginia, Ferrum College, Virginia Commonwealth University, the University of Richmond, and NatureServe. Drawing heavily on inventory and monitoring reports, as well as my interviews with Timothy Sims, currently the chief of interpretation and resource management at BOWA, chapter nine gives detailed attention to the expansion of the park's natural resource program.

Chapter ten covers the years (2009–2018) of Carla Whitfield’s tenure as superintendent. Important issues discussed include the renovation of the visitor center in 2010, the installation of the “Born Here, Freed Here” exhibit in 2014, and the ongoing battle to protect the park’s cultural and natural resources amid commercial and residential development in Franklin County.



Figure 2: Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke tours the Booker T. Washington National Monument (BOWA) with Chief of Interpretation and Resource Management Timothy Sims and Park Ranger Brittany Lane (Jeff Reid, Smith Mountain Eagle).

Recurring Challenges for Park Management

Within BOWA’s administrative, interpretive and resource management, and maintenance divisions there have been cycles of innovation, growth, and revitalization followed by periods of inertia, stagnation, and occasionally regression. Over the years, administrators and staff have inherited old problems while seeking to solve new ones. Some issues facing the staff have been temporary. Others have been long-lasting.

One recurring challenge for managers involved interpreting a public figure as complex as Booker T. Washington. Since BOWA’s establishment in 1956, the park’s programming has evolved to provide interpretation of the complexities of Washington as a

political figure whose life and work was shaped by slavery and the Civil War and Emancipation, always balanced against contextualized interpretation of his early life at the Burroughs farm and his career as an influential educator and statesman. As former and current BOWA staff repeatedly noted, Booker T. Washington was a complex figure. As a result, many visitors come to the park with preconceived notions of Washington and how his life should be interpreted. While most concede his status as an influential figure of note, the ways in which his life and work is contextualized and understood are still contested. For some visitors, Washington represents an exceptional role model for younger African Americans and an ideal archetype for African American leadership and achievement. For others, Washington was too accommodating to the racial status quo.

Thus, the noted educator is derisively dismissed by some as an “Uncle Tom” who served the needs of the white elite rather than the masses of African Americans. The challenge for the park has been to offer an honest engagement with Washington’s politics without minimizing his many personal accomplishments, especially in relation to his stewardship of Tuskegee Institute.



Figure 3: Booker T. Washington delivering a speech (Library of Congress).

Another challenge has been providing an accurate interpretation of the lives of the enslaved while accommodating the public’s fascination with living history demonstrations. During the 1970s and 1980s, craft demonstrations were central to the park’s living history program and a major source of attraction. Throughout the summer and winter seasons, BOWA provided visitors with many opportunities to experience everyday antebellum life.

Craft demonstrations included basket weaving, spinning, blacksmithing, candle making, and soap making. “We were always doing some sort of craft in the historic area,” Connie Mays remembers.⁴ Although these demonstration activities provided visitors with a sense of what kinds of tangible goods would have been made for plantation use and sale at the farm, they did not provide many opportunities for any interpretation which explicitly acknowledged the violence of slavery, the extent of its influence on social relations on the plantation, or how these realities shaped Washington’s formative years. The prominence of craft demonstrations was related not just to visitors’ interest but also to sales. “The emphasis was on production while you were interpreting in the historic area,” Eleanor Long reflected in our interview. “Production, production, production. Sales, sales, sales.”⁵ One interpreter, Mays recalled in an interview, “focused on how many candles could be made in a day. He always said let’s get a hundred candles made today.” Instead of engaging the complex life of Washington, the emphasis was on “how many bars of soap could be made today? How many baskets can you weave?”⁶ This focus on the production aspect of living history was especially strong during Richard Saunders’ tenure (1983–1991) as Chief, Interpretation and Resource Management. As Long notes, “When Richard Saunders became our Chief Ranger, he was a salesman on the side. He was a salesman period.”



Figure 4: Living History interpreter splitting shakes at Booker T. Washington (NPS Archives).

⁴ Connie Mays, interview with author, December 10, 2019.

⁵ Eleanor Long, interview with author, December 24, 2019.

⁶ Connie Mays, interview with author, December 10, 2019.

With the appointment of William Gwaltney as superintendent in 1994, the farm demonstrations were eliminated. “The visitors weren’t getting educated about Washington’s life; they were just doing arts and crafts,” Gwaltney later complained. Though she understood the validity of some of Gwaltney’s critiques, Mays wishes the demonstrations had been scaled back and reimagined rather than eliminated:

People still call here wanting to know when we are bringing demonstrations back. Because they remember when they used to come, and they would see those demonstrations going. I know what people want to see. Why do people want to go to Williamsburg? They really want to see what those demonstrations are about and that’s what keeps those people coming back, time and time again.⁷

Another challenge for BOWA, especially in the past twenty years, has been the rapid pace of commercial development in Franklin County and its impact on the park’s natural and cultural resources. The creation of Smith Mountain Lake in 1963 spurred recreational and commercial development in the area. As one local reporter noted, “For a time it seemed that all Smith Mountain Lake could do was grow. When the lake reached full pond 50 years ago, a rural farming area slowly transformed into a community with luxury waterfront homes. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the lake swelled with new people, houses, and developments.”⁸ A key contributor to this growth was Ron Willard, who in 1976 constructed the Waterfront, the area’s first country club community. Over the next two decades, Willard built other developments: the Water’s Edge, the Boardwalk, and the Westlake Town Center. The town center construction in 2000 required rezoning 139 acres on the south side of Route 122 across from the eastern intersection of Routes 616 and 122. This development raised serious concerns for BOWA staff. Development, they had long maintained, compromised the park’s viewshed and the rural character of the area. To those concerns, Willard responded: “We have given careful and thorough consideration to creating an acceptable and aesthetic buffer between the new development and the existing Booker T. Washington National Monument. . . . Surrounding the center will be a landscape buffer of trees and other appropriate foliage.”⁹ To protect their interests, BOWA staff sought to maintain good relations with Willard, city planners, and the larger community. Park management also pursued a land acquisition policy that would assist them in better preserving and managing the park’s cultural and natural resources. After years of negotiations, the park acquired a 15-acre tract of land in 2004. This acquisition was important but did not solve all the problems associated with the area’s growth.

⁷ Connie Mays, interview with author, December 10, 2019.

⁸ Stephanie Klein-Davis, “Smith Mountain Lake Emerging from Recession,” *The Roanoke Times*, March 6, 2016, https://www.roanoke.com/news/local/smith-mountain-lake-emerging-from-recession/article_6c-b49a3f-3729-5215-bb9a-cfde40529264.html.

⁹ *Franklin News Post*, November 24, 2000.

In 2005, Bill Berry and Phil Floyd of Phillips Development proposed a 57-acre mixed-use project east of the Booker T. Washington National Monument. The development was slated to include a 30,000 square-foot shopping center, an office park, town homes, and patio homes. This proposal followed on the heels of their work to develop the Westlake Village Business Park, CVS, and BB&T buildings in the area. However, their proposal for the 57-acre development and their rezoning requests, submitted to the Franklin County Board of Supervisors, was met with opposition from over 150 community members, who gathered at a Board of Supervisors public hearing to oppose the development and voice their concerns. Chief among community concerns were the proximity of the Phillips development site to the monument's Jack-O-Lantern Branch Trail, the effects the development would have on a visitor's experience of the park, and the environmental effects the development would have on the stream connected to the trail. Rebecca Harriet, then-superintendent of Booker T. Washington National Monument, argued that the Phillips development "would clash with the peaceful agricultural landscape of the monument. What was once a walk in the wood will become a stroll through someone's back yard."¹⁰

After hearing the concerns of county residents and those of the park staff, the Phillips team requested additional time to submit a new proposal which would adjust their plans to respond to the concerns of the community. In August 2005, after ongoing conversations with developers and the community, the Franklin County Board of Supervisors voted (6-1) to grant the rezoning request for the new Phillips development and four special use permits for the site. Just before their vote, Bryan Sicher, another Franklin County resident, voiced his opposition to the Phillips development saying that Black community members "were afraid that this development will compromise the national monument, leading to fewer visitations, contributing to the forgetting of a part of their history and culture. . . . The setting at Booker T. Washington is a rural farming area in the 1800s. The smell of grills, the sound of music from the back decks and barking dogs, just 50 yards from the Jack-O-Lantern Branch will make it hard to imagine what it was like when Booker worked and played here."¹¹

The economic recession of 2008 slowed the pace of development in Franklin County, but urban encroachment remains a critical issue for the park and its supporters.

Two other challenges which have shaped the management and administration of the park are budget constraints and insufficient staffing. Superintendent reports, among other documents, abound with complaints about budget cuts, unfilled staff positions, and

¹⁰ Mason Adams, "Opposition Stalls Development Request," *The Roanoke Times*, July 20, 2005, https://roanoke.com/archive/opposition-stalls-development-request/article_1447bcfd-4531-5c5f-95b0-343976f656e2.html.

¹¹ Mason Adams, "Franklin Co. Board Ok's Development of 57 Acres Next to Monument," *The Roanoke Times*, August 17, 2005, https://roanoke.com/archive/franklin-co-board-oks-development-of-57-acres-next-to-monument/article_6938f5c9-15fe-5c74-b2e6-dcb5e718f569.html

limited funding for infrastructure improvements. Throughout the park's history, there have been instances in which vacant positions went unfulfilled for extended periods of time. One such position was the supervisory park ranger (chief of interpretation and resource management.) Upon the departure of Tina Orcutt in 2002, the supervisory park ranger position remained vacant for six years and the superintendent rotated employees in and out of the position. Taking Washington's "cast down your bucket" mantra to heart, BOWA has employed numerous strategies to deal with budgetary constraints. Staff have applied for external grants, partnered with local and regional institutions to carry out important historical, archeological, and ethnographic research, and maximized funding and sales opportunities through its membership in the Eastern National Park and Monument Association.¹²

BOWA has also relied on a dedicated group of volunteers to alleviate the burdens of an understaffed park. Volunteer contributions ranged from assisting with one-time special events to ongoing involvement in natural resource monitoring. Under the guidance of Timothy Sims, the volunteer program expanded significantly in the 1990s. "I expanded the volunteer program from just a handful of folks at visitor services, to helping on the farm and in the garden with the natural resources," Sims noted in an interview. "I was wearing a lot of different hats and kind of spread out." And one day, Sims thought about the "people out there who would actually enjoy working in the garden or helping with the animals." After informing the community of the volunteer opportunities available at BOWA, "the floodgates opened, and people just started coming."¹³

With its dedicated team of volunteers, administrators, and staff, BOWA continues to embrace the challenge and opportunities of the twenty-first century. The park's interpretive programming has moved forward with new media, waysides, and exhibits. Popular events like the Juneteenth celebration, "Harvest Time," and Christmas in Old Virginia draw thousands of participants and routinely receive coverage in the local media. Through onsite and offsite programming, the park's staff continues to assist the public in deepening its understanding of the complex life and legacy of Booker T. Washington and the critical role of slavery and race in the making and remaking of the United States.

¹² Finding new revenue streams and increasing existing ones has been an important aspect of managers' work. One revenue source which has been very important for BOWA managers has been the Eastern National Park and Monument Association (ENP&MA). Founded in 1947, Eastern National supports NPS parks by providing educational products, services, and grants. Over the years, Eastern National has funded a variety of interpretive programs at BOWA, including audiovisual installation and the printing and upgrading of brochures. Starting in the 1980s, ENP&MA returned a percentage donation of funds to each member park based on that site's sales for the previous year.

¹³ Timbo Sims, interview with author, December 10, 2019.



Figure 5: Booker T. Washington Family Reunion at BOWA, 2000 (BOWA Archives).

BOWA has also remained an active research site. In keeping with NPS guidelines, park administrators continue to conduct historical, archeological, and ethnographic research as well as natural resource inventory and monitoring. And because of this work, the public continues to gain greater insight into Booker T. Washington and plantation life in Piedmont Virginia, as well as the impact of anthropogenic activity and commercial development on the environment.

As we shall see in the pages which follow, the history of the administration and management of the Booker T. Washington National Monument is one of dynamic and innovative leadership, detailed attention to research and planning, and strong partnerships with community groups and regional institutions. The story of how BOWA managers and staff have confronted difficult interpretive and resource management issues has relevancy for not just current and future employees, but also for other archivists, curators, scholars, and interpreters engaging the topics of race, slavery, the Civil War and Emancipation, massive resistance, and the politics of memorialization and commemoration. For nearly seventy years, the Booker T. Washington National Monument has provided a model of how to confront the hard realities of our nation's history through innovative public programming, interdisciplinary research, and creative partnerships.

CHAPTER ONE

UP FROM SLAVERY: BOOKER T. WASHINGTON AND THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IN VIRGINIA

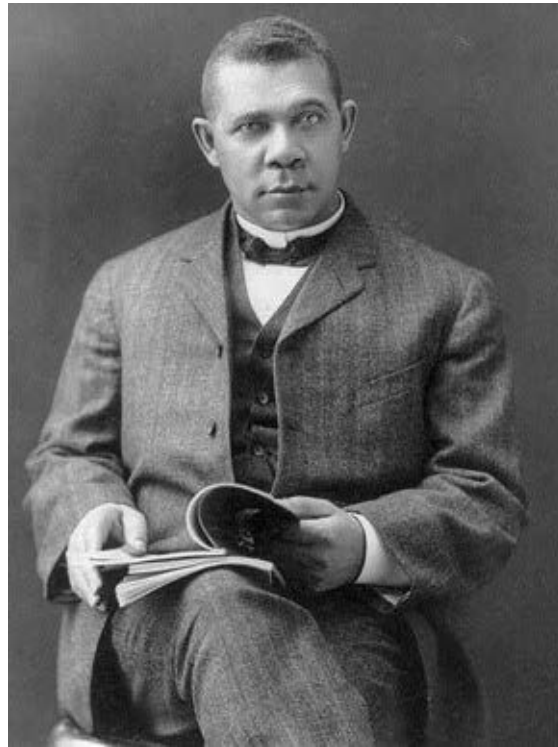


Figure 6: Booker T. Washington at Tuskegee Institute (Library of Congress).

Introduction

On October 2, 1908, Booker T. Washington, the most famous and influential Black man in the world, visited his birthplace, Franklin County, Virginia. Over the course of his brief visit, he walked the grounds of the Hale's Ford area farm, reminisced over his childhood experiences, compared and contrasted his memories of his former home with the present conditions of the landscape, and queried his hosts about the status of old establishments like Morgan Mill, the place where he carried corn as a child. "Everything is changed," Washington noted as he

evaluated the transformations in the landscape. “It seems incredible to me that the Ferguson place, where I used to go, as a boy, is now only across the road. The old dining room too, is not near as large as it used to be, or at least as it seemed to be.”¹⁴ Shortly after touring the premises, Washington delivered an address from the porch of what was thought to be the residence of his former owner, James Burroughs. A diverse crowd, including white planters and former enslaved African Americans, assembled near the house to hear Washington’s address.

During his speech, Washington expressed pride in his humble beginnings, reflected on the lessons learned during his boyhood years on the farm, and recounted his accomplishments as an educator. According to the *New York Evening Post*, Washington reminded the African Americans who were present that it was not too late for them to begin, if they had not already done so, to save a little money to get a little home, and to make something of themselves.”¹⁵

Throughout his public career, Washington presented himself as the living embodiment of what could be achieved in America through hard work, frugality, temperance, and self-mastery. Though born into slavery, he had risen to a position of authority and influence not just in the South but throughout the nation. An advisor to wealthy industrialists, philanthropists, and even the nation’s presidents, Washington wielded enormous political power as the founding principal of Tuskegee Institute, chief financier for the vast majority of Black newspapers in the US, and a leading proponent of industrial education. “Easily the most striking thing in the history of the American Negro since 1876 is the ascendancy of Mr. Booker T. Washington,” the noted intellectual W. E. B. DuBois wrote in 1903.¹⁶

The story of Washington’s rise from slavery to freedom is inextricably linked to the long and complex history of race in Virginia. His life illuminates many of the dominant themes in Afro-Virginia history: African Americans’ intimate yet fraught relationship with the white ruling class; African Americans’ quest for literacy and greater economic opportunities; their struggles to build democratically robust institutions that would not only challenge slavery and Jim Crow segregation but also forge new conceptions of freedom, justice, and equality; and the ongoing tensions within the African American community over the most effective political strategies in a racially stratified society. A native son of Virginia, Washington always presented his southern roots as a badge of honor. In fact, the South as both a real and imagined place factored significantly in his self-fashioning. Washington viewed his upbringing in rural Virginia as central to his formation, instilling within him a deep respect for the wisdom of older African Americans and a love

¹⁴ Louis Harlan, *Booker T. Washington Papers*, Vol. 9 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 637.

¹⁵ Louis Harlan, *Booker T. Washington Papers*, Vol. 9 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 638.

¹⁶ W.E.B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 1903.

of the land. In his 1911 book, *My Larger Education*, he reflects on his early years in Franklin County and the joy he derived from “communing with and taking lessons from the old class of coloured people” and having “the opportunity to learn nature, to love the soil, to love cows and pigs and trees and flowers and birds and worms and creeping things.”¹⁷ This was not a simplistic rehashing of whites’ common assertion of slavery’s “civilizing” influence on African Americans but rather a genuine appreciation of rural southern life. Thus, understanding the complex life and legacy of Washington requires serious engagement with Virginia, the state which helped shape his outlook as both a young boy and a student at Hampton Institute, and informed how the nation as a whole confronted critical questions regarding race and slavery.

The Making of Racial Slavery in Virginia

The emergence of racial slavery in the colony of Virginia was not inevitable. To prove this point, scholars often reference the life of Anthony Johnson, a member of the charter generation of African Creoles who navigated the socially fluid landscape of colonial Virginia during the first half of the seventeenth century. Johnson arrived in Jamestown in 1621 and was originally listed in colonial records as “Antonio, the Negro.” Johnson worked on the Bennett family plantation for twelve years and then became a member of Virginia’s landowning class. After securing his freedom, Johnson purchased his family’s freedom, amassed a substantial amount of land on the Maryland Eastern Shore, and acquired several indentured servants.¹⁸

Johnson’s life chances and experiences were radically different than those of the next generation of Africans in America, due in no small part to the legal codification of slavery. Over the second half of the seventeenth century, the British colonies of Maryland and Virginia passed a series of laws which not only codified slavery as a race-based system but also severely restricted the rights of free Blacks. One such law was Virginia’s Act XII. Act XII declared that the children of enslaved Black women would inherit the civil status of their mothers. This was one of many slave codes which provided the legal context for the emergence of chattel slavery, a perpetual system of involuntary servitude based on race. Passed throughout the North American colonies between 1660 and 1710, these codes banned slaves from owning weapons and ammunition, holding property, testifying against white people in courts, congregating in groups larger than three or four, marrying, and

¹⁷ Booker T. Washington, *My Larger Education: Being Chapters From My Experience* (New York Doubleday, 1901), 2.

¹⁸ Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

entering into contracts. This inscribing of chattel slavery as a system of racial subjugation and economic control into colonial law shaped the growth and maturation of plantation slavery in the tobacco colonies of the Upper South and throughout colonial America.

The advent of plantation slavery in the Chesapeake colonies of Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina was inextricably linked to the growing demand for the staple crop of tobacco. Between 1620 and 1700, the surge in the annual exports of tobacco from the Chesapeake region was astonishing. Collectively, Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina sent 20,000 pounds of tobacco to England in 1620; by 1700 this number had grown to 35 million pounds.¹⁹ This tobacco revolution would have been impossible without the labor of enslaved Africans who arrived in the colonies via the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The transatlantic slave trade supplied the colonies of the North American mainland, most notably the tobacco plantations of the Chesapeake and the rice producing low country of South Carolina, with African-born laborers from the regions of Senegambia, Upper Guinea, Gold Coast, Bight of Benin, Bight of Biafra, West Central Africa and Mozambique-Madagascar.²⁰

The slave trade had a profound impact on the Virginia colony. Between 1680 and 1750, the percentage of Blacks in the colony's population rose from 7 percent to 44 percent. "They import so many Negros hither," noted Virginia planter William Byrd II in 1736, "That I fear this Colony will some time or another be confirmed by the Name of New Guinea."²¹ Slavery was very much a part of the social order in Virginia, but during the revolutionary years, the egalitarian ethos of the times and the exigencies of war expanded the emancipatory possibilities for Blacks living in Virginia. The Dunmore Proclamation—signed on November 7, 1775 by John Murray, the royal governor of the British colony of Virginia—granted freedom for slaves of Patriots who deserted their owners and joined British forces. The proclamation had a threefold impact: (1) it intensified whites' fear of a massive slave revolt; (2) it pushed some neutral whites to the side of the Patriots; and (3) it introduced the manumission of African Americans as a possible wartime strategy. A month

¹⁹ Jean B. Russo and J. Elliot Russo, *Planting an Empire: The Early Chesapeake in British North America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2012); James Horn, *A Land As God Made It: Jamestown and the Birth of America* (New York: Basic Books 2008); Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680–1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975).

²⁰ The trade spanned three hundred years, resulting in the forced migration of more than ten million Africans into the Americas. Of those Africans subjected to the brutal experiences of capture and the Middle Passage, 500,000 arrived in the North American British colonies. Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1998).

²¹ Philip D. Morgan and Michael L. Nicholls, "Slaves in Piedmont Virginia, 1720–1790," *William and Mary Quarterly* XLVI, no. 2 (1989): 215–16.

after the proclamation's signing, approximately 800 slaves escaped to Norfolk, Virginia to join the Royal Army. The proclamation also resulted in massive desertions by enslaved people throughout the South, particularly in Virginia.

Notwithstanding the egalitarian rhetoric of the revolutionary period, most white Virginians remained firmly committed to the institution of slavery and the idea of Black inferiority. Thomas Jefferson in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* posited that African Americans were inferior to whites in both body and mind.²² Although Jefferson publicly stated his support for gradual emancipation, he insisted that freed Blacks would have to leave the state of Virginia because the races would never reconcile their cultural, political, and intellectual differences. Published in 1785, *Notes on the State of Virginia* elicited outrage from a variety of African American intellectuals and leaders, including Benjamin Banneker, who insisted that his own achievements proved the fallacy of Jefferson's claims on the intellectual and moral inferiority of African Americans.

Throughout Virginia and the nation, African Americans registered their opposition to slavery through their words and actions. For example, in the spring of 1800, Gabriel Prosser, a blacksmith enslaved by Thomas Prosser of Henrico County, devised a plan in which he and his most trusted comrades would murder all the whites they encountered, seize weapons and ammunition from Richmond's arsenal, break into the state treasury, and establish an independent Black state in Virginia. The ultimate goal was to force all slaveholders to free their slaves. Gabriel commenced his insurrection on August 30, but torrential rains and a violent storm undermined his efforts. A local Black revealed Gabriel's plans, and the state militia suppressed the insurrection. Prosser and thirty-four of his men were convicted and hanged.

Even as the fight against slavery intensified, the peculiar institution remained firmly entrenched in American society. By 1790, Virginia had a population of 293,427 enslaved people. And unlike the late sixteenth and seventeenth century, many of these resided in the piedmont region of the state. As the colony lessened its restrictions on western settlement, whites journeyed to Spotsylvania, Brunswick, Hanover, Albemarle and other counties in the Piedmont region of Virginia to clear new lands for tobacco cultivation. "On the eve of the American Revolution," historian Philip Morgan writes, "the piedmont could claim almost 45 percent of Virginia's population, and settlement stretched diagonally from the Potomac River, down the Blue Ridge, to the North Carolina line."⁸

Slavery occupied a central place in the economic and social structure of the region. In fact, by the end of the Revolutionary War, the enslaved population in the Piedmont was greater than that in the Tidewater. According to the 1790 census, 51 percent of the enslaved

²² <https://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/jefferson/jefferson.html>.

in Virginia lived in the Piedmont region, 44 percent in the Tidewater area, and 5 percent in the Shenandoah Valley. Thus, it should come as no surprise that slavery was very much a part of the economic and social landscape of Franklin County.

Located in the southern region of the Piedmont, Franklin County was established in 1785. The most detailed description of the early residents and class structure of early Franklin County comes from historian John Salmon:

It is possible, theoretically, to use the foregoing statistics to concoct some sort of 'average' Franklin County resident for 1786; it would also be meaningless because there are several possible averages. At the bottom of the economic ladder for instances, the poorest residents constitute about 1/3 (35%) of the population and the degrees of poverty range from what is called "grinding" to just below the subsistence level. The milling class—lower and upper—was composed of just on the 3/5 of the taxpayers (59%). The upper economic class amounted to hardly more than 5 percent of the total. Such classifications do little by themselves to describe the actual conditions under which Franklin County citizens lived. They do at least provide a means of measuring relative prosperity.²³

This statistical breakdown remained consistent throughout the early national and antebellum periods. So, too, did the percentage of slaveholders in the area. According to the 1860 census, 24 percent of Franklin County's population owned slaves. Though large slaveholding plantations were rare in the county, the institution of slavery was an integral component of the economic structure, including the area's industrial sector. One of the area's slaveholders was James Burroughs.

James Burroughs was born near Smith Mountain in Bedford, Virginia in 1794. Like many men of his social milieu, Burroughs served in the War of 1812. On August 5, 1818, he married Elizabeth W. (Betsy) Robertson. The next year, Burroughs purchased a 228-acre farm in Bedford, where he and Elizabeth built a life with their fourteen children. In 1850, James Burroughs purchased a 207-acre tract of land in Franklin County from his brother Thomas. On the Burroughs farm, enslaved African Americans cultivated tobacco, grew subsistence crops like wheat and corn, cared for the livestock, and tilled the gardens. One of the slaves who worked for James Burroughs was a woman named Jane, who was born around 1820. Louis Harlan speculates that Burroughs may have purchased Jane from Bowker Preston, a prosperous owner of enslaved people who resided across the road from the Burroughs farm: "In the inventory of his estate before its division among his nephews, the first slave on the list was recorded as 'Janie & child,' jointly valued at 500.00."²⁴ The

²³ John S Salmon, *Franklin County, Virginia 1786–1986: A Bicentennial History* (Franklin County: Franklin County Bicentennial, 1994), 72.

²⁴ Louis Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Making of a Black Leader, 1856–1901* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 9.

child referenced here could have possibly been Jane's first son, John. We do know that by the time Jane had her second child, Booker, in 1856 she was the property of James Burroughs and worked on his farm as a cook.

In an oft-cited passage from his autobiography, Booker T. Washington recounts the circumstances of his birth and the unknown aspects of his identity:

I was born a slave on a plantation in Franklin County, Virginia. I am not quite sure of the exact place or exact date of my birth, but at any rate I suspect I must have been born somewhere and at some time. As nearly as I have been able to learn, I was born near a crossroads post-office called Hale's Ford, and the year was 1858 or 1859. I do not know the month or the day. The earliest impressions I can now recall are of the plantation and the slave quarters—the latter being the part of the plantation where the slaves had their cabins."²⁵

In this and other texts, which BOWA administrators have relied on in their wayside exhibits and interpretive media, Washington conveyed how slavery robbed many African Americans of an in-depth knowledge of their family history:

Of my ancestry I know almost nothing. In the slave quarters, and even later, I heard whispered conversations among the coloured people of the tortures which the slaves, including, no doubt, my ancestors on my mother's side, suffered in the middle passage of the slave ship while being conveyed from Africa to America. I have been unsuccessful in securing any information that would throw any accurate light upon the history of my family beyond my mother. She, I remember, had a half-brother and a half-sister. In the days of slavery not very much attention was given to family history and family records—that is, black family records. My mother, I suppose, attracted the attention of a purchaser who was afterward my owner and hers. Her addition to the slave family attracted about as much attention as the purchase of a new horse or cow. Of my father I know even less than of my mother. I do not even know his name. I have heard reports to the effect that he was a white man who lived on one of the near-by plantations. Whoever he was, I never heard of his taking the least interest in me or providing in any way for my rearing. But I do not find especial fault with him. He was simply another unfortunate victim of the institution which the Nation unhappily had engrafted upon it at that time.²⁶

Like most enslaved children, young Booker lived under harsh conditions. His clothing consisted of a one piece shirttail made of flax. The coarse garment bruised the skin and caused him great discomfort, which his older brother sought to relieve: "On

²⁵ Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery*, (1901; New York: Oxford University, 1995), 1.

²⁶ Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 2.

several occasions when I was being forced to wear a new flax shirt, he generously agreed to put it on in my stead and wear it for several days, till it was 'broken in.' Until I had grown to be quite a youth this single garment was all that I wore."²⁷

John and Booker loved each other deeply, and would extend that love to their half-sister Amanda, the child of their mother Jane and stepfather Washington Ferguson. Booker's stepfather was enslaved by Josiah Ferguson and lived on a nearby farm in Franklin County. Not one to easily accept the cruelties of slavery, Wash Ferguson was considered unruly and insolent. He frequently ran away from his owner, who had a reputation for whipping his slaves. Because of this, Josiah Ferguson rented Wash to other families and allowed him to work in the tobacco factories nearby and the salt mines in West Virginia. Longing to be free, Wash would escape from slavery during the Civil War.

Of course, young Booker's stepfather was not alone in using the circumstances of war to gain his freedom. To undermine the power of the Confederacy, African Americans challenged the managerial authority of the slave-owners, fled the plantations into Union Army lines, and enlisted enthusiastically in the Union Army. To mention these initiatives is not to discount the significance of such decrees as the Confiscation Act of 1862 or the Emancipation Proclamation; rather these initiatives reinforce the significance of employing both "top-down" and "bottom-up approaches" to understanding the historical forces responsible for the abolition of slavery.

Up from Slavery: Booker T. Washington's Life after Emancipation

On January 13, 1865, Congress abolished slavery with the passage of the thirteenth Amendment. Four months later, Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered his Army of Northern Virginia to Union General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox. In the aftermath of slavery's abolition, newly freed Blacks prioritized the stabilization of their family lives, securing education for their children, gaining control over their economic lives, and exercising their political rights. After the passage of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, African Americans entered the political arena as both voters and elected officials. They participated in the writing of new state constitutions, expanded the South's free public school system, worked to reform the criminal justice system, and fought valiantly against the regressive forces of white supremacy throughout the South.

Like other African Americans, Booker T. Washington's family sought greater autonomy and freedom after the abolition of slavery. With the hopes of improving their status and reuniting their family, Jane Ferguson and her three children left Franklin County

²⁷ Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 7.

for Malden, West Virginia, in August 1865. Her husband had sent word of his location in the Kanawha Valley. The transition from slavery to freedom was anything but easy. Booker later remembered his new home as “no better than the one we had left on the old plantation in Virginia. In fact, in one respect it was worse. Notwithstanding the poor condition of our plantation cabin, we were at all times sure of pure air. Our new home was in the midst of a cluster of cabins crowded closely together, and as there were no sanitary regulations, the field about the cabins was often intolerable.”²⁸



Figure 7: The cabin where Booker T. Washington and his family lived in Malden, West Virginia (BOWA Archives).

Immediately upon their arrival, Booker and his brother John began working in the salt mines with their stepfather. This became a source of great frustration for Booker as his quest for education intensified. “From the time that I can remember having any thoughts about anything, I recall that I had an intense longing to learn to read. I determined, when quite a small child, that, if I accomplish nothing else in life, I would in some way get enough education to enable me to read common books and newspapers.”²⁹

The persistent Booker convinced his mother to purchase a Webster’s spelling book and then began the task of learning the alphabet. Shortly thereafter, the Black community started a school in the Tinkersville section of town and hired a young man named William

²⁸ Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 15.

²⁹ Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 16.

to serve as the instructor. Much to Booker's disappointment, his stepfather initially refused to allow him to attend the school as he expected his son to work in the salt furnaces. Frustrated but not deterred, Booker attended the night school held primarily for adults.

Even though he learned a great deal in night school, he was determined to attend day school. "I let no opportunity slip to push my case," he later remembered. Booker and his stepfather struck a compromise. The youngster would work in the mines from 4 am to 9 am and then dash off to day school."³⁰

Beyond the classroom, Washington received additional training from Viola Ruffner, the second wife of Lewis Ruffner, a prominent salt and coal manufacturer. A native of Vermont, Ruffner was educated at Bennington Academy. Passionate about education, she taught in North Carolina and New Jersey. She briefly ran her own school until an illness forced her to stop. While recuperating, she applied for a job as a governess for General Lewis Ruffner, a widower whom she married in 1843. The stern yet loving former teacher would have a profound influence on Washington, who began working as a servant in her home in 1867. He credited Ruffner with teaching him the values of temperance, frugality, cleanliness, and hard work.

Those values would also be reinforced at the institution which had the greatest impact on his political trajectory and educational philosophy: Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute. Hampton was founded in 1868. With hopes of securing a better education, Washington departed for Hampton Institute in 1872. On his journey to Hampton, the sixteen-year-old encountered what he later referred to as his first real brush with racial discrimination:

I had been travelling over the mountains most of the afternoon in an old-fashioned stage-coach, when, late in the evening, the coach stopped for the night at a common, unpainted house called a hotel. All the other passengers except myself were whites. In my ignorance I supposed that the little hotel existed for the purpose of accommodating the passengers who travelled on the stage-coach. The difference that the colour of one's skin would make I had not thought anything about. After all the other passengers had been shown rooms and were getting ready for supper, I shyly presented myself before the man at the desk. . . . Without asking as to whether I had any money, the man at the desk firmly refused to even consider the matter of providing me with food or lodging. This was my first experience in finding out what the colour of my skin meant. In some way I managed to keep warm by walking about, and so got through the night.³¹

³⁰ Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 19.

³¹ Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 19.

As was customary throughout his career, Washington treated his encounter with racism as more of a nuisance than a barrier to his advancement: “My whole soul was so bent upon reaching Hampton that I did not have time to cherish any bitterness toward the hotel-keeper.”³²

Upon his arrival at Hampton, Washington presented himself to the head teacher. Though he bore all the signs of his long journey, he hoped to be granted admission into Hampton. Hours passed before he received any word from the headmaster, and when he did, it was a request to clean a room:

The head teacher said to me: ‘The adjoining recitation-room needs sweeping. Take the broom and sweep it.’ It occurred to me at once that here was my chance. Never did I receive an order with more delight. I knew that I could sweep, for Mrs. Ruffner had thoroughly taught me how to do that when I lived with her. I swept the recitation-room three times. Then I got a dusting-cloth and I dusted it four times. All the woodwork around the walls, every bench, table, and desk, I went over four times with my dusting-cloth. Besides, every piece of furniture had been moved and every closet and corner in the room had been thoroughly cleaned. I had the feeling that in a large measure my future depended upon the impression I made upon the teacher in the cleaning of that room.³³



Figure 8: Booker T. Washington as a student at Hampton Institute (Library of Congress).

Having pleased the head teacher, Washington was admitted into Hampton. During his time at Hampton, Washington excelled at school and developed a great admiration for the school’s principal, General Samuel Armstrong. Samuel Chapman Armstrong was a former Union general who led African American troops during the Civil War. According to

³² Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 19.

³³ Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 19.

James Anderson, a leading scholar of Black education, Armstrong “developed a pedagogy and ideology designed to avoid such confrontations and to maintain within the South a social consensus that did not challenge traditional inequities of wealth and power.”³⁴ One way he did this was through his promotion of industrial education, which emphasized the training of “responsible” black leaders who would support the existing social order. As Anderson explains, “Hampton was neither a college nor a trade school but a normal school composed of elementary school graduates who were seeking two additional years of schooling and teacher preparation courses so that they might qualify for a common school teaching certificate.”³⁵ The school did not grant a bachelor’s degree. Nor did it offer courses in the advanced sciences or engineering. “The point was not to create entrepreneurs or blacks efficient in technical trades,” Anderson maintains. Instead, Armstrong sought “to create black ideologues who were expected to exemplify and propagate Armstrong’s philosophy of southern Reconstruction to the Afro-American working class.”³⁶ A key component of that philosophy was an aversion to Black participation in the political sphere. “Political ambition,” he believed “had proved unhealthy for the brightest minds of the black race.”

Despite these views, Armstrong considered himself a “friend of the Negro.” Others, including Washington, shared his perspective.

I never met any man who, in my estimation, was the equal of General Armstrong. Fresh from the degrading influences of the slave plantation and the coal-mines, it was rare privilege for me to be permitted to come into direct contact with such a character as General Armstrong. . . I do not believe he ever had a selfish thought. He was just as happy in trying to assist some other institution in the South as he was when he was working for Hampton. . . . It would be difficult to describe the hold that he had upon the students at Hampton, or the faith they had in him. In fact, he was worshipped by his students. It never occurred to me that General Armstrong could fail in anything that he undertook.³⁷

After three years, Washington completed his studies at Hampton. In the years after his graduation, he taught in West Virginia, studied briefly at Wayland Seminary in DC, and even considered the possibility of a career in law. Washington also worked briefly at his alma mater. These experiences provided critical lessons when Washington became the founding principal of Tuskegee Institute.

³⁴ James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 33.

³⁵ Anderson, *The Education of Blacks*, 35.

³⁶ Anderson, *The Education of Blacks*, 47.

³⁷ Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 54.

The Wizard of Tuskegee

The genesis of the founding of Tuskegee Institute can be traced to an agreement between W. F. Foster, a former Confederate General, and Lewis Adams, an African American Republican. In exchange for Adams assisting him in securing the African American vote during the 1880 election, Foster would pressure the state of Alabama to establish a school for Black people in the county. Thanks to the efforts of Adams and other African Americans, the Democrats received nearly twice the number of Black votes they had received six years earlier. Arthur Brooks, a member of the House Committee on Education, introduced House Bill No. 165 to appropriate funds for a Black normal school at Tuskegee. The bill passed 48 to 20 in the House and 21 to 7 in the Senate. The legislature placed control of the school under three commissioners, Adams, George W. Campbell, and Thomas B. Drayer. One of their first tasks was to hire a principal for the proposed school. Campbell sought a white educator in the vein of Samuel Armstrong to lead the school. When he asked Armstrong to recommend a white man suitable for the position, Armstrong responded: “The only man I can suggest is one Mr. Booker T. Washington, a graduate of this institution, a very competent capable mulatto, clear headed, modest, sensible, polite, and a thorough teacher and superior man. The best man we ever had here.”³⁸

Impressed by Armstrong’s recommendation, the state commissioners hired Washington as Tuskegee’s first principal. Washington and his students built the university from the ground up. “Before going to Tuskegee I had expected to find there a building and all the necessary apparatus ready for me to begin teaching. To my disappointment, I found nothing of the kind. I did find, though, that which no costly building and apparatus can supply—hundreds of hungry, earnest souls who wanted to secure knowledge.” The school opened in a one room shanty near Butler Chapel AME Zion Church. The first class consisted of thirty students who were largely from Macon County. The appropriation bill for the creation of Tuskegee allotted \$2,000 for the hiring of teachers but nothing for campus development. The shortage of funds, according to Ian Grandison, “motivated a self-help approach toward accomplishing the school’s goals of black education, campus development and community building.”³⁹ It also facilitated a novel approach to development: “The process of development differed fundamentally from the conventional implementation of design in landscape architecture in that it was not an abstract linear

³⁸ Louis Harlan, *Booker T. Washington Papers*, Vol. 2, 127.

³⁹ Kendrick Ian Grandison, “From Plantation to Campus: Progress, Community, and the Lay of the Land in Shaping the Early Tuskegee Campus,” *Landscape Journal* 15, no. 3 (1996): 9.

mechanism bringing together discrete client, planner, and contractor entities to build the campus. Instead, it was a cyclical process that dissolved the boundaries between the three in the interest of integrating development with community uplift.”⁴⁰



Figure 9 : Tuskegee Institute, 1906 (Library of Congress).

By the turn of the century, Tuskegee was a shining jewel among historically Black colleges and universities. It had an endowment of more than two million dollars, dozens of impressive buildings, Black students from across the nation and around the world, and a faculty made up of some of the most accomplished African Americans—including the noted botanist George Washington Carver, the pioneering sociologist Monroe Nathan Work, and the renowned architect R.R. Taylor. Structured along the lines of Hampton Institute, Tuskegee’s curriculum, values, and ethos mirrored those of Washington’s alma mater.

Over time, Washington’s influence extended far beyond Tuskegee. In 1892, he founded the Tuskegee Negro Conference, which drew African Americans from various parts of the nation to discuss economics, education, social welfare, and other matters related to the uplift of the race. Eight years after the formation of the Negro Conference, he created the National Negro Business League as a way to spread his message of economic self-sufficiency and racial cooperation.

The major breakthrough for Washington as a national leader came with his address at the 1895 Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, Georgia. Throughout the nineteenth century, the United States and various European nations hosted exhibitions,

⁴⁰ Grandison, “From Plantation to Campus,” 9.

expositions, and world fairs which promoted their advancements in business and industry, progress in public education and health, scientific achievements, and artistic ingenuity. The New South city of Atlanta was the site of several exhibitions, including the 1895 Cotton States and International Exposition. Held from September 18 to December 31, the 1895 Exposition attracted more than 80,000 visitors. On the opening day, Booker T. Washington delivered a message calling for racial reconciliation and peaceful progress in the South. African Americans were encouraged to place their focus on improving themselves economically and morally:

Our greatest danger is that in our leap from slavery to freedom we may overlook that fact that the masses of us are to live by the production of our hands, and fail to keep in mind that we shall prosper in proportion as we learn to dignify and glorify common labor; and put brains into the common occupations of life; shall prosper as we learn to draw the line between the superficial and the substantial, the ornamental gewgaws of life and the useful. No race can prosper until it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem. It is at the bottom of life that we must begin and not at the top.⁴¹

Washington's tendency to pander to white stereotypes about African Americans was on full display as he mildly chastised those who prioritized "a seat in congress" over the acquisition of "real estate or industrial skill." Insisting that African Americans' future lay in the South, he discouraged Blacks who sought to improve their status through migration north or settlement in Liberia: "To those of my race who depend on bettering their condition in a foreign land, or who underestimate the importance of preserving friendly relations with the southern white man who is their next door neighbor, I would say: 'Cast down your bucket where you are.' Cast it down, making friends in every manly way of the people of all races, by whom you are surrounded."⁴²

Washington also had a message to his white audience, insisting that the future progress of the South depended on the labor of African Americans.

To those of the white race who look to the incoming of those of foreign birth and strange tongue and habits for the prosperity of the South, where I permitted, I would repeat what I have said to my own race: 'Cast down your bucket where you are.' Cast it down among the eight millions of Negroes whose habits you know, whose fidelity and love you have tested in days when to have proved treacherous meant the ruin of your fireside. Cast down your bucket among these people who have without strikes and labor wars tilled your fields,

⁴¹ Washington, Booker T, "Atlanta Exposition Speech of 1895" (speech, Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, Atlanta, GA, September 18, 1895), <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/multimedia/booker-t-washington.html>.

⁴² Washington, "Atlanta Exposition Speech of 1895."

cleared your forests, build[t] your railroads and cities, brought forth treasures from the bowels of the earth, just to make possible this magnificent representation of the progress of the South.⁴³

Interracial progress, he insisted, was critical to the reconciliation of the South and North and the prosperity of the nation. Washington's message resonated deeply with many whites and Blacks. "Permit me to extend a hearty word of Congratulations for your great utterance of yesterday," S. Laing Williams of Chicago wrote to Washington. "No word uttered by a colored man during the past 20 years will go farther and do more to set us right in public opinion than your eloquently apt and philosophically sound words." Equally excited was Mary Elizabeth Preston Sterns: "You have struck the keynote of Twentieth Century civilization in America! Can the South fail to hear its sublime pathetic pleadings: its unanswerable truth?" Words of praise also came from Clark Howell, editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*: "I do not exaggerate when I say that Prof. Booker T. Washington's address yesterday was one of the most notable speeches, both as to character and as to the warmth of its reception, ever delivered to a Southern audience."⁴⁴

⁴³ Washington, "Atlanta Exposition Speech of 1895."

⁴⁴ *New York World*, September 19, 1895.



Figure 10: Robert C. Ogden, Senator William Howard Taft, Booker T. Washington and Andrew Carnegie (Library of Congress).

The success of his speech, along with the growth of Tuskegee, catapulted Washington to a level of influence unknown to any other African American of his generation. With the idea that Washington could assist them in solving the “Negro Question,” wealthy white philanthropists invested heavily in Tuskegee and sought his counsel on other institutions to which they should donate their money. Presidents William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and William Howard Taft, sought his advice on key cabinet appointments, as well as various matters related to race.

Washington’s rise to power was documented in two autobiographies, *The Story My Life and Work* and his magnum opus, *Up from Slavery*. His first autobiography, *The Story My Life and Work*, appeared in 1899. Two years later, *Up from Slavery* was released to rave reviews. According to W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Up from Slavery* bore the influence of two autobiographical traditions: “One was the tradition of autobiographies of self-made men and its preoccupation with individual responsibility and accomplishment. The other was the tradition of antebellum narratives by enslaved people, with its preoccupation with freedom and self-development.” Washington’s uplift story found strong support among

whites who routinely suggested the plight of African Americans was the result of their misplaced values, undue attention to politics, and lack of hard work rather than entrenched racism.

Not everyone, however, shared such a positive view of Washington. Even at the height of his influence, the Tuskegee leader met resistance among several African American leaders, most notably W. E. B. DuBois. In his criticism of Washington, DuBois pointed out what he labeled the triple paradox of the leader's ascendancy:

1. He is striving nobly to make Negro artisans business men and property-owners; but it is utterly impossible, under modern competitive methods, for workingmen and property-owners to defend their rights and exist without the right of suffrage.
2. He insists on thrift and self-respect, but at the same time counsels a silent submission to civic inferiority such as is bound to sap the manhood of any race in the long run.
3. He advocates common-school and industrial training, and depreciates institutions of higher learning; but neither the Negro common-schools, nor Tuskegee itself, could remain open a day were it not for teachers trained in Negro colleges, or trained by their graduates.⁴⁵

Washington and DuBois undoubtedly had their political differences, but it is unfair to present the former as completely acquiescent to the South's racial order. At the height of his political power, Washington clandestinely fought against several segregation laws, as well as the rising tide of Black political disenfranchisement. To understand that fight, it is necessary to review, if only briefly, whites' efforts to undermine Black political power in Alabama. Emboldened by their comrades in other parts of the South, Alabama Democrats assembled at the state convention in 1901 to "establish white supremacy" without violating the Fifteenth Amendment. Toward this goal, the convention delegates passed amendments which required voters to pass a literacy test, pay a poll tax, and reside in the state for two years.⁴⁶

The architects of Alabama's disenfranchisement movement did not go unchallenged. On the eve of the convention, Washington and twenty-three other African American leaders convened in Montgomery to draft a protest petition, which they presented on the convention floor. "Alabama's boisterous delegates," historian R. Volney Riser explains, "were in no mood to hear the complaints or pleas of the state's black population, but Booker T. Washington was a special case. . . . Thanks to Judge Coleman and

⁴⁵ W. E. B. DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk* (1903 reprint; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 40.

⁴⁶ "Alabama's 1901 Constitution: Instrument of Power," *University of Alabama School of Law* online special collections, December 9, 2016. <https://www.law.ua.edu/specialcollections/2016/12/09/alabamas-1901-constitution-instrument-of-power/>.

Governor Jones, Washington's petition received a public airing over the objections of the convention's young members. . . . The clerk read the letter accompanying the document as well as the petition, while the unruly delegates sat twisting in their chairs, their lunches delayed, forced to hear the honeyed entreaties of the most famous man in Alabama."⁴⁷ The petition was similar to the one he had help craft in opposition to Louisiana's disenfranchisement movement. "It requires little thought, effort or strength to degrade and pull down a weak race," he pleaded with white convention leaders. But it is a sign of great statesmanship to . . . lift up a weak and unfortunate race. Destruction is easy; construction is difficult."⁴⁸ Washington's pleas, along with those of other African Americans, fell on deaf ears. The state's electorate approved the new constitution on November 11, 1901 with 108,613 votes cast in favor and 81,734 votes against. The effect of the new constitution was immediate and profound. The number of African Americans registered to vote in Alabama decreased from 181,471 in 1900 to 3, 654 in 1906.

Washington secretly financed two legal challenges to Alabama's discriminatory voter registration practices, *Giles v. Harris* and *Giles v. Teasley*. The two cases involved Jackson Giles, a federal postal employee in Montgomery. As the president of the Colored Men's Suffrage Association of Alabama, Giles sought to challenge against voter registration practices in Alabama. In 1903, he filed a mandamus petition in federal court to "force the Montgomery County Board of Registrars to register him and five thousand other black Montgomerians as voters." The Supreme Court heard the case but ruled that it was a congressional rather than judicial matter. The bulk of the financing for this case and the subsequent one came from Booker T. Washington, who throughout the late 1890s and early 1900s financed similar challenges to political disenfranchisement. The secretive nature of Washington's civil rights activity underscores the repressive environment in which he operated. Though much attention is given to Washington's popularity among certain white philanthropists, industrialists, and politicians, it is important to remember that there were whites who viewed the leader and his program as a threat to white supremacy. Consider the comments of Paul Barringer, a faculty member of the University of Virginia: "Carry every theory of Booker T. Washington to its full and perfect consummation and you will make a new and deadlier competition between antagonistic races. The conflict heretofore has been social and political. You will carry it then to material things."⁴⁹

Undeterred by his opponents, Washington labored earnestly to advance his program of racial uplift. The tireless leader traveled extensively, conducted countless fundraising drives on behalf of Tuskegee and other Black institutions, shepherded his

⁴⁷ R. Volney Riser, *Defying Disfranchisement: Blacks Voting Rights Activism in the Jim Crow South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2010), 116.

⁴⁸ Riser, *Defying Disfranchisement*, 116.

⁴⁹ John David Smith, *Racist Southern Paternalism: General Statements of the "Negro Problem"* (New York: Garland Publications, 1993), 177.

National Negro Business League, wrote hundreds of letters to associates, politicians, and philanthropists, and worked incessantly to keep his political enemies in check. “Work was life to Booker T. Washington, and he worked without stint until he could work no longer,” wrote Louis Harlan.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, Washington’s hectic schedule took a toll on his health as he battled kidney and heart disease. Family and friends begged him to slow down, but their warnings fell on deaf ears.

On Sunday morning, November 14, 1915, Booker T. Washington died of congestive heart failure at the age of 59. Across the country, white and Black newspapers mourned the death of one of the nation’s most beloved and controversial public figures. “With few exceptions,” writes historian Kenneth M. Hamilton, “Washington’s obituaries memorialized him as the foremost leader of African Americans . . . His death notices reinforced a long-held myth that the nation’s bountiful opportunities would allow all persons, regardless of their status at birth or of their sex, race, or ethnicity, to succeed if they adopted the Yankee Protestant ethic paradigm. They portrayed him, moreover, as an optimistic, magnetic, philanthropic leader who endeavored to change the nation’s realities for African Americans, particularly in the South.”⁵¹ Immediately upon his death, African Americans began discussing ways to memorialize one of the most prominent leaders of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

⁵⁰ Louis Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Wizard of Tuskegee: 1901–1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 438.

⁵¹ Kenneth M. Hamilton, *Booker T. Washington in American Memory* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 38.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BOOKER T. WASHINGTON BIRTHPLACE MEMORIAL



Figure 11: Portia Washington Pittman and Sidney Phillips at the Booker T. Washington Birthplace Memorial (BOWA Archives).

On November 28, 1915, the League of Colored Business Men assembled in Washington, DC to mourn the death of its founder, Booker T. Washington. At the somber meeting, delegates drafted a series of resolutions outlining Washington’s accomplishments as an educator, author, and business leader. Over the course of his illustrious career, Washington had exercised enormous power and influence as the founding principal of Tuskegee Institute, trusted advisor to several elected officials, including Presidents William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt, and a leading proponent of industrial education. To ensure future generations remembered Washington’s many contributions to American culture and politics, the League called for the establishment of a national monument to properly honor the man whose political acumen earned him the title “Wizard of Tuskegee.” This was not the last conversation on the best way to memorialize Washington. In the years to follow, African Americans engaged

in a series of memorialization and commemoration projects designed to draw attention to Washington's complex life and rich political legacy.⁵²

Across Black America, Washington's legacy was inscribed into the built environment as numerous schools, parks, and buildings were named in his honor. On April 5, 1922, thousands gathered at Tuskegee Institute for the unveiling of the "Booker T. Washington Lifting the Veil of Ignorance" monument. Created by sculptor Charles Keck, the bronze monument depicts Washington removing the veil of ignorance from a young man holding a book. The inscription under the monument reads: *He lifted the veil of ignorance from his people and pointed the way to progress through education and industry.* Five years later, a replica of Keck's sculpture was placed at Booker T. Washington High School in Atlanta.



Figure 12: Lifting the Veil Monument at Tuskegee Institute (BOWA Archives).

In the decades after Washington's death, many black leaders continued to stress the importance of remembering and honoring his legacy. One individual especially committed to keeping Washington in the public memory was Tuskegee graduate Sidney J. Phillips, who in 1945 founded the Booker T. Washington Birthplace Memorial. With financial backing from his employer, the Nehi Company, Phillips purchased the Burroughs farm for \$7,610. Three months after the purchase, he transferred the property to the Booker T. Washington

⁵² See "Ask Booker T. Washington Day: Monument Also Proposed by League of Colored Business," *Washington Post*, November 28, 2015, E 20; "Monument to Be Unveiled: Booker T. Washington Memorial to Be Unveiled," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, April 1, 1922, 1; "10,000 At Unveiling of Monument to Booker T. Washington," *Afro-American*, May 28, 1927; "Booker T. Washington Memorial Is Proposed," *Washington Post*, January 8, 1930, 20.

Memorial Foundation. Under his leadership, the Booker T. Washington Birthplace Memorial built a slave cabin replica based on Washington's description of his living quarters as a boy, renovated the Burroughs house, opened a post office, and operated a farm which produced and sold sweet potatoes, corn, and cured meats. Not simply a site to commemorate Washington, the Birthplace Memorial was envisioned as a self-sufficient community which would provide a model for African Americans throughout the country. It aimed to advance and reflect the Washingtonian principles of self-reliance, hard work and frugality, and group cooperation. Though much had changed in the country and the world since Washington's death, Sidney Phillips was convinced his ideas were still relevant: "Never in history has there been such a need for the things which Booker T. Washington advocated as now, especially for good-will, for the economic building of the South and for adapting education to the needs of the people."⁵³



Figure 13: Sidney Phillips, founder of Booker T. Washington Birthplace Memorial (BOWA Archives).

⁵³ S. J. Phillips, "Launch Booker T. Washington Industrial School Drive," *The Chicago Defender*, June 22, 1946.

Phillips' perspective bore the imprint of his background and his training. A child of the post-Reconstruction South, Sidney James Phillips was born on May 7, 1901 in Pike Road, Alabama. He and his wife, Virginia L. Hurt, had three children and lived most of their married life in Alabama. Phillips graduated from Tuskegee in 1932 and then earned an MS from the University of Wisconsin. A longtime admirer of Booker T. Washington, Phillips had ambitious plans for the Birthplace Memorial. Turning his dreams into a reality would not be an easy task.

Since Washington's boyhood, the Burroughs property had changed ownership several times. After leaving the farm in 1870, Elizabeth Burroughs rented the land, which steadily depreciated in value. The property was then sold to Robert T. Cook in 1885, but he defaulted on his payments. Thomas Robertson Burroughs was briefly appointed receiver of the land before the property was finally sold to John D. Robertson in 1894. To improve the property, the Robertsons removed the horse and cow barns, the corncribs, the tobacco barns, and the old slave cabins. They also constructed two stock barns and five tobacco barns, and added a board siding and a front porch with gabled roof to the old log house. On July 6, 1917, Robertson gave Cook seven acres of the old Burroughs land on the east in exchange for the same amount of land on the north. According to Park Ranger-Historian Barry Mackintosh, this gave the former Burroughs property direct access to the Rocky Mount-Lynchburg Turnpike for the first time.⁵⁴

The Robertsons owned the Burroughs farm for nearly fifty years, until shortly after Martha Robertson's death in 1943 when the oldest Robertson son, Jacob, expressed interest in selling the land. The other children yielded to his desires, and the Burroughs property was put on auction on October 6, 1945.

The impending sale of Booker T. Washington's birthplace drew tremendous attention from the Black press, most notably the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*. The Virginia-based paper wanted the land in African American hands: "This occasion will present a great opportunity to our race to secure ownership of the birthplace of a great American and to dedicate it to use suitably perpetuating the memory of a revered leader and educator."

The Norfolk Journal and Guide devoted a great deal of attention to the auction and supported the idea that the birthplace be turned into a memorial: "Reviewing the life and works of Booker T. Washington is enough to fill every Negro patriot's heart with a deep desire that his birthplace be purchased and set aside as a living memorial to the name and achievements of this great education, social, and business leader of the race."⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Barry Mackintosh, *Booker T. Washington National Monument: An Administrative History* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1969).

⁵⁵ "To Auction Birthplace of Booker T.," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, September 22, 1945.

On the day of the auction, land speculators, bankers, politicians, and other interested parties arrived in Roanoke ready to bid on the property. Sidney Phillips opened the bidding with an offer of \$1500.00. Even though no one responded to his initial bid, Phillips raised his offer to \$3,600. The crowd became more anxious as other bidders began to participate. The Negro Society of Hampton then bid \$4,000.00, after which Phillips hiked his bid up to \$7,000. Unwilling to pay such a price, the Negro Society and the other bidders conceded to Phillips.

With funding from his employer, the Nehi Company, Phillips purchased the land for \$7,610 on October 15, 1945. To those with concerns about Nehi's involvement in the deal, Phillips assured them of his financial autonomy: "In getting information on auction proceeding in the state of Virginia, I was informed that a bid may be thrown out on the basis of the bidder's solvency being in question. Being a stranger in Franklin County, I felt that the solvency of the Roanoke Nehi bottler who is well known in this section could be easily established. Hence my use of his check instead of my own. The property is mine and will be developed by Negroes for Negroes."⁵⁶

Three months after Phillips secured possession of the Burroughs property, the Booker T. Washington Memorial was incorporated under the state of Virginia. On May 4, 1946, Phillips sold the property to the Booker T. Washington Birthplace Memorial, an organization over which he presided, for one dollar. On January 31, 1946, the Booker T. Washington Birthplace Memorial was chartered under the laws of the state of Virginia. The charter stated that the memorial would commemorate "the life and character of Booker T. Washington [and] erect and maintain shrines, monuments, and other similar markings at places connected" with his life. The charter also vowed to

collect and distribute historical facts and literature and mementos which would serve the general purpose of this corporation . . . and in particular to purchase, preserve and maintain the property located in Franklin County, Virginia, known as 'The Burroughs Farm.' This property would be a 'National Shrine,' dedicated to the aims, ideals, and purposes for which Booker T. Washington lived and labored, that the Industrial Education and Interracial Good Will which Booker T. Washington envisioned and proclaimed with matchless eloquence may be preserved in the hearts of men everywhere and that this memorial may be an inspiration to encourage and refresh those who strive for its ultimate attainment.⁵⁷

The foundation received \$15,000 in funding from the state of Virginia. These funds would not have been secured without the support of Walter L. Hopkins, a member of the Virginia Assembly. A native of Franklin County, Hopkins would eventually serve on the

⁵⁶ "Booker T. Birthplace to be a National Shrine," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, October 27, 1945.

⁵⁷ Mackintosh, *Booker T. Washington National Monument*, 18.

Memorial's board of trustees. With fiscal support from the state, Phillips began work on his vision for Washington's birthplace. According to Barry Mackintosh, "the first use of the state appropriation was for the construction of a two-lane driveway with circular turn-around at the end, leading from State Route 122 to the front of the Burroughs House."⁵⁸ The site's staff then moved toward the construction of a log cabin replicating the cabin Washington lived in while enslaved. They received assistance from Richard B. Collins of Tuskegee, who drew up plans for the replica. The cabin was completed in 1949 at the cost of \$1,500. The construction was based on Washington's description of the cabin in *Up from Slavery*. Another important addition to the birthplace was the Booker T. Washington Post Office, which opened in 1948.

That same year, the Birthplace Memorial launched the Booker T. Washington Trade School. The school offered courses in carpentry, bricklaying, radio repair, auto mechanics, beauty culture, and business. Some leaders believed such courses were desperately needed given the economic transformations taking place in postwar America.

One of the school's most vocal supporters was the educator Mary McLeod Bethune, who looked proudly on the work of the Memorial. "I knew Dr. Washington intimately," Bethune reflected in an editorial in the *Chicago Defender*. "He was a great help and inspiration in my own work. It cheered me to know that a group of loyal, devoted followers of the founder of Tuskegee Institute were making this attempt to carry on." Though the world was in throes of great change, Bethune believed Washington's ideas were still relevant for the times: "We have never needed more the ideas of Booker T. Washington, and I was deeply impressed, recently, when I heard of the work being done at the birthplace of this great American, to extend basic vocational education to the masses of Negro adults in the South." In her editorial, Bethune praised the Memorial's progress, its construction of the slave cabin replica, and its business endeavors:

"I heartily approve of the far-sighted work which Mr. Phillips and his associates have begun at the Booker T. Washington Birthplace Memorial at Roanoke," Bethune wrote. "I believe that it merits the earnest support of those who realize the need for meeting the problems of the American masses 'back down the line;' the need for extending our help to those who still have those first, difficult rungs to climb."⁵⁹

Bethune was not alone in her support of the school. On the pages of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, social critic George Schulyer argued for the continued relevancy of Washington's ideas and the trade school. "One reason why the Negro has been 'last to be hired and first to be fired' is because so few Negroes could do anything well that the economy wanted done. If there were a big group of highly skilled Negro craftsmen no one will argue that we would not be better off. Every person should be highly skilled in at least one craft. Our

⁵⁸ Mackintosh, *Booker T. Washington National Monument*, 19.

⁵⁹ Mary McLeod, Bethune, "Ideals of Booker T. Washington Find New Life in Birthplace Memorial," *Chicago Defender*, January 13, 1951.

great difficulty today, as in the past, is that we have tens of thousands of Negro so-called workers, urban and rural, who really do not know how to do anything well, except moan for 'security' and Government freebies. Many cannot even shine shoes or do domestic work properly. How the picture would change if we had a few hundred more consecrated men like far-sighted S. J. Phillips of Booker Washington Birthplace, VA!"⁶⁰

As mentioned earlier, the Memorial Birthplace also received support from elected officials at the local, state, and federal levels. This support came in the form of appropriation of state funds for several of the Birthplace's early buildings, Congressional authorization of the Booker T. Washington Memorial half-dollars, and the renaming of sections of Route 122 as the Booker T. Washington Highway. These actions reflected many politicians' recognition of Washington's historical importance as well as their preference for his leadership style over emerging forms of Black political protest.

With backing from Congressman T. G. Burch and Senator Carter Glass, Congress authorized the coinage of five million Booker T. Washington T. Birthplace Memorial half-dollars on May 23, 1946. President Harry Truman signed the bill on August 7. Four months later, the US government released the first Booker T. Washington half-dollars, which the Birthplace Memorial sold to the public for one dollar. Over the years, hundreds of African Americans ordered the half-dollars from the Birthplace Memorial. One Floridian sent two dollars to the Birthplace Memorial, noting his desire to pass down the half-dollars to his children. "I want to save them for my children. I want them to know about Booker T. Washington and I want them to know about the great work you are doing at the Booker T. Washington Birthplace Memorial."⁶¹

The legacy of Washington was also remembered with the renaming of Route 122 in 1953. The dedication included ribbon-cutting ceremonies held at both ends of the sixty-mile strip. In Rocky Mount, State Representative J. Brady Allman cut the red and blue ribbon. On the other side of the highway, J. C. Oliver, member of the county board of supervisors, presided at the official opening. It was a festive occasion featuring music, local bands, and an inspiring talk from Portia Washington Pittman. In her remarks, Pittman expressed tremendous pride at the renaming of Route 122 in honor of her father. The principal speaker for the event was Dr. G. Lake Imes of Baltimore, vice-president of the Booker T. Washington Birthplace Memorial and a retired faculty member of Tuskegee Institute. "The great service of Booker Washington to his race was the building of a road for

⁶⁰ George S. Schuyler, "Views and Reviews ... Finds Transformation at Booker T. Washington's Birthplace," the *Pittsburgh Courier*; April 22, 1950.

⁶¹ Robert M. Ratcliffe, "Hundreds Buying Coins," *Pittsburgh Courier*; December 9, 1950.

his people who, like himself, were making their way up from slavery,” Imes declared. “It was the task of Booker Washington to show his people that labor was the road to emancipation.”⁶²

The spirited event received tremendous attention from the media; yet the Memorial Birthplace faced serious management and financial issues. Some complained about the use of funds collected from the commemorative coins. Others bemoaned the lack of African American support. Leading this charge was Sidney Phillips himself. “Every program we have attempted has been supported almost entirely by white persons,” Phillips complained. “Less than 3 percent of the memorial coins sold were bought by Negroes.” In their rebuttal to Phillips’ commentary, *the Norfolk Journal and Guide* drew attention to what they claimed to be the Memorial’s lack of financial accounting: “It is a matter of record that Mr. Phillips was never able to command the confidence of Negro leaders. His memorial project never received the blessing or endorsement of Tuskegee Institute administrative authorities, particularly of Dr. F. D. Patterson, president of the Institute, at the time Mr. Philips launched his movement.”

This view was also articulated in a *Richmond Dispatch* article, which described the memorial as a “bright dream that bogged down in much of its uncertain finances.”⁶³

Beyond finances, another set of issues for the memorial were the political views of Sidney Phillips. In 1953, Phillips claimed, “the circumstances of the segregation system have been of overall benefit to the Negro.” The South’s social system, he argued, had given African Americans a field of their own. What he called the South’s “dual system” had “made the Negro look to himself, in large measure, for his earnings, his property holdings, his achievements, the respect he commands, and even the popularity he enjoys.” Turning his attention to the labor market, Phillips added that segregation had given African Americans a “monopoly” on certain jobs and that “thousands could be in peril as the result of any sweeping change resulting from legislation.”⁶⁴ His comments deeply angered many African Americans. “I think his economic and sociology theories are somewhat twisted,” noted Thomas Henderson of Virginia Union University. Others agreed. Throughout the country, Black newspapers lashed out at Phillips. “Shocking Words By a Thoughtless Speaker,” “Segregation Good, Yes Suh!,” and “Uncle Tom Phillips Speaks Up” were some of the headlines grabbing Black newspapers.⁶⁵ Incensed by Phillips’ commentary, the *Chicago Defender* refused to temper its criticism of the leader: “The contempt we hold for a person who would make such a ridiculous statement would ordinarily cause us to ignore him. But

⁶² Ratcliffe, “Colorful Ceremonies Mark Dedication of BTW Highway,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 18, 1955.

⁶³ “Phillips Folds BTW Memorial: Blames Negroes For Failure Of Project, But Failed To Report Fully On Financial Activities,” *New Journal and Guide*, Jan 22, 1955, B1.

⁶⁴ “Segregation Defended by Negro Leader,” *Washington Post*, July 6, 1953.

⁶⁵ “Shocking Words by a Thoughtless Speaker,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, July 11, 1953; “Segregation, Good, Yes Suh!,” *New York Amsterdam News*, July 11, 1953.

since the nation's wire services have flashed his ignoble words across the world, we feel called upon to comment, not on the obvious falsity of the statement, but upon the obvious falsity of the man."⁶⁶ With vivid detail, the editorial challenged Phillips' claims about the benefits of segregation. "The teachers who don't want integrated schools fear the loss of their jobs. The preachers who stand silent on mixed churches are afraid they may not have a pulpit from which to earn their daily bread—easily. The businessmen who cling to the principle of separation prefer second-class citizenship to busying themselves and providing first class service which would withstand competition. And the memorializers who fatten off the grants and charities of rich white supremacists know full well that the only way to stay in business is to bow the head and sell the soul." Concluding that "Booker T. Washington must be grieving in his grave," the *Defender* challenged the idea that Phillips' political views represented a continuation of those of the Tuskegee leader.

Phillips' and the Birthplace Memorial's complicated relationship to the Civil Rights Movement was further magnified with his decision in 1954 to sell a section of the Burroughs property to the Franklin County School Board for the erection of a segregated Black elementary school to be named after Booker T. Washington. The dedication ceremony, held on October 17, 1954 at 2:30, opened with the singing of the "Star Spangled Banner" and then an invocation by Reverend J.E. Powers. The principal of the new school, J. A. Holmes welcomed the guests, who then received greetings from Sidney Phillips. The keynote speaker was J. Elmer Turner, the principal of Albert Harris High School in Martinsville, Virginia. The editor of the *Roanoke Tribune*, Reverend F. E. Alexander delivered the prayer of dedication. Other notable attendees included Harold W. Ramsey, superintendent of Franklin County Schools; school board members James Smith and G.R. Smith; James Holland, the president of the local PTA; C. L. Atkins, principal of Franklin County Training School; and Portia Washington Pittman. The ceremony closed with the singing of the Negro National Anthem and then the benediction, which was delivered by H. G. Helm.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ "'Uncle Tom' Phillips Speaks Up," *Chicago Defender*, July 18, 1953.

⁶⁷ Dedication Ceremony Program, Booker T. Washington National Monument Resource Management Records, 1903–2013.



Figure 14: Booker T. Washington Elementary School in Franklin County, Virginia (BOWA Archives).

Years after the school's founding, James Jordan still had fond memories of his time there. "Back in those days it was a long walk to the bus stop, at least a mile," he reminisced. "I had five sisters and one brother. My whole family had a part in the school. My mom volunteered as a teacher's aide and my dad worked 19 years with the park service at the school."⁶⁸ As Jordan's comments make clear, the school was a source of pride for its students and teachers. Yet, its legacy is also intertwined with the darker history of Virginia's efforts to thwart the advances of the Civil Rights Movement, including the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board* decision, which declared separate but equal educational principles unconstitutional. Opened the same year as the *Brown* decision, the Booker T. Washington Elementary School is very much a part of the history of massive resistance. This point is reinforced in Scot French's detailed history of the school:

Booker T. Washington Elementary was largely a product of Virginia's eleventh-hour equalization campaign, an attempt to eliminate obvious disparities between black and white schools and establish legal compliance with Virginia's 'separate but equal' statutes. To the untrained eye, there was little to distinguish this segregated Negro elementary school from the modern white elementary schools erected at about the same time. Yet, however similar they might appear, the Black schools would always bear the badge of inferiority. It was not by

⁶⁸ Denise Allen Membrano, "Reunion Honors Namesake and Graduates," smithmountainlake.com, August 9, 2016, https://www.smithmountainlake.com/news/local/reunion-honors-namesake-and-graduates/article_1fd-1bc98-574e-5af8-81f6-e435b8dc4b0c.html

chance, for example, that Booker T. Washington lacked some of the physical amenities and finishing touches found in white schools constructed in the same period.⁶⁹

Phillips hoped the segregated school would add value to the Birthplace Memorial, which was nearly \$140,000 in debt. The Memorial owed \$94,670 to promotional firms for their marketing of the Booker T. Washington commemorative coins and approximately \$35,000 to the farms comprising the site. Facing mounting debts, Phillips turned his attention to the NPS, which he hoped would purchase the land and restore the historic property to its nineteenth century form.

⁶⁹ Scot French, Craig Evan Barton, and Peter Flora. *Booker T. Washington Elementary School and Segregated Education in Virginia: Historic Resource Study* (Washington DC, National Park Service, 2007), 6.

CHAPTER THREE

CIVIL RIGHTS, THE POLITICS OF MEMORIALIZATION, AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BOOKER T. WASHINGTON NATIONAL MONUMENT

On the morning of February 3, 1956, the House of Representatives' Subcommittee on Public Lands held hearings to consider H.R. 6904, a bill to provide for the establishment of the Booker T. Washington National Monument in Franklin County, Virginia. The bill, if passed by the Senate and House of Representatives, would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to acquire by gift, purchase, or condemnation "all rights, title, and interest in and to the real property located at Booker T. Washington Birthplace, Virginia." The property acquired under the act would constitute the Booker T. Washington National Monument and commemorate the noted educator and "apostle of good will." It would be supervised, managed, and administered by the Secretary of the Interior "in a suitable and enduring manner which, in his judgment, will provide for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of the United States."⁷⁰

The bill's sponsors included Brady Gentry, D-TX; Harrison A. Williams, D-NJ; Clair Engle, D-CA; James Roosevelt, D-CA; Clyde Doyle, D-CA; and Arthur L. Miller, R-NE. Over the course of the hearings, the Subcommittee on Public Lands heard statements from elected officials, National Park Service representatives, African American leaders, and family and friends of Washington. The lively conversation underscored how the push for the establishment of the Booker T. Washington National Monument was fueled by not just an admiration for Washington but also the political climate.

⁷⁰ *Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Public Lands of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs House of Representatives*, 84th Congress (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1956), 1.



Figure 15: US Representative Clair Engle, chief sponsor of bill authorizing Booker T. Washington National Monument (Associated Press).

The previous few months had witnessed an upsurge in civil rights activism, particularly in the state Washington had lived much of his adult life: Alabama. On Thursday afternoon, December 1, 1955, Rosa Louise McCauley Parks, a seamstress at Montgomery Fair department store, boarded the Cleveland Avenue bus with plans for a quiet evening dinner with her family. On her journey home, bus driver James Blake ordered Parks and three other Black passengers to relinquish their seats when the white section filled to capacity. The passengers initially ignored Blake's orders, but after he repeated his demands three of the riders exited their seats. Forty-two-year-old Parks, however, remained seated in a moving act of political defiance. "Are you going to stand up?" Blake queried Parks as she remained in her seat. To his question, the seamstress replied, "No."⁷¹ Instead of discharging Parks from the bus, Blake summoned police officers F. B. Day and D. W. Nixon, who then arrested her. Parks' arrest inspired a city-wide bus boycott which lasted more than a year, catapulted Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. into the national spotlight, and led to a Supreme Court mandate that Alabama desegregate its buses.

Of course, Montgomery was not the only place where African Americans challenged the status quo. Across the South, Black activists and their white allies intensified their struggle for civil and human rights. In fact, the same day, the subcommittee held hearings on the establishment of the Booker T. Washington National Monument, Autherine Lucy enrolled at the University of Alabama, becoming the first African American to attend the segregated institution.

It was within the context of the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement that some politicians viewed the establishment of the monument as a way to address the nation's race issue. This was clearly the perspective of Texas Representative Preston Gentry, who praised Booker T. Washington as a "great American citizen" who was a "greater benefactor of the white race than he was of the Negro race." The establishment of the national monument honoring Washington, he believed, was what the country needed: "I cannot imagine

⁷¹ Jeanne Theoharris, *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013), 62–63.

anything that would be more salutary even under the present circumstances, considering the recent decision of the Supreme Court. I believe it would bring people closer together because it would bring to mind what Booker T. Washington was and what he did, the things he preached, the things he taught, and the great example he set to all Americans, both white and colored.” Similar sentiments were echoed in the testimony of Representative James Roosevelt of California, who conveyed how the proposed monument might shape the nation’s image internationally. “Such a monument will be a beacon and rallying place for all Americans and for many visitors from outside of our own country. It will add to our national prestige in the eyes of the world and finally, and perhaps most important of all, it will be a symbol of the acknowledgement of a grateful nation for the valuable contributions which Booker T. Washington made to our civilization.”⁷² This Cold War angle also appeared in the statements of Sidney Phillips, who positioned himself as a disciple of Washington. Though staying clear of terms like integration and segregation or even Communism, he spoke of the “conflicting ideas and ideologies which are trying to be sold to our citizens.”⁷³ Perhaps playing on the political sensibilities of those who viewed the rising group of black leaders as too radical or forceful, Phillips praised Washington’s teachings as “sane and fundamental.”⁷⁴ He also presented the Tuskegee founder as an apostle of labor, a self-made man who understood the value of hard work. Like Roosevelt, Phillips also thought the establishment of the monument would assist the country in its Cold War efforts. “Anything that our Nation does that focuses the attention of the world upon the ideals of our democracy strengthens our position as a world leader.”⁷⁵

The hearings also featured statements from those who were against the establishment of the proposed monument. Wesley A. D’Ewart, the Assistant Secretary of the Interior, acknowledged Booker T. Washington’s noteworthy achievements but held firm in his opposition to the establishment of Washington’s birthplace as a national monument. In his remarks, he leaned heavily on the opinions of the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments, which in a 1954 resolution opposed the inclusion of Washington’s birthplace in the national park system. “While Booker T. Washington, the man, is an impressive national figure, the birth site is not equally impressive, since it is largely devoid of original structures or object remains associated with him. It is also lacking in outstanding potentialities for recreational development were the

⁷² *Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Public Lands of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs House of Representatives*, 84th Congress, 6.

⁷³ *Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Public Lands of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs House of Representatives*, 84th Congress, 12.

⁷⁴ *Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Public Lands of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs House of Representatives*, 84th Congress, 12.

⁷⁵ *Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Public Lands of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs House of Representatives*, 84th Congress, 12.

area to be included in the national park system on recreational grounds.” D’Ewart agreed and was forthright in his office’s opposition to the establishment of the birthplace as a national monument.

We conclude that, based upon the several recommendations of the Board and other information of record, the Booker T. Washington Birthplace site does not measure up to the criteria or standards that have been adopted for the purpose of determining whether historical landmarks, structures, or other objects of historic or scientific interest warrant recognition as national monuments. It is felt also that the area lacks the scenic and topographic appeal of a recreational park. Because of its remoteness from urban areas, its potential as day-use recreational area is limited. It follows that this site does not qualify for admission to the national park system.⁷⁶

Herbert E. Kahler, chief historian of the National Park Service, also opposed the establishment of the monument. Tuskegee Institute, he argued, was the most ideal site for commemorating Washington’s life. This was where the leader achieved most of his accomplishments. As Kahler explained: “When he was selected director of that school in 1881, he found it lacked a plant, it lacked equipment, it lacked faculty, and had very little money. When he left the institute in 1915 it had over 100 buildings, a student body of 1,500 and an endowment of nearly \$28 million. Thirty-four years, the most productive period of his life, he spent at that institution. . . . In view of his great accomplishments while at Tuskegee, we believe that this is the logical place to commemorate the outstanding achievements of Booker T. Washington.”⁷⁷ Though much of Kahler’s comments centered on Tuskegee as the most suitable site for commemorating Washington, he was also careful to remind the committee that the birthplace in Franklin County did not meet NPS’ standards of integrity of site. Kahler’s remarks did not sway the House of Representatives’ Subcommittee on Public Lands. While recognizing Washington’s accomplishments at Tuskegee, the committee viewed his birthplace as the ideal site for the monument. “The integrity of the site of the birthplace and early boyhood of Booker T. Washington is beyond question,” the committee noted in its report. In addition, the site was “readily adaptable to the development of a living monument which would inspire those who would walk within its boundaries.”⁷⁸

⁷⁶ *Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Public Lands of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs House of Representatives*, 84th Congress 3.

⁷⁷ *Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Public Lands of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs House of Representatives*, 84th Congress 8.

⁷⁸ *Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Public Lands of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs House of Representatives*, 84th Congress, 48

With the backing of Representative Engle and other members of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, Congress authorized the establishment of the Booker T. Washington National Monument on April 2, 1956.

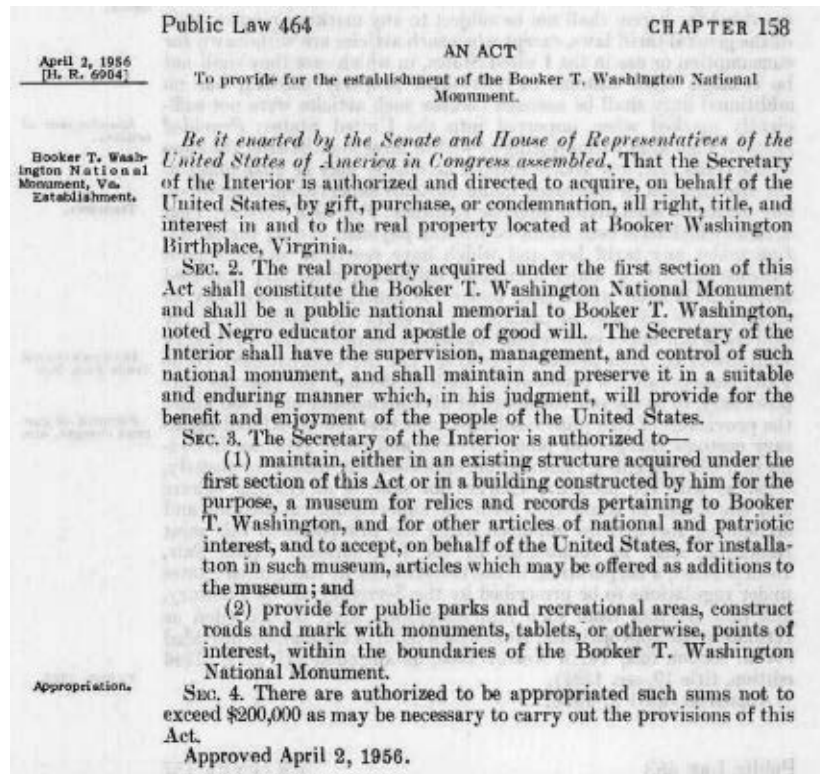


Figure 16: Booker T. Washington National Monument's Enabling Legislation (United States Congress).

Four months after Congress' authorization of the monument, Attorney C. Carter Lee notified the Secretary of Interior's office that he was in possession of Virginia's check for \$17,000 to pay off the back taxes of the Booker T. Washington's Memorial Birthplace. These funds would be dispersed upon the Secretary's approval of a deed transferring the property to the federal government.

The administrative process of state-funded acquisition required formal identification of the location of the property to be taken, an appraisal of the value of the lands to be acquired, and the provision of notice to the property owner of the government's intent and evaluation of said property. To meet this requirement, NPS personnel traveled to Franklin County for a field investigation of the site on August 28–29. The investigators included Regional Director Elbert Cox, historian Roy E. Appleman, and Superintendent Sam P. Weeks of Blue Ridge Parkway. A week before their arrival, Sidney Phillips had requested that the land transferred to the government not include the access road to the Booker T. Washington Elementary School, portions of land involved in a previous exchange between himself and John Booth, and a two acre plot of land near the

school that the PTA had purchased from the National Monument Foundation in 1955. After conducting their investigation, Cox, Appleman and Weeks determined that the NPS should reject Phillips' request for exclusion of the two acre plot next to the school since it included a house built by the Robertsons. The group also determined that the southern and western portion of the property below the school tract should "be included unless the state could use it for exchange purposes to acquire land needed along State Route 122 for vision protection."

Setting the park's boundary was not the only area of concern for the group. Two families associated with the Birthplace Memorial still lived on the site, and six office workers were present in Hopkins Hall. While investigating the matter, Appleman discovered that the families and workers expected to continue to live on the site after the NPS transfer. This did not sit well with Appleman, who relayed his concerns to the regional office: "I consider it very important for future operations of the national monument that Dr. Phillips and his associates be removed from the national monument area." This issue, he believed, would not be resolved quickly. Though Phillips supported the monument's transfer to the NPS, he wanted to keep portions of the site under his control.

On June 18, 1957, Attorney General Herbert Brown approved the title and the NPS accepted the deed. The next month, Chester Brooks was appointed superintendent of BOWA, and Brooks transferred from Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, where he served as its historian. His principal tasks included making the site presentable as a unit of the NPS, conducting research and completing planning documents, defining the role of the monument to the local community, and establishing the park's boundary. None of these tasks were easy. Upon his arrival, Brooks found the site in a state of disarray. Trash, overgrown weeds, and dirty, dilapidated buildings dominated the landscape. "The area looked like a city dump," Brooks complained. "The buildings at the Monument constituted one of the worst imaginable fire hazards. The attics are filled with papers; the fire extinguishers have not been recharged since 1950; the wiring is unsatisfactory and there are a host of other conditions existing that defy fire preventions standards."⁷⁹ These observations were echoed in the reflections of Albert "Sidney" Wright, who was hired as the maintenance worker in December. Wright transferred from Blue Ridge Parkway to fill the maintenance position on December 3. Early on, he proved to be a hard and efficient worker. By the end of the month, eighteen pickup truck-loads of trash had been removed from the site.

⁷⁹ Memorandum to Regional Director, Region One, August 16, 1957.

During this time, the Booker T. Washington National Monument Foundation and the Booker T. Washington Centennial Commission also vacated the site. When the Park Service denied Phillips a special permit for the Booker T. Washington Birthplace Post Office, he finally closed it down on December 1. Five days later, he and the National Memorial Foundation evacuated the area.

To assist the new park in its endeavors, the NPS assigned James J. Kirkwood as its historian and Louise Firth as its clerk. As Barry Mackintosh notes in his history of the park, Kirkwood aided Superintendent Brooks in much of the original research on the Burroughs Plantation. Small but effective, BOWA's early staff proved quite successful in getting the park to NPS standards.

Staffing, 1956–1967

Division	Personnel
Management	Chester Brooks (Superintendent) Roscoe Reeves (Superintendent) Fred A. Wingeier (Superintendent) H. Gilbert Lusk (Acting Superintendent) Stanley C. Kowalkowski (Superintendent)
Administration	Louise K. Firth (Clerk) Louise H. Aydlett (Clerk)
Interpretation and Resource Management	James J. Kirkwood (Historian) Frances A. Ketterson, Jr. (Historian) Albert Benjamin (Historian) H. Gilbert Lusk (Historian)
Maintenance	Albert Sidney Wright (Farmer Foreman) John L. Jordan (Farmer Demonstrator)



Figure 17: Chester Brooks, the first superintendent of the Booker T. Washington National Monument
(National Park Courier).

Superintendent Brooks plunged into research and planning in 1958. That year, three important documents were completed: the boundary survey, which revealed that the monument contained 199.73 acres rather than 164.5 acres; the Burroughs plantation report; and the Museum Prospectus. On August 19, a master plan conference was held at the park. At the conference, the attendees approved the visitor center, the entrance road, and the Roll Road trail. As the staff prepared for the future, they confronted the pressing issue of land acquisition. The Boundary Status Report of 1957 recommended the purchase of twenty acres on both sides of the highway. This additional land would provide the monument with a highway frontage of 1,940 feet and a protective strip approximately 3000 feet deep along the north side of the highway. In September 1958, Brooks had a meeting with Ruth and Thomas R. Saunders, owners of desired land on the northeast. Unsuccessful in his efforts to convince the Saunders to sell the property, Brooks urged the introduction of legislation enabling the acquisition of the desired property. “It is imperative that a Boundary Revision Bill be introduced in the present Congress, as it is conceivable that it might take two or more years to obtain passage of such a bill.” To his request, Assistant Regional Director E. M. Lisle replied that the service’s legislative program was swamped with land acquisition bills for high priority areas associated with Mission 66 construction programs. According to Barry Mackintosh, “Leslie did not accept the idea of the buffer strip along the west side of the school road, believing that as long as the monument

retained its existing land on that side, the likelihood of other developments there would be slight.”⁸⁰ The regional director, however, supported the acquisition of a small tract owned by John W. Booth on the east side of the road.

Other important developments in 1958 included the installation of the museum’s entrance sign, the construction of a rail fence of 3,200 feet around the pasture near the Roll Road *trail*, and the disking, fertilizing, and seeding of the historic area.

The major and perhaps most controversial task for the newly formed monument was the construction of Washington’s birthplace and boyhood cabin. The birthplace cabin replica inherited from the Booker T. Washington National Monument Foundation was inaccurate and in very poor condition. “The present ‘replica’ of the slave cabin is rapidly deteriorating,” Brooks informed NPS officials. “If a visitor should push against the north wall with any degree of force, the wall could collapse.” In September 1959, the Phillips replica was removed from the monument. The removal of the replica coincided with intense debate among park officials regarding the location of the new slave cabin.

On June 26, 1959, Superintendent Brooks and Historian James J. Kirkwood submitted their Historic Structures Report entitled “Reconstruction of Slave Cabin.” The report provided a historical analysis of the site, a justification for the slave cabin reconstruction, and detailed illustrations of the site. The report asserted that Washington’s birthplace cabin had been located not at the site of the existing replica, but rather southeast of the Burroughs house. Although some believed the report undermined the case for a new reconstruction of the cabin at the southwest corner of the Burroughs house, Brooks and Kirkwood still preferred that location for several reasons: (1) The southwest corner was the site of a cabin in which Washington likely lived for a brief time during his boyhood and (2) existing research provided them with some sense of the cabin’s exterior appearance, i.e. the existence of a wooden floor. Under these circumstances, Brooks and Kirkwood proposed that the interior of the new reconstruction follow Washington’s description of his birthplace cabin “for interpretive purposes,” with a dirt floor, a potato hole, and cookware in the fireplace. A taped recording inside the cabin would provide visitors with Washington’s description of his cabin, along with a brief statement of the significance of the log cabin in American history.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Mackintosh, *Booker T. Washington National Monument*, 110–11.

⁸¹ Archeologist John W. Griffin conducted preliminary investigations in the vicinity of the site at the southwest corner, during which he had uncovered nails and pottery of the mid-nineteenth-century and had verified the accuracy of the Phillips cabin location in terms of the original cabin on that site. October 29, 1959, he submitted a preliminary report to the region’s stand on the reconstruction of the “boyhood” cabin. He argued that it was “likely that his description of the cabin interior is of the second cabin. If so, the earth floor and potato hole would be appropriate to this second cabin.

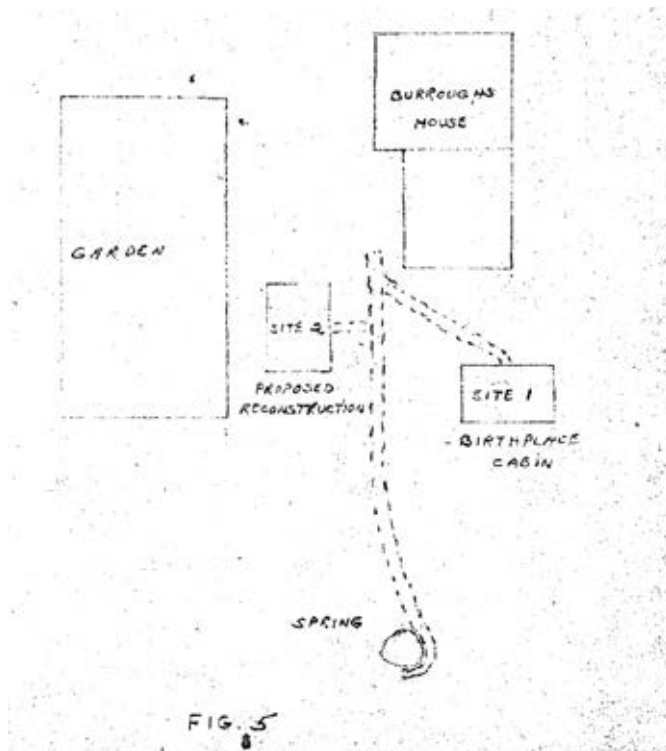


Figure 18: Sketch from the Historic Structure Report (1959) showing location of the birthplace site and proposed reconstructed cabin in relation to the Burroughs house site (NPS Archives).

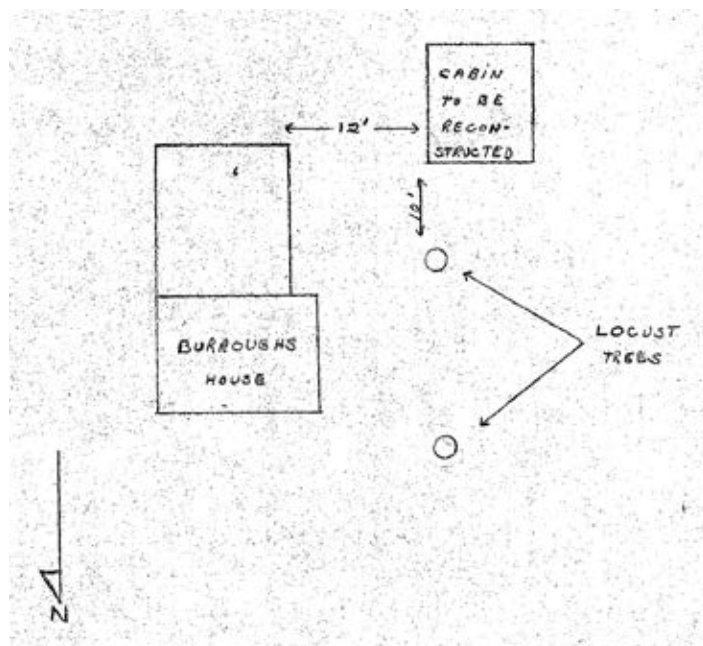


Figure 19: Sketch from Historic Structure Report (1959) showing relation of proposed cabin reconstruction, Burroughs House, and locust trees (NPS Archives).

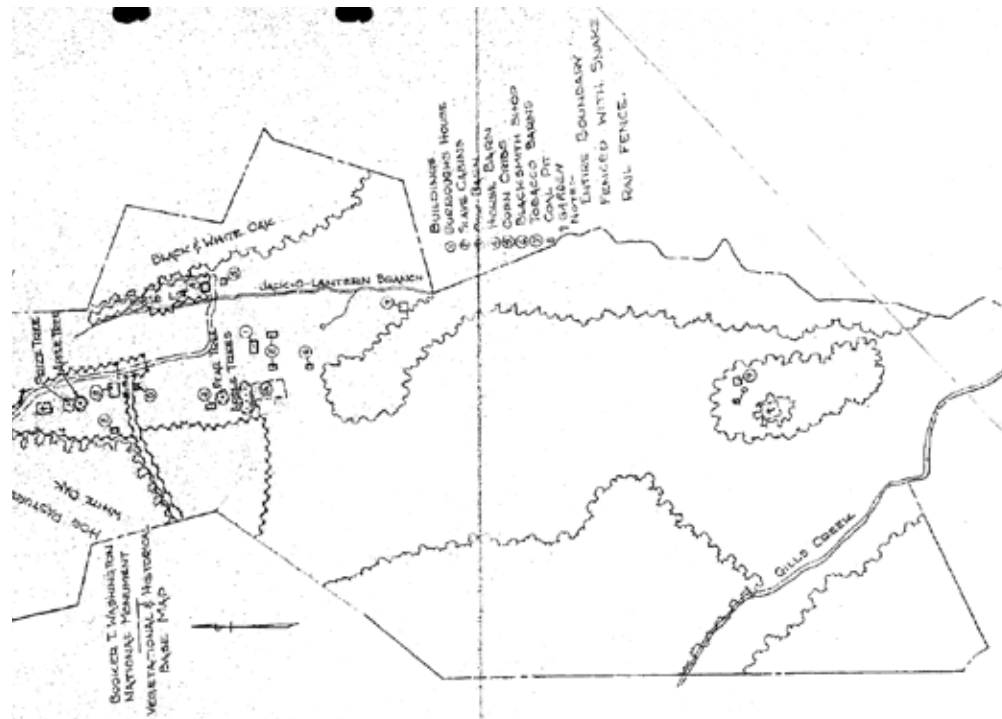


Figure 20: Vegetation and Historic Base Map, 1959 (NPS Archives).

The cabin proposal troubled the NPS Division of Interpretation, which was of the opinion that the cabin should be reconstructed at the birthplace site. According to Chief Architect Dick Sutton, the division believed the cabin’s exterior and interior should be based on Washington’s descriptions in *Up from Slavery*. This opinion was not shared by Acting Regional Director E. M. Lisle:

We have no accurate information on the exact appearance of the birthplace cabin and this site (No. 1) cannot be located precisely because of construction and bulldozing in its vicinity in past years. The other location (No. 2, site of probably boyhood cabin and present replica) has physical remains in the ground. A photograph of the cabin at this site is also available to support the archeological evidence. We believe it is better to reconstruct a known building or a known site than to construct a replica of doubtful design on a site which cannot be authenticated. . . . In this home [Washington] received his boyhood training and from there he went to make his place in the world. . . . Although justification for reconstruction would have been much stronger if this had been the birthplace, we are convinced that the reasons presented in the Historic Structures Report are sufficient to justify the reconstruction on the boyhood cabin site.⁸²

⁸² Mackintosh, *Booker T. Washington National Monument*, 121–22.

Charles E. Peterson, supervising architect of historic structures, felt differently about the proposed reconstruction. After his visit to the monument on August 27, Peterson registered his disapproval of the combination cabin: “In many ways it reminded me of the other Washington birthplace project as it stood in 1930, only this project appears to me even less.”⁸³ After considering the options, he opposed the reconstruction of any cabin: “The construction of an authentic early log cabin (nearly—if not entirely—a lost art) would take an inordinate amount of architectural time and attention which we can hardly afford. . . . It seems to me that Booker T.’s life in the area could be more vividly and realistically presented in dioramas in the proposed Visitor Center. A simple and dignified marker on the supposed site would be a lot more practical and would not require an attendant to explain that this is not the original cabin etc.”⁸⁴

Not in agreement with Peterson, Kirkwood viewed the cabin as central to the monument’s interpretive agenda. “In the absence of historic remains related to Washington’s life on the plantation, it is necessary to have something tangible on the ground to make the visitor aware of the humble conditions surrounding Washington’s birth and early life. A marker at the cabin site could hardly do this.”⁸⁵ It was impossible, he insisted, to carry out the park’s interpretive themes without a cabin. Fortunately, Regional Director Cox agreed with Kirkwood.

The construction of the cabin began in April 1960 and was completed that August. The audio station inside the cabin featured a voice-over by Howard University professor James Butcher. Slowly but surely the living farm was taking shape. The tobacco barn had been restored in July 1959 and the Roll Road trail was completed in 1960.

⁸³ Mackintosh, *Booker T. Washington National Monument*, 121.

⁸⁴ Mackintosh, *Booker T. Washington National Monument*, 121–22.

⁸⁵ Mackintosh, *Booker T. Washington National Monument*, 123.

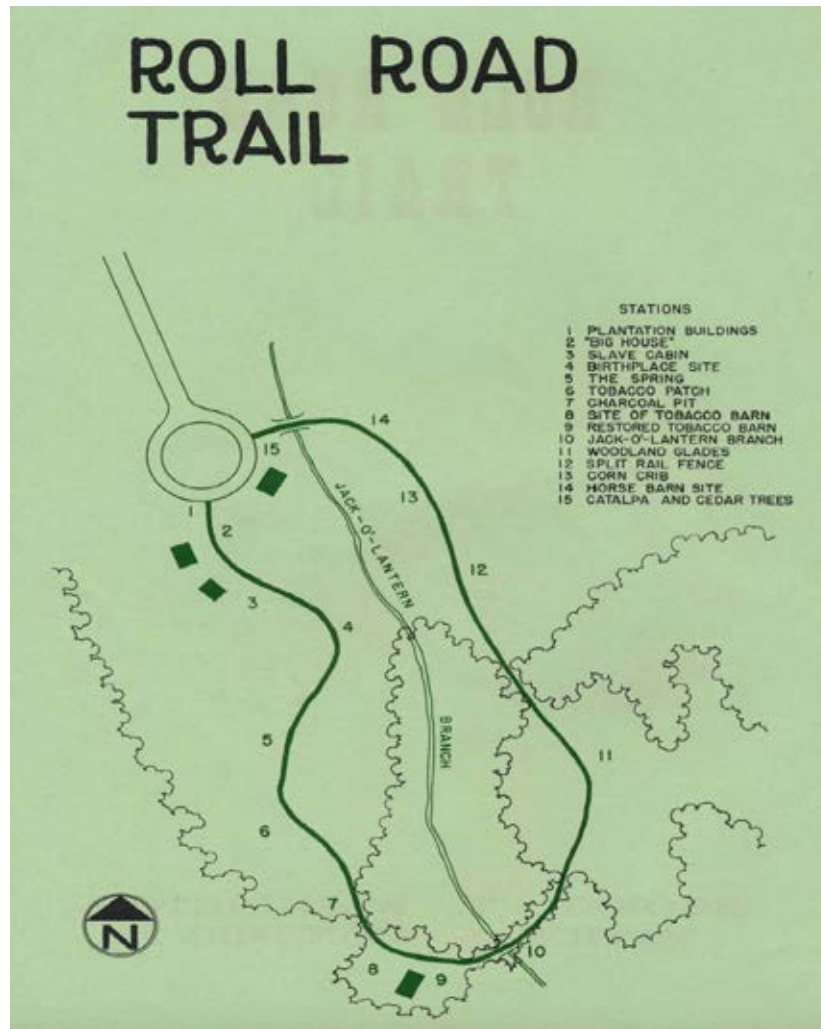


Figure 21: Roll Road trail map (NPS Archives).

Despite the additions, the site still had some major issues. Foremost among those issues was the intrusive nature of Hopkins Hall, which functioned as the visitor center. Completed in 1946, Hopkins Hall was a forty by sixty foot two-story brick building located east of the Burroughs house. After the Burroughs house was destroyed by fire in December, 1950, Hopkins Hall became the site of the Memorial’s administrative offices and post office. In 1958, Hopkins Hall became BOWA’s visitor center. According to the Master Plan, the visitor center did not provide “an effective introduction to the area.”⁸⁶ Another problem was the “living quarters” of Sidney Wright. A carryover from the Memorial Birthplace years, the residence undermined the site’s effort to establish the atmosphere of a nineteenth century farm.

⁸⁶ Mackintosh, *Booker T. Washington National Monument*, 127.



Figure 22: Slave Cabin Replica, Booker T. Washington National Monument (NPS Archives).

These along with other problems would be transferred to Chester Brooks' replacement, Roscoe Reeves. Reeves came to BOWA from the Blue Ridge Parkway and assumed the position of superintendent in February 1960. Of particular concern for Reeves was the Smith Mountain Dam Project, which he believed would transform the local community fairly soon. "There is no doubt that commercial buildings of all kinds will spring up along the roads leading to the facilities of the reservoir, which would include Highway 122 which runs right by the entrance to the Monument. . . . it is more apparent than ever that we should make an all-out effort to acquire this property." Five months later, Neal A. Butterfield, regional chief of recreation and resource planning, informed Reeves that the site's land concerns were included in the service's Preliminary Legislative Program for the first session of the Eighty-Seventh Congress. There would be no further communication regarding legislation related to the monument's land acquisition concerns during Reeves short tenure, which ended after his reassignment to the Blue Ridge Parkway.

His successor, Fred A. Wingeier, reopened the issue in the fall of 1961. On September 19, 1961, Superintendent Wingeier contacted the regional director to find out the status of land acquisition requests put forth in the 1958 Park Boundary survey: "The question of land acquisition at this Monument seems to me to be a matter of considerable urgency. We would like to know the present status of proposed legislation and what is

occasioning the delay.”⁸⁷ Despite the superintendents’ many inquiries, there would be no movement on land acquisition until 1962. On April 3 of that year, Lewis Garber of Rountrey and Associates appraised the four tracts under consideration at \$5,090. However, the park’s efforts to interest the landowners in selling at the appraised values were unsuccessful. Only John W. Booth, owner of the 0.04-acre triangle east of the school road, was willing to part with his tiny tract for the proffered sum of \$25. The deed for this land was transferred to the park on December 14, 1962.



Figure 23: Fred A. Wingeier,
Superintendent of Booker T. Washington from 1961 to 1967
(*National Park Courier*).

Lizilia Harris Hayes, owner of the land most needed for monument development, refused to sell her property, which contained her family’s cemetery. The monument’s offer of a sixty-foot square cemetery reservation with free access was unpersuasive, especially after her appraiser valued the land at much higher rate than the government’s offer. The park service also proved unsuccessful in convincing Cora B. Robertson and Thomas and Ruth Saunders to sell their land. Given these circumstances, condemnation became the

⁸⁷ “Boundary Status Report,” *National Park Service, Booker T. Washington National Monument*, prepared August 11, 1959.

only option. A Declaration of Taking for the remaining lands was filed on March 18, 1963. Two days later, the United States District Court delivered an order for Delivery of Possession. Instead of going through the condemnation process, the court-appointed commissions awarded the landowners a total of \$7,554. This award exceeded the appraised value of their lands by more than \$3,000. With the addition of these lands finalized in 1964, the monument attained its final total of 217.87 acres.

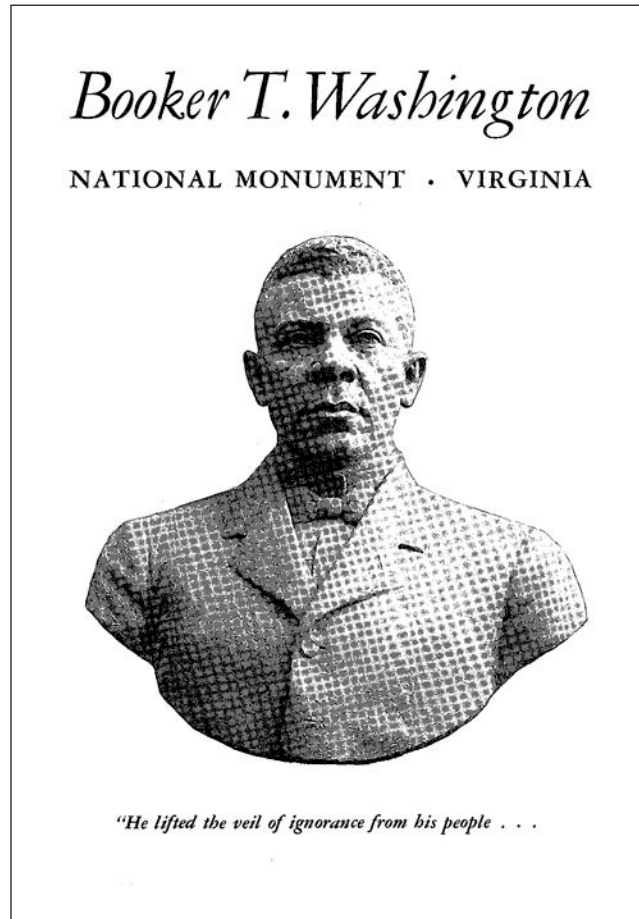


Figure 24: Cover of Booker T. Washington National Monument Brochure, 1960 (NPS Archives).

With the land deal settled, the park staff looked toward the Mission 66 program to resolve some of their other issues. Launched with Congressional funding in 1956, Mission 66 was a service-wide initiative to update the national parks in anticipation of the golden anniversary of the NPS in 1966. Conrad Wirth, director of the NPS from 1951 to 1964, conceived the plan for governmental funding and convinced President Dwight Eisenhower and Congress to support it. A landscape architect, Wirth had managed the National Park Service's CCC program for the state parks in the 1930s. His work with the CCC program,

according to one historian, strengthened his belief in the power of modern planning and technology to solve preservation issues resulting from intensive public use of the parks. When he became the NPS director in 1951, the agency was insufficiently funded and lacked the facilities to deal with growing visitation. A combination of factors, including greater leisure time, the construction of the highway system, and the growing number of automobile owners, led to greater visitation in the national parks. To accommodate the rise in visitation, the Mission 66 program aimed to improve the facilities of existing parks.

BOWA's 1958 mission prospectus, which was updated in 1962, included the construction of a visitor center, an employee residence, a road and parking lot, and the installation of boundary and entrance signs. On April 22, 1965, the NPS entered negotiations with Paul E. Overstreet Construction Company for the contract to build the visitor center and the new employee residence. To stay within their budget, however, BOWA decided to hold off on the construction of a new employee residence. Construction of the visitor center began in May 28, 1965. A few months later, S. R. Draper Paving Company commenced work on the entrance road, parking area, and utility court. In his annual report, Fred Wingeier noted how the staff was very much attentive during the construction process. "We have found that a great deal of close attention and supervision is needed in the course of these contracts to ensure the correct completion of the work. These construction programs have provided invaluable experience for all the members of the Park staff." He also relayed the park's effort to deal with budgetary limitations: "the Congressional limitation of \$200,000 has caused us to lose some of our museum exhibits, as well as the residence."⁸⁸

While working to improve the park's physical properties, the staff also expended considerable time and energy into its interpretive activities. "The field of interpretation has provided us with a great deal of activity this past year," reported Wingeier, "and because of the creative phase we are now undergoing, it has provided excellent training and on the job experience for our historian, Mr. Benjamin." Staff revised and resubmitted the Museum Prospectus. With assistance from the Exhibits Planning Team and the chief of the audiovisual branch of the Washington Area Support Office, they also finalized certain aspects of the visitor center exhibits and the audiovisual program. Several weeks later, the staff conducted a four-hour interview with the Robertson brothers about the location of the original plantation structures. Staff also completed an exhibit for the tobacco barn explaining the use of hogsheads to roll tobacco to the markets.

The hard work paid off. Even though the park was still in developmental mode, it saw an increase in visitors. "We have had school groups, boy scout groups, business groups, hospital groups, and a V.P.I resource management class," Wingeier boasted. "The Veterans Hospital from Salem has visited our area many times and were pleased to receive a

⁸⁸ Fred Wingeier to Regional Director, Southeast Region, "Superintendent Annual Report," June 2, 1965, 2.

complimentary letter from them.”⁸⁹ The superintendent also engaged in a number of offsite talks, presenting programs to over 3,000 students, as well as local groups like the Historical Society of Rocky Mount, the Red Valley Community Club, and the Lions Club of Bedford, Virginia.

Judging from his annual report, Wingeier seemed satisfied with the park’s progress. The construction of key Mission 66 projects was progressing well. BOWA was establishing a presence in the region through its offsite programs. And in 1965, 25,567 visitors came to the park. The superintendent attributed the spike in visitation to the Smith Mountain Lake. “The use of this area for recreational purposes is just getting underway,” he reported, “and one of the major boat launching access points to this lake is only five miles from us.”⁹⁰ Staff predicted the number would increase with the opening of the new visitor center in 1966.

On March 9, 1966, the new visitor center opened to the public. The dedication ceremony was held on Saturday, June 18. The ceremony’s sponsors were the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, the Roanoke Chamber of Commerce, the Eastern National Park and Monument Association, and the National Park Service. The guest list included Howard B. Woods, Associate Deputy Director of the United States Information Agency; A. Clark Stratton, Associate Director of the National Park Service; Elbert Cox, Regional Director of the Southeast Regional Office of the NPS; Reverend J. W. Reynolds of Methodist Church in Rocky Mount; Reverend M. T. Coker of Mt. Zion Baptist Church; and Dr. C. Ralph Arthur, president of Ferrum College. The first half of the program, scheduled for the monument grounds, was moved to the auditorium of Burnt Chimney Elementary School because of weather conditions. A band concert by the Lee Waid High School preceded the program, which featured remarks from local leaders and government representatives. Howard Woods of the USIA centered his remarks on Washington and another famous Virginian, Thomas Jefferson. “Both men were products and prisoners of their times,” he stated. And each man in their own way, Woods believed, advanced the ideas and principles of freedom. Turning his attention to contemporary issues, he noted that while the country had made significant progress in race relations, social and political inequality still engulfed the lives of too many Americans. “Justice cannot be dispensed by the ounce to some, by the gallon to others.”

The ceremony ended with Reverend Reynolds delivering the benediction. The guests then traveled to the visitor center, where Portia Washington Pittman ceremoniously cut the ribbon to open the new building. “I know of no one who is more appropriate to cut this than Mrs. Pittman,” said A. Clark Stratton, associate director of the NPS.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Fred Wingeier, “Superintendent Annual Report,” 1965.

⁹⁰ Wingeier, “Superintendent Annual Report,” 1965.

⁹¹ “Visitor Center to Be Dedicated in Franklin,” *The Roanoke Times*, June 12, 1966.

With the visitor center open, the staff welcomed feedback on its newly installed audiovisual program. “We think the program is an excellent one,” Wingeier proudly reported to the regional office. “We have shown it to over 1,000 people and the majority had nothing but complementary remarks. The program has been shown to a wide variety of groups, ranging from 3rd graders on up. Most everyone we talked to feels that the art fits in perfectly and that it helps to tell Washington’s story. Even the youngsters got as much out of the program as could be expected for their ages and education.” He was especially grateful for the Booker T. Washington family’s response to the program. “Perhaps the greatest compliments came from the people who knew Booker T. Washington best. His daughter, Mrs. Pittman, his granddaughter, Mrs. Douglass, and his two nieces, Mrs. Lillia W. Lee and Mrs. Margaret W. Lee are quite proud and sensitive about their knowledge of Washington. They all thought the program was excellent and that it caught the most important essence and qualities of the man.”⁹²

The new visitor center was not the only change at the monument. There were also some important personnel changes. On June 12, Helen Kay Denson joined the staff as a park guide. The next day, Charles E. Starks, Jr. and Richard Geoghegan began work as laborers under the supervision of Farmer Foremen Sidney Wright. Earlier that year, John Jordan joined the staff as a maintenance worker. Unfortunately, the park lost its historian when Albert Benjamin was transferred to Natchez Trace Parkway on June 30. Benjamin had been actively involved in research for the site’s interpretive program, had played a critical role in shaping the audiovisual script at the new visitor center, and participated in dozens of offsite programs. Finding a replacement for Benjamin was imperative as the park was in the middle of the interpretive season. Fortunately, the park found a very capable replacement in H. Gilbert Lusk.

⁹² Fred Wingeier, “Superintendent Annual Report,” 1966, 3.



Figure 25: Gilbert Lusk, Park Ranger-Historian and Acting Superintendent of Booker T. Washington during the late 1960s (NPS Archives).

A native of Oakland, New Jersey, Harlan Gilbert Lusk began his distinguished career in the NPS as a student trainee at Castillo de San Marcos National Monument in St. Augustine, Florida. Upon his graduation from Gettysburg College, Lusk returned to Castillo de San Marcos National Monument as a ranger. Shortly thereafter, he was appointed historian at BOWA. One issue Lusk confronted during his time at the park was how to make use of the Booker T. Washington Elementary School building. To comply with the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the state of Virginia closed down several schools in the summer of 1966. One of those schools was Booker T. Washington Elementary, which had been opened in 1954. Upon the school's closing, the Franklin County School Board agreed to sell the property to the federal government. School Superintendent Harold Ramsey contacted Interior Secretary Udall to inform him that the school board had passed a resolution authorizing the sale of the property to the federal government. Ramsey also sent copies to Senators Harry F. Byrd, Jr. and William Spong, and US Representative William Tuck. Representative Tuck favored the resolution and believed the school would be an excellent addition to the monument. Acting Superintendent H. Gilbert Lusk advised against the purchase of the property, arguing that the building would not be of any use for the site. Chief Edward S. Peets of the Office of Resource Planning agreed: "The boundaries of the present National Monument include all the 207 acres of the

original James Burroughs plantation.” His statement was false. The property was part of the original plantation. Notwithstanding this fact, the school property would not become a part of the monument until the 1970s.

Immersed in the final stages of the park’s developmental phase, BOWA staff worked hard to complete several key planning documents, to minimize the intrusions upon the historic scene at the monument, and to increase public use of the park. In 1967, the year before the park embraced the living farm concept, the staff completed the first draft of the historical research management plan and the amended version of the Interpretive Prospectus, removed 0.1 miles of the old entrance road, painted and relocated several informational and directional signs and markers, and produced a new minifolder for the Roll Road trail guide. Staff hoped these developments would improve visitation numbers, which dropped from 21,756 in 1966 to 17,408 in 1967.



Figure 26: Tobacco stalks along Roll Road trail (NPS Archives).

Looking back on his time at BOWA, Gil Lusk found the experience both rewarding and challenging. The park experienced the growing pains familiar to most new sites, but there were some racial dynamics specific to the environment which made it difficult for some staff members. “Working at Booker T. Washington was a challenge in many ways,” Lusk later recalled. Franklin County “was still a center of segregation and opposition to Blacks. A mile north of the Monument there was a large steel cross that had been erected years back. It was still used for cross burning and gatherings of KKK members from the

local area. Black staff from the park that lived with their families locally were still subjected to vandalism and ugly behavior by people who lived locally.” Despite these challenges, BOWA’s staff gave their all to make the park a success. “Fred Wingeier and Louise Aydlett, the Clerk worked well . . . along with Sidney and John on the Maintenance crew,” Lusk noted. Together, they hoped to tell an accurate and compelling story of Washington and the social world which shaped his life. “It was never a complete story in those years,” Lusk admitted, “but we did receive visitors and interpreted the site as best we could.”⁹³

⁹³ Gil Lusk, *National Parks Our Living National Treasures: A Time for Concern*.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF BOOKER T. WASHINGTON NATIONAL MONUMENT'S LIVING HISTORY PROGRAM, 1967–1975

Introduction

The year 1972 was a busy one for employees and volunteer personnel at the Booker T. Washington National Monument. Under the leadership of its recently installed superintendent, William Webb, BOWA expanded its living history activities, inaugurated its “Summer in the Park” program, and implemented subtle yet important changes in its landscape to better execute its interpretive vision. “What we are trying to do with our Living Historical Farm,” Webb summarized in his annual report, “is to bring out the effects of this total (cultural, social, etc.) environment on the life of Booker T. Washington during his nine years here as a slave. The purpose of the Living Farm is to lay a foundation for understanding the man Booker T. Washington, and understanding his achievements.”⁹⁴ If adequately researched and successfully implemented, the living history activities would “allow the visitor not only to hear the story but also ‘feel it.’” To achieve this goal, Webb and his staff engaged in extensive training and research. The park also hosted visits from several key officials in the NPS, most notably Charles S. Marshall, director of the Virginia State Office; Frank Barnes, the Northeast Regional Office interpretive specialist; Chester Brooks, director of the Northeast Region; Charles E. Shedd, deputy director of the Virginia State Office; and William Key, Virginia State interpretive specialist. These visits aimed to identify existing and potential issues in the park’s interpretive program, recognize noteworthy contributions from park personnel, and gain greater insight into park operations. On their tour of the park, Charles Marshall, Frank Barnes, Chester Brooks, Charles Shedd, and William Key evaluated the progress of BOWA’s living history program, noting its strengths and weaknesses. Never one to mince

⁹⁴ William Webb, “Superintendent Annual Report,” 1972.

words, Barnes worried that BOWA did not fully capture the complexity and horror of slavery. A year after his visit, he would reiterate his concerns in a blistering critique of the park, which he judged to be the “worst” and most misleading in its portrayal of the South’s peculiar institution. “The Booker T. Washington farm comes out as a charming scene, of course, complete with farm animals with picturesque names, with almost no indication of the social environmental realities of slave life (indeed, how can you go with ‘living slavery’?).”⁹⁵

Barnes’ critique of how BOWA depicted nineteenth-century plantation life was part of a larger conversation about the place of living history in the NPS’s interpretive work.⁹⁶ During the late 1960s and early 1970s, living history emerged as the principal interpretive method at many parks. No small factor in the NPS’ shift was the publication of Marion Clawson’s 1965 manifesto, “Living Historical Farms: A Proposal for Action.” To adequately capture the nation’s rich agricultural history, Clawson (then director of the Land Use Management of Resources Program for the Future) recommended the establishment of a “national system of perhaps 25 to 50 actual operating historical farms, each of which would seek to capture as faithfully as possible all the conditions of the time and region for which it was representative . . . Within the limits necessarily imposed by sampling of time and geography, the farms should be reasonably typical of the time and place each is chosen to represent. The farm size, its crops, livestock, production methods, the products sold—all these and other details of the farm should be as accurate as it is reasonably possible to make them.”⁹⁷ Clawson’s plan struck a resonant chord among several officials within the National Park Service, most notably its director George Hartzog. Hartzog judged the living historical farm program to be “entirely consistent with our emphasis on trying to interpret the peaceful and inspirationally creative contributions of this country in the field of history, to complement the great emphasis that has been placed so far on birthplaces and battlefields.”⁹⁸ Together with NPS Historian Roy Appleman, Hartzog identified several parks strategically positioned for living history initiatives. These parks included but were not limited to the following: Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial, Fort Vancouver, Whitman Mission, George Washington Carver, Sagamore Hill, and the George Washington Birthplace. Though not initially included in the list of potential living historical farms, the Booker T. Washington National Monument would soon become a part of the NPS’ living history initiative.

⁹⁵ Frank Barnes, “Living Interpretation,” April 1973, NPSHC.

⁹⁶ Barry Mackintosh, “Interpretation in the National Park Service: A Historical Perspective,” (ParkNet, National Park Service, July 9, 2000), https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/mackintosh2/index.htm.

⁹⁷ Marion Clawson, “Living Historical Farms: A Proposal for Action,” *Agricultural History* 39 (April 1965): 110.

⁹⁸ Mackintosh, “Interpretation in the National Park Service.”

Transitioning to a historical farm would not be an easy task given the existing condition of the site. As historian Barry Mackintosh notes in his administrative history of the site, “with the completion of the new visitor center and its audiovisual program and exhibits in 1966, the plantation assumed a more subordinate role in interpretation. For the first time, some visitors did not even go to see the reconstructed cabin, now hidden from view by the remaining residence.”⁹⁹ And yet, many within the NPS believed the site’s conversion into a historical farm could boost its visitation numbers (between 1966 and 1967, visitation decreased from 21,756 to 17,408).¹⁰⁰ Leading the charge was historian, H. Gilbert Lusk who recommended the reconstruction of farm buildings and the planting of crops prominent during the nineteenth century. An enthusiastic Lusk then commenced with the revision of the BOWA’s Interpretive Prospectus. In the amended prospectus, Lusk called for greater attention to the Burroughs plantation in the park’s interpretive activities. The prospectus recommended the reconstruction of the major plantation buildings and the hiring of costumed interpreters dressed in nineteenth-century attire. It was imperative, in Lusk’s view, to bring the visitor as close as possible to the physical and cultural environment Booker T. Washington experienced as a child.

On May 31, 1968, Regional Director Jackson E. Price approved Lusk’s Interpretive Prospectus. Around the same time, Director Hartzog designated the Booker T. Washington National Monument as a historical farm. The service’s interpretive activities had been a source of frustration for many within the NPS who believed this aspect of the park’s work was a weak link in an otherwise increasingly innovative service: “The feeling at the time was that personally conducted interpretation had not shared in the general improvement and advances made in our audiovisual efforts, museums, and publications,” Robert G. Johnsson of the Division of Planning and Interpretive Services shared with Mackintosh in an interview. Interpretation, Johnsson firmly believed, was “slipping” and “in serious need of attention.”¹⁰¹

With the site’s declining visitation numbers, BOWA staff welcomed the opportunity to revamp and hopefully reenergize its interpretive program. The early stages of creating the living historical farm involved extensive research into the Burroughs’ plantation, the relocation of several wayside exhibits closer to the trail, and the acquisition of additional farm animals, crops, and equipment. By 1969, a small portion of the Burroughs Plantation’s historic fields had been restored with new rail fencing enclosing the sheep pasture and pigpen. Staff planted corn and sweet potatoes in the field, as well as acquiring a horse, wagon, and other equipment. To add to the site’s authenticity, Mackintosh conducted additional research on the Burroughs family, the political economy and social

⁹⁹ Mackintosh, *Booker T. Washington National Monument*, 1969.

¹⁰⁰ Stanley C. Kowalkowski, “Information and Interpretive Services Annual Report,” January 31, 1968, 2.

¹⁰¹ Mackintosh, “Interpretation in the National Park Service.”

life of the local community, and the specifics of agricultural work. New findings discovered during Mackintosh's research resulted in the "elimination of the existing and proposed charcoal exhibits and hogsheads and the renaming of Roll Road Trail as Plantation Trail."¹⁰²

Watching BOWA's transformation, Mackintosh marveled at the vast interpretive possibilities for the site: "This place offers the finest opportunity for relevant social-environment interpretation to be found anywhere in the National Park System. The way of life and the human relationships that were a part of the Burroughs plantation vividly illustrate both the good and the evil of our heritage. What people sowed we are reaping today." In the closing pages of his 1969 Administrative History of the Booker T. Washington National Monument, Mackintosh sounded a note of cautious optimism regarding the site's interpretive program, which he identified as its "greatest challenge." While recognizing that the living historical farm had revitalized BOWA, he encouraged NPS officials to exercise caution in their new interpretive programs. There was real danger in whitewashing history. "It will be all too easy for the farm to become merely a pretty pastoral scene—an end in itself—an attraction."¹⁰³ In the coming years, other historians and administrators would echo similar concerns as the park pushed for a more comprehensive view of Washington, slavery, and race.

Fortunately, BOWA had three capable superintendents to guide it through the first five years of its living history program: Stanley C. Kowalkowski, William Webb, and Sylvester Putman. The site also had very dedicated employees in the administration, interpretation, resource management, and maintenance divisions. The work of Farmer Foreman Albert Sidney Wright, Administrative Technician Louise H. Aydlett, and Park Ranger-Historians H. Gilbert Lusk, Barry Mackintosh, Gordon Gay, Fahy C. Whitaker, and Elaine Christensen Baffrey were critical to advancing the park's agenda.

Coming to the park in 1972, Whitaker was a great addition to the site as she possessed an indefatigable work ethic and a nuanced understanding of public history.

Her previous assignments included the Grand Canyon and Independence National Historic Park. Working closely together, the park's staff focused on expanding and improving the living history program. On weekdays, costumed interpreters worked in the gardens, weeding, picking bugs, and mulching. On weekends, interpreters engaged in a variety of demonstrations, from making soap to churning butter. Sidney Wright was critical to the success of the Living History farm concept. As the farm demonstrator and the head of maintenance, Wright shouldered a great deal of responsibility. He supervised routine and preventive maintenance, including the repair and renovation of replica buildings, fences, and sheds, interacted with visitors during their tours of the monument, and participated in offsite programs in Franklin County and the Roanoke area.

¹⁰² Mackintosh, *Booker T. Washington National Monument*, 143.

¹⁰³ Mackintosh, *Booker T. Washington National Monument*, 150.

Staffing, 1968–1975

Division	Personnel
Management	Stanley C. Kowalkowski (Superintendent) William Webb (Superintendent) Sylvester Putman (Superintendent)
Administration	Louise H. Aydlett (Admin Technician)
Interpretation and Resource Management	H. Gilbert Lusk (Park Ranger-Historian) Barry Mackintosh (Park Ranger-Historian) Gordon Gay (Park Ranger-Historian) Fahy C. Whitaker (Park Ranger-Historian) Elaine C. Baffrey (Park Ranger-Historian)
Maintenance	Albert “Sidney” Wright (Farmer Foreman) John L. Jordan (Farmer Demonstrator) Doy Norman (Maintenance Worker)

In the years between 1968 and 1975, park staff faced a twofold challenge: (1) strengthening the Living History program and (2) establishing new initiatives which would attract new visitors to the park. One such initiative was the “Summer in the Park” program. In 1968, Congress had appropriated funds for “Summer in the Park” programs as a response to the urban crisis (rising youth unemployment, crime and violence, political rebellion, etc.).¹⁰⁴

Establishing the Living Farm

Arriving to BOWA in late 1967, Kowalkowski brought with him a great deal of knowledge. His previous experience included work at the Blue Ridge Parkway, Yosemite National Park, and Everglades National Park. During his four-year tenure, he played a critical role in advancing the living history agenda of the NPS. Since the site’s Interpretive Prospectus had been completed the year before his arrival, Kowalkowski set his sights on implementing Lusk’s and the NPS’s vision. In 1968, he identified the revision of the site’s historical research management plan, the completion of exhibit number 2, the extension of the Roll Road trail, and the completion of research on crops and herbs for the living

¹⁰⁴ Russel Wright, “Summer in the Parks – 1968,” *Trends in Parks & Recreation: A Publication of the Park Practice Program*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1969): 1-8, http://npshistory.com/newsletters/park_practice/trends/v6n2.pdf.

historical farm as his principal interpretation objectives. The next year in his annual report, he proudly reported that many of the park's interpretive goals had been met. This was just the beginning of a long process of historic restoration and construction. In 1969, the staff also outlined Booker T. Washington's birthplace cabin, planted a historic corn field, placed a farm wagon at the tobacco barn, acquired hogs for the hog pen, furnished the slave cabin, and assisted Edwin Bearss in his research on the Burroughs plantation. The park also acquired period-appropriate farm implements and costumes.

As Kowalkowski's annual reports made clear, landscape management was also an integral component in the park's efforts to replicate the small nineteenth century farm: "Many of the interpretive goals became realities through the efforts of our maintenance crew, such as clearing to restore land to historic use in crops and pasture and locating and extending rail fences."¹⁰⁵

Much of this work was assigned to Sidney Wright, a dedicated employee who had been at the park since its inception. Coming from the Blue Ridge Parkway, Wright was taken aback by the poor condition of the Booker T. Washington National Monument upon his arrival in 1957. "I was pretty disgusted when I first saw it. But after we began to clear the brushes and everything, I started liking it pretty well."¹⁰⁶ Without question, Wright was the engine behind the park's restoration and maintenance operations.



Figure 27: Albert Sidney Wright (BOWA Archives).

¹⁰⁵ Stanley Kowalkowski, "Superintendent Annual Report," 1969.

¹⁰⁶ "Retiring: Sidney Wright Is Leaving Post at Booker T. Washington," *Franklin News Post*, June 10, 1985.

Even though BOWA was under-resourced, it made significant strides in its interpretive program. In the two years after its designation as a historical living farm, BOWA staff completed construction on several key structures, including a horse barn which was located northeast of the Burroughs house. The barn measured 16' x 20' and was made of nineteenth century logs. The site also installed an audio station at the tobacco barn, planted corn in a newly cleared section of the historic fields, acquired a variety of farm animals, reconditioned old wagons, and completed a new folder for the Plantation trail guide which placed greater emphasis on Washington's childhood experiences on the farm.

In a 1970 letter to the director of the southeast region, Kowalkowski seemed pleased with the site's progress:

This year at Booker T. Washington National Monument our living interpretation has centered mainly around our Negro farmer dressed in a slave period costume. His costume, consisting of a red-and-white checkered shirt and flax britches, was completed with suspenders, a straw hat, and shoes of the period. On the Sundays, the farmer is in costume, on the plantation trail, talking to the visitors. One of his demonstrations is making tobacco twists and cigars. The really authentic part of his demonstration comes when he takes a chew from a taste or lights a cigar he has made. Our sheep, cows, hogs, and horse have added real life to our living interpretation, along with our vegetable garden, gourds, corn, oats, wheat, flax, and tobacco crops.¹⁰⁷



Figure 28: Farmer Demonstrator John Jordan.

¹⁰⁷ Stanley Kowalkowski to Director of Southeast Region, September 1970. According to Kowalkowski, these demonstrations greatly pleased visitors. "Our visitors liked the period costumes worn by our farmer when demonstrating mid-nineteenth century farm practices near the plantation trail." Stanley Kowalkowski to Director of Southeast Region, September 1970, Superintendent Annual Reports, 1.

As Lusk had outlined in the 1967 prospectus, the goal was to familiarize visitors with Washington's experiences as an enslaved child on the farm. The slave cabin, according to Kowalkowski, was "the prime interpretive structure here. A pine table, butter churn, wooden water bucket, and dipper gourds have been placed in the cabin along with the pots and skillets already there, thus making it look more alive."¹⁰⁸ The staff's hard work began to show dividends in terms of visitation numbers. BOWA experienced a 33 percent increase in visitation from 1970 to 1971. These numbers reflected the staff's hard work not just in the field of interpretation but also in community outreach. Kowalkowski and Park Historian Barry Mackintosh actively participated in the local Franklin County Historical Society. Kowalkowski also became a member of both the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce and the Tourism and Public Relations Committee.¹⁰⁹ In addition, park staff reached out to the local NAACP with the hopes of encouraging more African Americans to visit the site.

Though the park still had much to accomplish, Kowalkowski was quite pleased with BOWA's outreach initiatives. He was also encouraged by the progress of the living historical farm and how it aligned with the interpretive mission of the NPS: "The living interpretive program has added a new dimension to Booker T. Washington National Monument. The Burroughs plantation [is] a working, living farm. It is much easier to show a visitor a leaf of tobacco and let him feel it and smell it then it is to try to tell him what tobacco looks and smells like."¹¹⁰ To complement the living historical farm, workers set up a display of nineteenth century carpentry and blacksmith tools in the visitor center. These items were displayed on a butchering table made of three-inch oak. Two spinning wheels (one flax, the other wool) were placed in the AV room of the center.

The strong emphasis on strengthening the living history program continued after Kowalkowski left the park and accepted the superintendent position at Whitman Mission in Walla Walla, Washington. His replacement was William Webb, who assumed the position of superintendent on October 31, 1971. A native of Glasgow, Kentucky, thirty-seven-year-old Webb brought a great deal of experience. He served in the US Army from 1954 to 1956, then attended Kentucky State College. Upon his graduation from the historically Black college, he moved to Jenkins, where he taught biology and coached basketball. In 1971, he was appointed superintendent of Booker T. Washington National Monument.

Webb devoted considerable attention to developing a good relationship with his staff and community partners, learning as much as possible about the site's strengths and weaknesses, and undergoing the necessary training to fulfill his responsibilities. His training courses included introduction to park planning, the impact of urbanization on park management, law enforcement, dealing with unions, preparing environmental impact

¹⁰⁸ Stanley Kowalkowski to Director of Southeast Region, September 1970.

¹⁰⁹ Stanley Kowalkowski, "Superintendent Annual Report," 1969.

¹¹⁰ Stanley Kowalkowski to Director of Southeast Region, September 1970.

statements, programming and fiscal management, and workplace evaluations. Webb's dedication did not escape the notice of Charles Shedd, who in his letter to the superintendent in 1973, praised him for his professionalism and deep commitment to advancing the larger goals of the NPS.

Webb was not the only new employee at the Booker T. Washington National Monument. In January 1972, Fahy C. Whitaker assumed the position of park ranger-historian. That same year, Glenna Hawkins was hired as a park technician and Christopher N. Woodroof and Colby Brown were added as seasonal laborers during the summer months.



Figure 29: Park Ranger-Historian Fahy Whitaker (BOWA Archives).

With regards to its interpretive vision, BOWA maintained its existing plan of action. As had been the case since 1967, much of the park's construction and restoration activities centered on strengthening its living history program. In Webb's first year as superintendent, the park added a replica blacksmith shed and corn crib. A year later, the park added a chicken house. To better advance its living program, BOWA also altered its landscape. As Webb explained in his annual report: "Some grassed areas were not mowed but were allowed to grow up to be more representative of a plantation, since labor on a small plantation was not wasted on mowing of grassed areas. Period farm crops were planted in different locations to support the farming concept. An entrance medium was planted with natural flowering plants. This was done to support the interpretive purposes of the area."¹¹¹ Everything was geared toward providing the visitor with an "authentic" experience of life on a small, nineteenth-century farm.

Some outsiders felt as if the visitor experience was anything but such. Though appreciative of BOWA's progress, interpretive specialist Frank Barnes expressed concern that the environment at Booker T. Washington National Monument "gives a false or romantic picture of slavery, which is somewhat contradictory to Washington's

¹¹¹ Webb, "Superintendent Annual Report," 1972.

description.”¹¹² Taking in the criticism, the staff struggled to find ways to demonstrate the complexity of Black life in nineteenth-century America and at the same time, respond to the desires of visitors, who liked the idyllic images of the period.

Despite some misgivings within the NPS, the living farm concept remained a driving force behind the work of BOWA. On their tours of the park, visitors observed a variety of farm animals, including sheep, cattle, and domesticated hogs, gardens overflowing with vegetables grown on the plantation during the pre-Civil War era, and costumed interpreters performing a wide range of tasks and chores.

To provide visitors with as accurate portrait of plantation life as possible, the staff continued to make infrastructure improvements. In 1973, the maintenance division repainted an interpretive sign which erroneously explained tobacco cultivation, and installed new audio stations. To capture the sonic landscape of the nineteenth century, the visitor center now played “slave songs” on a newly purchased record player.

Living history was integrated into almost every facet of the park's operations, including its special events. Three events in particular illustrate this point: BOWA's fifteenth anniversary celebration, Living History Day, and “Summer in the Park.” In 1971, BOWA hosted its fifteenth anniversary celebration with more than 2,000 visitors in attendance. According to Webb, “the plantation was brought to life with personnel wearing 1860 period dress and giving demonstrations of spinning, weaving, cooking, butter-churning, soap-making, blacksmithing and sheep shearing.” To promote both the event and the larger work of the park, staff members appeared on local television, dressed in period costume. They also spoke on local radio, encouraging members of the local community and surrounding areas to make the park a greater part of their educational and social experience.

In 1972, the park hosted its first Living History Day, which drew nearly 1,850 visitors. During the event, costumed interpreters dressed in nineteenth-century costumes and offered demonstrations such as ice churning, spinning, and weaving. The next year, Living History Day attracted nearly 5,000 attendees.

BOWA also drew visitors to the park with its “Summer in the Park” program.¹¹³ Launched in 1972, the monument's Summer in the Park Program was designed to expose youth to the beauty and restorative powers of the natural environment. The program had 400 participants, with all but seventy coming from Roanoke's Recreation Youth department. Initially the staff had planned a history and nature day for the youth but had to combine the two efforts due to understaffing. The next year, the vastly improved “Summer in the Park” program attracted 518 youth. Though the “Summer in the Park”

¹¹² Webb, “Superintendent Annual Report,” 1972.

¹¹³ In 1968, Congress had appropriated funds for “Summer in the Park” programs as a response to the urban crisis (rising youth unemployment, crime and violence, political rebellion, etc.). The inaugural program in the nation's capital hosted events ranging from music concerts to arts and crafts events. http://nps.history.com/newsletters/park_practice/trends/v6n2.pdf.

program included activities designed to increase participants' knowledge and appreciation of the site's natural resources, living history was the main source of attraction and interest for youth. Once again, the park hoped to make a deeper connection with local youth. Fortunately, the addition of two seasonal interpreters and another volunteer on the park's staff during the summer enabled them to meet the demands of the children.

With these special events, BOWA continued its upward trend in visitation. Webb proudly reported an 11 percent visitation increase in his 1973 report. At the same time, BOWA staff continued to establish a presence beyond the park. Though much of the staff's interpretive work was conducted at the monument, BOWA employees substantially increased their outreach work in 1973. When Rocky Mount celebrated its centennial, three costumed interpreters from BOWA participated in the event. In fact, according to Webb, their presence was "the only evidence of black participation in the event." Later that year, BOWA staff presented at Ferrum Junior College's dedication of the Blue Ridge Institute. Park historian Fahy Whitaker and two interpreters also hosted campfire programs on the life and times of Booker T. Washington at the Blue Ridge Parkway.



Figure 30: Living History Demonstration (BOWA Archives).

The success of BOWA's offsite programs was but one of the park's accomplishments mentioned in Superintendent Webb's 1974 annual report. Other noteworthy developments at the park included the hugely successful "Living History Day" program, the installation of a new water pump, floor covering, and air conditioners, the construction of a new replica chicken house, and increased sales for Eastern National Park and Monument Association. A savvy administrator, Webb had also convinced the Franklin County public school system to transfer the now closed Booker T. Washington Elementary

School to the NPS. This acquisition, Webb believed, would enhance the site's living history program and enable BOWA to launch programs consistent with the NPS' new environmental mission.

Though positive about BOWA's future, Webb's tenure at the park was coming to an end. Early in 1974, the NPS transferred William Webb to the Virgin Islands. Though only at the park for three years, he had done important work in advancing its living history program, building and sustaining good relationships with community partners, and extending the interpretive work of BOWA into other areas of central Virginia.

Webb's replacement, Sylvester Putman, assumed the superintendent position in May 1974. Putman began his career in 1961 as a tour leader at Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, St. Louis, Missouri. Seven years later he was promoted to supervisory technician. Then in 1971, he was transferred to Fort Union Trading Post, where he worked as a management supervisor. A one-year stint at Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park preceded his appointment as superintendent of Booker T. Washington National Monument in 1974.¹¹⁴ Putman was not the only new arrival on BOWA's staff. Elaine Christensen Baffrey replaced Fahy C. Whitaker as the park's historian after the latter was transferred to Cape Cod in July.



Figure 31: Sylvester Putman (*National Park Courier*).

Combined with adjusting to shifts in leadership, BOWA staff had to deal with the repercussions of the energy crisis and its impact on travel. Visitation at the park dropped by 9 percent, the first decline in three years. Moreover, only 150 children participated in

¹¹⁴ National Park Service, *Newsletter*, 11, no. 13 (November 1976): 9.

the “Summer in the Park” Program. Even still, the Park continued to make substantial progress in its historic preservation and reconstruction work. Under the direction of Sidney Wright, the maintenance crew completed construction of a replica smokehouse with shelves and a curing platform inside. The smokehouse cured hams and stored vegetables used in the living history program. To add to the site’s authenticity, the staff secured a Devon cow and her calf from the George Washington Birthplace. Thanks to sales and donations at the visitor center, the park was also able to supply its permanent, seasonal, and VIP interpreters with authentic period costumes. This proved a big hit among visitors.

One of the goals was to ensure the park not only entertained but also educated visitors. Toward this objective, BOWA introduced a new minifolder during the summer season. The new minifolder, Putman wrote, “combines a history of the life and philosophies of Booker T. Washington with a plantation trail guide through the living historical farm.”¹¹⁵ Here again, the objective was to provide the visitor with a deeper understanding of both the man and the environment. Staff also welcomed the addition of new audio stations throughout the site. Now visitors could participate in a self-guided tour through the Burroughs plantation with interpretive audio along the trail.



Figure 32: Living History at BOWA in the 1970s (NPS Archives).

¹¹⁵ These redesigned minifolders were part of a larger effort to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and enhance communication within governmental agencies. This project, according to Lorraine Peltit, “successfully lowered the cost per brochure from 4.5 cents to 2.5 cents.” Lorraine Peltit, “Making Design a Necessity for Good Government,” October 11, 2017.

Even with these additions, not everyone was happy with the direction of the NPS's living history program. Few were more critical than Robert Utley, the NPS's chief historian, who in the pages of *In Touch* challenged his colleagues to seriously address the ways in which the living history program undermined the service's interpretive work:

I fear that we have let the public's enthusiasm for living history push us from interpretation of the park's features and values into productions that, however entertaining, do not directly support the central park themes. . . . Inappropriate living history, moreover, is not merely harmless diversion. The more "living" it is, the more likely it is to give the visitor his strongest impression, and memory, of his park experience. Thus, a program that is not unusually supportive of key interpretive objectives may be correspondingly distractive if not actually subversive. We are obsessed with showing what everyday life was like in the past. . . . But most of our historic places are not preserved because of the everyday life that occurred there. The visitor whose fascination with "living" portrayals of everyday activity inhibits his understanding and appreciation of the momentous significance of Lee's surrender to Grant, or the progress and consequences of the Battle of Saratoga, has not been well served by our interpretive program, no matter how well conceived and presented.¹¹⁶



Figure 33: Robert M. Utley (*National Park Courier*).

¹¹⁶ *In Touch*, October 1974.

In Utley's view, too much emphasis had been placed on dramatization and not enough on a site's meaning and significance. He was not alone in this belief. Noting the importance of engaging in critical reflection about the NPS's interpretive agenda, James Sheire also voiced his criticism in the pages of *In Touch*:

I share Mr. Utley's concern with the accuracy and appropriateness of some areas of living history. As a spectator or member of the audience I simply do not understand what the relation is between accurate universe, camp scenes, and weapon firing and the meaning and significance of the particular stage, usually a battlefield or fort, on which living history is played. In my function as a research historian I would make a plea for the reintroduction of "meaning and significance" as interpretive conceptions. In my opinion they are the heart and soul of interpretation. It is a simple question: what is the meaning and significance of a Yorktown, a Gettysburg, an Edison, a Carl Sandburg, a "Mesa Verde," or a John Muir?¹¹⁷

Sheire also expressed reservations about the new audiovisual craze. Visitor centers with the latest technology, he argued, were not substitutes for well-trained interpreters with deep knowledge of the park's history and significance: "Mastery of the most sophisticated and innovative interpretive techniques can never substitute for the absence of content. A media without a message is vulgar technology that contributes nothing to understanding."¹¹⁸

Aware of these criticisms, BOWA staff sought to address the interpretive limitations of its living history program, as well as challenge distorted and whitewashed views of slavery which many visitors brought with them to the site. Their self-improvement efforts ranged from traveling to Johnson Farm at the Peaks of Otter and Appomattox Court House National Historical Park to learn from other living history programs to creating a section in the visitor center where patrons could sit at a table and read new works in US history and the burgeoning field of African American studies. The goal was to find innovative yet cost-effective ways to enhance BOWA's interpretive work.

In his 1974 annual report, Superintendent William Webb communicated the park's commitment to improving and expanding the living history program. "Two additional seasonal interpreters and another volunteer enabled us to expand the Living History program considerably. Thus, Sunday activities included; farm stores, churning butter, making lye soap, clothes washing, cooking, canning and drying foods, candle-dipping, shake-making, and chair weaving." According to Webb, these activities were enhanced by the purchase of new tools, equipment, and utensils, including a two-horse wagon and

¹¹⁷ "Living History, Another Interpretation," *In Touch*, October 1974, 16.

¹¹⁸ "Living History, Another Interpretation," *In Touch*, October 1974, 16.

buggy. If the turnout at the summer's annual Living History Day was any indication, the staff was headed in the right direction. More than 5,000 visitors turned out to participate in a variety of activities.¹¹⁹

The vibrancy of the park's interpretive work, particularly its living historical farm, did not escape the attention of the local media, which routinely ran features on BOWA. During the summer of 1975, Clay Peters of WSLC-TV came to the park to film a portion of the living history demonstrations for his show, "Probe."

Superintendent Putman envisioned even greater possibilities for the historical farm, especially with the addition of the Booker T. Washington Elementary School in 1973. After significant negotiating from park officials, the Franklin County School Board donated the former school building and its associated six acres to the park in 1973. The acquisition would enable the park to expand its living history program and better fulfill some of NPS's environmental objectives. When the building was dedicated in March 1974, the ceremony attracted representatives from various local clubs, as well as key officials in the NPS. Enthused about recent developments, former superintendents Chester Brooks and William Webb guided visitors on a tour of the Plantation trail. The newly acquired building, visitors were told, would be fully incorporated into the site's interpretive work.

In the months and years to come, BOWA staff would build on the foundation laid by the site's living history trailblazers. To un-simplify the historical narrative, they added to the living history program with outreach activities, symposia, and other interpretive activities. Thus, the history of the living program at BOWA is not one of rise and fall but rather rise and maturation.

¹¹⁹ Webb, "Superintendent Annual Report," 1974.

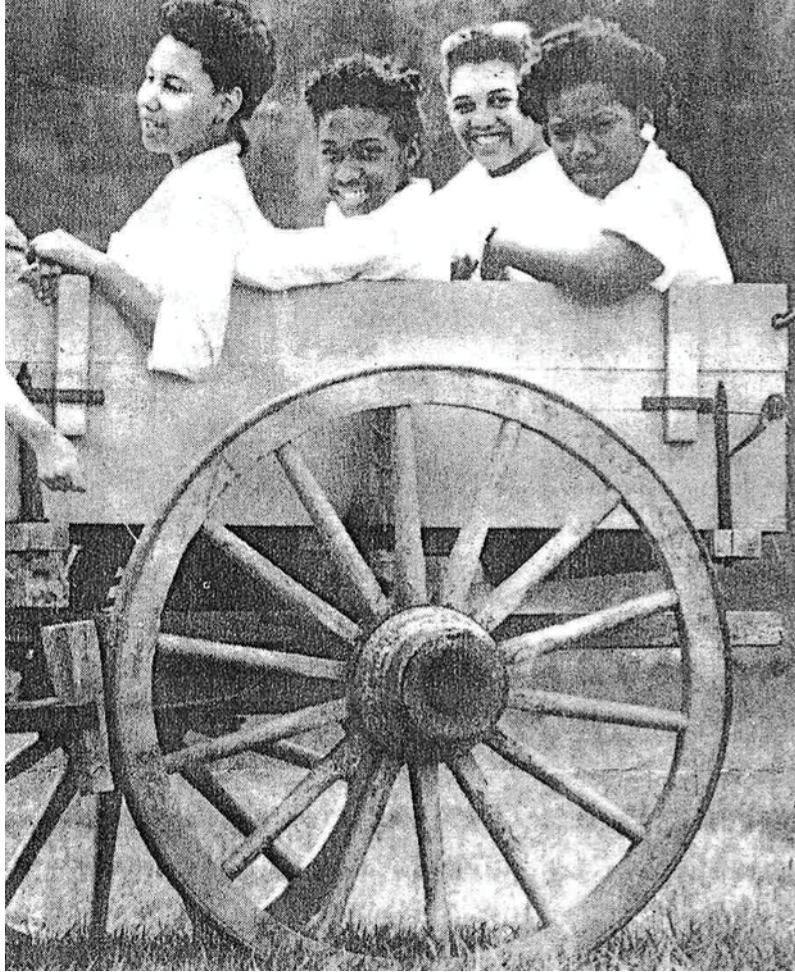


Figure 34: Living History Program (NPS Archives).

CHAPTER FIVE

NEW DIRECTIONS, 1976–1979

Introduction

On April 5, 1976, the Booker T. Washington National Monument held the dedication ceremony for the Environmental Education and Cultural Center (EECC). The EECC was housed in the former Booker T. Washington Elementary School, which had been closed since 1966. The ceremony attracted local community members, several NPS dignitaries (including Director Gary Everhardt), and Portia Washington Pittman, the 92-year-old daughter of Booker T. Washington. The event received extensive publicity from local media, most notably the *Franklin County Times* and the *Franklin News Post*. The crowd buzzed with excitement as BOWA staff shared their goals for the EECC, which they hoped would enhance the park’s environmental education work and its interpretive operations. In the months after the dedication, Sidney Wright, John Jordan, and Doy Norman, among other paid and volunteer personnel, worked earnestly to complete the necessary maintenance improvements for its scheduled July opening. Workers installed window screens, electric heat, a water cooler, and carpeting, as well as outfitted the kitchen, office, and classrooms with fluorescent lights. To improve access, a gravel surface was placed on the service road leading to the EECC.

The center got off to a promising start in its first full year of operation. From 1976 to 1977, it had an impressive lineup of environmental and cultural programs anchored by several well-attended exhibits. Co-sponsored with the Mary McLeod Bethune Club of Rocky Mount, the “Black Women’s Achievements Against the Odds” program drew 600 visitors to the park. Along with its exciting historical exhibits, the EECC also offered programs which sought to raise awareness about key environmental issues, particularly those related to energy saving and conservation. The center’s environmental education work ranged from large-scale mobile units on solar energy to ranger-led talks on water conservation measures to hosting special events like “Sun Day.”

By providing a variety of programs and exhibits, the EECC enabled the monument to diversify its interpretive operations without compromising its living history program. Craft demonstrations remained a central part of the park’s weekday and weekend

activities, while special events like “Living History Day” still drew crowds in the thousands. Finding a way to carry out the park’s mission through new and old programs while bringing more people to the park was the responsibility of BOWA’s new superintendent, John Hutzky.



Figure 35 : John T. Hutzky.

Staffing

During his three-year tenure (1976–1979) at BOWA, Hutzky expanded the park’s interpretive activities, increased its community partnerships and outreach programs, and improved its physical landscape. Before Hutzky’s appointment as superintendent, he had served as the Administrative Officer at Gettysburg National Battlefield Park. The former Marine had also acquired invaluable experience during his 10 years at New York’s Saratoga Historical Park, where he worked as an interpretive park guide.¹²⁰ Like many of his colleagues, he deeply valued his work at the NPS and believed strongly in its mission. “The National Park service has been more than a career,” he once noted, “It’s been the source of my well-being and inspiration.”¹²¹

Hutzky’s deep respect for the NPS’ mission was apparent in his efforts to strengthen the monument’s existing interpretive programs as well as create new ones. Throughout his tenure, he had a very capable staff. The park’s veteran employees—Sidney

¹²⁰ “NPS Superintendent John Hutzky Retires,” *Upper Delaware* 8, no. 2: 7.

¹²¹ “NPS Superintendent John Hutzky Retires,” *Upper Delaware* 8, no. 2: 7.

Wright, Louise H. Aydlett, and John Jordan—understood the challenges and opportunities specific to the area, while newcomers like Park Ranger-Historian William T. Wilcox and Park Technician Eleanor C. Long matched Hutzky’s enthusiasm and commitment.

Staffing, 1976–1979

Division	Personnel
Management	Sylvester Putman (Superintendent) John T. Hutzky (Superintendent) Geraldine M. Bell (Superintendent)
Administration	Louise H. Aydlett (Administrative Technician)
Interpretation and Resource Management	William T. Wilcox (Park Ranger-Historian) Eleanor C. Long (Park Technician)
Maintenance	Albert Sidney Wright (Farmer Foreman) John L. Jordan (Farmer Demonstrator) Doy Norman (Maintenance Worker) Brian M. McGinnis (Maintenance Worker)

Interpretation

On August 14, 1976, Hutzky began his tenure as superintendent. The summer at BOWA had been another productive season as thousands of women, men, and children visited the park. Wasting no time in addressing the park’s most immediate needs, Hutzky examined the condition of the various buildings, assessed the maintenance problems at the EECC, and met with NPS researchers and historians to consider additional research possibilities for the Burroughs Plantation. At the meeting, it was determined that “systematic research will yield little new material about the Burroughs plantation.”¹²² While never neglecting those events and activities most directly associated with BOWA’s status as a living historical farm, Hutzky, Long, and other park personnel set their sights on developing new initiatives and exhibits which complemented and enhanced existing efforts to illuminate the significance of Booker T. Washington’s life and African American history. In the summer of 1978, for instance, the park replaced its visitor center exhibits. The new exhibit focused on the early life of Booker T. Washington. The centerpiece of the exhibit

¹²² John Hutzky, Superintendent Report, 1976.

was Lloyd Lillie’s life-size bronze sculpture of Washington as a boy. The sculpture accompanied another one of Lillie’s figurative art pieces: a depiction of a Union soldier reading Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation to a group of enslaved African Americans.



Figure 36: Lloyd Lillie’s “Emancipation” sculpture (BOWA Archives).



Figure 37: Lloyd Lillie’s “Booker T. Washington” sculpture (BOWA Archives).

Later known for his statues of Thomas Jefferson and John Quincy Adams, Lillie made his first foray into sculpture with the Booker T. Washington statue. According to Hutzky, Lillie’s striking sculpture of Washington required extensive research and discussion:

To do an accurate sculpture of the young Booker took some sleuthing on the part of the Park Service and the sculptor. The main thing Lillie had to go on was a photograph of Washington at age 17, taken at Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia. Using this as research and a live model of Booker’s own age, Lillie fashioned the figure. The figure is dressed in a one-piece smock of homespun flax which Washington later vividly recalled. In making the sculpture Lillie progressed from a clay model to a plastic mold, then to a wax figure, and final mold. The finished bronze casting was made in a foundry at Poughkeepsie, New York.¹²³

The sculpted images of Washington and the emancipation scene anchored an exhibit which also included photographs of the educator during his Tuskegee years, passages from *Up from Slavery*, and an inventory of the plantation owner’s estate which includes an entry on Washington’s value (“Booker, a boy, 400 dollars.”). By providing evidence of Washington’s status as “chattel,” the park confronted the dehumanizing reality of slavery. The exhibit opened on July 4th and remained in place until 1995.



Figure 38: Visitors at a Booker T. Washington National Monument exhibit, 1978 (BOWA Archives).

¹²³ John Hutzky, “News Release,” June 15, 1978.

On their trips to the monument, many visitors also spent time in the EECC. A multipurpose facility, the EECC hosted community meetings, NPS-led lectures on energy conservation, and various exhibits.

By 1978, the EECC had become fully integrated into the park's interpretive operations. The Smithsonian's traveling exhibit, "Black Women in History," was another crowd pleaser and an important component of the park's efforts to extend its interpretation of African American history beyond slavery and Washington.

BOWA and the African American Community

Such exhibits, NPS personnel hoped, would increase local Blacks' involvement with BOWA in general and EECC in particular. At the EECC's dedication ceremony, NPS Director Gary Everhardt envisioned the EECC as a place of learning and recreation for local school children. With this in mind, Hutzky endeavored to make the center more welcoming by creating a primitive camping area and improving the picnic area. His efforts proved futile. "Press releases didn't raise the ante nor did a television interview with the local Roanoke, Virginia TV station," Hutzky later remembered. "I decided that I would have to go one-on-one with leaders of the local black community in the county seat of Rocky Mount, Virginia." He specifically targeted members of the Mary McLeod Bethune Women's Club with the hopes they would help him better understand why "the black population seemed indifferent to our programs at the environmental center."¹²⁴ This indifference was not because Hutzky was white. His predecessor Sylvester Putman—a southern Black man—had run up against similar problems so he knew this was not simply a matter of his race. A determined Hutzky set out to improve his relationship with the African American community by meeting with the Bethune Club. The Club's initial response to Hutzky was lukewarm, but when he brought his wife Priscilla on his second visit, he was able to make some inroads with the group. On his ride back home, he engaged in critical reflection and began to come to grips with the realities of segregation and what the EECC represented for many African Americans: "The blacks of Piedmont, Virginia in the mid-70s were only a few years away from the segregated schools of the Old South. To them the environmental center (located in the former Booker T. Washington school) was a part of the desegregated schools their children had escaped and they didn't need reminders of that era, even if we prettied it up with another name."¹²⁵ This issue was not confined to BOWA.

¹²⁴ John Hutzky, "From Afar: The 70's in the Piedmont," *River Reporter*, February 24, 2000.

¹²⁵ Hutzky, "From Afar: The 70's in the Piedmont."

The extent to which the painful memories of the past informed African Americans' relationship with the NPS would be a topic of discussion at the national level as several individuals sought to explain Blacks' low rates of visitation. NPS Deputy Director Ira Hutchinson had sought to raise awareness among African Americans about the many benefits and pleasures of the nation's parks. With Hutchinson's assistance, *Ebony* magazine ran a story in its May 1978 issue entitled, "Enjoy Your National Parks—You're Paying for Them," in which they encouraged African Americans to visit more NPS sites.¹²⁶ Instead of condemning African Americans, civil rights leader Benjamin Hooks sought to provide a more nuanced perspective on the matter. "For Black Americans ever so preoccupied with the consuming struggle for civil rights, jobs and equality," he explained, "recreational pastimes such as visiting national parks and monuments often seem a luxury that are hardly worth the effort." Moreover, he argued, some Blacks might not find a visit to a national park or monument an uplifting experience. "When it is remembered, also, that much of American history contains another type of pain for Blacks—the pain of slavery and centuries of discrimination—one is left to marvel that Blacks really bother to visit some of these monuments at all."¹²⁷

Over the years, as the park assessed its interpretive methods and themes, it had to take into account African Americans' complicated relationship with the past. And by the past, this meant not just slavery but also segregation and the pangs of integration. The sharp edges of history had the potential to trouble African Americans as well as whites. In fact, Hutzky found that talking about race could be difficult even among BOWA staff members. Years after his appointment, he recalled a drive from Richmond to Franklin County with the park's farmer foreman, Sidney Wright. On their journey through Farmville, the usually quiet Wright recounted the struggles of African Americans to integrate the public-school system. "I thought that he would follow up on his remarks but he didn't. We continued to travel in silence as we passed through the village of Appomattox Court House. This was the last [discussion] that I would ever get from Sidney on the subject of racial relations and discrimination in the south."¹²⁸

Even though BOWA's relationship with the African American community fell below Hutzky's expectations, the park made significant strides in its interpretive program. Thanks to the dedicated work of its staff, BOWA experienced a noticeable spike in its visitation numbers in 1978. Visitation at the park hit the 30,000 mark—an increase of 6,000 people from 1977. Visitors traveled from various parts of the United States, and a handful

¹²⁶ "Enjoy Your National Parks—You're Paying for Them," *Ebony* (May 1978): 148–154.

¹²⁷ Benjamin L. Hooks, "Blacks and the National Parks," *New York Amsterdam News* (December 30, 1978).

¹²⁸ Hutzky, "From Afar: The 70's in the Piedmont."

of tourists from France, Germany, Italy, Holland, Austria, and Switzerland made their way to the park. “We were pleased with the visitation and use of monument facilities in 1978,” Hutzky told the *Franklin News-Post*, “and we look forward to increased activity in 1979.”¹²⁹

New Partnerships

Hutzky’s optimism stemmed in part from developing and existing partnerships which bolstered the monument’s interpretive operations. One of BOWA’s most valuable partners was nearby Ferrum College, which during the 1970s transitioned from a junior college to a fully accredited four-year degree-granting institution.¹³⁰ Located twenty-five miles south of the park, Ferrum College was an ideal partner for the monument. BOWA developed an internship program with the college in 1978 and over the years hired numerous students as park guides. “We have a good working relationship with Ferrum College and the program has been beneficial to both the college and the National Park Service,” Hutzky reported to the regional office.¹³¹ One of the earliest participants in the program was Leon W. Jones of Buckingham, Virginia. A senior in Ferrum’s leisure service program, Jones wanted to pursue a career in park and recreation management after graduation. Thus, his internship with BOWA aligned perfectly with his career goals. The park’s relationship with students was not just limited to the internship program. BOWA rallied behind their push to implement a Black Studies program at Ferrum and even collaborated with the college’s Black Student Union in the countywide celebration of Black History Month.



Figure 39: Jack Tale Players Performing at BOWA, 1978 (BOWA Archives).

¹²⁹ *Franklin County News Post*, January 11, 1979.

¹³⁰ In 1976, Ferrum was awarded accreditation as a four-year college by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

¹³¹ National Park Service, “News Release,” February 14, 1979.

The park also partnered with Ferrum professors. In 1978, the National Park Service provided Professors Andrew Baskin, Roy Talbert Jr., and Gary Caldwell with a \$7,000 grant to conduct research on slavery in Franklin County. “The Booker T. Washington Monument had a clear need to do some investigations,” Professor Talbert explained. “They had the funds and we had the historians.” The final project, “Studies in the Local History of Slavery” covered the years between 1850 and 1865. It yielded important information on the differences between slavery in Bedford and Franklin counties and the Deep South, the prevalence of miscegenation in the region, and the extent of pro-Union sentiment in the area during the Civil War. Their research served as the springboard for an outdoor historical drama supervised by Caldwell and drama professor Rex Stephensen and performed by the Jack Tale Players of Ferrum College.¹³² The televised version of the drama was broadcast on Roanoke public television (WBRA-WSNV).¹³³ On Labor Day weekend, the Jack Tales Players presented a series of performances at the monument.¹³⁴ Well respected, the Players had performed throughout Virginia as well as in New York City and New Orleans. Their theatrical performances featured the folktales of nineteenth-century mountain folk and African Americans interspersed with the musical sounds of mandolin, jugs, washboard bass, and other instruments.¹³⁵

As had always been the case, the park’s interpretive work required constant attention to the physical landscape. A major boost for the park came in 1978 when it was selected as a site for the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program. Launched by Congress in 1971, the YCC aspired to provide young people with “meaningful work experiences on national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and fish hatcheries while developing an ethic of environmental stewardship and civic responsibility.”¹³⁶ Scheduled from June 25 to August 19, BOWA’s YCC consisted of fourteen youth ranging in age from 15 to 18. The participants came from areas outside of northern Virginia and were evenly divided by gender. The superintendent had no worries about the length of their time at BOWA. “If they run out of things to do, I can always drum up more.” Idleness would not be a problem for the YCC participants. Housed at Ferrum College, the corps completed several maintenance projects during their time at BOWA. This work included cleaning the environmental trails, trimming and mulching trees and plants, digging trenches, re-chinking the tobacco barn, and building new fences. “We had a list of 22 projects for the corps to complete during the

¹³² *Roanoke Times and World News*, December 28, 1978.

¹³³ *Franklin County News Post*, November 26, 1978.

¹³⁴ *Franklin News Post*, August 31, 1978.

¹³⁵ “Jack Tale Players at National Park,” *The Vinton Messenger*; September 13, 1978; “Jack Tale Players Perform at Booker T.,” *Franklin News-Post*, September 4, 1978.

¹³⁶ “Youth Conservation Corps,” *National Park Service* website, December 31, 2020, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/youthprograms/ycc.htm>

summer,” Hutzky told a local reporter. “Everything was finished except one or two minor projects.”¹³⁷ Thankful for their contributions, he looked forward to continuing the program the next summer.



Youth Conservation Corps workers began digging a drainage ditch at Booker T. Washington National Monument last week. The project is one of 22 the corps hopes to complete by the end of the summer.

Figure 40: Youth Conservation Corps at BOWA, 1978 (BOWA Archives).

The arrival of the YCC was not the only new development at the monument in 1978. The Virginia Skyline Council, the Girl Scouts of America, and the National Park Service jointly sponsored an American Heritage Trail Badge Program at the monument. When Girl Scout troop leader Valerie Gue queried park officials about the possibility of launching a badge program at BOWA, she found them quite receptive to her idea. Park Technician Eleanor Long collaborated with Gue and Helen Ruth, the supervisor of the Skyline Council, to establish requirements for the trail program. The requirements included hiking the historical plantation trail, viewing exhibits, listening to and reading the

¹³⁷ *Franklin News Post*, August 31, 1978. Hutzky believed strongly in the program: These kids are the leaders of the future. If by working at the park they can gain some insight into the work that goes into maintaining a park, perhaps they can influence other people in the future.”

audiovisual material in the visitor center, and correctly answering forty-five out of fifty questions on a specifically prepared questionnaire.¹³⁸ Along with developing the participants' skills and character, teaching them the importance of teamwork, and building their confidence, the heritage program aimed to expose them to the life of Booker T. Washington and the social and cultural environment of his childhood. Upon completion of the requirements, the scout would earn her badge.

One of the exhibits the girl scouts had a chance to observe during their time at BOWA was the previously-mentioned exhibit “Black Women’s Achievements Against the Odds.” Located in the EECC, the exhibit was divided into nine major sections: literature, civil rights, medicine, education, law and the judiciary, governments, fine arts, the performing arts, and business and industry.¹³⁹

The year 1978 was a good one for the park. A new brochure—the *Jack-O-Branch Trail Guide*—was first published, and BOWA staff hoped to build on the momentum. They also hoped to meet the expectations of the NPS and its director, William Whalen, who declared 1979 to be “The Year of the Visitor.” Fiscal constraints, Whalen pointed out, demanded that NPS employees be more innovative in their activities so as to increase visitation and better convey to the public the importance of the nation’s parks. Toward this goal, BOWA expanded its living history program during the summer, offering two guided tours daily. It also provided a daily environmental talk and a daily historical talk. In 1979, the *Booker T. Washington National Monument Environmental Education Teacher Guide* was published. The guide featured environmental education activities specifically related to the park.

Notwithstanding these efforts, the park’s visitation numbers declined from 30,627 in 1978 to 25,507 in 1979. There was also a decline in the sales at the visitor center. A major reason for the plunge in visitation was the energy crisis. Though the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) had lifted their oil embargo in 1974, fuel prices remained incredibly high, and the energy crisis lingered for the rest of the decade.

Conclusion

Amid great economic uncertainty, the monument faced another challenge: finding a replacement for Superintendent John Hutzky, who was reassigned to Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River. Five months after Hutzky’s departure, the NPS appointed Geraldine M. Bell as the new superintendent of Booker T. Washington National Monument. In assuming the position, Bell became the first African American woman to be

¹³⁸ “Trail Badge Program Set at Booker T.,” *Franklin News-Post Rocky Mount*, March 2, 1978.

¹³⁹ “Exhibition Set at Booker T.,” *The Franklin County Times*, April 27, 1978.

named a superintendent in the history of the NPS. “You couldn’t find a more qualified superintendent for your park,” Richard L. Stanton, the director of the Mid-Atlantic Region raved when introducing Bell to the Franklin County community. NPS director William Whalen agreed: “I’m confident she will do a good job.”¹⁴⁰ Whalen’s and Stanton’s confidence stemmed from knowledge of Bell’s previous work. Joining the NPS in 1967, Bell had amassed a wealth of experience in the years before her appointment to BOWA. For four years she served as a supervisor of interpretation at Independence National Historical Park, where she handled millions of visitors. Between 1970 and 1972, she served as park technician. Then from 1972 to 1975, she served as historian and park technician at Saratoga National Historical Park. During 1977 and 1978, she participated on a team of NPS personnel conducting a suitability-feasibility study for the creation of a national African American museum in Wilberforce, Ohio.



Figure 41: Ira Hutchinson, Geraldine Bell, and Richard Stanton (BOWA Archives).

¹⁴⁰ Geraldine M. Bell Appointed Superintendent at Booker T. Washington Nat’l Monument, *Roanoke Tribune*, November 8, 1979; National Park Service, “News Release,” October 18, 1979.

Ira Hutchinson, Deputy Director of the NPS, was ecstatic about Bell's appointment at BOWA. At the park's welcoming celebration, he noted: "This is not my day or the director's day. It is the park's day, the community's day and Geraldine Bell's day."¹⁴¹ Bell, Hutchinson proclaimed, "is breaking some new ground today."¹⁴² When Hutchinson finished his remarks, the crowd rose to its feet as Bell approached the podium. The Philadelphia native thanked the attendees and the NPS for the warm welcome and the opportunity to lead the park into the 1980s. "I'm going to give it my best shot," Bell promised as the program came to a close. Her job would not be an easy one as the NPS endured budget cuts and political changes. There were also park-specific challenges, ranging from boundary issues to developing interpretive themes reflective of the wide range of views on slavery, race relations, and Booker T. Washington. As one might expect given Bell's experience, it didn't take her long to recognize some of the tensions within the park's interpretive program: "Although an active small farm operation is very popular with visitors, we are still searching for a balance between the farm where Washington lived and the focus on Washington the man."¹⁴³ While living history remained the principal model of interpretation under her tenure, she was quite proactive in incorporating other means to complicate and broaden the community's understanding of Booker T. Washington and his place in US history.

¹⁴¹ "First Black Woman Heads Booker T. Monument," *Franklin County Times*, November 15, 1979.

¹⁴² "First Black Woman Heads Booker T. Monument," *Franklin County Times*, November 15, 1979.

¹⁴³ Geraldine Bell, Superintendent Report, 1979.

CHAPTER SIX

NEW HORIZONS: 1979–1987

Introduction

The appointment of Geraldine Bell as superintendent of the Booker T. Washington National Monument reflected larger changes at the NPS. As the work of Polly Kaufman demonstrates, the combined forces of civil rights legislation and second wave feminism transformed gender relations within the NPS.¹⁴⁴ By the 1970s, women were moving up the NPS hierarchy in a variety of fields, challenging various forms of gender discrimination, and lobbying for historic sites and parks about women. The changing landscape of NPS was evident at the first National Park Service Women’s Conference, held November 13–16, 1979 at the Sheraton International in Reston, VA. “I’m glad to see that the women are getting together and they are making recommendations to their leadership,” Linda Tarr Whelan informed the crowd of eighty NPS employees. “I think if this works, it can be a precedent for other Federal Government agencies.” Spirits were extremely high at the gathering as attendees articulated their desire to increase the representation of women within the NPS ranks. “It’s been a long road, but we’re finally headed in the right direction,” remarked conference chairwoman Peggy Lipson. “We have our commitment, but better than that, we’ve got a good network among ourselves. This is only the beginning.”¹⁴⁵ The women left a strong impression on Director Bill Whalen, who listened closely as organizers and attendees put forth a variety of recommendations. “I could never be more proud to be associated with the National Park system than I am this evening, and I look forward to continuing good relationships.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Polly Welts Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman’s Voice: A History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006).

¹⁴⁵ “First National Park Service Women’s Conference,” *Courier*, 3, no. 2 (January 1980): 2.

¹⁴⁶ “First National Park Service Women’s Conference,” *Courier*, 3, no. 2 (January 1980): 10.

Staffing

The growing influence of women within the NPS was evident at BOWA, where Geraldine Bell, Eleanor Long, Alice Hanawalt, and Louise Aydlett had a profound impact on the site's operations during the late 1970s and 1980s. Joining the staff in 1976, Eleanor Long worked as a park technician until 1981, when she was upgraded to Park Ranger, a position she held for six years. Then in 1987, Long moved to administration, where she held the position of Administrative Technician and later, Administrative Officer. Though Long arrived at the park expecting to work primarily on environmental education, much of her time was spent in mainstream interpretation. “The primary interpretive theme was living history,” Long remembered. The focus was on craft production—cooking, soap-making, candle production, blacksmithing. “Booker T. was incidental to the living history at that time, as were the tours, to be truthful about it.” In Long's view, this strong focus on production was problematic. “That's not what made that farm unique,” she explained. The park was about memorializing the life of Booker T. Washington.¹⁴⁷



Figure 42: Park Ranger Eleanor Long (BOWA Archives).

Another worker who shared her vision was Alice Hanawalt, who came to the park in 1981 as a seasonal worker. “From the get-go, she was interested in Booker,” Long recalled. “Now, she did living history,” but the focus was on how various crafts related to

¹⁴⁷ Eleanor Long, interview with author, December 24, 2019.

the life of Booker T. Washington and the experiences of the enslaved. In Long’s view, Hanawalt was the source of a much-needed change in the park’s interpretive activities. “She was the person who started her tours talking about Booker T. Washington, rather than the farm. It was a backdrop to his life. And that just encouraged me to do the same thing.”¹⁴⁸ Without question, Hanawalt was an anchoring force at BOWA for many years. Over her twenty-year tenure at the park, Hanawalt won several awards, including a regional safety achievement award and a semifinal finish in a national “Take Pride in America” campaign. An avid researcher, Hanawalt conducted a great deal of genealogy research on the Burroughs family.



Figure 43: Park Ranger Alice Hanawalt (BOWA Archives).

¹⁴⁸ Eleanor Long, interview with author, December 24, 2019.

Staffing, 1979–1988

Division	Personnel
Management	William T. Wilcox (Acting Superintendent) Geraldine Bell (Superintendent) Gordon J. Wilson (Acting Superintendent) Ronald Mack (Superintendent)
Administration	Louise H. Aydlett (Administrative Technician) Janet Pagans (Clerk Typist) Marie Potter (Clerk Typist) Elaine Jacobs (Clerk Typist) Teresa Barger (Clerk Typist, Administrative Clerk) Eleanor C. Long (Administrative Technician)
Interpretation and Resource Management	William T. Wilcox, (Chief, Interpretation and Resource Management) Eleanor C. Long (Park Ranger) Alice F. Hanawalt (Park Ranger) Richard H. Saunders, Jr. (Chief, Interpretation and Resource Management) Connie B. Mays (Park Ranger) Daniel Young (Park Ranger)
Maintenance	Albert Sidney Wright (Farmer Foreman) John L. Jordan (Farmer Demonstrator) Doy Norman (Maintenance Worker) Brian McGinnis (Maintenance Worker) Robin Scott Leatherman (Farmer Demonstrator) Joseph H. Finan (Maintenance Worker Foreman) James Hanauer (Farm Demonstrator) Kenneth W. Arrington (Tractor Operator)

As was the case for many sites in the NPS, BOWA's interpretive, management, research, and planning activities were marked by both change and continuity between 1978 and 1987. The living farm concept continued to anchor the interpretive program, though BOWA staff introduced new activities and events with the hope of providing visitors with a deeper appreciation for the life, politics, and influence of Booker T. Washington. During

these years, the monument hosted visits from elementary and secondary students, partnered with various foundations and institutions on research projects and symposia, and sponsored a variety of exhibits highlighting African America’s contributions to US society, politics, and culture. There were also important additions to the site’s physical landscape. BOWA opened its primitive campground in May 1980. The campground, located along the Jack-O-Lantern Branch Trail, consisted of four units of five gravel tent pads with a fire ring in the center, a wood rack, and trash bins. Chemical toilets, a central campfire ring, a picnic shelter, and a large wood bin were also located on the site. There was no charge for the use of the site, which could accommodate eighty people. In a 1981 press release for the campground, Superintendent Bell encouraged the local community to take advantage of the unique experiences it provided: “Tent camping and cooking over an open fire allow users an opportunity to experience a simpler life in an outdoor setting.”¹⁴⁹ Unfortunately, the campground was seldom used and closed within three years of its opening. According to Robin Snyder: “The lack of regular use and the cost of maintenance staff time to open and close it each spring and fall, plus rental and regular cleaning of the porta potties, factored into its permanent closure.”¹⁵⁰

A year later, the Plantation Trail and the Jack-O-Lantern Branch Trail were designated as part the Booker T. Washington National Recreation Trail, part of the National Recreation Trail System.



Figure 44: Map of Plantation Trail and Jack-O-Lantern Branch Trail (NPS Archives).

¹⁴⁹ Geraldine Bell, News Release, National Park Service, April 15, 1981.

¹⁵⁰ Robin Snyder, email to author, October 14, 2020.

To maximize efficiency, the staff also repurposed sections of the EECC for the maintenance division. The first section of the EECC to be repurposed was the kitchen, which was converted to a storage facility. Classroom three was converted into a garage for maintenance work, which enabled the staff to move maintenance operations out of the three-vehicle garage in the headquarters building. Maintenance, according to Bell in her 1983 annual report, was not the only division to benefit from the move: “As a consequence of the maintenance move from the downstairs garage office area, the I&RM division was able to [declutter] their primary office space.”¹⁵¹ During this time, the park also entered the computer age, with the purchase of its first copier and a CPT word processor in 1983. BOWA also acquired its first radio and alarm systems that year.

There were also significant personnel changes during this period. John Jordan, the monument’s original farmer demonstrator, retired after nineteen years. Two years lapsed before his position was filled. Janet Pagans, the monument’s first NPS clerk typist, accepted a job in Roanoke, and in May 1983, Park Ranger Bill Wilcox was reassigned to Herbert Hoover NHS and Park Ranger Richard H. Saunders, Jr. came to BOWA. Another key personnel change was the retirement of Sidney Wright in June 1985. Wright’s retirement, according to Bell, “marked the passing of the old guard.” Praised by his co-workers as the park’s “collective memory,” Wright had been employed at BOWA since 1957. “He was the reference for eight superintendents,” Bell remarked.¹⁵² Wright loved his job and appreciated his service at the park, but hoped his replacement had more support. The maintenance division, he believed, needed more employees. “I’ve just about got the same number of people working for me now that I did then [when he started in the position]. It’s really a lot of work. I hope whoever takes over next can keep it up with what they have to work with.”¹⁵³ Three months after Wright’s retirement, Louise Aydlett announced plans to retire at the beginning of the next year. A highly valued employee, Aydlett had been at the park since 1962. The retirements of Jordan, Wright and Aydlett were major losses for the park, but there were also some positive personnel developments. Three important additions came to the Park in 1987: Connie Mays and Dan Young as seasonal rangers and Ernest Brown as a laborer.

¹⁵¹ Bell, Superintendent Annual Report, 1983.

¹⁵² Bell, Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1986.

¹⁵³ “Retiring: Sidney Wright is Hanging It Up After Almost 30 Years with Park Service,” *Franklin News-Post*, June 10, 1985.

Planning

Upon her arrival in 1979, Superintendent Bell hit the ground running. One of her biggest tasks was the completion of the General Management Plan. BOWA GMP recounted the site's history, provided guidelines for preserving the historical theme of the park and enhancing the visitor experience, and outlined opportunities for and limitations on future development. The report also included maps providing insight into resource use. The last GMP, completed in 1964, preceded the living historical farm development; BOWA desperately needed a new GMP.

After much work, the GMP was completed in late 1980. The tone of the plan was one of optimism as it predicted steady growth for both the park and the region. Noting that the economic base of southwestern Virginia was “diversified and stable,” the plan noted the expansion of recreation activities in Franklin County and surrounding areas:

There exists within the region a wide variety of rapidly expanding recreational opportunities. The Blue Ridge Parkway is situated about 30 miles to the west of the park site. Philpott Dam, Fairy Stone State Park, and Smith Mountain Lake are also major recreational attractions within the region. Smith Mountain Lake, 4 miles east of the park, is becoming a popular recreational area, providing fishing, boating, camping, and lakefront sites for second homes. The state is developing a 20,000-acre park on the eastern side of the reservoir.¹⁵⁴

Despite these developments, the plan cautioned against any preparation for a dramatic increase in the number of park visitations. The visual amenities of the park, the plan noted, “are somewhat less than spectacular.” In other words, the site “does not possess vantage points from which the visitor will get spectacular views, nor is it surrounded by unique landscape features that would be an attraction to visitors.”¹⁵⁵ The park's strengths lay not in its scenic landscape but in its historical importance as the birthplace of Booker T. Washington.

With this in mind, the plan's management statement identified the park's purpose as threefold: “to evoke the physical and cultural milieu of Booker T. Washington's birth and boyhood; to memorialize his later accomplishments in advancing the educational and economic status of American Blacks and interracial harmony, and to stimulate visitors to understand the relationship between his boyhood environment and his later contributions.”¹⁵⁶

The management statement also included the following ten objectives:

¹⁵⁴ Booker T. Washington National Monument, *General Management Plan*, 1981, 5.

¹⁵⁵ Booker T. Washington National Monument, *General Management Plan*, 1981, 8.

¹⁵⁶ Booker T. Washington National Monument, *General Management Plan*, 1981, 11.

1. To preserve, protect and restore, as practicable, the atmosphere of the pre-Civil War Burroughs plantation to suggest the period of Booker T. Washington's boyhood.
2. To interpret Booker T. Washington and his significance in American history, with particular attention to the natural and social environment in which spent his early years.
3. To give visitors interpretation of the daily operation of the Burroughs plantation, including facilities and equipment, and the part played therein by Washington and his family.
4. To encourage maximum enjoyment and use of the area with expanded services during the summer season.
5. To provide for visitor and employee safety and protection through management programs.
6. To provide adequate protection for the Living Farm and other park resources.
7. To effectively participate in community and regional planning to ensure that development is comparable with the monument's needs and to seek mutually acceptable solutions to such common problems as law enforcement, fire control, pollution, etc.
8. To encourage public participation in all planning phases for the monument.
9. To develop a continuing research program on Washington himself and the immediate area.
10. To acquire, preserve, and maintain a collection of historic artifacts relating to Washington's life and the plantation.¹⁵⁷

To carry out these plans, the GMP made several recommendations. The first recommendation concerned the visitor center and its visual impact on the living farm. Because of its prominent location and architectural style, the visitor center could not be "left behind as visitors wander through the living historical farm."¹⁵⁸ Thus, the plan recommended the planting of trees on the visitor center's south and east sides. Screening trees would dramatically reduce the center's visual impact on the farm and enhance the park's interpretive program.

¹⁵⁷ Booker T. Washington National Monument, *General Management Plan*, 1981, 10.

¹⁵⁸ Booker T. Washington National Monument, *General Management Plan*, 1981, 12.

The second recommendation addressed the limited office space for park staff and volunteers. Noting that office space was “woefully insufficient in the present Visitor Center,” the GMP recommended that the EECC be repurposed to better maximize the site’s resources.¹⁵⁹ There was also talk of moving the maintenance staff to the EECC. Notably, the plan did not openly consider the interpretive possibilities available at the EECC, the location of the former elementary school.

The third recommendation called for the construction of a new residential space for park employees. The existing residential house had become a source of great annoyance for park personnel for its “intrusion on the historic scene” as well as for the tendency of visitors to mistake the structure for the Burroughs’ “Big House.”¹⁶⁰ To remedy this problem, the GMP advised the immediate construction of a new residence: “A National Park Service residence should be provided in the northwest section of the park in the wooded area along the ridge to provide protection for park resources and meet the off-hour emergency needs of the farm animals. This location, with selective thinning, should allow visual monitoring of the entrance road and historic area of the park. The present residence is unsafe and should be demolished when a new residence is available. The present residence is also an offensive intrusion in the historic zone.”¹⁶¹

The recommendation section of the report concluded with an extensive discussion of the park’s interpretive program. The GMP discouraged further expansion or reconstruction of the living farm, noting that the present scene should be maintained as available funds and staff permit. It did call, however, for “strengthened focus toward the man, Booker T. Washington.” Toward this end, the plan called for an annual program commemorating Washington’s birthday. Three themes would anchor the annual program: 1) the Burroughs plantation’s impact on Washington’s boyhood years; 2) his life and career as an educator, particularly his work at Tuskegee Institute; and 3) his influence on African American politics during the post-Reconstruction period. With respect to Washington’s politics, the plan called for greater emphasis on how the social and natural environment of his boyhood influenced his leadership style and activism in later years. Suggested, but not explicitly stated, was the idea that Washington’s rural background had a lasting influence and that influence deserved a greater place in the site’s interpretive agenda.¹⁶²

To accomplish its interpretive goal, the site needed to update the interpretive publications and exhibits featured in the visitor center. As the GMP noted: “Several interpretive publications regarding black history in general and Washington in particular are going out of print. Even *Up from Slavery* is no longer available from the regular sources.

¹⁵⁹ Booker T. Washington National Monument, *General Management Plan*, 1981, 12.

¹⁶⁰ Booker T. Washington National Monument, *General Management Plan*, 1981, 13.

¹⁶¹ Booker T. Washington National Monument, *General Management Plan*, 1981, 13

¹⁶² Booker T. Washington National Monument, *General Management Plan*, 1981, 13.

Additional publications will have to be developed or sought to replace existing ones as well as to reflect new insights into Washington’s place in black history.”¹⁶³ The GMP additionally called for an update of the audiovisual program in the park’s visitor center. The existing waysides and exhibits did not adequately convey the complexity of Washington’s life as an educator and leader.

Such work, the plan suggested, provided the opportunity for collaboration with two critical institutions: Tuskegee and Hampton. “Both Tuskegee Institute and Hampton Institute are also involved in the story of Booker T. Washington. They and the Booker T. Washington Monument could participate in joint efforts to produce programs and exhibits.”¹⁶⁴ The plan provided no guide of how such partnerships might work but seemed optimistic that collaboration was a viable option in the future.

Upon its completion, the GMP was sent to the regional office, which approved it on December 2, 1980. Over the next few years, staff worked to implement several of the recommendations. When Sidney Wright retired in 1985, the park’s long-time temporary quarters was finally demolished and removed.

Natural Resource Management

Two years after the approval of the GMP, the park completed its Resource Management Plan (RMP). The plan encouraged the continuation of its present course of action with regard to resource management priorities and principles. According to the RMP, because of its “isolated, rural location,” “Booker T. Washington National Monument does not have many resource management problems . . . [or] any serious or persistent threats to the natural resources of the park.” Water and air quality were not major issues. However, the plan did note certain dangers that were inescapable such as fire danger, insect damage, water damage, lightning strikes, and storm damage. In the future, the Plan recommended that staff be instructed to remove vegetation for maintenance and farming purposes from the Historic and Development Zones only. This would permit natural processes to continue unchecked for the most part in the Natural Zone, which is the zone in which most environmental education takes place.

The plan also emphasized the need to know more about the history of the site:

There are large gaps in our knowledge of the appearance of and activities which took place on the Burroughs Plantation between 1856–1865. At present, the park has the 1861 inventory of James Burroughs’ property, 1860 census and tax records, a few remembrances of the Burroughs’ children, a few paragraphs in

¹⁶³ Booker T. Washington National Monument, *General Management Plan*, 1981, 13.

¹⁶⁴ Booker T. Washington National Monument, *General Management Plan*, 1981, 13.

Booker's writings, and conjecture to guide us in interpreting Booker's first nine years. We do not know the physical appearance of the farm or the day-to-day activities or skills of anyone on the farm. It is unlikely that the park will easily gain the missing information. In a meeting which took place in December 1977, the park staff was advised by the prominent Booker T. Washington researchers, Mr. Edwin C. Bearss and Dr. Louis R. Harlan, that 'systematic research' would yield no new information about Booker or the Burroughs Plantation from 1856–1865. At this point, the park staff is in the position of taking advantage of other local history projects which may happen to include information helpful in filling in the blanks in the park story."¹⁶⁵

The RMP also addressed the management of the site's artifacts and provided a timetable for the completion of certain tasks. The plan acknowledged the remarkable progress in collections management in recent months: "Most of the slide collection is now organized in less damaging storage cabinets and the staff is developing finding aids. This is a time-consuming task because scenes were not identified at the time they were added to the collection."¹⁶⁶ At the time of the report, the photograph collection still needed to be properly assessed and updated. Despite limited resources, the park aimed to have all the records of the site's artifacts properly updated and catalogued by the end of 1982.

With a clear vision of its resource management agenda, the park set out to reach some of its objectives. In 1983, funding provided through the NPS' partnership with the United States Forest Service (USFS) enabled the monument to hire a local contractor, who (under the supervision of Bill Sites of the USFS) cabled and thinned the crown of the catalpa, as well as pruned two white oaks. All three trees pre-dated the arrival of the Burroughs' family on the site. The partnership between BOWA and the USFS points to the continued importance of outside groups in assisting the park in resource management. Another important partner was the Blue Ridge chapter of the Virginia Wildflower Preservation Society, which in 1986 commenced a two-year flora survey for the park. Upon its completion, the society provided detailed lists of trees, flowers, grasses, and mosses, as well as a location map. Ferrum College conducted a mammal survey for BOWA in 1985. Ferrum College professor, S. M. Litton conducted a field survey from October 1984 to September 1985, sampling four major habitats to get an accurate account of the mammals in the park. Since the site forbade sampling mammals within the historic district, trapping was conducted in the development and natural zones of the park. According to the report, "mammal species larger than rodents were sampled by construction of scent stations developed by Joe Coggin of the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries."¹⁶⁷ During the survey, forty-six small mammals from eight species were trapped and twenty

¹⁶⁵ Booker T. Washington National Monument, *Resource Management Plan*, 1982, 12.

¹⁶⁶ Booker T. Washington National Monument, *Resource Management Plan*, 1982, 12.

¹⁶⁷ S. M. Litton, and W. Rabenau, *Mammal Survey of Booker T. Washington National Monument*, 1985, 2.

mammal species were sampled. The golden mouse, muskrat, the woodland jumping mouse, and mink were found only in the riparian ecosystem; however, the vast majority of mammals were not habitat specific.

Figure 1. Map Showing Locations of Trapping Lines and Scent Stations.

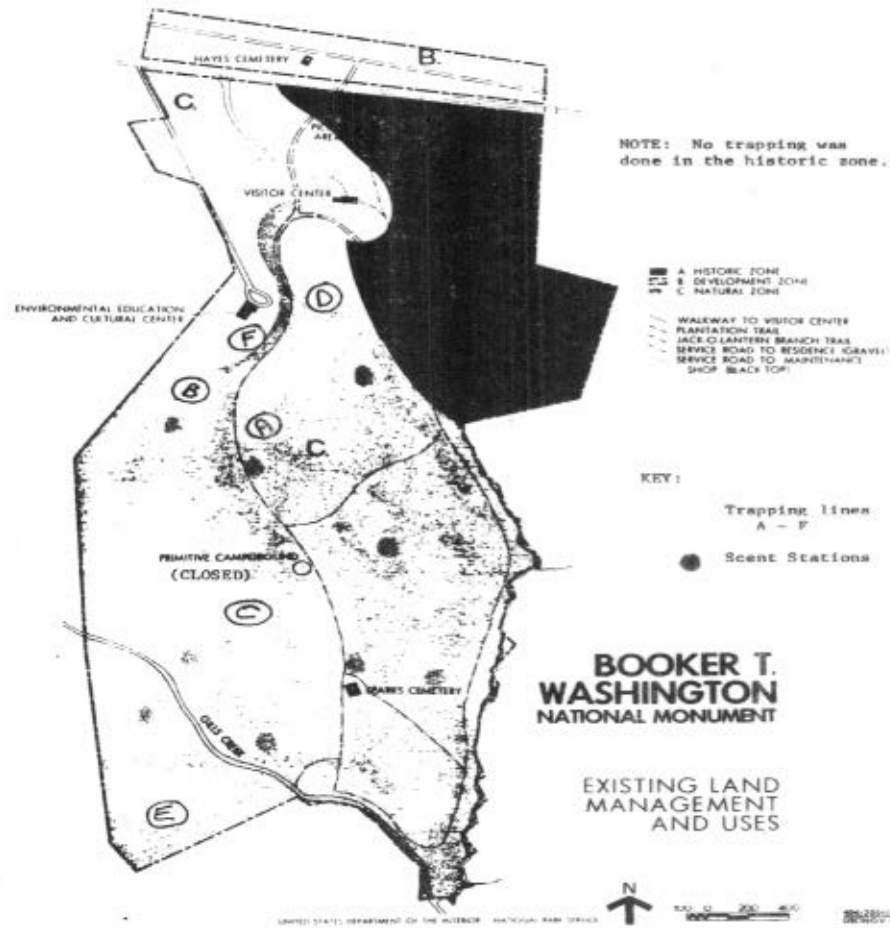


Figure 45: Map of Trapping Locations during the 1985 mammals survey at BOWA.

Another important aspect of the park’s resource management pivoted around environmental compliance. As outlined in its Natural Resource Management Statement, the NPS strives to “understand, maintain, restore, and protect the inherent integrity of the natural resources processes, systems, and values of the parks while providing meaningful opportunities to enjoy them.”¹⁶⁸ These resources and systems included water, air, soil,

¹⁶⁸ “Natural Resource Stewardship Training,” Natural Resource Stewardship Training, National Park Service, January 3, 2020, <https://www.nps.gov/training/nrs>.

topographic features, paleontological resources, natural soundscapes, and clear skies.” The site’s RMP reflected not just its own priorities but also new demands from the Commonwealth of Virginia. As Superintendent Bell noted in one of her annual reports:

The State of Virginia, showing new vigor in enforcing water quality requirements, started 1980 with a note threatening dire consequences if water meters were not installed by the end of February and water use not reported. Although hard to find and expensive, meters were eventually installed, and usage is now regularly reported. We have one location where back flow is a remote possibility. A restricting device will be installed there.¹⁶⁹

Increasingly during the 1980s, BOWA’s resource management activities also addressed the steady upsurge in commercial and residential development in Franklin County. Critical to this upsurge were the activities of Ron Willard, who in 1973 started a construction company and then three years later built the Waterfront, Smith Mountain Lake’s first country club community. The sprawling community was located on 750 acres with 8.5 miles of shoreline. Then in 1985, the Willard Companies acquired land for the construction of a planned community called The Water’s Edge, a private 712-acre development which would include an 18-hole PGA Championship course and a private 36,000 sq. ft. country club nestled along 13.5 miles of Smith Mountain Lake shoreline. These developments were a source of great pride for County Administrator Bill Beckett, who saw the current moment as an opportunity for Franklin County to rebrand itself. “People generally think of Franklin County as the moonshine capital of the world, and that is certainly part of a colorful, though minor, tradition. But there are a lot of positive, good things going on in the county as well. Franklin County is a progressive rural county that has a lot to offer both residents and newcomers.”¹⁷⁰

This upward trend in growth and development in Franklin County was a real concern for Superintendent Bell, who wanted to ensure BOWA’s cultural and natural resources were protected and preserved. At the same time, she understood the benefits of development and sought to maintain good relations with the pro-growth forces in the area. In her capacity as superintendent of BOWA, Bell attended several meetings of the Planning Team for the River Foundation. “Our neighborhood continues to take shape around us,” Bell informed NPS officials in her 1986 annual report. “The shopping center at the intersection of 616 and 122 is sputtering along. The opening of the pizza parlor seems to have added a more stable business to the center. We also do our share to keep him in business. The proposed River Parkway seemed to be more than a proposal by the end of the year. People in the area seem to feel that there will be a parkway.”¹⁷¹ Amid these

¹⁶⁹ Bell, “Superintendent Annual Report,” 1981.

¹⁷⁰ “Franklin Boasts Colorful Past, Hope for the Future,” *Roanoke Times and World News*, July 1, 1984.

¹⁷¹ Bell, “Superintendent Annual Report,” 1986.

developments, the importance of preserving the site’s cultural landscape became more urgent in 1987, when the Roanoke Land and Auction Company placed 285 acres directly abutting the park for sale. This accelerated the process of development in the 1990s.

Interpretation and Special Activities

As BOWA staff wrestled with the inevitability of commercial development, they also focused their attention on improving the site’s interpretive activities and educational programs. Under Bell’s leadership, the park introduced several initiatives: the Annual Holiday Open House, the Farm Life Festival, the Heritage Film Festival, and the Booker T. Washington Elementary School Reunions.

One event which drew a great deal of attention for the site was its Booker T. Washington Symposium, held in 1984. On Friday, April 27, the monument sponsored a day-long symposium on the life, politics, and legacy of Booker T. Washington. The symposium, held at the Holiday Inn in Roanoke and funded by a \$15,000 grant from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, featured several leading experts on the Black experience in the United States, most notably Benjamin Quarles, Raymond Smock, Emma Thornborough, Tommy Bogger, Vivian Verdell Gordon, Armstead Robinson, Edgar Toppia, and August Meier. In their remarks, some speakers noted Washington’s relevance for the contemporary moment. “Washington’s message remains relevant today. Black people want a chance to produce, to be employed, to get into the mainstream,” said noted civil rights leader Ralph Abernathy.¹⁷² Others disagreed with Abernathy. Raymond Smock noted that the Tuskegee leader’s politics seemed “downright cowardly,” providing African Americans with the “path of least resistance.”¹⁷³ Historian Emma Thornborough was equally blunt in her remarks, accusing the leader of “deviousness, duplicity, and hypocrisy.” Calling Washington an “undercover reformist,” the noted scholar Benjamin Quarles attempted to provide a more nuanced portrait of the leader. “Nobody had internalized the American dream the way he had,” Quarles reflected. “But he was pragmatic. He had to live with ambiguity—just as we do.”¹⁷⁴ Even though the conversation was quite heated at times, Geraldine Bell was pleased with the symposium: “The scholarly papers and exchanges deepened the attendees’ understanding of Washington . . . [and] as a result of the symposium, I feel many people got a renewed appreciation of Booker T. Washington. From the presentations by the scholars, their comments to each other, and the questions from the audience, the attendees told me they have a better understanding of Washington’s place in

¹⁷² Mark Layman, “Washington Wrong, Some at Forum Say,” *Roanoke Times and World News*, April 28, 1984.

¹⁷³ Layman, “Washington Wrong.”

¹⁷⁴ Layman, “Washington Wrong.”

black history in the US.” The symposium foreshadowed future developments at the park, which in the 1990s increasingly situated Washington within the larger context of US history and American race relations.”¹⁷⁵

**SYMPOSIUM ON BOOKER T. WASHINGTON
SCHEDULED FOR APRIL**

A day-long Symposium on Booker T. Washington (1856-1915) will be conducted in Roanoke, Virginia on Friday, April 27. The event, which will bring together some of the foremost scholars in the field of black history, has been made possible by a grant of more than \$15,000 from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy.

Collaborating in the Symposium’s sponsorship are the staffs of the Booker T. Washington National Monument in Hardy, Washington’s birthplace, and Blue Ridge Public Television in nearby Roanoke. The Symposium proceedings are to be televised and distributed by satellite across the nation to participating public television stations.

Dr. Louis R. Harlan, a professor of history at the University of Maryland and the author of a prize-winning, two volume biography of the great Virginian, will initiate the Friday Symposium by delivering a paper on the general thrust of Washington’s career as an educator and leader of America’s black minority. The winner of the much-coveted Bancroft Prize in American history in 1973 for his work on Booker Washington’s career, Harlan has just completed the editing of the last of a 13-volume collection of Washington’s papers.

Responses to Professor Harlan’s comments will be offered at the Symposium’s morning session by : August Meier of Kent State University, author of the *History of Negro Thought in America*; Benjamin Quarles of Morgan State, who has written extensively in the field on such topics as *The Black Abolitionists*; Elliot Rudwick, biographer of Washington’s frequent critic, W.E.B. Du Bois; Emma Lou Thornbrough, author of a 1969 biography of Booker Washington; and and Edgar Toppin, Dean of the Graduate School at Virginia State University.

Details are still being completed on the Symposium’s afternoon session, but the project’s organizers plan to focus that discussion on the contemporary implications of the black leader’s doctrines and practice, particularly such notions as “self-help.”

The Symposium will be held in the city of Roanoke. Final arrangements for the exact location are now being made. Further details may be obtained by contacting the Booker T. Washington National Monument (703-721-2094) or the Project Director, Dr. Douglas W. Foard at Ferrum College, Ferrum, Virginia 24088.

Figure 46: Symposium on Booker T. Washington (BOWA Archives).

¹⁷⁵ Bell, “Superintendent Annual Report,” 1984.

BOWA staff enjoyed developing new programs and events, but sometimes felt they lacked the resources to realize the full potential of these initiatives. In BOWA's 1985 Statement for Interpretation and Visitor Services, Richard Saunders, the park's chief of interpretation and resource management, conveyed his concerns: "Without a doubt our greatest challenge will be to carry out a very limited program of interpretive services without betraying to the public the deeply felt bitterness about the severity of the impact of the 1985 budget cuts on this park."¹⁷⁶ Superintendent Bell echoed Saunders' sentiments in her annual report: "We had closed out 1984 with a string of success beyond [the] wildest dreams of a 'small park.' During that year we had broken all kinds of park records. It took us several months into 1985 to get our balance back." Unlike Saunders, she ended her reflections on a more optimistic note: "In the spirit of Booker we 'cast down our bucket' similar in style to the wooden water buckets Booker, the boy, would have recognized! We squeezed all of our dollars as well as any program funds that came our way."¹⁷⁷

The budget situation remained dire in 1986. To deal with its limited resources, the park participated in the Job Training Partnership Act's Summer Youth Employment program. The program employed five youth—two worked in the interpretive division and the other three worked in the maintenance division. Another program the site participated in was the Franklin County Sheriff's Office Work Release program. Details are rather hazy but according to the superintendent's annual report, this program had mixed results: "We charted many hours of work worth hundreds of dollars, in exchange for the gas it took to bring the workers from the jail and supervisory time. For a first effort, I would say the program was fairly successful. We learned a lot about coping with another agency program when they themselves have not determined final, formal program guidelines. However, our participation in the program seemed to have caused a stir in the labor relations office in Washington and in some quarters of the regional office."¹⁷⁸

Judging from several reports and planning documents, maintenance and interpretation and resource management were able to complete or make significant progress on several important projects despite the budget cutbacks of 1985 and 1986. By the summer of 1986, the paving projects on the historic trail, visitor center parking lot, and the new maintenance yard were nearly complete. The maintenance division had also commenced work on a tree screening project on the park's northeast boundary. With the retirement of Sidney Wright, the house where he and his family lived was demolished and the land where Wright's residence stood was filled and seeded, as was the adjacent parking area. The removal of Wright's temporary quarters, according to Saunders, enhanced the

¹⁷⁶ Richard Saunders, "Statement for Interpretation and Visitor Services," 1985, 3.

¹⁷⁷ Bell, "Superintendent Annual Report," 1988, 5.

¹⁷⁸ Bell, "Superintendent Annual Report," 1986.

site’s interpretive work. “Now when visitors look down into the historic area from the visitor center, they see only a nineteenth-century scene; gone are electric and telephone wires, cars, and a 20th century structure.”¹⁷⁹



Figure 47: Doy Norman and Sidney Wright (BOWA Archives).

On the interpretive front, the park maintained its guided tours, its Black History Month exhibit, its costumed summer demonstrations, and its annual summer festival. However, because of budget restrictions in 1986, the costumed demonstrations ran six weekends only and a maximum of four demonstrations could be seen each weekend day. At maximum level, according to Richard Saunders, “the program runs daily for ten weeks from mid-June through Labor Day, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. A minimum of two different demonstrations can be seen each weekday, and a minimum of five demonstrations can be seen on each weekend day.”¹⁸⁰

Saunders hoped for greater stability for the interpretive program, but this would be difficult as terrible weather conditions made 1987 an extremely tough year for BOWA. Snow blanketed the park for several days in January and February. Then in June,

¹⁷⁹ Bell, “Superintendent Annual Report,” 1986.

¹⁸⁰ Annual State Interpretive Plan, FY 86, 44.

rainstorms flooded much of the area. As Superintendent Bell recalled: “Trail areas which had not been damaged by the previous years of rain, snow, and ice became ruts, and the bridge at the tobacco barn looked as though a giant had [wrung] it out by hand.” The bridge, she continued, was unsalvageable. “The rains of Labor Day turned Gills Creek into a river,” Bell noted. The Park received \$11,000 in emergency funding from the federal government but according to Bell, “a major trail rehab project was still needed to restore emergency access to the lower section of the park and boundaries.” Fortunately, during these difficult times, BOWA workers could depend on many within the community: “Several groups came to the aid of the park. Individual Boy Scouts as well as troops took on improvement projects at the park. They repaired trail markers or made new ones. They helped plant screening trees, cleared trails of debris, and helped pick up litter along Route 122.”¹⁸¹

Conclusion

One of the few bright moments for the park came in June, when it held the first reunion for the graduates of Booker T. Washington Elementary School. More than 125 people attended the event. Spirits were extremely high as the attendees shared memories, pictures, and memorabilia with each other and the park staff. The event foreshadowed future developments at the park as the staff aspired to make the story of the school, its place in the larger story of desegregation in Virginia and the South, and its place as a source of great pride for African Americans a more central component of its interpretive and resource management activities.

¹⁸¹ Bell,” Superintendent Annual Report,” 1987.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IN TRANSITION, 1988–1994

Introduction

The management staff of BOWA experienced significant change between 1988 and 1994. Over the six-year period, the park had sixteen superintendents. Of those sixteen superintendents, four were permanent and twelve were acting. On July 5, 1988, Ronald J. Mack began his term as superintendent. His brief tenure ended with his transfer to Harry S. Truman NHS in 1990. Upon his departure, Joseph Finan was appointed acting superintendent. In under a year, Finan transferred to another site, Saratoga NHP. Richard Saunders was temporarily promoted to acting superintendent. The staff hoped for stability when Mary Green-Victory came on board as the park's tenth superintendent in January 1991. Unfortunately, she began an extended leave on May 29 that would last for the remainder of the year. During her leave, the park had four acting superintendents. Green-Victory resumed her duties in January 1992, providing much-needed consistency in staffing for the year. Change marked the position again in 1993, when Administrative Technician Eleanor Long and Administrative Officer Bess Sherman, on a detail from Colonial NHP filled in as acting superintendents. The revolving door of superintendents also included William W. Gwaltney, who was appointed superintendent in January 1994. His thirteenth month of tenure at the site was marked by “dramatic change and creative leadership.”¹⁸²

Staffing

Notwithstanding the high turnover rate among superintendents, the park's interpretive program, outreach, and maintenance operations maintained a high level of productivity. The park's visitation numbers also held steady as the living history program and a variety of special events (Annual Holiday Open House, Black History Month programs, and Explore Family Reunion) drew thousands to the site. BOWA's success, as

¹⁸² William Gwaltney, “Superintendent Annual Report,” 1995.

well as the dedicated work of its staff, did not go unnoticed. Several BOWA employees won awards during this period: Park Safety Officer Alice Hanawalt received the Regional Director’s Safety Achievement Award in 1990. A year later, Connie Mays, who moved from interpretation to administration in 1990, became the first BOWA employee to receive the NPS’s highly coveted Exemplary Act Award. Maintenance Worker Foreman Ken Arrington was named the Outstanding Regional Chief of Maintenance while Park Ranger Ajena Rogers was the recipient of the Interpretation Gold Star Award for the Mid-Atlantic Region. Along with these individual awards, the park’s Take Pride in America program received recognition from several organizations, including the Office of the President.

Staffing, 1988–1994

Division	Personnel
Management	Geraldine Bell (Superintendent) Gordon J. Wilson (Acting Superintendent) Ronald Mack (Superintendent) Joseph H. Finan (Acting Superintendent) Richard H. Saunders, Jr. (Acting Superintendent) Mary A. Green-Victory (Superintendent) Sandy Rives (Acting Superintendent) Chris Ward, (Acting Superintendent) Hollis G. Provins (Acting Superintendent) Eleanor C. Long (Acting Superintendent) Bess Sherman (Acting Superintendent) William W. Gwaltney (Superintendent)
Administration	Eleanor C. Long (Administrative Officer) Teresa Barger (Administrative Clerk) Connie Mays (Administrative Clerk)

continued next page

Staffing, 1988–1994 *continued from previous page*

Division	Personnel
Interpretation and Resource Management	Richard H. Saunders, Jr. (Chief, Interpretation and Resource Management) Alice F. Hanawalt (Park Ranger) Connie B. Mays (Park Ranger) Becky Saunders (Park Ranger) Daniel Young (Park Ranger) Betsy Haynes (Park Ranger) Lewis Rogers, Jr. (Chief, Interpretation and Resource Management) Ajena Rogers (Park Ranger) Timothy Sims (Park Ranger)
Maintenance	Doy Norman (Maintenance Worker) Joseph H. Finan (Maintenance Worker Foreman) James Hanauer (Farmer Demonstrator) John M. Mitchell (Maintenance Worker) Kenneth W. Arrington (Tractor Operator) Timothy Sims, (Maintenance Worker) Kenneth W. Arrington (Maintenance Worker Foreman) Kevin L. Phifer (Maintenance Worker) Timothy Sims, (Farmer Demonstrator) Douglas W. Toler (Maintenance Worker)

That BOWA continued to gain recognition for its work was impressive, given not only the high turnover rate among the site’s superintendents, but also the budgetary constraints under which BOWA staff operated. Across the nation, NPS administrators and supporters drew attention to the inadequate funding provided to the service. In a 1991 report entitled “A Race Against Time,” the National Parks and Conservation Association stated that the NPS needed an “influx of 1,200 new rangers and \$250 million a year to meet the increased demand at national parks and protect resources at its 358 sites.” To paraphrase the report, the NPS faced an infinite number of problems and had a finite supply of funds. “I don’t think the park system will exist as we know it if we don’t start turning around these problems,” Paul C. Pritchard explained to the Washington Post. “I think by the year 2000, most of the ecological systems will be affected, most of the wildlife

will be [affected]. We are losing species at a fast rate, and that is an indicator of the broader problem that we have in the national parks.”¹⁸³ Limited funding had also created a maintenance backlog alongside severe understaffing at many parks, including BOWA.

“Inadequate staffing, especially in the I&RM Division, continues to be a management issue of concern,” Superintendent Ronald Mack complained in 1989. “Lack of funding is the prohibitive factor in the park’s inability to fill its vacant GS-4 Park Ranger position. The position was approved by the region’s Position Management Review Committee in 1984, subject to available funding and FTE.”¹⁸⁴ BOWA staff members were stretched thin and faced with the daunting challenge of creating vibrant programs with limited financial resources. The site’s operation budget for the fiscal year of 1988 was \$280,400. And according to Mack, “the start-up collection fee money and the fee collection money kept the park going.” The budget increased to \$303,000 in 1989 and remained at that number for the next year. Then in 1991, the site received a much-needed boost (\$75,000 increase) in its operating funds, which after assessment was \$406,100. The NPS slightly reduced the site’s budget in 1992. Fortunately, additional funding from the Regional Office enabled BOWA staff to complete several maintenance projects. The site’s financial situation improved slightly in 1993, when the NPS gave the site a \$442,000 budget.

Another source of concern for BOWA was inadequate office space in the visitor center. To remedy the problem, the I&RM division moved from the visitor center to the EECC in 1991. That same year, a separate office for the Chief, Interpretation and Resource Management was constructed and the administrative division’s office was expanded from one to two offices in the visitor center. Despite these changes, complaints of overcrowding in the visitor center continued to appear in various reports. Some relief came in 1993, when the administration division moved from the visitor center to the EECC. The move came with an upgrade in equipment as the division procured two new computers, a copier, file cabinets, and a laser printer.

The other “space” issue at BOWA involved preserving the park’s cultural landscape from further commercial encroachment. Commercial development and population growth in the Smith Lake Mountain region intensified during the late 1980s and 1990s. Franklin County’s population increased from 35,740 in 1980 to 44,604 in 1994. In a period when many rural counties in Virginia were losing population, Franklin County was one of the fastest growing localities in the state. Much of this was because of high rates of residential and commercial development. As William Gwaltney warned: “The rate of growth of the

¹⁸³ Brent Mitchell, “Report Urges Additional Rangers, Funds,” *Washington Post*, August 21, 1991.

¹⁸⁴ Ronald Mack, “Superintendent Annual Report,” 1989, 2.

developments around Smith Lake Mountain is such that in five years the entire park will be surrounded with development that will negate the purpose of the park. The viewshed must be protected by purchase or easement.”¹⁸⁵

Interpretation and Visitation

Though Franklin County was becoming less rural, the living farm concept continued to anchor BOWA’s interpretive program. On their trips to the site, visitors listened as park rangers described Washington’s boyhood on the Burroughs plantation, participated in candle and soap-making activities, and observed various livestock. The annual Farm Festival day, usually held in July, drew crowds ranging from 500 to 900 people. Other special events included the Explore Family Reunion, the Annual Holiday Open House, and Senior Citizens Day. Through its Black History Month programs, the park’s staff engaged not only the life and politics of Booker T. Washington but also broader issues and themes in African American experience. Notably, BOWA staff reached thousands of visitors who never stepped foot on the monument’s grounds. The park’s many offsite programs included a Black history celebration for Jefferson National Forest employees in Roanoke, a co-sponsored event with the Harrison Museum for African American culture, and interpretive programs at the Vinton Folklife Festival, the Salem Pumpkin Festival, and the Roanoke and Vinton Christmas Parades. In 1990, the superintendent’s report estimated that the park’s public contact for events had been 250,000 people.

As had been the case since the late 1960s, living history remained the principal interpretive method at BOWA. During the course of the day, park rangers and volunteers fed the animals, worked in the garden and fields, and demonstrated nineteenth-century techniques of sewing, cooking, blacksmithing, and basket weaving. “Time machines may exist only in the movies,” journalist Christian Samuels wrote in the *Roanoke Times*, “but the Booker T. Washington National Monument in Franklin County comes close to transporting visitors back in time—to the 1800s.”¹⁸⁶ In this and other features on BOWA, emphasis was placed on how living history demonstrations, the historic buildings, and farm animals gave visitors a glimpse of nineteenth century plantation life. Consider as a case in point, the following section from a 1993 write-up in the *Roanoke Times*:

On a visit to the monument, you can tour the 207-acre site, where towering trees from Washington’s boyhood on the plantation still grow. You’ll view an award-winning slide show that details parts of Washington’s life, too.

¹⁸⁵ William Gwaltney, “Superintendent Annual Report,” 1994, 6.

¹⁸⁶ Christian Samuels, *Roanoke Times*, June 22, 1990.

You'll see the reconstructed log cabin where Washington lived, with its fireplace and root cellar, the spot where his birth took place, a smokehouse, a blacksmith shed and an outhouse.

There is a reconstructed tobacco barn where workers on the plantation hung tobacco leaves six rafters high to cure before selling them to a tobacco factory.

Between Memorial Day in May and Labor Day in September, there are live demonstrations at the park, where people dress up in clothes like those worn in the 1800s, when Washington was growing up there. These people will show how plantation folks made soap, candles and baskets, and tended the gardens and livestock.”¹⁸⁷

Slavery was *the* defining feature of “plantation life” on the Burroughs farm but as the article demonstrates, engagement with the institution was surface level.

Maintenance and Resource Management

Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, employees at BOWA performed infrastructure maintenance, repair, and rehabilitation. In 1991, the park refurbished and stabilized the kitchen cabin, replaced the retaining wall at the horse barn and a culverted crossing in the historic area, constructed a livestock holding pen, and restored two of the park's horse-drawn wagons. With assistance from the YCC, BOWA also cleared fence lines and trails, added additional parking space at the EECC, and painted the interior of its buildings.

Several key additions to the BOWA staff enabled the site to complete many of its maintenance and resource management projects. Ken Arrington was hired as the maintenance worker foreman in 1991. Kevin Phifer completed his Cooperative Education Program (CO-OP) and was reassigned to a permanent position at BOWA. Douglas Toler was hired as permanent maintenance worker. John Mitchell, hired as a seasonal laborer in 1988, remained employed under the Stay-In-School Program. With their dedicated labor and funding from the regional office, the maintenance division was very productive in 1993. According to the superintendent's annual report, “Bridge decking was replaced and other related components were checked for stability on the wooden vehicle/pedestrian bridge on the Plantation Trail, which alleviated a major safety concern.”¹⁸⁸ The maintenance division also replaced floor coverings at the visitor center and a large segment of the split rail fencing on the farm, as well as completing an energy retrofit project at the EECC building, now known as the Park Headquarters building. As was the case at many NPS sites, BOWA's

¹⁸⁷ Wendi Gibson Richert, “Virginia's Other Washington,” *the Roanoke Times*, February 15, 1993: NF-1.

¹⁸⁸ William Gwaltney, “Superintendent Annual Report,” 1993, 2.

management activities also reflected the site’s growing concern about the rapid pace of commercial development in the area. For example, in 1990, local Boy Scouts built a 1,000-foot Virginia Worm Fence as part of the East Boundary Screening Project. Trees from the historic tree propagation project were planted at several locations in the park.

Because of limited funding and insufficient staffing, the park’s resource management program was not as successful. Though BOWA completed its RMP in 1992, the park lacked the staffing to move forward on most of its recommendations. There was some progress in the park’s efforts to protect its oldest trees. Four trees in the historic corner—a catalpa, two white oaks, and a Virginia red cedar—dated to the early 1800s. According to a Cultural Landscape Report, in 1989, two catalpas propagated from the historic tree were planted, one near the original stump and the other close to the hog pen.¹⁸⁹ Four years later, these trees were added to the National Park Service’s list of Interesting Trees. Subsequently, maintenance practices were undertaken to address the catalpa’s advanced age and poor health.

Community Relations and Cooperative Activities

Despite the shortfall in funding and FTEs, BOWA staff proved remarkably resourceful and effective in advancing the site’s mission and preparing for the future. They pursued new partnerships and grant opportunities, completed key planning documents, and participated in a number of offsite programs aimed at deepening the area’s knowledge of Booker T. Washington within the larger context of US history. In 1992, the park partnered with Ferrum College in developing “A Movement to Lead,” a short drama centered on a fictional meeting between Washington and W. E. B. DuBois. Drawing from the two leaders’ public writings and private letters, Professor R. Rex Stephenson wrote the play with the hope of highlighting their differences and similarities. Funded by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, “A Movement to Lead” debuted at Franklin County High School on April 23, 1993. It was also presented at the Booker T. Washington National Monument, Ferrum’s Schoolfield Hall, and Ferrum’s Blue Ridge Dinner Theatre. Discussions were held after each performance.

As part of its community relations and cooperative activities, the park also collaborated with local educators and the Appomattox Court House on the NPS’ “Parks as Classroom” program. With generous funding from the Pew Charitable Trusts, the NPS launched the “Parks as Classroom” initiative in late 1992. The program aimed to enhance classroom learning by using parks’ cultural and natural resources as teaching tools. It

¹⁸⁹ Lisa Nowak, H. Eliot Foulds, Philip Troutman, *Cultural Landscape Report for Booker T. Washington National Monument: Site History, Existing Conditions, Analysis, and Treatment*, Massachusetts: Olmstead Center for Landscape Preservation, 2004), 81.

specifically targeted children from fourth to seventh grade. The NPS had long worked with school-age children and three-fourths of the service’s sites already had educational programs. However, the new funding stream from the Pew Charitable Trusts promised to significantly bolster existing work and enable sites to coordinate their efforts together. According to Joe Dobrow, spokesperson for the National Park Foundation, the parks’ educational work, is “mostly done on a local basis with fairly limited resources, and it’s never had a means of [national] coordination.”¹⁹⁰ Park staff collaborated with local educators to develop a plan for outreach to local schools and selected a contractor to develop curriculum materials.

Much of the responsibility for coordinating this cooperative work fell on the shoulders of Eleanor Long, Connie Mays, and Bess Sherman. With the constant flux at the superintendent position, Long and Mays provided stability and leadership at the administrative level. Their previous experience in interpretation, deep knowledge of the local community, and indefatigable work ethic proved useful as they handled multiple responsibilities. In 1993, Mays was promoted to a GS-05 and served as acting administrative technician for two months while Eleanor Long served as acting superintendent for six weeks in late March and April.

It was within this context of administrative change and flux that the park staff welcomed the arrival of William “Bill” Gwaltney in January 1994. His appointment as the park’s superintendent was met with both enthusiasm and optimism.



Figure 48: William “Bill” Gwaltney (NPS Archives).

¹⁹⁰ Marcia Davis, “Parks Planning New Programs for Classroom,” *Washington Post*, December 17, 1992.

Transformation under Gwaltney

A native of Washington, DC, William Gwaltney brought with him a deep love of history, a strong belief in the power of the NPS to transform the ways the general public understood the past, and a wealth of experience in historical interpretation. His research interests included the Indian fur trade, the Civil War, and African American military history. In 1980, he landed a job as an artifacts curator at Bents Old Fort. His activities, however, would quickly extend beyond curation. “I just couldn’t help for meddling. I developed a few living-history programs, like an 1846 Christmas, and taught a course at Otero Junior College on the history of the Santa Fe Trail.”¹⁹¹ His experiences proved useful when he transferred to Fort Davis for the position of interpreter and security guard.

Much to Gwaltney’s frustration, the interpretive programs at Fort Davis failed to incorporate the experiences of African American soldiers. One night at a party, he conveyed his disappointment to another interpreter. “I asked why he never talked about the black soldiers, and he said he was concerned about what he’d do when confronted with a racist visitor,” Gwaltney remembered. “He feared he would be looked at as being politically correct if he talked about the black soldiers.”¹⁹² This was unacceptable to Gwaltney, who believed the NPS and all historic sites had to confront and communicate the hard truths about the nation’s past.

Gwaltney brought this same energy and honesty to BOWA. Shortly after his arrival, he identified several areas in need of immediate attention. One area of concern for the newly-arrived superintendent was resource management. While acknowledging the attention previous managers had given to completing critical planning documents, he noted their inability to implement many of recommendations because of inadequate support. “There is a dearth of staff to implement a Resource Management Plan,” Gwaltney complained to the regional office. “In the future, the park and the Region should look to a variety of options that might allow Resource Management to move forward at the park.” These options, according to Gwaltney, “could include a position shared between Booker T. Washington and the Blue Ridge Parkway, contract Resource management research and labor, using community service workers to perform Resource Management work, or having the funding and FTE to hire a permanent resource manager.”¹⁹³

Though attentive to resource management issues, Gwaltney was most concerned with improving the park’s interpretive program. During his short tenure, Gwaltney implemented many changes in how the park told the story of Booker T. Washington and

¹⁹¹ Julie Jargon, “Back to Nature,” *Westword*, August 19, 1999, <https://www.westword.com/news/black-to-nature-5060202>.

¹⁹² Jargon, “Back to Nature.”

¹⁹³ Gwaltney, “Superintendent Annual Report,” 1993, 1.

slavery. Upon his arrival, he was disturbed to witness the amount of emphasis placed on soap-making, blacksmithing, and other craft activities. “I told them that wasn’t what we were there to do.”¹⁹⁴ Looking back, Timothy Sims understood the need for change: “I worked Saturdays back then . . . And it would be one or two people in the historic area blacksmithing, cooking in the cabin, dipping candles, making baskets and soap. And sometimes it was like a one-man operation. It would be Mr. Young, kind of circulating around to these different stations and doing all the stuff.” Visitors, Sims continues, “were drawn to these demonstrations because they were just like really curious as to what was going on. . . . But there was never any discussion about slavery or who the people were.”¹⁹⁵

Ajena Rogers shared Sims’ assessment. BOWA’s interpretive activities, she believed, “romanticized view of life on the plantation . . . we really were not confronting slavery.”



Figure 49: Living History Demonstration (NPS Archives).

¹⁹⁴ Jargon, “Back to Nature.”

¹⁹⁵ Timothy Sims, interview with author, December 19, 2020.

Finding the site's interpretive work unacceptable, Gwaltney revamped the visitor center, established new partnerships, and revised the site's special activities: "I auctioned off the [arts and crafts] materials and brought in a historian from the University of Virginia to convince the staff of what they were there to do. We had a bigger responsibility to the American people."¹⁹⁶

Gwaltney believed BOWA needed to provide visitors with a more robust engagement with the life and times of Booker T. Washington, the history and evolution of slavery, and African Americans' triumphs and struggles during Emancipation and Reconstruction. In an interview with the *Roanoke Times*, Gwaltney laid out his vision for creating an exciting, informative, and historical interpretive program: "In the past, visitors have seen rangers talk about slavery, Reconstruction and the permanence of racism in American society that limited Booker T. Washington's opportunities and directed his judgments and choices. It will still be exciting and interesting, but not so technology oriented. We'll be talking about the sociology and ideology of nineteenth-century Virginia. Visitors will still see activities, like people working tobacco or hooking (rugs), but as part of a larger picture."¹⁹⁷

To realize his vision, Gwaltney proposed a more rigorous training program for BOWA staff and volunteers. "Annual employee training will become a priority in the park. Volunteers and employees will receive training in history, historiography, research, public service, interpreting racism, and developing an interpretive program."¹⁹⁸ Leaving nothing to chance, Gwaltney sought to ensure his interpretive goals for the park were transparent and routinely communicated to BOWA staff and volunteers. "Performance standards will be written for all employees in 1994. Previous performance standards were mostly 'boiler-plate' and failed to convey the specificity required." Gwaltney's plans also included regular audits of the site's interpretive programs and their historical accuracy:

"Each interpreter will have interpretive programs audited a minimum of three times each season. The park will create standards for historical accuracy that will be applied to park interpretive programs, special events and volunteer interpreters alike. Key elements will include accurate period clothing copied from original garments or made from authentic patterns taken from original garments. Interpretive props will be examined for authenticity and replaced if necessary."¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ <https://www.westword.com/news/black-to-nature-5060202>

¹⁹⁷ Almena Hughes, "True to Live\Reenactment of Booker T. Washington's Return Home Tells It Exactly the Way It Was," *Roanoke Times*, August 19, 1994.

¹⁹⁸ William Gwaltney, "Superintendent Annual Report," 1993, 4.

¹⁹⁹ Gwaltney, "Superintendent Annual Report," 1993, 4.

To create a more accurate portrait of the experiences of enslaved African Americans on the Burroughs farm, Gwaltney, along with Park Ranger Ajena Rogers, conducted additional research to make the park's historic interpretations and displays more historically accurate. Their research resulted in an immediate change in the historic interpreters' clothing. "In all the pictures we looked at, we noticed that the slave women wore head wraps, not bonnets," Rogers noted. As a result of the staff's research, the female reenactors wore headwraps. There was also a change in the men's attire. Instead of wearing mass-produced denim jeans and colored shirts with plastic buttons, the male reenactors wore pants, shirts, and vests made from flax linen. To create a more accurate portrait of a nineteenth-century farm, Gwaltney also altered the landscape by allowing the grass to grow, purchased new lumber based on historical research, and replaced the existing cooking utensils.

"He was like a whirlwind . . . It was really fast paced," Park Ranger Betsy Haynes remembered. "The time limits were really short for what we had to get done."²⁰⁰ Though she did not always appreciate his leadership style, Haynes remains grateful for the ways in which he pushed her. With Gwaltney's encouragement, Betsy Haynes presented a paper at the National Association for Interpretation in Orlando and wrote a paper entitled, "The Burroughs Plantation: Departure from Fiction." For her research, she eventually received an award from the Northeast Region. "And it was all because he pushed me," Haynes admitted. Combined with pushing employees, Gwaltney also sought to increase efficiency by moving the farmer demonstrator position from the maintenance to the interpretive division. At the time, Timothy Sims held the farmer demonstrator position. "I think there were only three farmer demonstrators in the whole Northeast region," Sims remembered. "And two of the other farmer demonstrators got reclassified as GS, interpretive park rangers."²⁰¹ After the move from maintenance to interpretation, Sims started conducting tours, participating in planning, and assuming ranger responsibilities.

In his assessment of the park, Gwaltney also called for significant improvements in its physical structure: "The park is at an interpretive disadvantage because it does not have appropriate museum space. The interpretation of slavery, plantation life, emancipation, Reconstruction, education for Black Americans, the resurgence of racism and the political and economic subjugation of African Americans that set the stage for Booker T. Washington is wholly dependent on sufficient and provocative exhibits and a video document. Today, the park has neither of these interpretive options in place. The planning that will make these options viable realities must begin as soon as possible."²⁰²

²⁰⁰ Betsy Haynes, interview with author, December 10, 2019.

²⁰¹ Timbo Sims, interview with author, December 10, 2019.

²⁰² Gwaltney, "Superintendent Annual Report," 1993, 5.

In his efforts to revamp the site's interpretive program, Gwaltney also targeted the park's special events and community activities. "Special Events will undergo considerable change in FY 94 to make them compatible with the interpretive mission of the site," he noted in his annual report. "Programs and demonstrations that are primarily 'arts and crafts' demonstrations will be discontinued, and all interpretive programs and special events will have Individual Service Plans written and approved before they take place."²⁰³ The park's interpretive shift, in Gwaltney's view, must be reflected in the visitor center. "The sale of candles, soap, blacksmith objects and other crafts items by the park will be discontinued."²⁰⁴

Gwaltney had a bold vision, but he was well aware of the challenges ahead of him. One challenge which concerned him greatly was commercial development. "Perhaps there is no single issue as important at Booker T. Washington as that of land acquisition. The rate of growth of the developments around Smith Mountain Lake is such that within five years the entire park will be surrounded with development that will negate the purpose of the park. The viewshed must be protected by the purchase or easement."²⁰⁵

Even as the local community transformed, Gwaltney was excited about the road ahead for the Booker T. Washington National Monument. However, the responsibility for implementing many of his suggestions would largely fall on his successor. After thirteen months of "dramatic change and creative leadership" at BOWA, Gwaltney was transferred to Fort Laramie NHS. Eleanor Long stepped in as Acting Superintendent before the NPS appointed Rebecca L. Harriett as Gwaltney's replacement.

²⁰³ Gwaltney, "Superintendent Annual Report," 1993, 2.

²⁰⁴ Gwaltney, "Superintendent Annual Report," 1993, 4.

²⁰⁵ Gwaltney, "Superintendent Annual Report," 1993, 6.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FORGING AHEAD, 1995–2000

Introduction

On Thursday, March 19, 1998, the Booker T. Washington National Monument, in partnership with the Organization of American Historians, kicked off a three-day symposium entitled, “Washington and DuBois at the Turn of Two Centuries.” The historic gathering drew more than 200 archivists, cultural resource specialists, students, and NPS staff from around the country to discuss the politics of Washington and DuBois, their ideological differences, the methods and assumptions of scholars studying the two leaders, and the enduring significance of their ideas. The symposium featured some of the leading scholars of the American South and the African American experience as well as descendants of both DuBois and Washington. “For decades many have held the view that Washington and DuBois were ideologically opposed to one another, with one advocating integration and the other separation,” noted David DuBois. “This meeting was something of a rapprochement not only between our families, but between the scholars and activists who identify with them. We all realize that both men made invaluable contributions and that it is time to join their legacies together and move on.”²⁰⁶ Before a very engaged audience, scholars and activists like Edward Ayers, Michelle Mitchell, and Julian Bond discussed the two men and their contributions to African American thought. Conference attendees also had the opportunity to learn more about the work of the Booker T. Washington National Monument through a guided tour of the site, a living history presentation from former BOWA interpreter Ajena Rogers, and a paper (*Interracial Memory Work in a Segregated Society: The Establishment of the Booker T. Washington Birthplace Memorial in Franklin County, Virginia, 1945–1957*) delivered by Scot French.

²⁰⁶ “UMass Amherst Professors Take Part in Historic Meeting of Families of Civil Rights Pioneers W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington,” *University of Massachusetts Amherst*, News & Media Relations, April 2, 1998, <https://www.umass.edu/newsoffice/article/umass-amherst-professors-take-part-historic-meeting-families-civil-rights-pioneers-web-du>.

The symposium was a source of great pride for BOWA staff. It signaled their commitment to positioning the park as an important site for critical research and dialogue on the multifaceted life of Booker T. Washington. “From Julian Bond’s stirring keynote address to Director Robert Stanton’s closing remarks, this event was a shining moment for the Booker T. Washington National Monument and the National Park Service,” Superintendent Rebecca Harriett proudly noted in her annual report.²⁰⁷ The event also testified to the growing stability within BOWA’s management office.

After four years of management flux, Superintendent Rebecca Harriett provided much-needed stability to the park. Under her dedicated leadership, the staff prepared for the next century by implementing several of the recommendations put forth by the previous superintendent (William Gwaltney), completing key planning documents, and pursuing a more proactive land acquisition policy. In interview after interview, BOWA employees remembered Harriett’s tenure as transformative. “She walks on water and she has a halo and you know, wears the wings,” Ellie Long affectionately recalled. “She was the best superintendent I’ve worked for.” Innovative, fair, reliable, and generous were but a few of the superlatives interviewees used when discussing Harriett. Simply put, Harriett and BOWA were a perfect fit.

A native of North Carolina, Rebecca Harriet grew up in a family which nurtured her love of history and the natural environment. Visits to North Carolina’s natural parks were regular activities for her family. As an undergraduate at North Carolina State University, she majored in Parks and Recreation Management. To fulfill her major requirement, she interned as a seasonal ranger at Cape Lookout National Seashore in Beaufort, North Carolina. Upon her graduation from NC State, she moved to Alaska, where she worked at the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park. Then after a three-year stint at the Seattle Unit of Klondike in 1980, she returned to Cape Lookout National Seashore as a law enforcement ranger. Her next assignments included George Washington Carver National Monument, where she worked as a chief ranger and Friendship Hill National Historic Site in Pennsylvania, where she served as the site’s Supervisory Park Ranger. With encouragement from Gwaltney, she applied for the superintendent position in 1995. Though Gwaltney’s leadership style and revamping of the living history program were not always popular among the staff, Harriett found value in the park’s new direction. “When I was offered the position, I knew that I wanted to continue what he has set forth in the interpretive program.”²⁰⁸

Harriett definitely possessed the skills and experience to advance his agenda. She also had a deep commitment to the park, which had intrigued her for quite some time. Viewing BOWA as a dream job, she wanted to assure the staff that she was in for the long

²⁰⁷ Rebecca Harriet, Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1998.

²⁰⁸ Rebecca Harriett, interview with author, January 3, 2020.

haul. As one might imagine, the high turnover in superintendents had been difficult for employees and volunteers. “The staff, I think, felt kind of beaten down. They really put a lot of hope in Bill and when he left them earlier than they anticipated they were disappointed . . . I knew the park needed some stability because of the history of turnover and leadership.” Verbal declarations of commitment, Harriett felt, were not enough: “I think the best thing I ever did was when I got there, I bought land to build a house I think they realize that I was here to stay for a lot longer.”²⁰⁹

In Harriett’s first three years, BOWA developed its first curriculum-based educational program, completed several key planning documents, including the General Management Plan, conducted important archeological and ethnographic research, and completed a much-needed water quality inventory under the direction of the US Geological Survey. Another important accomplishment was the 1997 launch of the park’s first newsletter: *The Grapevine Telegraph*. Edited by Park Ranger Betsy Haynes, *Grapevine* aimed to update readers on the major projects and events taking place at the site. The newsletter’s title, according to Superintendent Harriett, drew inspiration from the “network of oral communications used by American slaves to spread the news of what was happening around the community, on the various plantations and eventually what was going on in “The War” and about the Underground Railroad.”²¹⁰ The first issue of the *Grapevine* provided an update on the General Management Plan, summarized the Washington-DuBois symposium, and included a calendar of upcoming events at the Park. It also featured short articles from ethnographer Willie Baber and archeologist Amber Moncure. Over the years, the *Grapevine* was an important source of information on not just the site’s new exhibits and events, but also its various research projects. Every dimension of the park’s work—interpretation, cultural and natural resource management, historical preservation and research, planning, and outreach—appeared on the right track.

²⁰⁹ Harriett, interview with author, January 3, 2020.

²¹⁰ Harriett, interview with author, January 3, 2020.

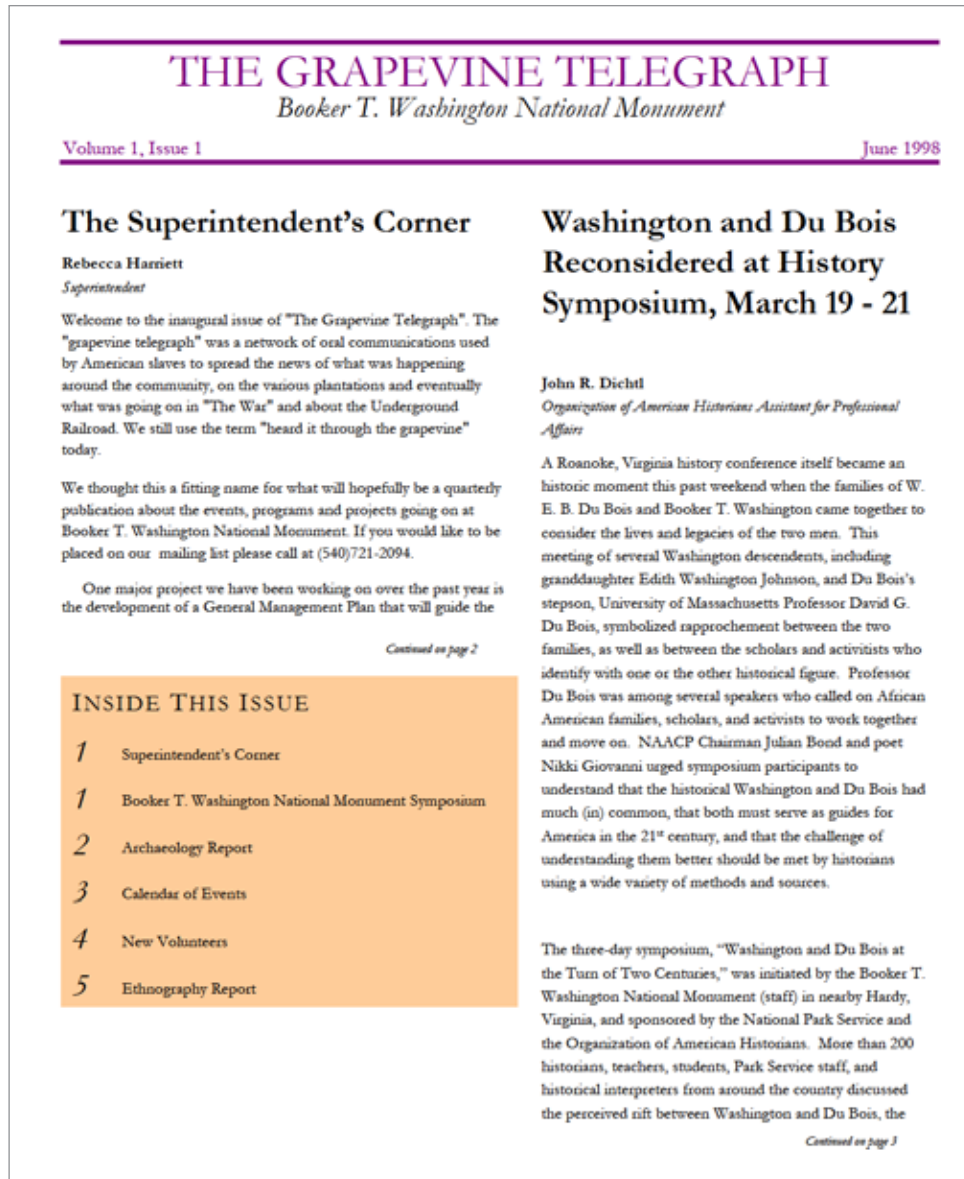


Figure 50: Cover of the first issue of the *Grapevine Telegraph*.

Staffing

The park had a dedicated staff committed to building on previous accomplishments, as well as to taking advantage of new opportunities. Critical to the park's success were the contributions of Superintendent Harriett, Connie Mays, Eleanor Long, Timothy Sinclair, Timothy Sims, Alice Hanawalt, Tina Orcutt, Ajena Rogers, and Betsy Haynes. The common thread uniting park staff and its expanding personnel was a strong belief in the importance and power of the Booker T. Washington story. Through the site's various programs and activities, they presented Washington as a complex historical figure whose life and times

reveal a great deal about the nation’s past and present. Feeling as Washington had become an “obscure figure” who many Americans only understood through “second-hand-education,” Timothy Sims felt strongly that the park was uniquely positioned to complicate and transform conventional understandings of Washington: “This is the place where people can come to really rediscover or discover who Booker T. Washington was. And I think it is important for this site to introduce visitors to the complexity of Booker Washington. Mainstream history just doesn’t provide that lesson about Booker T. Washington but this is the place that we can.”²¹¹ Others shared his commitment. “This is a very important park,” Betsy Haynes points out, “one of the very few that focuses on an enslaved person and not the owner. So that’s our real priority. And not only that [Booker T. Washington] was born here but freed here. Both of those things were very important.” Equally important for Haynes was including the stories of women in the park’s daily interpretive programs. The 1980s and 1990s witnessed the publication of new and innovative scholarship²¹² on the experiences of enslaved women, and through her participation in seminars and workshops like the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History’s Summer Workshops, Haynes was very familiar with the new directions in scholarly literature on enslavement. Combined with researching the lives of the women in young Booker’s life, particularly his mother, Haynes also studied the experiences of enslaved women across the South. Drawing from narratives by formerly-enslaved people, particularly Harriet Jacob’s *Life in the Incidents of a Slave Girl*, Haynes provided visitors with a glimpse into the hardships of enslaved women, addressing issues of both economic and sexual exploitation. “It’s a hard story,” Haynes noted in our interview. The site’s interpretive program was also enhanced by the contributions of Park Ranger Ajena Rogers, who brought a wealth of knowledge and talent to the position. A native of Roanoke, Rogers began her relationship with the NPS after high school when she worked one summer at the Blue Ridge Parkway. “I started as a fee collector at Roanoke Mountain campground after my first year of college and worked my way up to interpretation that same summer,” Rogers recalls. “I was hooked for life.” She graduated from James Madison University, then earned a master’s degree in resource interpretation at Stephen F. Austin State University. Returning to Virginia, Rogers spent six years at the Blue Ridge Parkway before joining the staff at

²¹¹ Timothy Sims, interview with author, December 10, 2019.

²¹² See Deborah Gray White, *Ar’nt I A Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: Norton, 1985); Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family From Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Darlene Clark Hine, “Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance,” *Sings* (Summer 1989): 912–920; Nell Irvin Painter, “Soul Murder and Slavery: Toward a Fully Loaded Cost Accounting,” in *US History as Women’s History: New Feminist Essays*, eds. Linda Kerbert, Alice Kessler-Harris, and Kathryn Kish Sklar (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 125–46; Darlene Clark Hine and David Barry Gaspar, eds. *More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); Brenda Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

BOWA.²¹³ Rogers' interests in African American history aligned perfectly with the interpretive thrust of BOWA and its ongoing efforts to confront the harsh realities of slavery. Rogers was an excellent interpreter who used her research and creative skills to tell the story of enslaved African Americans. One way she sought to enrich the visitors' experience and enhance her interpretive work was through the creation of composite characters. These composite characters allowed me to "challenge people's perceptions of what it's like to be African American, to be a woman, to be in these places that we are there but not always seen as having been there or having a part in history."²¹⁴

One of Rogers composite characters was Rachel Hatcher. When asked about the origin of the Rachel Hatcher character, Rogers explains:

She came about because I knew I wanted to do a living history character similar to the way I had approached it with Granny Foster. And with Booker T. Washington's [auto]biography *Up from Slavery* being so rich in narrative, I wanted to figure out how I could bring that to life. So I started doing research in the library there in Virginia and found a list of slaves who were in Hale's Ford and her name was on there and she lived right across the road from the Burroughs plantation. . . . She was the same age as Booker T.'s older brother John. So I had my person, I had my character. I could not be Booker T. I was not going to dress up as him. But through Rachel Hatcher I could live his life because she was right there at the same time, having the same experiences. That's how she started out.²¹⁵

In 1992, Rogers debuted "Rachel Hatcher: Looking to Freedom," a one-person act set in 1874, in the community of Hales Ford. The composite character Rachel discusses the reality of slavery and the joy of emancipation with brief references to Booker and John Washington. Slavery was not an easy topic to broach, but Rogers felt it important to expose children and adults to this aspect of the nation's past: "We don't want to look at it, but we have to. You can't ignore it."²¹⁶ To highlight how slavery shaped gender relations, Rogers also participated in a drama where she played an enslaved person living on a plantation near the Burroughs farm and Park Ranger Haynes played the role of a Burroughs daughter. The drama, according to Haynes, was intense, but it helped visitors understand slavery's impact at the interpersonal level.

²¹³ "Sunday Q&A with Ajena Rogers at Maggie Walker National Historic Site," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, January 30, 2016.

²¹⁴ Ajena Rogers, interview with author, September 21, 2020.

²¹⁵ Ajena Rogers, interview with author, September 21, 2020.

²¹⁶ Jon Popet, "Ranger Brings Slave's Story to Life," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, February 16, 1994.



Figure 51: Ajena Rogers, Park Ranger at BOWA (BOWA Archives).

Rogers also remembered the performance as intense.

I did my part and Besty did hers, and we got so immersed in our characterization that I remember thinking at one point, ‘why are you doing this to me, why . . . ’ I really could feel it. And when Betsy and I finished, we had to hug it out. We were presenting these two sides on the stage at the same time and you could see the complexity of the relationship between black and white through that living history. And we had to come out of it and remember ‘oh we’re friends.’ . . . You did not do this to me, I did not do this to you’ The feelings were kind of real there.²¹⁷

²¹⁷ Ajena Rogers, interview with author, September 21, 2020.

Staffing, 1995–2000

Division	Personnel
Management	Rebecca L. Harriett (Superintendent)
Administration	Eleanor C. Long (Administrative Officer) Connie Mays (Administrative Clerk)
Interpretation and Resource Management	Alice F. Hanawalt (Park Ranger) Betsy G. Haynes (Park Ranger) Ajena Rogers (Park Ranger) Timothy Sims (Park Ranger) H. Tyrone Brandyburg (Chief, Interpretation and Resource Management) Queferi Colbert (Park Ranger) Timothy D. Sinclair (Park Ranger) Tina M. Orcutt (Chief, Interpretation and Resource Management)
Maintenance	Kenneth W. Arrington (Facility Manager) John M. Mitchell (Maintenance Worker) Kevin L. Phifer (Maintenance Worker) Doug Toler (Maintenance Worker) James Richard George (Maintenance Worker) Justin Reagan (Maintenance Mechanic)

Educational Programming

Under the direction of Chief, Interpretation and Resource Management Tina Orcutt, BOWA developed new curriculum-based programs which targeted K-6 students. The impetus for these programs was the newly implemented SOL assessments. In June 1995, the Virginia Board of Education (VBE) adopted and approved the SOL for K–12 students. The SOLs set forth expectations in four content areas: English, mathematics, science, and history and social science. Each content area had curriculum frameworks which specified the knowledge and skills students must possess to meet the required SOLs. In 1997, the VBE approved the standards for accountability and adopted annual testing as a means to measure student and teacher performance. With the goal of assisting local

teachers in meeting SOL assessment goals, BOWA’s curriculum was organized around four themes: “To Be a Slave,” “Choices in Black and White,” “The Quilt of Cultures” and “War on the Homefront.”

Funding from the “Parks as Classrooms” program enabled staff to develop the program as well as seek input from local teachers. The idea, according to Timothy Sims, was to “develop SOL-based programs that cover the entire spectrum of primary school.”²¹⁸ The areas targeted for the park’s curriculum-based education program were Roanoke, Roanoke City, Franklin County, and Bedford County.

In her annual report for 1998 Superintendent Harriett provided a description of each program, noting the grade levels, themes, and activities:

To Be a Slave

K-1 Program

In this program, students participate in a flannel-board story activity and a walk to help students compare their lives to the life of Booker T. Washington. Students see, touch, and smell life on the mid-nineteenth century Burroughs plantation. While exploring objects and clothing related to Washington on the farm, students learn about what being a slave meant to him

Choices in Black and White?

Grades 2-3 program

Students investigate the meanings of freedom while exploring the plantation where Booker T. Washington lived enslaved for nine years. By searching for clues, students will discover the rights and privileges of a master and enslaved persons. Using those clues, they’ll discuss the choices and consequences which face the people who lived on this plantation.

The Quilt of Culture

Grades 2-4 Program

During this program, students experience aspects of slave culture, such as music, foods, and crafts which survived slavery to create the cultural blend we have in Virginia today. While exploring the plantation, listening, smelling, and touching things which were part of Booker T Washington’s life, students discover how this slave culture survived and is evident in America’s quilt of cultures.

War on the Homefront

Grades 4-6 Program

While exploring the park, students discover that the Civil War and emancipation meant different things to the people who lived on the Burroughs plantation. By comparing and contrasting their experiences during those tumultuous times, students will evaluate how these events affected both master and slave.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ Timothy Sims, interview with author, December 10, 2019.

²¹⁹ Rebecca Harriett, Superintendent Annual Report, 1995.

With the development of these curriculum-based programs the park experienced a noticeable increase in visitation among youth groups. For example, in 1998, 4,887 schoolchildren participated in BOWA's programs, accounting for 25 percent of the site's visitation numbers. Many of the school-aged children were in kindergarten. This was mainly because of Booker T. Washington's placement in the SOL kindergarten curriculum. Along with Johnny Appleseed and Betsy Ross, Washington was identified as a person of importance for kindergarten. The park appreciated the upsurge in visitation but there were drawbacks. "For that age level," Sims explains, we weren't sure. . . . how far we could go or how deep we could go on the harder things."²²⁰ Slavery, for example, was not an easy topic to discuss with kindergarteners and first-graders. This would not be a problem for long. In the revised version of the SOLs, George Washington Carver replaced Booker T. Washington as a historical person of importance in the kindergarten curriculum.

Fortunately, Washington returned as a historical figure of importance in the Reconstruction and Jim Crow eras for middle schoolers (grades 6–8). "I was elated," Sims recalled, because Washington was "exactly where we need him to be."²²¹ Moreover, park staff were excited about the prospect of being able to interpret reconstruction and the Jim Crow era to students.



Figure 52: Tina Orcutt, Chief, Interpretation and Resource Management at BOWA (1997–2002).

The park's work also expanded through Park Ranger Tim Sinclair's Legacy Series and its Juneteenth celebration. Juneteenth was an annual celebration which drew hundreds of participants. The event commemorates Union General Gordon Granger's June 19, 1865 announcement of slavery's abolition in the state of Texas, as well as the emancipation of

²²⁰ Timothy Sims, interview with author, December 10, 2019.

²²¹ Timothy Sims, interview with author, December 10, 2019.

enslaved African Americans throughout the country. Over the course of the day, visitors listen to local gospel groups, watch reenactments of the reading of the Emancipation Proclamation, and participate in a variety of arts and crafts activities. During the Juneteenth Celebration, the park hosted the “Tears of Freedom” interpretive program as well as a gospel concert. As previously mentioned, Ranger Sinclair also launched his Legacy Series. The series included forums on the political and philosophical ideas of Booker T. Washington, the evolution of the Ku Klux Klan, and the life, politics, and ideological influences of Malcolm X. It was an important part of the park’s efforts to think about American race relations more broadly.



Figure 53: Park Ranger Timothy Sinclair (BOWA Archives).

These programs, as well as others, underscored the staff’s commitment to carrying out two important aspects of the park’s 1997 Strategic Management Plan: providing a “focal point for continuing discussions about the legacy of Booker T. Washington and the evolving context of race in American society” and “a resource to educate the public on the life and achievements of Booker T. Washington.”²²² Once again, these events also testified to BOWA’s steadiness and strength under the leadership of Superintendent Rebecca Harriett. Under her guidance, the staff not only engaged in exciting and innovative programming but also embarked on an extensive and intensive period of planning.

²²² Booker T. Washington National Monument, *Strategic Management Plan*, 1997.



Figure 54: Superintendent Rebecca Harriett delivering the welcome address at the 2000 Booker T. Washington Family Reunion (BOWA Archives).

Planning

One of the first planning documents completed during Superintendent Harriett’s tenure was the Comprehensive Interpretive Plan. The CIP was divided into two main sections. The first section consisted of the Long-Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP). The LRIP detailed the purpose and significance of the site, outlined the staff’s vision for the park’s interpretive program over the next six years, and highlighted parkwide interpretive themes. It also recommended various interpretive methods and programs which most effectively “convey messages about the park’s purpose, significance, themes and park issues to all visitors, on or offsite.”²²³

The plan put forth a list of primary themes, secondary themes, and subthemes which should be communicated to every visitor. Below is a list of the primary, secondary, and subthemes.

Primary Themes

Booker T. Washington represented a generation of African Americans that knew what it was like to be enslaved and understood the obstacles faced by former slaves in achieving political and social equality

²²³ Comprehensive Interpretive Plan, 1999, 2.

Booker T. Washington's belief in education as the best path to progress and true freedom for African Americans was the driving force in his life and his career.

Although Dr. Washington was not without critics in the African American community, he served as their leading national consultant and spokesperson on racial affairs, stimulating some of the first public dialogue about civil rights in this country.

Secondary Themes

Just as Booker T. Washington was an early leader in the quest to improve African American livelihoods, the establishment of the park was an early monument on the road to recognizing and preserving sites which have milestones in race relations and African American achievements.

Subtheme

The Burroughs farm, home to the enslaved Washington, represents a small-scale plantation and slave culture which was more common than the stereotypical large-scale plantations.²²⁴

During the interpretive planning process, the team of staff and evaluators identified several issues which the park must address moving forward. One set of issues and influences affecting the process centered on what some viewed as the park's limited engagement with Booker T. Washington's political philosophy and the varying opinions on his leadership style. "There are too few opportunities for visitors to explore and understand Washington's philosophy for achieving political and social equality for African Americans and equally few opportunities to understand his practical application of those philosophies," the plan noted.²²⁵ "There is a need to actively encourage dialogue about the adult Washington, his achievements and the ideas he espoused. . . . There is a need to convey more about Washington's entire life and move beyond his memories as an enslaved child on the Burroughs farm." This did not mean, however, that the evaluators were completely satisfied with the interpretive activities centered on Washington's early life. As the CIP explained: "The slave cabin and master's house areas, including Washington's birth site, are static and inactive. Overall there is little interpretive activity to draw a visitor to this area to help them explore and understand the significance of these resources."²²⁶ The plan also noted the small percentage of visitors who walk the Jack-O-Lantern Branch Trail or visit the elementary school. "Most visitors only walk out to the barn yards and cabin areas finding limited opportunities to connect with the park's stories." The limited

²²⁴ Booker T. Washington National Monument, Comprehensive Interpretive Plan, 8–15.

²²⁵ Booker T. Washington National Monument, Comprehensive Interpretive Plan, 15.

²²⁶ Booker T. Washington National Monument, Comprehensive Interpretive Plan.

interpretation of the Booker T. Washington Elementary School was unfortunate given its importance to the modern civil rights story, particularly Virginia’s role in massive resistance.

Of course, confronting the hard truths of American history is not an easy task. The Comprehensive Interpretive Plan addressed the challenges involved in tackling the subjects of slavery and racism: “Some staff feel apprehensive about how visitors will react to the interpretive program. The staff perceives that some visitors expect to find a pleasant setting with an old-fashioned plantation that once had slaves. Instead they find stories about slavery, racial strife, controversy, and civil rights. At times, some interpretive rangers do not feel comfortable in dealing with controversy with an unreceptive public, and wish they were better prepared and equipped to manage these situations.”²²⁷

The second section of the CIP focused on BOWAs’ future interpretive program. The plan envisioned an interpretive landscape with minimum administrative intrusions and greater opportunity for contemplation. While exploring the park’s resources and stories, visitors would gain a deeper appreciation of Washington’s life and accomplishments, find useful references to his politics and legacy, and venture beyond the living quarters and barn yard areas.

To ensure Washington’s adult life was adequately engaged, the plan encouraged recreating “significant moments in his life using dramatic interpretive vignettes.” Scripts could include Washington’s return to his birth site in 1908 or “selected dramatic readings with his contemporaries’ response.”²²⁸ The plan also called for exhibits which not only conveyed historical information but gave visitors a sense of the research process. Future exhibits would include “photos of people involved in the research, compelling findings . . . and actual results with instructions on how to obtain more information about the project or how to be involved.”²²⁹

There was also a call for a dramatic revamping of the site’s audiovisual program: “Assemble audiotape of historical recordings, audible oral histories (including living family members) and thoughts from current day leaders and historians on Washington’s life and legacy. Lend it out to visitors during their visit and make it available as a sales item.

“Produce an audio tour for use while walking around the park grounds which delivers interpretive messages at key points. The script should be lively, with varied voices and sounds and should convey messages linked to the park’s interpretive themes.”²³⁰

²²⁷ Booker T. Washington National Monument, Comprehensive Interpretive Plan, 16.

²²⁸ Booker T. Washington National Monument, Comprehensive Interpretive Plan, 21.

²²⁹ Booker T. Washington National Monument, Comprehensive Interpretive Plan, 22.

²³⁰ Booker T. Washington National Monument, Comprehensive Interpretive Plan, 23.

To ensure the interpretive work of the site reached a broader audience, the plan encouraged partnerships with African American Heritage Tours, local and regional scholars, and family reunion groups. It also encouraged the continuation of special programs and book signings. The plan also recommended that the park have a stronger digital/internet presence. Other recommendations included the production of a new film which incorporated the latest scholarship on Washington and his historical milieu, more research on the history and cultural landscape of the park, and additional forums and discussions on the link between the past and contemporary race relations.

Research

BOWA managed several important research projects during the 1990s and early 2000s. It entered into partnerships with Sweet Briar College, the University of Virginia, the Olmstead Institute, and the University of North Carolina Greensboro, among other institutions, to complete several important historical, archeological, and ethnographic studies. These studies helped the park's staff better interpret the landscape's multiple and evolving layers of use and occupation. One study which received a great deal of attention was Willie Baber's Ethnographic Overview and Assessment (EOA). Completed in 1998, Baber's EOA revealed the possibility that the Burroughs house was in a different location than previously thought. The impetus for this hypothesis was the discovery of the 1847 deed. Baber used the 1847 deed to argue three important points: the northern boundary of the Burroughs property was incorrect, that the Burroughs family had access to Hales Ford Road, and a Burroughs house was located off Hales Ford Road and within the tract of land covered in the 1847 deed. Baber finds support for his thesis in Washington's autobiography, *Up from Slavery*. According to Baber, Washington "describes conditions much closer to a 'big house' located some distance from slave quarters, and he notes the veranda of the 'big house.'" Insisting that Burroughs would not have located his permanent residence away from the Hales Ford Road, Baber challenges Louis Harlan's yeoman interpretation of Burroughs as someone who lived and worked close to his slaves. Combined with using material evidence and *Up from Slavery* to advance his hypothesis regarding the location of Burroughs "Big House," Baber also relies on the speech Washington delivered during his visit to Franklin County in 1908:

With a broader landscape in mind, I stood about where Washington would have been standing in 1908, i.e., in front of stones placed in positions outlining the foundation of the so-called Burroughs big house. I observed the surrounding landscape. I noted in particular how the land slopes upward, gradually, toward highway 122 to the north, and how the area in which I was standing is higher ground still compared to a slight decline to the south. I looked northeast, toward the burned ruins of the Ferguson house not visible from where I was

standing; I noted a branch of Gills Creek to the east and moving south to north. Then I imagined a “big house” upon a knoll just above the Burroughs cemetery, well above the watershed of Gills Creek, and more than one hundred yards from where I was standing. A big house ‘up there’ would fit perfectly, I thought, into various patterns—watershed, viewshed, spatial status in slave systems, and frontage along Hales Ford Road similar to other Hales Ford homes still standing.²³¹

Concurrent with the completion of Baber’s Ethnographic Assessment was Dr. Amber Moncure’s critical work on the site’s Archeological Overview and Assessment (AOA). It is the policy of the National Park Service to require periodic completion of an AOA, an important planning document which details and assesses a site’s known and potential archeological resources. The archeological overview, according to Moncure, had five main objectives: “recover evidence of plantation period dwellings and outbuildings; to define and provide a date for the original plantation road; to locate evidence of plantation gardens; to identify the class of the occupants of the “Big House;” and to document the two cemeteries on the property.” The timeline for the AOA was as follows: The archeological survey of BOWA commenced on March 9, 1998 and concluded on June 5, 1998. Then between June 8 and July 31, field supervisor Cynthia Trussell and her team of Sweet Briar College students conducted large-scale excavations at the site. Dr. Moncure submitted her report to the NPS on September 30, 1998. The report provided a historical overview and evaluation of past archeological work at the site, highlighted the limited scope of previous mitigation tests, illuminated the high level of disturbance which occurred during the Birthplace Memorial era, and detailed why archeological research was so central to understanding the site’s history and landscape. “Past archeological work at BOWA has been extremely limited. All of BOWA’s extant resources are archeological, and for this reason, it is imperative that archeology hold a place of prominence in the preservation and interpretation efforts of the park.”²³²

The report proposed that future archeological work at BOWA address the following issues:

The structure traditionally identified as the “Burroughs House” should be fully excavated seeking information on its size and its occupants. Based on past work at the park, such excavation should take between 12 and 15 weeks using a crew of 4 persons, at an approximate cost of \$15,000-17,500.

²³¹ Willie L. Baber, “Booker T. Washington National Monument: Assessment and Alternative Interpretation,” *High Plains Applied Anthropologist* 21, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 130.

²³² Amber Moncure, “Archaeological Overview and Assessment” (National Park Service report, Booker T. Washington National Monument, Hardy, VA, 1998), 14.

The twenty acres around the Sparks Cemetery should be surveyed for evidence of nineteenth century occupation. The location of the cemetery suggests that enslaved African Americans lived in near proximity to their burial ground. Such a survey with a crew of 4 persons would take about 20 days and would cost approximately \$5,000.

The tobacco barn stone foundation which lies just off a Park trail should be excavated. The foundation is clearly intact and the area around it appears undisturbed. This project should yield valuable information about the Burroughs period of occupation on the property and about the process of nineteenth-century tobacco cultivation. This barn and its immediate environs could be excavated in 30 days, with a crew of 4 persons, at an approximate cost of \$8,000.

In addition to these large-scale projects, it is important that the park be prepared to have all earth-moving activities monitored or have the area to be impacted surveyed first. Monitoring is ideally done by a professional archeologist but could be done by Park staff with proper training. All mitigation surveys should be conducted by professional archeologists.²³³

Natural Resource Management

The late 1990s marked a dramatic shift in BOWA's management of its natural resources. In 1998, the park updated its RMP. In that same year, Timothy Sims spent three days at Shenandoah NP studying its natural resource program. He also underwent 40 hours of natural resource training.

From August 1998 through July 1999, the US Geological Survey conducted a Level 1 Water Quality Inventory and Monitoring (WAQIM) data collection at the park. The survey sought to provide the NPS and BOWA with nominal inventory of the physical, chemical, and microbiological data from the water bodies within the park's boundaries. For nearly a year and over a range of hydrologic conditions, researchers tested two streams running through the park, Gills Creek and Jack O-Lantern Branch. According to the survey report, "because of the drought conditions that persisted during the study period, variations in flow between seasons were less pronounced than during normal hydrologic conditions."²³⁴ The survey findings revealed four major threats to water quality in the park "(1) encroaching development; (2) logging in areas outside of the park boundaries; (3) agricultural activities; and (4) animal waste from farm animals maintained within the park

²³³ Moncure, "Archaeological Assessment and Overview," 14.

²³⁴ U.S. Geological Survey. 2000. Level One Water-Quality Inventory and Monitoring, Booker T. Washington National Monument (BOWA), Virginia. U.S. Geological Survey. Richmond, Virginia, 2.

for living history exhibits. Data-collection sites and the parameters analyzed were selected based on the spatial distribution of land-use activities inside and immediately outside of the park’s boundaries and the nature of the potential threats to park water-quality.”

As the park worked to improve its natural resource plan, staff received some encouraging signs from the federal government. Congress passed the National Parks Omnibus Act of 1998, which inaugurated a new phase in resource management for the NPS. Signed into law by President Bill Clinton on November 13, 1998, the act included several pieces of legislation which pertained to NPS career development, training, and management, resource inventory and management, fees, and concession management. Of particular interest for many park managers with long-standing concerns about the inadequate funding for resource management was Title II of the Act. This section of the law directed the Secretary of the Interior to: “(1) assure that management of NPS units is enhanced by the availability and utilization of a broad program of the highest quality science and information; and (2) in partnership with other Federal and State agencies, enter into cooperative agreements with colleges and universities (including land grant schools) to establish cooperative study units to conduct multi-disciplinary research and develop integrated information products on the NPS resources or the larger region of which parks are a part.”²³⁵

On the heels of the act’s passage, the NPS launched the Natural Resource Challenge: The National Park Service Action Plan for Preserving National Resources (NRC) program. Created in 1999, the NRC focused on natural resource management and ecosystem preservation. The NRC’s Action Plan, which doubled the NPS natural science budget for five years, prioritized “increasing the role of science in decision making, revitalizing and expanding natural resource programs, gathering baseline data on resource conditions, strengthening partnerships with the scientific community, and sharing knowledge with educational institutions and the public.” In a statement at the time of the NRC’s unveiling, NPS Director Robert Stanton declared, “This Action Plan represents our strong commitment to preserving our country’s precious natural heritage for this and future generations.” Now, Stanton insisted, was the time for a radical change in the service’s approach to resource management: “Preserving our natural resources far into the future now requires active and informed management based on sound science.”²³⁶

The NRC identified six broad areas of focus:

- The protection of endangered and native species’ habitat
- The removal of non-native species

²³⁵ “National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998,” accessed April 28, 2021. https://www.nps.gov/gis/data_standards/omnibus_management_act.html.

²³⁶ “Natural Resource Challenge Original Press Release,” *National Park Service Explore Nature* website, April 11, 2016. <https://www.nps.gov/nature/pressrelease.htm>.

- Inventory and monitoring of natural resources
- Air and water quality monitoring
- Scientific collaboration with resource experts
- The utilization of parks as scientific laboratories and classrooms

These developments were especially exciting for BOWA staff, which was completing its GMP. The drafting of the plan provided BOWA staff with the chance to access the challenges and opportunities facing the park. The last GMP, completed in 1980, was no longer adequate to address the management and operation issues facing the park's managers. These issues included but were not limited to development pressure on adjacent lands, inadequate program space, limited staffing, and facility overcrowding during peak periods of visitation. After extensive research and consultation, BOWA submitted its final GMP in 1999.

General Management Plan

The completion of the GMP was a major accomplishment for the park. The draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (GMP/EIS) presented four alternatives for the future management of BOWA. The proposed action and alternatives reflected the staff's desire to expand the interpretive scope of the site, make better use of the resources and story of the Booker T. Washington Elementary School, provide new opportunities for visitors, and protect the site's cultural and national resources from further commercial development.

Under Alternative A, the no-action alternative, the Booker T. Washington National Monument would continue current resource management practices.²³⁷ There would also be no significant change in the interpretive and visitors programs. And the Booker T. Washington Elementary School building would continue to be used for administrative and maintenance purposes.

Alternative B acknowledged the need for BOWA to strengthen its resource protection and provide greater visitor opportunities at the park.

Alternative B envisioned Booker T. Washington as a commemorative park. As a national pilgrimage destination, the park would be dedicated to “commemorating Booker T. Washington's impact on American education and race relations.”²³⁸ In this alternative, the park's cultural and natural resources would be managed to “maintain existing

²³⁷ The National Environmental Policy Act mandates the consideration of a no-action alternative along with other alternatives when developing a management plan for a unit of the National Park System. The no-action alternative should be used as a baseline for evaluating and comparing the effects of the action alternatives.

²³⁸ Booker T. Washington National Monument, General Management Plan, 2000, iv.

conditions and provide a contemplative setting appropriate for a commemorative park.”²³⁹ The action items under this alternative included the creation of an interpretive Life Walk that would highlight Washington’s major achievements, the rehabilitation and restoration of the Booker T. Washington Elementary School as a visitor center, and the construction of new administrative and maintenance offices.

Under alternative B, “circulation patterns within the park would be reoriented to bring visitors first to the former school, where they would begin their visit.”²⁴⁰ To better realize the new management goals and programming requirements, staffing levels at the park would need to be increased substantially.

Alternative C of the proposed plan envisioned the park as “a progressive educational center offering a broad range of programs that heightened the public’s awareness of ‘Washington’s life and work as well as the broader issues of American race relations.’”²⁴¹ It aspired to realize the full interpretive potential of the park by enlarging the present visitor center and installing a new system of waysides along an expanded system of trails. It recommended only a portion of the former school be rehabilitated and restored for interpretive and educational purposes. This approach to rehabilitation would enable the site to better incorporate the school into its interpretive agenda without completely disrupting the current use of the building. As outlined in the proposed plan, portions of the former school would still be used as an administrative space. Repurposing the former school would improve parkwide interpretation. According to the proposed plan, this would also necessitate the relocation of the maintenance shop and yard.

Alternative C also called for “ongoing archeological, ethnographic, and cultural landscape research to better protect the site and enrich the park’s interpretive program.” The planning team also acknowledged the need for “increased school and community outreach opportunities, and additional efforts to help maintain and protect the rural, agricultural character of the land surrounding the park.”²⁴²

Another important action item under the proposed plan was a fifteen-acre boundary adjustment at the northeast border of the park to include the seven remaining acres of the Burroughs plantation not currently within the park boundary. The justification for the expansion was simple: “By preserving a resource that is directly related to the park’s significance and securing a measure of viewshed protection for the northeast quadrant of the park, acquisition would be a major positive impact. If NPS does not acquire the

²³⁹ Booker T. Washington National Monument, General Management Plan, 2000, iv.

²⁴⁰ Booker T. Washington National Monument, General Management Plan, 2000, iv.

²⁴¹ Booker T. Washington National Monument, General Management Plan, 2000, iv.

²⁴² Booker T. Washington National Monument, General Management Plan, 2000, iv.

property, as recommended by alternatives A and B, it is likely to be sold and developed privately. Development of that land for a use that is not sympathetic to the purpose of the park would constitute a major negative impact.”²⁴³

The need to protect the site’s historic viewshed was also addressed in alternative D. This alternative not only recommended the boundary adjustment at the northeast border of the park but also encouraged the NPS to purchase land along the western boundary of the park. Under alternative D, the former segregated school building would be completely rehabilitated and restored, then established as the site’s new visitor center. This would allow the school to be fully integrated into the interpretive program. Planners acknowledged that “pursuing Alternative D would trigger some key changes including new construction of a building (or relocating and reusing the current visitor center) near the school for park administrative functions and a new maintenance shop and yard in a site where it would not detract from visitor enjoyment. The new use of the school building would also result in changes in circulation and visitor use patterns that have existed in the park for more than 30 years.”²⁴⁴ Moving forward, “a Historic Structure Report would be prepared to document the school prior to those changes. No irreversible alterations would be undertaken, and all work would be sensitive to the fact that at some point in the future the school may be fully restored.”²⁴⁵

The draft GMP/EIS was available for public review from June 25, 1999 through August 31, 1999. Public meetings were held at the Center for Applied Technology in Rocky Mount on July 19, 1999 and at the Trinity Ecumenical Church in Moneta, Virginia on July 20, 1999. According to the GMP, “slight modifications to Alternative C were made in response to comments submitted during the public review period during the completion of the proposed plan.”²⁴⁶

The final document carefully outlined the park’s objectives for the next twenty years. It provided a guide for the investigation and stewardship of the park’s cultural, ethnographic, and natural resources, expanded educational and interpretive offerings, and the preservation of the park’s rural setting. The GMP stated that “the park would not attempt to restore the entire site to one particular historic era, but rather would use available above-and below-ground resources to show the evolution of the site through archeological investigation and interpretive signage.”²⁴⁷ The existing historic and

²⁴³ Booker T. Washington National Monument, General Management Plan, 2000, iv.

²⁴⁴ Booker T. Washington National Monument, General Management Plan, 2000, iv.

²⁴⁵ Booker T. Washington National Monument, General Management Plan, 2000, 16.

²⁴⁶ Booker T. Washington National Monument, General Management Plan, 2000, xiii.

²⁴⁷ Booker T. Washington National Monument, General Management Plan, 2000, 2.

reconstructed structures would be preserved through regularly maintenance. The visitor center would be expanded, and the Booker T. Washington Elementary School would be used as a secondary venue for educational programs.

The new GMP plan complemented many aspects of the Comprehensive Interpretive Plan. It called for an interpretive program which transcended the legislative intent of the park and used the site to “interpret not only Washington’s childhood, but the Reconstruction, Jim Crow, Memorial and NPS eras as well.”²⁴⁸ Permanent and changing exhibits, computer kiosks, and audiovisual presentations would orient visitors to the site. No longer the sole anchor of the interpretation program, living history would continue to be a supplementary interpretive tool for special programs and events. The GMP stated that “a limited number of farm animals would remain on site, and efforts would be made to incorporate them directly into the interpretive programs.”²⁴⁹

Improving the visitor experience required making facilities more accessible. According to the GMP, “to assist visitors with accessing the steep section connecting the school to the cabin area, the park would provide limited vehicular access and special parking. In the proposed plan, staff levels would be increased by addition of a historian, a full-time education specialist, an interpretive specialist, and a maintenance worker.”²⁵⁰

It was widely acknowledged in the GMP that the supplemental reports needed to be completed to guide park management in its future plans. As Superintendent Harriet later noted, the “GMP identified information gaps within the park’s resource management needs and recommended further studies. It was recognized in the GMP that the cultural landscape was a marginally understood component of the park that needed further documentation and analysis.”²⁵¹

With the GMP completed, the Booker T. Washington National Monument was ready to move into the twenty-first century.

²⁴⁸ Booker T. Washington National Monument, General Management Plan, 2000, 19.

²⁴⁹ Booker T. Washington National Monument, General Management Plan, 2000, 19.

²⁵⁰ Booker T. Washington National Monument, General Management Plan, 2000, 21.

²⁵¹ Lisa Nowak, H. Eliot Foulds, Philip Troutman, *Cultural Landscape Report for Booker T. Washington National Monument: Site History, Existing Conditions, Analysis, and Treatment*, Massachusetts: Olmstead Center for Landscape Preservation, 2004).

CHAPTER NINE

MORE THAN A HISTORICAL PARK, 2000–2009

Introduction

On Saturday, April 2, 2006, 500 people assembled at Booker T. Washington National Monument to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of its founding, in conjunction with the 150th birthday of the park’s namesake. The five-hour celebration featured music, a living history tour, the unveiling of a commemorative cachet and postal cancellation stamp, and several speeches, including a keynote address by Dan Murphy, the NPS deputy director. The highlight of the event was the interpretive program, “Tears for Freedom,” which consisted of a reenactment of Washington’s emancipation from slavery. Based on Washington’s famous autobiography, *Up from Slavery*, the reenactment featured members of Franklin County High School’s African American History Club. The celebration was splendid and could not have happened without contributions from BOWA’s wide network of supporters, including the local media, the Roanoke Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau, the African American Experience Fund (whose \$7,000 contribution to the park funded the event) and park volunteers (seven of whom traveled to Tuskegee Institute NHS earlier in the year to learn more about Washington).

“2006 was a wonderful year for the Monument,” Superintendent Rebecca Harriett rejoiced in her end-of-the-year report to the regional office. The fiftieth anniversary celebration was a success. Visitation and EN sales were up. The monument received the 2006 National Sustained Accessibility Award for improving the park’s services and accommodations for people with disabilities. The park’s interpretive and educational programs continued to expand and improve, and the University of Virginia finally completed its long-awaited Booker T. Washington Historic Resource Study.

BOWA also continued to make strides in its natural resource program. As a member of the Mid-Atlantic I&M Network (MIDN), BOWA conducted baseline inventories of non-volant mammals, vertebrates and vascular plants, the avian community, and amphibians and reptiles. The site’s increased attention to natural resource preservation

and protection developed in response to internal and external forces. NPS historian Richard Sellers had long complained that the service's natural resource program had focused more on aesthetics, particularly scenic issues, rather than the health of the parks' ecosystem. Aesthetic degradation rather than ecological integrity, Sellers argued, drove natural resource policy. A much-needed shift in policy occurred in the late 1990s with the creation of the Natural Resource Challenge and the reorganizing of Inventory and Monitoring. And BOWA's natural resource program was definitely a beneficiary of that shift.

Another force shaping the site's natural resource program was ongoing commercial development in the Smith Mountain Lake area and the impact of urban encroachment on the park's natural resources. Sedimentation and soil erosion in Gills Creek were real concerns for the park and its community partners. In fact, encroaching development led the Roanoke Valley Historic Preservation Foundation to place the Booker T. Washington National Monument on its "Ten Most Threatened Historic Sites" list. As development intensified in Franklin County, the site's natural resource activities took on greater urgency.

One way the park sought to deal with the problem of commercial encroachment and better protect its viewshed was through land acquisition. Fortunately, the park had the support of the NPS and several legislators, including Senator Mark Warner, who in 2001 introduced the Booker T. Washington National Monument Boundary Adjustment Act. The act authorized the Secretary of the Interior to acquire a 15-acre parcel of land for inclusion in the monument. The bill authorizing the purchase of additional land for the monument passed the House of Representatives on September 12, 2001 and then the Senate in 2002. The Conservation Fund purchased the land in February 2002 and then the NPS assumed control in 2004.

Interpretation

Even as the park focused more of its attention on natural resource management, it continued to embrace its mission of providing the public with a deeper understanding of Booker T. Washington and the complexity of slavery and the experience of enslaved African Americans on smaller plantations. "Most people who come here expect to see Tara [from the film, *Gone with the Wind*]," explained park ranger Alice Hanawalt in 2002. "But there were more of these plantations than Taras, especially here in the Piedmont area of western Virginia."²⁵²

²⁵² Michael Schuman, "Monument Dispels Notions About Plantation Life," *The Baltimore Sun* online, April 7, 2002, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-2002-04-07-0204080217-story.html>.

The site's interpretive advances did not go unnoticed. For its efforts to challenge romanticized images of slavery, the monument received the praise of *Baltimore Sun* journalist Michael Schuman:

Discard your preconceived ideas of plantation life in the ante-bellum south, those notions of white-pillared mansions, formal balls and women in billowing gowns. The Virginia birthplace of famed black educator and political advisor Booker T. Washington hurls a coat of mud on the image of wealth and splendor in plantation palaces. Here in the shadows of the Blue Ridge Parkway near Roanoke is the Booker T. Washington National Monument, a living depiction of plantation life as it commonly was. The site is both a tribute to the accomplishments of Washington as well as a gritty look at daily life in the pre-Civil War South.²⁵³

The effusive praise was well deserved. Between 2000 and 2009, BOWA had a dedicated staff which provided some of the best examples of interpretive and educational programming and cultural and natural resource management. Continuing to provide superb leadership, Rebecca Harriett managed the staff, worked diligently to protect the park's natural and cultural resources from further commercial encroachment, shepherded the park through the acquisition of a 15-acre tract, and maintained relationships with new and old community partners. The administrative division benefitted immensely from the leadership of Eleanor Long, the administrative officer, and Connie Mays, the administrative clerk. Mays' and Long's deft handling of the budget enabled the park to achieve its mission amid expected and unexpected financial challenges.

²⁵³ Schuman, "Monument Dispels Nations About Plantation Life."

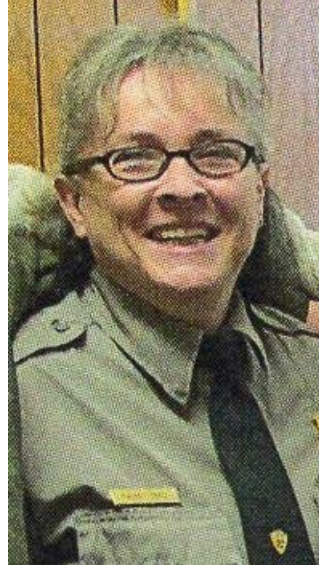


Figure 55: Administrative Clerk Connie Mays.

Timothy Sims guided the resource management program, while Timothy Sinclair anchored the interpretive and educational programs. Ken Arrington (Facility Manager), John Mitchell, Kevin L. Phifer, and Christopher Major comprised the maintenance division. Their responsibilities included providing routine and preventive maintenance for the park, including the living history farm and outbuildings, the walking trails, the picnic area, and the roads. Without the exemplary work of the maintenance division, the park’s advancements in interpretation and resource management would not have been possible.

During this period, there were also some key departures. After twenty years of service at BOWA, longtime employee Alice Hanawalt retired in 2001. A year later, Chief of Interpretation and Resource Management Tina Orcutt left for a position in the NPS’s budget office in DC. Orcutt’s departure intensified the staff’s workload, as her position remained vacant for six years. “Key components of this position have been divided between interpretive and administrative staff,” Superintendent Harriett informed the regional office. It was not an easy arrangement. “Although we are trying to work as a self-directed work team, for all practical purposes, I’ve become the de facto Chief of I&RM.”

With ongoing budget constraints, resource sharing between BOWA and other NPS sites became more common. The Shenandoah National Park Contracting Office had long handled BOWA’s high dollar open market contracts, while Blue Ridge Parkway rangers provided law enforcement assistance for the park. In 2005, the vacancy of the Administrative Officer position at Appomattox Courthouse (APCO) led the regional office to direct administrative resource sharing between Appomattox Court House and Booker T. Washington National Monument. From October 2005 until May 2006, BOWA’s administrative staff carried the workload for both parks until Appomattox hired Ruth

Sawyer as the administrative officer in June. Insight into the nature of the arrangement can be found in Superintendent Harriett’s 2007 annual report: “Their AO visited the park several times, met staff, and familiarized herself with BOWA’s operation. BOWA’s Administrative Clerk serves as the Board of Survey Chair for both parks and BOWA’s EO Counselor serves in that role for both parks. BOWA has provided assistance to APCO for property and finance matters.” If needed, BOWA personnel were also detailed to other sites.²⁵⁴ Even though park staff was frequently stretched thin, they were able to accomplish many of their interpretive, educational, outreach, and resource management goals.

Staffing, 2000–2009

Division	Personnel
Management *	Rebecca L. Harriett (Superintendent) Eleanor C. Long (Acting Superintendent) ** Peter Givens (Acting Superintendent)
Administration	Eleanor C. Long (Administrative Officer) Connie Mays (Administrative Clerk)
Interpretation and Resource Management	Alice F. Hanawalt (Park Ranger) Betsy Haynes (Park Ranger) ** Timothy Sims (Park Ranger) ** Timothy D. Sinclair (Park Ranger) ** Tina M. Orcutt (Chief, Interpretation and Resource Management)
Maintenance	John M. Mitchell (Maintenance Worker/ Heavy Equipment Operator) Kenneth W. Arrington (Facility Manager) Kevin L. Phifer (Maintenance Worker) James Richard George (Maintenance Worker) Christopher A. Major (Maintenance Worker)

*In 2002, Rebecca Harriett had two long-term assignments out of the park while participating in an Executive Leadership Program.

** From 2002 to 2008, Betsy Haynes, Tim Sinclair, Tim Sims, and Eleanor Long all served as Acting Chief, Interpretation and Resource Management, the former three multiple times.)

²⁵⁴ Rebecca Harriett, “Superintendent Annual Narrative Report,” 2007, 2.

The first decade of the twenty-first century was a time of evolution and growth for the interpretive division. With the creation of a new touch-screen interpretive program and a cell phone tour, BOWA fully embraced the digital age. The cell phone tour provided information about the park's reconstructed cabin, buildings, the birthplace site, the tobacco barn, the tobacco field, and Gills Greek. "People are sometimes shy about being with a park ranger on a tour. People like it when we give them the information they want and they can go at their own pace," Sinclair noted.²⁵⁵

Using the recommendations of the 2000 GMP as a baseline, the interpretive division built on BOWA's past accomplishments as well as addressed key areas of concern. The 2000 GMP had recommended that the interpretive program expand beyond the legislative intent of the park and "interpret not only Washington's childhood, but the Reconstruction, Jim Crow, Memorial, and NPS eras as well." Toward this goal, the park added five wayside exhibits in and around the historic area in 2003. The five wayside additions were: Emancipation, a tobacco barn, subsistence farming and property owners, the cemetery identified, and Washington and nature. The park also updated the interpretive media in the visitor center. BOWA staff contracted Northern Lights to produce a new film for the visitor center, which was divided into five main chapters. The first chapter opened with Washington's 1895 speech at the Atlanta Cotton Exposition. The second chapter detailed his early life on the Burroughs plantation and his quest for an education. It chronicles his fulfillment of his educational dreams at Hampton Institute, then his early years at Tuskegee. In keeping with the interpretive goals outlined in the GMP plan, the third section of the film, "From Paradise to Machine," situated Washington within a larger context by detailing the rise of Jim Crow and African American's various responses to the hardening of racial segregation and exclusion. The fourth chapter turns attention to Washington's critics. The concluding chapter returns to the Burroughs Plantation, where the audience has the opportunity to consider how they might have navigated the South. A script was produced, but funding for filming never materialized.

In 2004, a separate restroom building was added in front of the visitor center. The addition did not alter the historical integrity of the facility, which retained Mission 66 design elements. The park also unveiled a new touch-screen interpretive program. The program covered a wide range of topics, including Booker T. Washington, the history of slavery, the American Civil War, and other stories related to the park's history and cultural and natural resources. The program, according to Rebecca Harriett, also enhanced the visitor experience for patrons with mobility issues. "Although designed with a younger audience in mind, it has also proven to be an accessibility tool for visitors that cannot walk down to the cabin site." Around this time, the interpretive work of the site was also

²⁵⁵ Karen Dillon, "Park Offers New Ways to Learn about Old Days," November 21, 2008, *Roanoke Times*.

enhanced with the installment of new wayside exhibits, including one for the Booker T. Washington Elementary School. That wayside was unveiled at the annual Booker T. Washington School Reunion in June.

Even with budget cuts and staff shortages, the staff maintained an impressive menu of interpretive and educational programming between 2000 and 2009. The annual Juneteenth Celebration and “Christmas Days in Old Virginia” events were hugely popular. A new activity, “Harvest Time,” got off to a strong start in 2008, and the curriculum-based educational program promoted the life and legacy of Washington to thousands of school-aged children. As a site concerned with the evolving nature of race in US society, the site also used historical interpretation to address contemporary issues and problems. One interpretive program, for example, was connected to the NPS’ efforts to promote health and wellness through the use of public parks. In 2007, BOWA received a grant to increase awareness of critical health issues in the community. The site offered two programs which provided health screenings and featured presentations from a nutritionist. Six interpretive publications were produced, covering the following topics: National Negro Health Week, the Death of Dr. Washington, the diets of enslaved African Americans, and mid-nineteenth century plant uses.²⁵⁶

As had been the case during the 1990s, Park Rangers Timothy Sinclair and Betsy Haynes were key contributors to the interpretive program. Sinclair had many duties throughout the years, including Education Program coordinator, Volunteers-In-Parks coordinator, Museum Curator, and Visitor Statistics coordinator. Ranger Sinclair initiated new ideas such as the park’s animated touch screen exhibit and cell phone tours. Sinclair also worked closely with the Franklin County High School History Club and convinced some of its members to work on several projects within the park. Another impressive initiative launched by Sinclair was the park’s monthly book club. “Tim was fabulous,” Rebecca Harriett fondly remembered.²⁵⁷

Like Sinclair, Park Ranger Betsy Haynes had a definitive role in shaping the content and direction of the park’s interpretive program. A passionate student of history, Haynes researched and wrote on a wide range of topics, from the condition of the park’s library to the experience of enslaved women on the Burroughs Plantation. She embraced the opportunity to put together programs which explored the many dimensions of American history: “We can talk about women’s rights, we can talk about the Underground Railroad and Reconstruction. . . . Tim even does programs sometimes on Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr., and how their philosophies compared to Booker T. Washington.”²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ Rebecca Harriett, Superintendent Annual Report, 2007, 3.

²⁵⁷ Rebecca Harriett, interview with author, January 3, 2020.

²⁵⁸ Laurie Edwards, “More than a Monument,” *Roanoke Times*, February 13, 2009.

Haynes' commitment to incorporating the stories of women into the park's interpretive work was evident in her 2003 presentation "Changing Places: The Transformation of Women's Roles during the American Civil War."

Education

An important aspect of the park's interpretive work was its curriculum-based programming. Under the leadership of Sinclair and with assistance from other staff, the park offered a variety of education programs to local school children. In 2007, the park presented seventy-five curriculum-based programs to 2,745 students. To meet the needs of local teachers, park staff remained attentive to modifications in the SOL requirements and adjusted their curriculum to those changes. In 2008, the staff created two science SOL-based programs and updated existing history SOL education programs. The modification of the history program was based on the SOL's designation of Booker T. Washington as a figure of historical importance for 6-8 graders. "We want to make sure every student has the opportunity to learn about Booker T. Washington," Timothy Sinclair noted.²⁵⁹

The park's education programs also extended to older residents. In 2007, BOWA partnered with the Elderhostel Program at Smith Mountain Lake's 4-H Center and presented five all-day education programs for over 180 senior citizens.

Special Events, Lectures, and Programs

In its ongoing effort to tell a richer story of Washington's life during slavery and emancipation, BOWA hosted a variety of special events, talks, and lectures. Though Washington remained the focus of the park, the following titles of a small sampling of BOWA-sponsored talks provide evidence of how the site engaged the lives and politics of other African American leaders and activists: "Freedom Train: The Story of Harriett Tubman," "Douglass: A Biography of Bravery," "The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey," and "America's Nightmare: Reactions to Slavery." At the latter talk, Ranger Sinclair discussed the political strategies of Frederick Douglass, Nat Turner, and David Walker. For those who wanted an even deeper dive into American history, BOWA's book clubs provided the opportunity to read as wide ranging as Washington's "Character Building," Jubal Early's Civil War memoir, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, the *Narrative of Frederick Douglass*, and C. Vann Woodward's *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*.

²⁵⁹ Dillon, "Park Offers New Ways to Learn About Old Days."

BOWA also continued to host popular events like “An Old Virginia Christmas” and Juneteenth. “An Old Virginia Christmas” included lantern tours of the farm, the reading of Booker T. Washington’s “Christmas Days in Old Virginia,” children activities, refreshments, and other activities. The event was based on Booker T. Washington’s 1907 essay, “Christmas Days in Old Virginia.” In that essay, Washington shared his memories of the Christmas season in Virginia: “Looking back to those days, when Christmas, for me, was a much more momentous event than it is now, it seems to me that there was a certain charm about that Virginia Christmas time, a peculiar fragrance in the atmosphere, a something which I cannot define, and which does not exist elsewhere in the same degree, where it has been my privilege to spend the Christmas season.”²⁶⁰

Based on Washington’s recollection, BOWA staff and interpreters put on a dynamic program which drew hundreds during the Christmas season. The content of the program shifted slightly depending on which year the staff decided to focus.

The park’s Juneteenth celebration was another highly anticipated event among residents of Franklin County and surrounding areas. At that event, attendees enjoyed music, participated in games, and learned why Juneteenth carries so much meaning and significance for millions of African Americans. “This is really when America became the land of the free and the home of the brave,” Tim Sinclair told the *Roanoke Times*.²⁶¹ For this event, the park received assistance from many volunteers and supporters, including the Booker T. Washington Elementary School Reunion group.²⁶²

In 2008, the park added another special event: “Harvest Time.” Usually held in the fall, “Harvest Time” featured living history farm demonstrations, interpretive tours, children’s games and more. Through various activities, “Harvest Time” highlighted the lifestyles of people who worked on small Virginia tobacco plantations in the mid-nineteenth century. One year, “Harvest Time” focused on how African cultural retentions and continuities were embedded in the dance, foods, and crafts of the enslaved.

Though BOWA’s interpretive programs and special events were impressive, Superintendent Harriet remained vigilant in highlighting areas in need of improvement. Foremost on her list of priorities was renovating the visitor center. One of the park’s interpretive goals was to focus more on the Civil War and Emancipation and doing so required structural improvements in the visitor center. “The rehabilitation of the park’s visitor center remains the number one construction priority,” Harriett noted in 2007. “With the coming of the 150th Anniversary of the American Civil War (2011), a

²⁶⁰ “Christmas Days in Old Virginia,” *Booker T. Washington National Monument* website, February 256, 2015, <https://www.nps.gov/bowa/learn/historyculture/full-text-christmas.htm>.

²⁶¹ Amanda Codispoti, “Blacks Celebrate Freedom, Harmony,” *The Roanoke Times*, June 18, 2006, B1.

²⁶² Though private, the Booker T. Washington’s Elementary School Reunion was another event which brought hundreds to the site.

modernized visitor center complete with interactive exhibits, a new audiovisual program and expanded space would go a long way in helping us relate the story of Booker T. Washington.”²⁶³

To continue to advance the park’s interpretive and educational programming, research and planning was also necessary. There was still more to know about the park’s cultural resources, including the Burroughs plantation and the elementary school.

Cultural Resource Planning and Management

In the early 2000s, park personnel initiated several studies and reports designed to identify, document, preserve, and more effectively manage the cultural and natural resources at the monument. In 2003, the Olmstead Center for Landscape, in collaboration with the Carter G. Woodson Institute for African American and African Studies at the University of Virginia, finalized the *Cultural Landscape Report*. The report included an historical overview of the landscape, an analysis of the conditions of the site’s historic structures, topography, vegetation, hydrology, and views, an evaluation of the significance and integrity of the landscape based on the National Register of Historic Places criteria, and a list of treatment recommendations for BOWA’s cultural landscape.²⁶⁴

The landscape report divided the site into three management zones and then offered different treatment recommendations for each zone.

The Cultural Landscape Report made the following treatment recommendations for the cultural landscape zone:

1. Preserve current replica buildings in the historic core, unless they become deteriorated or unsafe in the future.
2. Refrain from adding highly visible or permanent representations of the Burroughs house footprint.
3. Manage vegetation surrounding the Burroughs house to more accurately represent a nineteenth-century middle class farm.
4. Reduce mowing to more accurately reflect a nineteenth-century farm.
5. Screen Burroughs domestic yard from offsite views.

²⁶³ Harriett, “Superintendent’s Annual Report Narrative,” 2007, 1.

²⁶⁴ Lisa Nowak, H. Eliot Foulds, Philip Troutman, *Cultural Landscape Report for Booker T. Washington National Monument: Site History, Existing Conditions, Analysis, and Treatment*, Massachusetts: Olmstead Center for Landscape Preservation, 2004), 3.

6. Install the statue of Booker T. Washington as a child in the Burroughs domestic landscape.²⁶⁵

The treatment recommendations for the Proposed Elementary School Overlay Zone were as follows:

1. Restore the school landscape to its 1966 appearance.
2. Remove materials storage from school landscape.²⁶⁶

The cultural report made allowances for “contemporary improvements to occur in the facility development overlay zone.” However, before those improvements were implemented, “proper measures need to be taken to ensure the smallest impact on the historic scene.”²⁶⁷ The report detailed the necessary steps in the paragraph below:

Archeological testing must be undertaken prior to construction and new facilities must be located outside of sensitive areas and viewsheds. For example, currently the outdoor maintenance yard is located near the former elementary school. An alternate location for the proposed maintenance yard should be chosen to not compromise the important resources of either the former school or the Burroughs landscape. Likewise, the proposed expansion of the park visitor center, and modifications to its associated parking lot must take care to avoid destroying archeological deposits. Modifications to the visitor center grounds should not destroy aspects of this more recent landscape that may be found significant as a result of a formal determination of National Register eligibility.²⁶⁸

The 2004 Cultural Landscape Report identified the school as a site of historical significance which retained “a high degree of integrity from the 1952–1966 period.”²⁶⁹ The report did note, however, that “qualities of workmanship, feeling and association . . . are somewhat diminished by current use as an administrative/maintenance facility for the park. Materials and equipment are stored randomly around the site, inconsistent with how the property was used historically. The park’s current interpretive program does not draw heavily on the school as a resource—weakening its association with the life and legacy of Booker T. Washington.”²⁷⁰

²⁶⁵ Nowak et al., *Cultural Landscape Report*, 169.

²⁶⁶ Nowak et al., *Cultural Landscape Report*, 172.

²⁶⁷ Nowak et al., *Cultural Landscape Report*, 176.

²⁶⁸ Nowak et al., *Cultural Landscape Report*, 176.

²⁶⁹ Nowak et al., *Cultural Landscape Report*, 120.

²⁷⁰ Nowak et al., *Cultural Landscape Report*, 165.

The report acknowledged that selecting the best landscape treatment for the former school was not a simple matter. “Historical sites focusing on that past must deal with the implications of restoring and reconstructing structures that, for some visitors, retain that negative stigma and provoke painful personal memories.”²⁷¹

After careful consideration of all options, the CLR recommended a restoration approach to the former school. It called for removal of all maintenance operations, the asphalt removed and returned to pack earth, and that the homemade basketball hoops (once located on a packed earth court) be replaced. The goal was for the school to accurately represent a rural, segregated elementary school of the 1950s and 1960s. The report’s recommendations were never implemented as budget restraints and other priorities consumed park personnel. There did remain, however, an interest in conducting more research on the former segregated school in an effort to fill the information gaps identified in the 2000 GMP report.

Thus, in August 2002, the NPS entered into a cooperative agreement with the University of Virginia to prepare a Historic Resource Study (HRS) on the former school. The stated purpose of the study was to “address the history of the former Booker T. Washington Elementary School and its role in the era of racial segregation and desegregation in Virginia.” The report coauthors were Scot French, a professor of history and associate director of the Carter G. Woodson Institute for African American and African Studies at UVA; Craig E. Barton, a professor of Architecture and Urban Design at UVA; and Peter S. Flora, then a graduate student at the university. The report provided a detailed account of the school’s history, situated its founding and closing within the context of the larger story of the school desegregation struggle in Virginia, and provided a compelling case of why the former school should occupy an important place in the park’s interpretive programs.

The report confronted the complex legacy of the school as both a part of the state’s effort to fight against racial integration as well as a source of pride for African Americans who either attended or taught at the school. Not just providing important data, the authors also offer suggestions to how the school could provide an entry to discuss the fate of Black institutions in the post-segregation era.

The historical study of the Booker T. Washington Elementary School was thoroughly researched and well-written. It provided the park personnel with critical facts and key interpretive themes. Even without the restoration of the former school, the story of African American’s quests for education could now be integrated into the site’s interpretive program.

Data in the CLR and the Booker T. Washington Elementary School HRS proved useful as BOWA prepared for the completion of its next major planning document: *The Strategic Plan for Booker T. Washington National Monument, October 1, 2008– September*

²⁷¹ Nowak et al., *Cultural Landscape Report*, 149.

20, 2012. Written during a period of intense planning and research, the *Strategic Plan* provides great insight into the critical cultural and natural resource management issues for the park. It also offers a view of the park’s long-term objectives.²⁷² A valuable resource for park future park managers, the plan *evaluated* the condition of the site’s historic structures, museum collections, archeological sites, and cultural landscapes. The archeological sites and the cultural landscapes were thought to be in good condition; thus, the report recommended a plan of routine maintenance for these areas. The park’s museum’s collections met 109 of the 117 preservation and protective standards put forth by the NPS. By September 30, 2012, the park planned to increase that number to 110. BOWA management also planned to improve the visitor experience. Though 98 percent of visitors to the monument reported their experience as satisfactory, the strategic planning report saw room for improvement. At the end of 2007, 83 percent of visitors reported understanding the significance of the park. The long-term goal was to increase the percentage to 88 percent by 2012.²⁷³

Natural Resource Management

To carry out its resource management agenda in a more efficient and scientific manner, the National Park Service reconceptualized and revamped its Inventory and Monitoring program. A crucial component of the I&M’s revamping was the organization of the 270 parks into a system of 32 ecoregional networks. These networks would enable I&M to better “leverage the program’s limited resources through partnerships with others as part of a strategy to maximize the use and relevance of the data for key target audiences.”²⁷⁴ Instead of working individually, network-affiliated parks would collaborate in planning, designing, and carrying out inventories and long-term monitoring. These partnerships, it was believed, would enhance the collection, analysis, and distribution of critical natural resource information.²⁷⁵ Additionally, they would provide park managers, researchers, and the public with scientifically-based data on parks’ habitats, species, and ecosystems. With this information, NPS managers and staff could better understand the

²⁷² “Strategic Plan for Booker T. Washington National Monument, October 1, 2008 – September 30, 2012,” *Booker T. Washington National Monument* website, accessed April 28, 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/bowa/learn/management/upload/2008-2012strategicplan.pdf>.

²⁷³ “Strategic Plan for Booker T. Washington National Monument.”

²⁷⁴ “3-Year Startup Review of the Mid-Atlantic I&M Network, April 5-7, 2011, Fredericksburg, Virginia, Report and Recommendations from the Review Panel,” *npshistory.com* website, accessed April 28, 2021, <http://npshistory.com/publications/interdisciplinary/im/mid-atlantic-im-review-2011.pdf>.

²⁷⁵ “3-Year Startup Review.”

natural resources within and around parks, monitor more effectively the biological health of their parks, detect important changes in their sites' ecosystems, and make better management decisions.

Based on its geography and natural resources, BOWA was placed in the Mid-Atlantic I&M Network (MIDN). The MIDN also included the following parks: Appomattox Court House NHP, Eisenhower NHS, Gettysburg NMP, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania NMP, Shenandoah NP, Hopewell Furnace NHS, Richmond NBP, Petersburg NB, and Valley Forge NHP.²⁷⁶ Through collaborations with park managers and staff, scientists, and partnering agencies, the MIDN would monitor vital signs and baseline inventories. Like other networks in the NPS, the MIDN received funding over four to five years to develop a plan which targeted the region's greatest long-term monitoring needs. Under the leadership of Jim Comiskey, the MIDN established a monitoring plan which established the priority vital signs for the region, set a timetable for sampling design, fieldwork, data collection, and reporting, identified potential partners and collaborators, and detailed the best resource sharing practices among parks. Together, parks could fulfill their own objectives, as well as meet the goals and standards of the I&M Program.

²⁷⁶ "Natural Resource Inventory and Monitoring within Mid-Atlantic National Parks," National Park Service, Mid-Atlantic Network Inventory and Monitoring Program, accessed April 28, 2021, <https://irma.nps.gov/Datastore/DownloadFile/481489>.



Figure 56: James Comiskey, Network Coordinator, measuring tree DBH at Booker T. Washington National Monument (BOWA Archives).

As one of the NPS' smaller parks, the Booker T. Washington National Monument benefitted immensely from the Natural Resource Challenge and the service's increased focus on resource management. It was also a direct beneficiary of the collaborative endeavors of the Mid-Atlantic Network. Over the period between 2001 and 2004, BOWA conducted baseline inventories of non-volant mammals, vertebrates and vascular plants, the avian community, and amphibians and reptiles. It also engaged in important vital sign monitoring. BOWA and the MIDN relied on experts and specialists from various organizations, including the Virginia Division of Natural Heritage, University of Virginia, Ferrum College, Virginia Commonwealth University, the University of Richmond, NatureServe, and the United States Vegetation Classification.

This was a marked departure from BOWA’s past resource management practices. Before the creation of the NRC, Timothy Sims explains, “the park didn’t really have a formal natural resource management program. . . . If you were to look back through archival material of studies done here at the park, most of them were informal. And they did not follow a specific scientific protocol.”²⁷⁷ According to Sims, previous studies were very informal: A professor from Ferrum College or Lynchburg College might visit the park and walk around and write down all the birds he or she saw or heard, would visit the park, document the species seen or heard, and give the list of recorded species to the park. Though BOWA staff appreciated these efforts, they understood fully that these observations did not provide substantive knowledge of the park, its ecological diversity and challenges, and the mosaic of species within its boundaries. Fortunately, during the 2000s, a major shift in BOWA’s resource management occurred with the infusion of greater resources into the site. Another important development was NPS’ adoption of a more holistic approach to resource management by recognizing that parks’ significance lay in both their cultural *and* natural resources. This shift was especially important for BOWA. As Sims explains, “Up to about the early 2000s, this park was looked [at] primarily as a cultural park because the focus is on Booker T. Washington.” But then there was a growing awareness within the NPS that “just because a park is small and culturally based . . . doesn’t mean it shouldn’t be effectively managing its natural resources.” It is within the context of changing perspectives about resource management that BOWA embarked on a variety of baseline inventories and vital signs monitoring.

Baseline Inventories, 2000–2004

At a scoping session held at Richmond National Battlefield Park on April 3, 2001, NPS technicians and administrators mapped out a plan for conducting inventories of vertebrates and vascular plants in the Mid-Atlantic Network parks. As part of the MIDN’s fish inventory, streams within the Booker T. Washington National Monument were sampled for the first time during the late summer of 2002. The research team of scientists and technicians employed qualitative backpack electrofishing techniques, sampling in downstream or boundary locations. According to the inventory report, “several sections of approximately 100m in length were sampled with emphasis on all representative and any unique habitats encountered.”²⁷⁸ The goal was to detect as many fish species as possible. A total of twenty-eight fish species were detected in Gills Creek and three were found within Jack-O-Lantern Branch. The most frequently encountered species were bluehead chub,

²⁷⁷ Timothy Sims, interview with author, December 10, 2019.

²⁷⁸ James B. Atkinson, *Fish Inventories of Mid-Atlantic and Northeast Coastal and Barrier Network Parks with Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania*. (National Park Service. Philadelphia, PA, 2008), 27.

redbreast sunfish, crescent shiner (*Luxilus cerasinus*), rosefin shiner (*Lythrurus ardens*), and satinfin shiner (*Cyprinella analostana*). Fish species encountered infrequently (fewer than five individuals detected) within Gills Creek included golden redhorse (*Moxostoma erythrurum*), johnny darter (*Etheostoma nigrum*), swallowtail shiner (*Notropis procne*), pumpkinseed (*Lepomis gibbosus*), white shiner (*Luxilus albeolus*), bluntnose minnow (*Pimephales notatus*), and spottail shiner (*Notropis hudsonius*).

In mid-May 2004, the natural resource team resampled the portion of Gills Creek that flows through or adjacent to the park in order to record fish species “that were either not present or not detected within this section of the stream during late summer or the low flow conditions that persisted in 2002.” Jack-O-Lantern Branch was not resampled “since the original 2002 survey yielded a species mix (albeit reduced) that was also found within the adjacent section of Gills Creek.”²⁷⁹ As was the case in 2004, a total of twenty-eight species were recorded in Gills Creek. Among the fish detected during the survey, six fish were not recorded in 2002. These species were silver redhorse (*Moxostoma anisurum*), shorthead redhorse (*Moxostoma macrolepidotum*), bigeye jumprock (*Scartomyzon ariommus*), common carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), white perch (*Morone americana*), and yellow perch (*Perca flavescens*). Additionally, six fish species observed during 2002 were not detected during the 2004 resampling. This was likely the “result of differences in seasonal distribution patterns related to habitat use, spawning activity and water flow levels.”²⁸⁰ The investigation of the fish community within BOWA uncovered several endemic species not found in other MIDN parks: bigeye jumprock, Roanoke hogsucker (*Hypentelium roanokense*), white shiner, crescent shiner (*Luxilus cerasinus*), and riverweed darter (*Etheostoma podostemone*). At the time of the survey, the bigeye jumprock, a globally rare species, was on the Virginia Natural Heritage Vertebrate Watch List.

In the report detailing the results of the 2002 and 2004 inventories, the uniqueness of the fish community within Gills Creek was attributed to three major factors: “(1) geographic location within the Roanoke drainage which supports one of the most diverse and distinctive fish communities on the Atlantic slope of the United States (Jenkins and Burkhead, 1994); (2) the influence of introduced species from Smith Mountain Lake located approximately three miles downstream; and (3) annual spring red horse sucker (*Moxostoma macrolepedotum*) spawning runs composed of large numbers of individual fish representing several species.”²⁸¹

Concurrent with the fish inventory, BOWA also conducted three baseline studies of non-volant mammals, avian species, and amphibians and reptiles. S. M. Litton and William Rabenau of Ferrum College had conducted a mammal survey in BOWA in 1985, but there

²⁷⁹ Atkinson, *Fish Inventories*, 3–4.

²⁸⁰ Atkinson, *Fish Inventories*, 17.

²⁸¹ Atkinson, *Fish Inventories*, 17.

had been no inventory conducted since then. To lead this important work, the MIDN turned to Dr. John F. Pagels, a respected biologist at Virginia Commonwealth University. Well known for his research on non-game species and their distribution, Pagels was ideal for the project. Over the years, he had collected thousands of specimens in Virginia.

During fall 2002, non-volant mammal inventories were initiated at the Booker T. Washington National Monument. With assistance from natural resource manager Timothy Sims and aerial photography, the site selection process began in the fall of 2002 and four major habitat types were identified: field-forest edge, mixed pinewood hardwood, hardwood (HWD), and bottomland hardwood (BLHWD). The research team used a grid system to randomly select the sample locations. In 2003, BOWA conducted a baseline non-volant mammal inventory. The purpose was twofold: (1) confirm the species identified in the 1985 study and (2) document the presence of new species. Trapping sessions occurred between June 2003 and August 2004. In fall 2003, the research team began using night-camera photography as an additional method for documenting medium-to-large nocturnal species. The findings indicated relatively rich mammal fauna at BOWA. The bottomland hardwood habitat type yielded the greatest richness of species. Twenty-six mammals were recorded, and their size ranged from pygmy shrew to the black bear. The survey report predicted future observations and samplings would detect more mammals at the park.²⁸²

With support from MIDA and under the guidance of Joseph C. Mitchell, a professor of biology at the University of Richmond, BOWA also conducted an inventory of amphibians and reptiles in the park. The intent of the baseline inventory was threefold: “(1) document 90 percent of the amphibians (frogs, salamanders) and reptiles (turtles, lizards, snakes) of BOWA; (2) describe their associated habitats; and (3) provide park staff with conservation and management recommendations.”²⁸³ Before the early 2000s, there had been no published literature on amphibians and reptiles at the site. The research team had an initial site visit on May 9, 2002, then field survey work occurred during amphibian and reptile activity seasons in 2003 and 2004. The field crews relied on visual encounter surveys, audio surveys, and road surveys, dipnets, minnow traps, and turtle traps. The seven habitats surveyed included grassland, mixed hardwoods and pine, mixed hardwoods, mixed pine, impoundment pond, floodplain pools, and streams. The inventory documented fewer than 90 percent of the expected number of amphibians and reptiles. According to the inventory report:

²⁸² J.F. Pagels, A.D. Chupp, and Am. Roder, *Survey of Mammals at Booker T. Washington National Monument* Survey of Mammals at Booker T. Washington National Monument. Technical Report NPS/NER/NRTR—2005/032 (National Park Service, Philadelphia, PA, December 2005).

²⁸³ J.C. Mitchell, *Inventory of Amphibians and Reptiles of Booker T. Washington National Monument*. Technical Report NPS/NER/NRTR-2006/057 (National Park Service, Northeast Region, Philadelphia, PA), 13.

Eastern box turtles were the most numerous chelonian species found at BOWA. Individuals of only one freshwater species were found, the snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*). Two lizards were found, both apparently abundant on BOWA, the five-lined skink (*Eumeces fasciatus*) and the eastern fence lizard (*Sceloporus undulatus*). The latter was found in relatively large numbers. The snake fauna was the most difficult to sample. In BOWA, the eastern ratsnake (*Elaphe obsoleta*) was the most numerous species seen in the hardwood forests in the park and in the outbuildings. One species of snake, the northern water snake (*Nerodia sipedon*), was found in association with Gills Creek and its tributaries. No species listed as state or federally threatened were found during this inventory. Although no venomous snakes were found during this survey, the probability of the northern copperhead (*Agkistrodon contortrix*) occurring on BOWA is probably high.²⁸⁴

The report acknowledged the challenges of short-term surveys since amphibians and reptiles are “highly seasonal animals whose activity patterns respond to changes in climate, temperature, and precipitation.” This mandated additional inventory work on each individual habitat type in order to have a better understanding of the abundance and distributions of amphibians and reptiles throughout the site. The report also identified existing and potential challenges for resource management, focusing on visitor education, vehicle and recreational activity, exotics and subsidized predators, and habitat management. Though noting that habitat loss was not a major threat to BOWA at the time, the report recommended that resource management pay closer attention to “the farm impoundment, the springs, Gills Creek and its tributaries, and the full-canopy hardwood forests. These habitats should be maintained as natural areas with amphibians and reptiles in mind.”²⁸⁵ The report also recommended the development and public distribution of educational materials “on the ecology, flora, and fauna, and their interactions with human history at BOWA. Such materials will properly advise visitors of the value of this park to natural resources and instruct them on the context within which the historical actions took place.”²⁸⁶

As part of BOWA’s resource management initiatives, the park’s avian community was also inventoried in 2003. With the support of Sims and the park staff, Bill and Anne Tucker and Fenton Day collected data on the relative abundance of species, species by habitat type, and species of concern. Using breeding season, migration, winter, and audio-play surveys, the Tuckers and Day conducted fieldwork in six habitat types: animal feedlot, forest/field edge, grassland, mature deciduous forest, mixed coniferous and deciduous forest, and riparian forest. The fieldworkers detected ninety-two species, of which fifteen

²⁸⁴ Mitchell, *Inventory of Amphibians and Reptiles*, 25.

²⁸⁵ Mitchell, *Inventory of Amphibians and Reptiles*, 34.

²⁸⁶ Mitchell, *Inventory of Amphibians and Reptiles*, 35.

were on the US Fish and Wildlife Service’s list of special concern or priority species. The four most detected avian species within BOWA were chipping sparrow (*Spizella passerina*), American robin (*turdus migratorius*), northern cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*), and red-eyed vireo (*vireo olivaceus*). The greatest species richness was observed in the mixed coniferous and deciduous forest. In hopes of maintaining the ecological health of the area, the report on the avian inventory warned of the potential dangers of continued development along the Route 122 corridor. “Due to the proximity of BOWA to Smith Mountain Lake and the accompanying rapid development, habitat loss on all sides of the park could very well impact avifauna at the park in the near future.”²⁸⁷

Here lies an important component of these inventory reports. Combining resource management with valuable knowledge about the site, they also assisted the site’s personnel and stakeholders in their efforts to safeguard BOWA from the deleterious effects of development. In fact, the NPS’ and the Mid-Atlantic Inventory Group’s renewed commitment to resource management coincided with the acceleration of development initiatives in the Smith Mountain Lake area. As Sims explains, “Right about that time is when the development started happening over here at West Lake and we started getting inundated with sediment in our streams and all that. And we relied on I&M—the people with inventory and monitoring—we relied on their guidance and help to mitigate that successfully. And it’s just kind of been going from there with continued water quality studies, long-term forest vegetation study.”

Vital Signs Monitoring

The second component of the NPS’s revamped resource management program was vital signs monitoring.²⁸⁸ Vital signs are the ecological processes, biological attributes, and the physical resources and processes in a park’s ecosystem that reveal the health of a site’s natural resources. Foundational to any effective resource management program, vital signs monitoring involves determining the status and trends in atmospheric ozone concentrations, wet and dry depositions, forest vegetation, the structure and composition of aquatic macroinvertebrates, weather and climate, and water quality, among other activities. Since the MIDN is primarily a forested ecoregion, the network prioritized vegetation inventory, mapping, classification, and monitoring. In early 2001, the Northeast Region requested the VADNH’s assistance in developing vegetation classification and maps for seven NPS units in the Piedmont and Coastal Plain of Virginia. Later that year,

²⁸⁷National Park Service, *Inventory of Avian Species at Booker T. Washington National Monument. Technical Report NPS/NER/NRTR—2009/137* (National Park Service, Philadelphia, PA, June 2009), xi.

²⁸⁸ In 2006, the Mid-Atlantic Network identified fifteen high priority vital signs for implementation as long-term monitoring programs in the parks.

representatives from NPS Northeast Region Inventory and Monitoring, NatureServe (then the Association of Biodiversity Information), NCSU-CEO, and VADNH convened a meeting to discuss the scope of the project. At the session, the groups outlined their respective roles and responsibilities. According to Karen D. Patterson, the ecologists at VADNH were responsible for field data collection and analysis, regional classification development, and the editing and validation of maps. Their responsibilities also included the development of local association descriptions and writing the final report. After the VADNH developed the vegetation classification, NatureServe then ensured the classification met USNVC standards, input new information into the USNVC databases, and completed global association descriptions. NatureServe would also help develop and review field keys to the mapping units, as well as provide in-the-field consultation on problematic vegetation types. The researchers at NCSU-CEO “were responsible for aerial photography acquisition and processing, preliminary photo interpretation, and compiling edits to the vegetation line work. They also wrote the corresponding sections of the final reports.”²⁸⁹ Together VADNH and NCSU-CEO worked with NPS to develop accurate vegetation maps of the site, an updated digital geospatial vegetation database for the park, and a list and description of plant species in the park.

The inventory deepened the BOWA staff’s knowledge of the uniqueness of the park’s vegetation community and potential dangers. For example, during vegetative mapping in 2002, workers documented a new occurrence of a Basic Mesic Forest. Another major finding of the inventory was the identification of invasive non-native plant species, of which the most common and threatening were the tree of heaven, Russian olive, Japanese honeysuckle, and Nepalese browntop. These findings, along with the scope, methods, and recommendations of the inventory would be published in June 2008.

There was also a geological inventory conducted at BOWA. The monument’s ecosystem had become a source of concern for BOWA employees as many noticed a rise in stream flow in recent years. In fact, the 2000 GMP noted how soil erosion had forced the relocation of portions of the Jack-O-Lantern Branch Trail away from Gills Creek and nearby wetlands. These, among other issues, were addressed in Trista L. Thornberry-Ehrlich’s 2010 *Geologic Resources Inventory Report*.²⁹⁰ Completed in 2010, the report detailed the park’s geologic features and processes, identified potential research projects for the future, and examined the influence of adjacent land development on the monument’s viewshed and hydrologic system. “Geologic knowledge is essential in understanding landscape evolution and anthropogenic impacts,” Ehrlich maintained.²⁹¹

²⁸⁹ Karen D. Patterson, *Vegetation Classification and Mapping at Booker T. Washington National Monument Virginia. Technical Report NPS/NER/NRTR__2008/100* (Philadelphia: National Park Service), 24.

²⁹⁰ Trista L. Thornberry-Ehrlich, *Booker T. Washington National Monument Geologic Resources Inventory Report*, 2010.

²⁹¹ Thornberry-Ehrlich, *Booker T. Washington National Monument Geologic Resources*, v.

“From the first settlers and farmers through modern development, geology has played a fundamental role in the evolution of Booker T. Washington National Monument.”²⁹² Geologic features and processes, she continued, had shaped the site’s “topographic expressions, streams and rivers, soils, wetlands, vegetation patterns and animal life.”²⁹³ In her report, Thornberry-Ehrlich also addressed the impact of climate change and developmental issues on the monument. “High flow events and continued development around the park may impact fluvial ecosystems within the monument. . . . During high flow events, erosion causes degradation of the aquatic and riparian environments in the monument.”²⁹⁴ To protect the park’s natural resources, the surrounding community needed to understand the current and potential dangers facing the monument’s hydrogeologic system and groundwater system. “Education and cooperation with surrounding landowners in sustainable land-use practices could help mitigate the problem of soil erosion in the area,” Thornberry-Ehrlich explained.²⁹⁵

²⁹² Thornberry-Ehrlich, *Booker T. Washington National Monument Geologic Resources*, v.

²⁹³ Thornberry-Ehrlich, *Booker T. Washington National Monument Geologic Resources*, v.

²⁹⁴ Thornberry-Ehrlich, *Booker T. Washington National Monument Geologic Resources*, 5.

²⁹⁵ Thornberry-Ehrlich, *Booker T. Washington National Monument Geologic Resources*, 6.

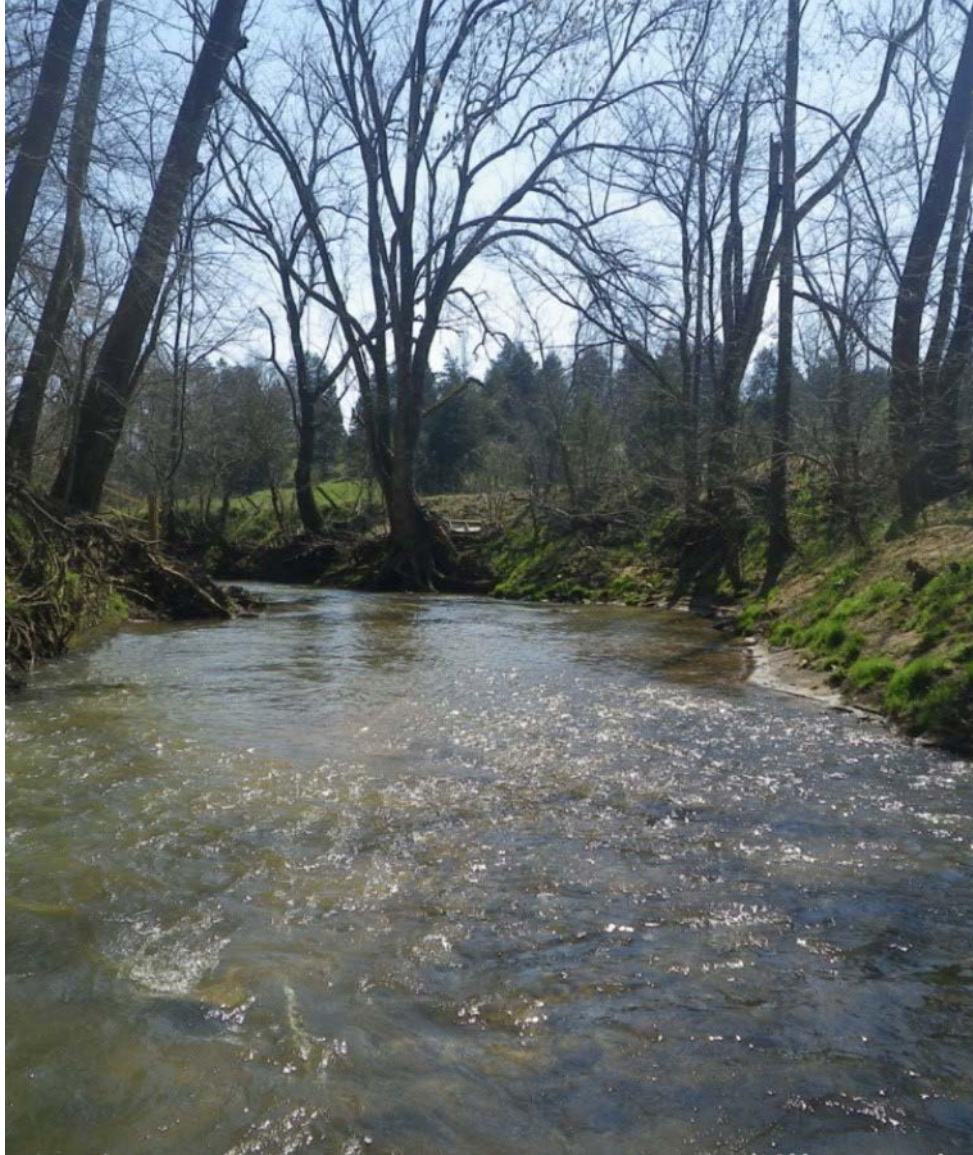


Figure 57: Gills Creek (BOWA Archives).

Much of Thornberry-Ehrlich’s report dealt with management issues, but she also addressed how its data had interpretive value: “The geological landscape in south-central Virginia underscores the relationship between geology and history. Both the geologic resources and the natural history of the area should be emphasized and interpreted to enhance the visitor’s experience of Booker T. Washington National Monument.”²⁹⁶ This observation provides an important reminder of the educational value of the site’s environment.

²⁹⁶ Thornberry-Ehrlich, *Booker T. Washington National Monument Geologic Resources*, v.

With the completion of the *Geologic Resources Inventory Report* in 2010, the monument filled some important information gaps. This new information could help improve the visitor experience as park personnel curated and shared a fuller and richer story of Booker T. Washington and the environment which shaped his early childhood.

Without question, BOWA made significant progress in its resource management program as a member of the MIDN. This progress continued well into the decade. There were additional studies on air quality, water quality, and the effects of climate change. According to Timothy Sims, the importance of BOWA's relationship with the I&M cannot be overstated: "They've created more of a collaborative resource management program for parks to participate in, rather than everybody being out on their own." And the impact on BOWA was immediate and profound. "It's put us at the table of a larger park service resource management initiative."²⁹⁷ These studies also proved useful as rapid development and urban encroachment threatened the site's natural and cultural resources.

Development

Throughout the early 2000s, adjacent land issues were a source of great concern for Superintendent Harriett. The period between 2000 and 2007 witnessed a dramatic upsurge in nearby commercial development. The building boom began with the construction of Ron Willard's Westlake Towne Center, located on the corner of Virginia 122 and Scruggs Road. The Center's tenants included Kroger, Smith Mountain Coffee, Davidson, and Haywood's Jewelers. Willard's activities spurred the interests of other developers, hoping to profit from the area's population growth. New condominiums, retail shops, offices, and restaurants signaled a community undergoing major change. The effects of such change on BOWA's landscape ranged from sedimentation and soil erosion in Gills Creek (because of upstream development) to viewshed problems. "The number one resource issue facing Booker T. Washington National Monument is commercial development along the park's eastern boundary," Harriett complained in her 2005 annual report.²⁹⁸ Earlier that year, Franklin County Planning Commission and the Franklin County Board of Supervisors had approved the rezoning of 58 acres from agricultural to a planned commercial district. With this rezoning, Phillips Development proceeded with plans to construct 118 townhouse units along the park's designated national recreational trail. There were also plans for a 30,000-square-foot shopping center and an office park. To mitigate the effects of the development on BOWA, the Phillips development proposed the construction of a 150-foot buffer along the boundary line. The plans did not sit well with Harriett, who at a Franklin

²⁹⁷ Rebecca Harriett, interview with author, January 3, 2020.

²⁹⁸ Harriett, "Superintendent Annual Report Narrative," 2005.

County Board of Supervisors meeting in July, argued that the planned development would “clash with the peaceful agricultural landscape of the monument.”²⁹⁹ In response to the criticism of Harriett and others, Phillips Development submitted a new plan to the county. The revised plan, which included an 8-acre buffer, reduced the number of town homes from 181 to 161. It also abandoned plans for a large medical facility. The county also agreed to finance a \$7,500 Virginia Tech study of the visual effect of development near the site. The study had three objectives: “identify two to four views from the [monument] that must be preserved to maintain the site’s historic integrity, pinpoint whether the development will disrupt those views and suggest ways to mitigate potential problems.” Noting the “national significance” and “immense cultural significance of the property,” John Kern, the director of the Roanoke office of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources strongly supported the study: “The viewshed analysis will really give us a true picture of the impact from any development next to the Booker T. Washington National Monument. It may turn out that some things we think would be really intrusive wouldn’t be, and it could be the opposite.”³⁰⁰

Throughout the debate over Phillips’ development plans, BOWA found many supporters. Lynn Davis, a member of the Virginia Association for Parks, registered her discontent at the Franklin County Planning Commission’s approval of the rezoning and planned development of land adjacent to the park. “I am dismayed to see that you have gotten this far and not realized that the development is swallowing up this historic place,” she complained to the planning commission in 2005. Darledia Alexander felt the failure to protect the monument and the bucolic character of its adjacent lands was a slap in the face of African Americans. “When you stand on the birthplace and you look through the woods and see some condominiums, that would be a blemish to me and all African Americans.”

These spirited debates did not escape the notice of elected officials. At the beginning of the 2006 legislative session, Delegate Onzlee Ware (D-Roanoke) filed a budget amendment requesting three million dollars to purchase and lease land near the Booker T. Washington National Monument. Alarmed by the Phillips development, Ware wanted to protect the rural character of the area surrounding the park. The latest round of commercial and residential development, he believed, “would make the monument less dignified.”

Delegate Ware was unsuccessful in securing additional funds for BOWA, but park supporters persisted their call for greater protection of the park’s rural characteristics. One group that was especially vocal in its support of the site was the newly formed Friends of Booker T. Washington National Monument.

²⁹⁹ Mason Adams, “Opposition stalls development request,” *Roanoke Times*, July 19, 2005.

³⁰⁰ Megan Wazin, “Buffer to protect historic views; Developers reduced commercial space to accommodate a buffer near the Booker T. Washington plantation,” *Roanoke Times*, July 30, 2006.

New Partnerships

The genesis of Friends of Booker T. Washington National Monument can be traced to the fall of 2006, when Superintendent Harriett and Lillie Head broached the subject of naming a nonprofit organization which would provide financial support, volunteer assistance in resource management, and a vehicle of communication between the park and the larger public. “Every park that I had been at had some kind of Friends group or some kind of association that was supportive,” Harriett explains. But when she arrived at BOWA in 1995, the park had no such group. Over the years, she researched the strengths and benefits of various Friends groups. She had a couple of interest meetings but nothing substantial materialized until Lillie Head started volunteering at the Park. “She and I just hit it off,” Harriett recalled. “And her ties to Tuskegee Institute were very deep and strong. They went down to Tuskegee all the time for alumni things. And she had really good ideas about how to make a better connection with Tuskegee and she already had those connections. And I remember thinking, ‘Boy, she would make a great president of the Friends group.’”

With Head at the helm, the Friends of the Booker T. Washington National Monument was officially formed in 2008 with a \$10,000 start-up grant from the National Park Service. The group’s founding members were Lillie Head, Penny Blue, Sue Joyce, Linda McLaughlin, George McLaughlin, Jean Hines, Lonnie Hines, Kathleen Tully, John Tully, Wilbert Head, and Sandy Kelso. Within a year, the group had 122 members and had helped fund many of the monument’s activities. The members included local residents, relatives of Booker T. Washington, and Tuskegee Institute graduates. Over the years, the Friends of Booker T. Washington hosted a variety of events, including its well-attended Legacy Dinner and the Rites of Passage Camp.

This was but one of several partnerships the monument pursued in the 2000s to advance its mission and purpose. Another important partner during the 2000s was the Booker T. Washington Elementary School Alumni, Inc., which held their annual reunions at the park. Several members of the alumni group provided assistance to the park during its Juneteenth celebrations.

Increasingly, BOWA relied on volunteers to assist the staff in all facets of park operations, from interpretation to resource management. Throughout the 2000s, volunteer hours and contributions increased substantially. Between 2006 and 2007, for example, volunteer hours at the park increased from 3,652 to 4,044. Much of the training of the volunteers was done onsite but occasionally the park sponsored trips to related historical sites. In October 2007, volunteers traveled to Alabama, where they visited Tuskegee University and historic landmarks and museums in Selma, Montgomery, and Birmingham.

Such training was necessary as the park expanded its interpretive themes and the public's contact with volunteers rather than staff became more commonplace. The work of the volunteers was critical to the success of the park.

So, too, was the exemplary leadership of Superintendent Rebecca Harriett. Along with providing stability to the park, she brought vision, an indefatigable work ethic, great communication skills, and grit. She arrived at a critical juncture in the park's history and proved perfect for the position. The site's interpretive work and cultural and resource management thrived under her leadership. And while ongoing development in the Smith Mountain Lake area posed its own unique challenges, she nurtured and maintained strong relationships with community partners. Harriett's remarkable tenure at BOWA ended in 2009, when she accepted the superintendent position at Harper's Ferry.

CHAPTER TEN

AT THE CROSSROADS: CONFRONTING THE CHALLENGES OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY, 2009–2020

Introduction

On May 1, 2009, the *Roanoke Times* introduced readers to Carla Whitfield, the new superintendent of Booker T. Washington National Monument. Replacing Rebecca Harriett was no easy task, but Whitfield, an eleven-year veteran of the Park Service, was prepared for the challenge. Prior to her appointment, she had worked at several sites including Cane River Creole National Historic Park, the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail, and the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site. “I fell in love with this park from the moment I saw it,” Whitfield later remembered. Having begun her career at Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Whitfield was excited about the vast possibilities at the site.

During Whitfield’s tenure, BOWA completed major renovations to its visitor center; installed the “Born Here, Freed Here” exhibit; debuted a new film, *Measure of a Man*; developed new interpretive programs and activities; and maintained the public’s interest in highly popular special events such as Juneteenth, “Harvest Time,” and “An Old Virginia Christmas”. Since Whitfield’s tenure overlapped with the nation’s celebration of the Civil War Sesquicentennial, many of the park’s interpretive programs sought to tell the story of the Civil War and emancipation from the perspective of the enslaved residents on the Burroughs plantation.

Even as the staff poured its time and energy into strengthening its interpretation and educational programming, resource management remained a critical component of BOWA’s operations. Superintendent Whitfield and Chief of Interpretation and Resource Management Timothy Sims worked to fill significant gaps in the park’s knowledge about its archeological sources, natural resources, and cultural landscape. In 2014, two NPS archeologists and two historical landscape architects conducted research in the park. “We’re trying to get a better idea of what it may have been like during Booker T. Washington’s time,” Timothy Sims explained to a local reporter. “Right now it’s

conjectural, based on someone’s memory.” Proper stewardship of the park’s natural resources was also important to Sims. The negative effects of commercial and residential development, climate change, and invasive species necessitated careful management of the park’s resources. Between 2009 and 2018, the park conducted forest vegetation, water and air quality, and climate studies, as well as a geophysical survey. It also participated in a national study on white-nose syndrome disease among bats. With support from the MIDN and local and regional partners, BOWA’s natural resource division continued to build on the progress and advancements of the previous decade.

Staffing, 2009–2020

Division	Personnel
Management	Carla Whitfield (Superintendent) Robin Snyder (Superintendent)
Administration	Eleanor C. Long (Administrative Officer) Connie Mays (Administrative Clerk) Connie Mays (Administrative Officer, 2011) Melissa Johnson (Administrative Clerk)
Interpretation and Resource Management	Timothy Sims (Chief, Interpretation and Resource Management) Betsy Haynes (Park Ranger) Timothy D. Sinclair (Park Ranger) Janet Blanchard (Park Ranger) Brittany Lane (Park Ranger)
Maintenance	Kenneth W. Arrington (Facility Manager) John M. Mitchell (Heavy Equipment Operator) Kevin L. Phifer (Maintenance Worker) Christopher A. Major (Maintenance Worker) John M. Mitchell (Facility Manager, 2020)

In 2009, Timothy Sinclair was selected as the Chief of Interpretation at Tuskegee Institute NHS; in 2010, Administrative Officer Eleanor Long retired; and in 2011, Connie Mays became the park’s new Administrative Officer.



Figure 58: Carla Whitfield, superintendent of the Booker T. Washington National Monument, 2009 to 2018 (BOWA Archives).

The staff’s hard work yielded positive results in terms of visitation numbers. Signature events drew crowds in the hundreds, and new initiatives like “Healthy Parks, Healthy People” and the Giving Garden aimed to increase the public use of the park and its trails. If visitation numbers are any indication, many in the community were heeding the staff’s call to engage with the park more.

Visitation Statistics, 2008–2018

Year	Statistics	Year	Statistics
2008	19,990	2014	26,127
2009	21,665	2015	27,205
2010	24,361	2016	23,440
2011	24,030	2017	25,479
2012	24,361	2018	22,732
2013	22,103		

There were encouraging signs of growing interest in the park, but staff also faced their share of challenges. These challenges included two government shutdowns (2013 and 2018) and a maintenance backlog of about \$1.3 million. Of course, these problems were not unique to BOWA. By 2018, the deferred maintenance backlog at Virginia’s national parks was one billion dollars. Across the state and throughout the country, parks postponed maintenance work on their visitor centers, campgrounds, historic structures, and trails because of limited funding. In 2016, a group of senators, including Mark Warner,

called for increased funding for the nation’s parks. For these senators, the NPS’ maintenance backlog was unacceptable: “In addition to protecting some of our nation’s most awe-inspiring land and important historic sites, our National Park System serves as an important economic engine both nationally and in adjacent communities. It is crucial that national park facilities be kept safe and accessible so they may continue to welcome and educate millions of American and international visitors who pass through their gates each year.”³⁰¹

To deal with the limited funding for maintenance, the park and its supporters employed a wide range of strategies: volunteer groups launched fundraising initiatives like the Bucket Challenge; the park elicited the community’s support in writing small grants; and summer employees at the park tackled maintenance projects. In 2011, for example, the park participated in the YCC program for the first time in 15 years. Four Franklin High School students worked (forty hours a week) at the park with funds provided through the YCC. Timothy Sims appreciated the students contributions, particularly on maintenance projects: “The additional manpower has allowed us to tackle projects in a shorter period of time than we would have normally been able to do with our small staff . . . they were able to go out and replace a pretty long section of split rail fencing in just a matter of days. That’s a project that is normally hard for us to get to because of our daily demands.”³⁰²

To address overdue maintenance needs, Superintendent Whitfield also sought assistance in applying for smaller grants. “A lot of grants come on our radar, but we don’t have the staff to apply for them,” Whitfield told the *Roanoke Times*. Because of a limited budget, BOWA staff members often do the work of several people. “They are overtaxed,” Whitfield said. Though small grants were no replacement for sufficient funding from the federal government, they could assist the park in addressing some major issues. For example, the monument’s fences were in poor condition and repairs were necessary to keep the farm animals safe. “A good grant would help us do that,” Whitfield noted.

In addition to managing the effects of wear and tear on BOWA’s facilities, the park’s staff also had to negotiate the ever-lingering problem of land use. Development in Franklin County persisted as a significant challenge to maintaining the park’s boundaries and buffers. In an attempt to protect the boundaries of the park and make provisions for future park expansion, Whitfield attempted to negotiate purchases of land bordering the park from area developers including Ron Willard, Bill Berry, Phil Floyd, and William Nissen II. If the park could secure additional land purchases on the boundary between developments and the park site, Whitfield proposed to “create a new access road to the park” which would “allow visitors to acclimate themselves to nature en route” to the park. Whitfield also suggested that proactive planning on behalf of the park would be key to the future of

³⁰¹ Alicia Petska, “Senators Call for Park Funds,” *The Roanoke Times*, April 9, 2016.

³⁰² Denise Allen Membreno, “Students Embrace the Chance to Work at BTW,” *Roanoke Times*, August 5, 2011.

land management. She pledged in 2010 “to put together a land management plan that will address all the [future] boundary issues” so that if developers decided to sell property adjacent to the park, BOWA would “have a plan of action as to how to address that.”³⁰³ Trying to protect the park’s resources involved a series of complicated negotiations which included many players—the Franklin County Board of Supervisors, local developers, Congress, park staff, and volunteers. As superintendent, Whitfield worked hard to represent the monument’s interests at multiple levels, from lobbying for federal funds to purchase land to serving on the Franklin County Board of Supervisor’s advisory planning committee for community development for Westlake and Halesford in 2014.³⁰⁴

Despite the many uncertainties surrounding development, land use, and funding, BOWA staff remained steadfast in its pursuit of the park’s principal mission: telling the story of Booker T. Washington and the life of the enslaved on the Burroughs plantation. Among the other developments at the park which assisted management in telling a fuller story was the renovation of the visitor center.

Visitor Center Renovation (2010)

In June 2010, Booker T. Washington National Monument unveiled plans for a 2,000-square-foot expansion to the visitor center at the Park. The renovation would double the space of its 45-seat theater and enlarge the facility’s exhibition area. The NPS entered into a contract with The Matthews Group (TMG) Construction company to complete the renovations and additions. According to TMG, “the existing auditorium and staff office space was modified to house exhibits and a new bookstore, respectively. Additionally, a new library/research space and staff offices were extended in space over the former garage.”³⁰⁵ The renovations also included an updating of the facility’s electric, HVAC, and Life Safety systems. The newly renovated building was to be equipped with sustainable and energy saving features and meet the standards of the American Disability Act.

Only the new theater and expanded exhibit space were constructed. The over 1,400 square foot expansion was completed in October 2010 and a grand opening of the visitor center was held in conjunction with the park’s annual Christmas Days in Old Virginia.

The expansion and new additions to the visitor center would be, according to Whitfield, “a chance for [visitors] to see some new things and get new takes on history.” The new exhibits featured spotlights on the Union and Confederate sides of the Civil War and the United States Colored Troops from Franklin Country—exhibits that would further

³⁰³ Laurie Edwards, “Land in Limbo,” *Roanoke Times*, August 12, 2010.

³⁰⁴ Elizabeth Hock, “Futures of Westlake and Halesford Up for Discussion,” *Roanoke Times*, February 7, 2014.

³⁰⁵ “Booker T. Washington Theater and Office Addition and Renovation,” *TMG Construction* website, accessed April 28, 2021, <http://www.tmgworld.net/portfolio-item/theater-and-office-addition-and-renovation>.

contextualize the significance of the park and Washington as a historical figure.³⁰⁶ Whitfield was elated, but not satisfied. “This is just a first stage in us projecting the resource. We have many, many other projects we’d like to do.”³⁰⁷

Fortunately, BOWA had the support of the National Park Service. With funds earmarked from fees collected under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, the NPS awarded the Booker T. Washington a \$370,000 grant to redesign its exhibit space. In 2011, BOWA contracted Wondercabinet Interpretive Design and Mystic Scenic Studios to produce new interactive exhibits. According to the park’s staff and management, “the current exhibits don’t effectively communicate or offer young people the opportunity to fully engage; to use their imagination; and to explore, touch, feel, and interact with the content in a meaningful way.” The site needed compelling, interactive exhibits through which visitors can make meaningful personal connections with content. In their meetings and correspondence with exhibit designers, BOWA staff clearly communicated their expectations and goals for the project.

These goals were as follows:

1. “Further strengthen the multifaceted approach to public educational BOWA with the thoughtful development, design and production of new youth-friendly exhibits through the site. . . .”
2. “[unify] the many layers this site offers into one holistic experience.”
3. “encourage ongoing conversation about the variable legacies left by Booker T. Washington and the continuing evolving context of race in America.”
4. “increase public awareness of a Booker T. Washington and make the park more attractive to school group and families.”

To achieve these objectives, BOWA staff emphasized the necessity of foregrounding five main themes throughout the new exhibits:

1. The Booker T. Washington National Monument is Booker T. Washington’s birthplace, where he lived in enslavement with his family as a child.
2. The Booker T. Washington National Monument is an emancipation site for Booker T. Washington and his family. Emancipation brought freedom and liberty to the enslaved but also presented many challenges in their new lives.

³⁰⁶ Laurie Edwards, “At BTW, Room to Spread Out, Bring Exhibits In,” *Roanoke Times*, October 29, 2010.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

3. Booker T. Washington was an outstanding educator and national leader, whose early life on the Burroughs' plantation formed the basis for his beliefs about education, work, and community.
4. Enslavement was a degrading and traumatic human experience entrenched in law and enforced through physical and emotional violence.
5. Slavery was the cause of the Civil War and fundamental to the tobacco-based economy of Virginia and to the Southern economy at large.³⁰⁸

The planning and designing processes for the exhibits were extensive, involving input from staff in the administrative, interpretive, resource management, and maintenance division. A perusal of the correspondence between BOWA and the Wondercabinet Interpretive Design and Mystic Scenic Studios finds extensive input from Timothy Sims, Carla Whitfield, and Ken Arrington. Their hard work was evident when the “Born Here, Freed Here” Exhibit opened on September 11, 2014.

“Born Here, Freed Here” Exhibit (2014)

Three years in the works, “Born Here, Freed Here” was engaging, informative, and beautifully constructed. It combined sculpture, illustrations, text, photographs, and audiovisual to relate the story of Washington’s early life. “I think this exhibit does something that I haven’t found at any other exhibit.” Superintendent Whitfield told local journalists. “I think we charged ahead and are showing the struggles that Booker T. had to face as a slave, but in an interactive way.”³⁰⁹ Without question, the exhibit was spectacular and brought to the forefront old and more recent interpretive themes. Unafraid to confront difficult and sometimes controversial subjects, the exhibit emphasized slavery as the cause of the Civil War and the Burroughs plantation as a site of emancipation. In ways both subtle and overt, the exhibit revealed how far the park and US historiography had come since BOWA’s founding in 1956.

³⁰⁸ Booker T. Washington National Monument, Visitor Center Exhibits-Formative Evaluation Report,” June 22, 2012. Box 102, Folder 5.

³⁰⁹ Megan Carpenter, “New Exhibit to Open at Booker T. Washington National Memorial,” *Roanoke Times*, September 17, 2014.



Figure 59: “Born Here, Freed Here” exhibit (Neal Mayer, Exhibit Design Services).



Figure 60: “Born Here, Freed Here” exhibit (Neal Mayer, Exhibit Design Services).

The new exhibit was a central component of the park’s interpretive work, but staff still relied on their annual programs and special events to assist them in telling the story of the life of Booker T. Washington within the larger context of the lived experiences of African Americans in Virginia and throughout the United States.

As the site prepared for the Centennial Celebration of the NPS’s founding and the Civil War Sesquicentennial, BOWA managers and staff worked hard to improve its interpretation program and the visitor experience, as well as attract a larger audience. On April 16, 2016, the park debuted a new film, *Measure of a Man*. The twelve-minute film starred Kenneth Morris (a descendant of Booker T. Washington) and the great abolitionist Frederick Douglass, and featured members of the Booker T. Washington National Monument Volunteer Living History Guild. With vivid detail, the film follows Washington’s life from slavery to freedom, recounts his accomplishments as leader of Tuskegee Institute, and details his leadership style. As Carla Whitfield noted at the film’s debut, *Measure of a Man* was based on existing scholarship as well as new research at the park.

Annual Programs and Special Events

Three signature events sponsored by BOWA remained extremely popular: Juneteenth, “Harvest Time,” and “An Old Virginia Christmas.” A day of historical reflection, music, and food, the Juneteenth Celebration was an extraordinary event which attracted residents from the Smith Mountain Lake area, Roanoke, and nearby communities in North Carolina and Virginia. Children played games, admired and petted the animals, and participated in the living history tours. Vendors sold fish, chicken, hot dogs, deserts, and drinks. In the afternoon, the Booker T. Washington National Monument Living History Guild Players reenacted the experience of the enslaved residents of the Burroughs Plantation receiving news of their emancipation. Another centerpiece of the Juneteenth celebration was gospel music. Over the years, the event featured Lil Joe and Refuge, Roy and Revelation, John P. Kee, and various local groups. The centrality of gospel music at the event was fitting given the deep cultural meanings the sacred songs hold for African Americans. Not just a form of entertainment, gospel music has long been a source of spiritual sustenance for many African Americans. And as an artform that emphasizes the power of faith in times of despair, gospel music blended perfectly with the introspective yet uplifting spirit of the Juneteenth celebration.



Figure 61: Juneteenth Celebration, 2013 (BOWA Archives).

Another popular special event is “Harvest Time,” which reenacts life on a mid-nineteenth-century slaveholding tobacco plantation during September. “Harvest Time” features costumed demonstrations of apple drying, knitting, hearth cooking, blacksmithing, tobacco cutting and twisting, and other activities. One of the more popular demonstrators is blacksmith Dale Morse, a former volunteer at the park who runs a

blacksmithing school in Waynesboro.³¹⁰ Along with demonstrations, the festival offers free horse-drawn carriage rides. Superintendent Whitfield viewed “Harvest Time” as an integral component of the site’s interpretive work: “In addition to providing a day full of activities for families to have fun economically, Harvest Time serves as a great way to learn, in a hands-on way, how our ancestors lived their daily lives.”³¹¹

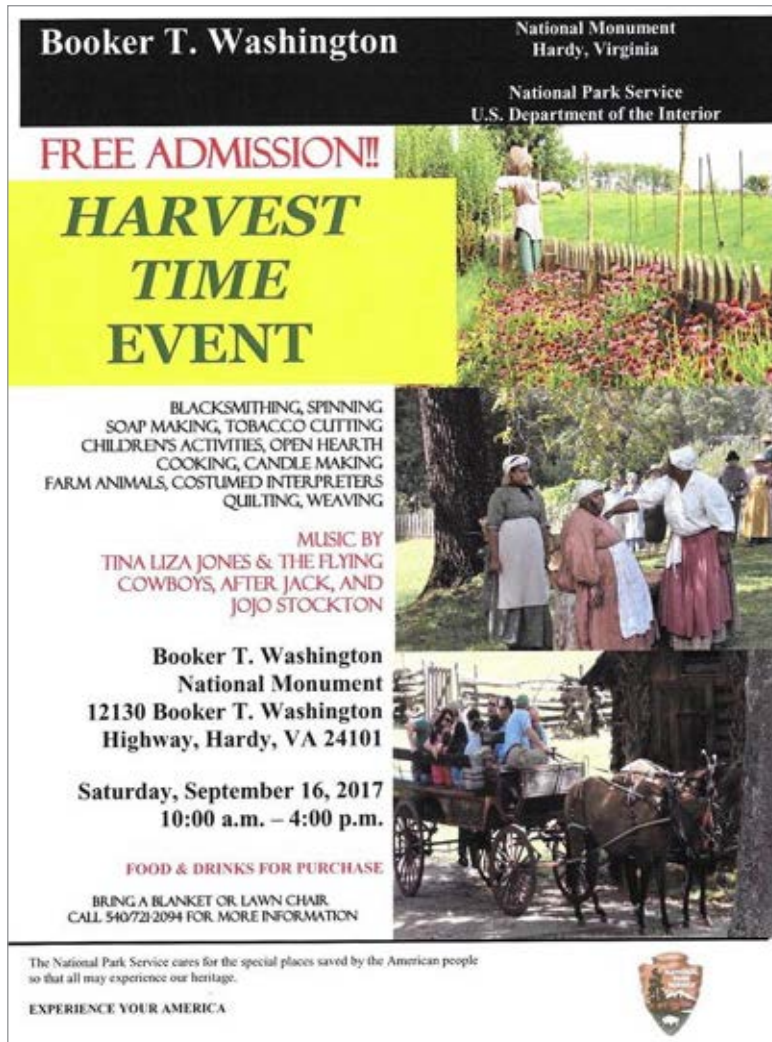


Figure 62: Flyer for “Harvest Time” event (BOWA Archives).

³¹⁰ “Harvest Festival at Booker T. Washington Set for Sept. 15,” *Smith Mountain Eagle* website, September 6, 2018, http://www.smithmountaineagle.com/news/article_58905a28-b20c-11e8-b6cc-579e0e36e3c5.html.

³¹¹ “Take a Step Back to Harvest Time,” *Smith Mountain Lake* website, September 14, 2015, https://www.smithmountainlake.com/news/local/take-a-step-back-to-harvest-time/article_4bb90b84-598a-540e-b5b9-8547060d6c6e.html.



Figure 63: “An Old Virginia Christmas” event at BOWA (BOWA Archives).

The local community also looked forward to the park’s annual “An Old Virginia Christmas” event. The event is based on Booker T. Washington’s reflections on Christmas in his 1907 article, “Christmas Days in Old Virginia.” In the article, which was published in *Suburban Life*, Washington shares his memories of how he and his enslaved family members experienced the holiday. Significant attention was given to the reunion of family members who had been hired out and thus away from their relatives for most of the year. “It was an important period in many ways, but the feeling of joy at the reunion of the family prevailed above all others,” Washington reflected.³¹² These reflections, along with other data about Christmas in mid-nineteenth-century Virginia informed the activities of the site’s annual “An Old Virginia Christmas.” The event features living history interpretive programs and tours, children’s activities, music, and light refreshments. The history presentations provided visitors with the opportunity to learn about the holiday experiences of the masters’ and slaves’ families on the Burroughs plantation. The general structure of the program is consistent, but the historical focus of the presentations shifts each year. Whereas the 2016 program focused on 1856, the year of Washington’s birth, the 2019 program brought visitors back to 1860, the year before the start of the Civil War. Park volunteers are critical to the ongoing success of these programs: “Volunteers are critical because we don’t have the number of people we would need to put on an event like this,” Betsy Haynes noted in 2012. “the owners of the plantation had 14 children, and there were

³¹² Booker T. Washington, “Christmas in Old Virginia,” *Suburban Life* 5: 336–37.

at one time at least 10 slaves here. We don't even have as many people who work here as they had children. We have two rangers and a supervisor on staff."³¹³ For the Christmas event, volunteers helped make costumes, served as interpreters, and worked to ensure guests had a great time.

Through a diverse set of programming, park staff sought to teach visitors not only about the history of the site, but its natural environment as well. One such program is the Junior Ranger Program, which is open to children ages 6 to 12. The rangers spend time in the visitor center, the tobacco barn, the slave cabin, and along the Jack-O-Lantern Branch Trail. The programs and activities focus on Washington's rise from slavery to freedom, his engagement with nature, and his character. "Listening to Mother Nature," "Walk a Mile in Booker's Shoes," and "Booker Character Camp" are the titles of some of the activities in which junior rangers participate during their Saturday meetings.

Junior Ranger 2019

Working with the Head, Hand, and Heart

Dates: July 10, 17 & 24
Time: 10:00-11:30 a.m.

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON NATIONAL MONUMENT

PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED by June 21, 2019
Register **EARLY** by calling 540/721-2094!

July 10 Listening to Mother Nature
Are you interested in reptiles and amphibians? Chat with a park ranger and herpetologist about Booker T. Washington's views on the importance of nature while also handling some of nature's friendly critters!

July 17 Walk a Mile in Booker's Shoes
Have you ever wondered how Booker got from Franklin County, VA to Malden, WV? Venture out on the 1.5 mile Jack-O-Lantern Branch Trail to learn about Booker T. Washington's journey to freedom.

July 24 Booker Character Camp
Have you ever wondered how Booker T. Washington became a great man? Spend time with a park ranger to discuss the importance of good character and participate in hands on team building activities.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Open to children ages 6-12 years old. Space is limited so register today!!

Booker T. Washington National Monument
12130 BTW Highway
Hardy, VA 24101

"Turn me over for a look at Eco-Camp Programs" >>>>

JUNIOR RANGER
AGES 6-12

Figure 64: Junior Park Ranger advertisement (BOWA Archives).

³¹³ *Roanoke Times*, November 13, 2012.

Cultural Resource Management

A number of historical, ethnographic, and archeological studies and surveys of the cultural landscape were conducted during Carla Whitfield’s term as superintendent. These included historical research on the Burroughs plantation and an archeological study of site. In 2013 an archeological study was undertaken under the direction of an interdisciplinary team of researchers, including archeologists William Griswold of the NPS Northeast Regional Office, Liza Rupp of Valley Forge National Historical Park, historical landscape architect Eliot Foulds, and Alexandra von Bieberstein (a student intern at the NPS’s Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation). Over a five-day period, the archeological team utilized ground penetrating radar (GPR), a resistivity meter, and a gradiometer/magnetometer to collect geophysical data, sensing conditions and anomalies below the surface. The goal of the study was to enable the park to provide a more accurate portrait and interpretation of daily life at the Burroughs plantation.³¹⁴



Figure 65: Alexandra von Bieberstein and Liza Rupp conduct archeological research at BOWA (BOWA Archives).

³¹⁴ Alexandra von Bieberstein, “Geophysical Survey at Booker T. Washington National Monument,” *National Park Service* website, May 2013, https://www.nps.gov/articles/news_bowa_survey.htm.

Natural Resource Management

Under the leadership of Timothy Sims, BOWA's natural resource program remained vibrant. With assistance from the MIDN, regional partners, and volunteer teams, the park participated in a variety of natural resource inventory and monitoring activities and testing. These activities ranged from water quality tests to the inventory and monitoring of rare bat species. During the summer of 2010, the MIDN initiated pilot testing for water quality monitoring in its parks. Streams were tested to detect any stressors (stream acidification) affecting aquatic communities within the parks' boundaries. This rtesting had four objectives: (1) to document the status and trends in water quality and flow; (2) to determine the natural range of variability in water chemistry; (3) to detect water quality measures which exceed threshold values and determine their compliance with state and federal water quality standards; and (4) to document changes in stream channel characteristics at sampling sites.

To remain aware of ecological stressors on the park, the I&M also monitored BOWA's forest health and bird populations. In 2011, sixteen bird monitoring stations were surveyed at BOWA. The ten most abundant species were the American crow, red-eyed vireo, chipping sparrow, tufted titmouse, Eastern wood pewee, blue-gray gnatcatcher, indigo bunting, northern cardinal, Carolina chickadee, and mourning dove. Within the park, twenty-four species of conservation concern, thirteen stewardship species, and eleven watchlist species were detected. I&M also monitored the health of the forest: in 2011, two plots established in 2007 at BOWA are still classified as "Caution." Lastly, compared to other parts in the MIDN, BOWA had "a low average percent cover of exotics with the most common species being Japanese honey suckle and Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*)." These results were confirmed in 2012, when researchers resampled plots established in 2008.³¹⁵ The next year, field crews revisited plots established in 2009 to better understand health trends and help BOWA managers and staff make sound management decisions.

In 2015, a team of researchers affiliated with the University of Richmond conducted a Natural Resource Conditions Assessment (NCRA) of the park. Through a multi-disciplinary synthesis of existing data and knowledge, the NRCA at BOWA documented current and trending conditions, detailed existing and potential threats to the park, identified data, and put forth a set of recommendations. The report identified air quality, invasive species, and development within the watershed as immediate threats to BOWA. The assessment report's recommendations can be found in the table on the following page:

³¹⁵ "Booker T. Washington National Monument 2012 Status and Trends," *Mid-Atlantic Network Forest Vegetation Resource Brief, National Park Service Northeast Region Inventory & Monitoring Program*, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/DownloadFile/482017>.

Natural Resource Conditions Assessment, 2015

Indicators	Recommendations
Air Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spread awareness throughout the region • Educate the public on the causes and effects of air pollution
Water Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take steps to decrease the potential for eutrophication • Prevent cows from entering Jack-O-Lantern Branch • Continue and increase monitoring of macroinvertebrates as an integrative measure of stream quality with special attention on species which have not yet been documented in the park
Biological Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue and increase treatment of known invasive species problems such as Japanese stilt grass; increase monitoring of treatment effectiveness • Increase monitoring and survey efforts for herpetofauna • Monitor white-tailed deer densities, which are a regional problem • Coordinate with other parks to prepare for hemlock woolly adelgid and emerald ash borer • Consider connectivity of forest resources when conducting any management
Landscape Dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • activities which would result in the loss of forest cover in the park • Work with neighbors to minimize impacts of future development outside of park's borders • Preserve healthy riparian forest buffers inside park and along its boundary • Continue to practice mowing techniques which will protect the integrity of large grassland patches • Gather data on night skies and soundscapes

Source: Lookingbill, T., H. Courtenay, J. Finn, R. Gifford, N. Hatchel, M. Mulroy, A. Pericak and M. Rouch. 2017. Booker T. Washington National Monument: Natural Resource condition Assessment. Natural Resource Report NPS/BOWA/NRR—2017/1558. National Park Service, Fort Collins, Colorado.

One unexpected study undertaken at the park was developed in response to NPS's efforts to learn more about white-nose syndrome (WNS), a fungal disease killing bats in the United States. The fungus *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* grows on the face and wings of

hibernating bats. Since bats are an important part of the ecosystem and a critical component of biodiversity, the NPS was committed to combating WNS and better protecting important cave habitats and bat populations. In Virginia, according to one study, WNS has reduced some bat populations by more than 90 percent.³¹⁶ The MIDN set out to collect baseline bat data within its parks, including BOWA from 2016 to 2017; scientists relied on acoustic detectors to study the bat population at BOWA. The most commonly detected bat at the park was the state endangered little brown bat (*Myotis Lucifugus*).

The bat study was an indication of how the park's natural resource management had evolved as a result of its membership in the MIDN. "That wasn't something," Timothy Sims explains, "that I thought of as the resource manager here . . . I&M had already picked that up and was thinking of it and they identified us as a good park to participate in [the study]."³¹⁷

As the park carried out its work, it faced significant and sometimes unexpected challenges. A significant aspect of the park's management and administration involved staying on top of the latest development plans and securing the support of partners in protecting the site's cultural and natural resources. Throughout 2010, debates about the future of development in the county and its effects on the Booker T. Washington National Monument were an ongoing conversation between developers, residents, BOWA park staff, and the Franklin County Board of Supervisors. The most immediate concern for Whitfield during the first year of her tenure as superintendent was the property of William Nissen. In January 2010, Nissen purchased 2 acres of land west of the park on Route 122. Not long after the purchase, he cut down several of the trees on the property, which did not sit well with many park supporters. "This assault on the serenity and green space around the monument is coming from most sites," Kathleen Tully of the Friends of Booker T. Washington complained. The ongoing threat of urban encroachment, along with pressure from his constituencies, spurred Representative Tom Perriello to action. On June 10, 2010, Perriello introduced H.R. 5512, the Booker T. Washington Boundary Expansion Act. The significance of BOWA was both cultural and economic. "Our region is blessed with natural and historic resources that are the envy of the nation. These resources can be powerful tools in attracting tourism, which fuels local economies and helps support jobs," Perriello argued. "It is also our sacred duty to protect these resources for future generations. I am proud to introduce this bill to protect and enhance this important heritage site in our area." Unfortunately, the bill was never enacted.

³¹⁶ "Bat Population Monitoring and White-nose Syndrome," *Booker T. Washington National Monument, National Park Service*, September 2018, <https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/DownloadFile/606010>.

³¹⁷ Timothy Sims, interview with author, December 10, 2019.

As a result, the preservation of the park's cultural and natural resources remained a lingering problem for BOWA. In 2013 post for the blog *Preservation Virginia*, Carla Whitfield laid out issues the facing the park. A significant portion of her post is excerpted below:

In order to achieve its mission, the BTWNM must ensure that stream flows, both quantity and quality, are sustained in healthy condition. Therefore, the success of the Monument is dependent on all actions within the watershed that affect flows in Gills Creek and Jack-O-Lantern Branch streams.

Visitors to BTWNM bring with them the expectation of an experience that portrays the mid-nineteenth century environment into which Mr. Washington was born and spent his early childhood years in slavery. An integral component of that experience is the visual experience. In order to deliver the opportunity for such visitor experience, it is important that uses outside the Monument but visible from within the historical core be designed with sensitivity to the Monument mission. The viewshed from within the park must be considered to protect the historical integrity of the site and quality of the visitor experience. . .

Although the downturn in the economy has slowed development, a sewage pumping station has been installed along with a line that runs the entire length of the park's eastern boundary to a developed leach field just north of park property for future development needs. A new beer brewery is also near completion on the adjacent property and electric transmission infrastructure has been installed. Development of the entire parcel will schedule as the economy and development stabilizes in the Westlake town center area.

The original development of Westlake that started in early 2000 has expanded to include many independent-living community homes, a medical center, and an emergency response helipad which maintains an emergency evacuation helicopter that flies response flights over the perimeter of the park several times a day.

At the northwest corner of the park boundary, in 2010, a two acre parcel was clear cut of trees and since has been established as a two-trailer rental property. The park currently shares an entrance to its headquarters with residents who rent the trailers and the property owner who maintains the property. The trailers have impacted the viewshed from within the park and the formality of the park's main entrance. The trailers are in clear view of visitors as they approach and enter the park main entrance from either direction on VA Route 122.

A large tract of farmland along the park's south border that has been in agricultural and forest use for generations was surveyed in 2012 and the current landowner is in negotiation with developers. The outcome of the future use of the property is unknown by the park at this time but changes to its current land use could dramatically impact viewshed and visitor experience since the park's scenic Jack-O-Lantern Branch Trail is located along the length of the same

boundary. The Jack-O-Lantern Branch stream is the dividing boundary between the park and property and any future development that would take place if the land is sold and developed would impact the ecosystem health of the stream and its aesthetic contribution to the visitor experience.

Booker T. Washington National Monument is working with community members, its Friends Group, and County planners to create awareness and hopefully mitigate impacts to park resources as a result of changes in surrounding land use. This cooperation will encourage developers and land users within the viewshed of the BTWNM to consider, at the design stage, how their potential development and uses might affect the Monument mission.

Purchase of adjoining land by the National Park Service or implementing landowner conservation easements to preserve the surrounding agricultural setting is still a park-preferred alternative.³¹⁸

Development was not the only issue of concern for Whitfield and her staff. As discussed earlier in the chapter, the park also had infrastructure needs which had too long been deferred due to lack of funding. Congressional funding of the NPS had decreased by 40 percent between 2007 and 2017, resulting in \$12 billion maintenance backlog for parks. Across the country, visitor centers, historic buildings, campgrounds, and hiking trails were in desperate need of repair. At BOWA, historic snake-rail fencing and the Jack O' Lantern Branch Trail were overdue for maintenance. On the occasion of the NPS's centennial celebration, several elected officials, including Senator Mark Warner, demanded greater investment in the nation's parks. Now, Warner argued was the time for action: "More than 100 years after the founding of the National Park Service, our park system remains in a critical state of despair. In fact, Virginia ranks 5th in the list of states with the greatest need for maintenance, with a backlog of more than \$800 million." Taking his concerns to his colleagues, Warner and Ohio Senator Robert Portman co-sponsored the National Park Service Legacy Act, which would establish a National Park Service Legacy Restoration Fund to reduce the maintenance backlog by using funds generated from federal energy development revenues over thirty years to repair NPS buildings, utilities, visitor facilities, and transportation projects. The bill stalled, and then a slightly revised version was reintroduced in 2019. "We owe it to our Commonwealth and to our country to pass this bill and clear the \$12 billion maintenance backlog that is holding back essential repairs and renovations at our cherished national parks. This problem will only worsen if we fail

³¹⁸ Carla Whitfield, "Booker T. Washington National Monument/Preservation VA Endangered Sites List," *Preservation Virginia* (blog) April 11, 2013, <http://preservationvirginia.blogspot.com/2013/04/previous-endangered-sites-booker-t.html>.

to act.”³¹⁹ After much wrangling, the US Senate finally passed the Great American Outdoors Act, which would address the deferred maintenance at NPS sites across the country. Warner was elated: “In addition to preserving our national treasures for future generations to enjoy, this legislation will also create tens of thousands of jobs across the country and provide a positive economic impact for gateway communities that depend on our national parks.”³²⁰



Figure 66: Senator Mark Warner visits BOWA (BOWA Archives).

This was great news for parks across the country, including BOWA. According to park Administrative Officer Connie Mays, BOWA has \$1.4 million in deferred maintenance needs. Federal funding would enable the park to make much-needed repairs on its historic tobacco barn, fences, and trails.

³¹⁹ “Warner, Colleagues Reintroduce Legislation to Fund Overdue National Parks Maintenance,” Senator Mark R. Warner Website, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://www.warner.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2019/2/warner-colleagues-reintroduce-legislation-to-fund-overdue-national-parks-maintenance>.

³²⁰ Amy Friedenberger, “Senate Passes Great American Outdoors Act, Conservation Proposal Championed by Sen. Mark Werner,” *Roanoke Times*, June 17, 2020.



Figure 67: Timothy Sims, chief of interpretation and resource management, and Senator Mark Warner (BOWA Archives).

The news of the act’s passage was especially encouraging given the uncertainty of the times. Like parks across the nation, BOWA had recently endured the uncertainty and inconveniences engendered by the government shutdown of 2018–2019 and the COVID-19 global pandemic. At BOWA, there had also been a significant leadership change, when Carla Whitfield retired in 2018. For nine years, Whitfield had not only provided stable leadership for the park but had been an active member of the local community, serving on the Hales Ford Planning Commission, participating in Community Garden, and offering her expertise to a variety of community projects.

Upon Whitfield’s retirement, Timothy Sims served as acting superintendent and then the NPS appointed Robin Snyder to the position. A native of Appomattox, Snyder is a graduate of the University of Virginia, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in History and a Master of Education from the Curry School. Her previous appointments included chief of interpretation and visitor services at New River Gorge National River, Gauley River National Recreation Area, and the Bluestone National Scenic River. In 2015, Snyder was appointed superintendent of Appomattox Court House National Historical Park. Since Appomattox was only 65 miles from BOWA, the NPS felt Snyder could serve, simultaneously, as superintendents of parks. According to Northeast Regional Director Gay Vietzke, “The decision to place both Appomattox Court House and Booker T. Washington under a single superintendent allows for greater resource sharing and increased flexibility for both units. It also provides opportunities for collaborative programming focused on the theme of Civil War to civil rights.” Snyder appreciated the opportunity: “I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve as superintendent of two sites that tell our collective American story.”³²¹

³²¹ <https://www.nps.gov/bowa/learn/news/snyder-superintendent.htm>.

Conclusion

On a warm Saturday afternoon in Charlottesville, Virginia in the spring of 2018, Park Ranger Brittany Lane delivered a powerful presentation on the life and legacy of Booker T. Washington to a receptive crowd at the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center. With vivid clarity and passion, she recounted Washington's rise from slavery to freedom, his quest for literacy and education, and his major accomplishments as an educator and advisor. Her chronicle of Washington's life devoted considerable attention to his institution-building efforts at Tuskegee. A masterful storyteller, Lane captivated the audience with her blend of history, personal reflections, and current events. Lane's presentation was a reflection of her skills as well as the many advances in research, interpretation, and programming which have occurred at BOWA over the past two decades. Though considerable attention was given to the singular achievements of Washington, she sought to place his life and legacy within the larger context of US race relations. Employing the Socratic method in her interactions with the audience, she asked the attendees to think deeply about the struggles of Virginia's enslaved population, the efforts of African Americans to build strong political, religious, and educational institutions within the context of Jim Crow, and the relevance Washington's lessons still holds for many Americans.

Thanks to the dedicated work of Lane and other park staff, BOWA has continued to advance its purpose and mission in the twenty-first century. It maintains an active research agenda, robust onsite and offsite programming, and an array of interpretive activities which continue to play a critical role in our evolving understanding of Washington and his political legacy.

Over the past decade, BOWA has sought to develop interpretive, resource management, education, and public outreach programs consistent with the mission of the NPS and also responsive to the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century. Through a variety of planning documents, BOWA management has endeavored to address and provide a remedy to the park's shortcomings. Staff members have also interacted with other parks and historic sites throughout Virginia. In the summer of 2018, for example, park rangers and volunteers visited James Madison's Montpelier to see its highly publicized new exhibit "Mere Distinction of Color." Along with visiting other historic sites, the park has invited experts involved in other projects related to race, slavery, the Civil War and Reconstruction. In 2017, Joe McGill of the University of Virginia's dwelling project gave a talk at BOWA. These interactions underscore the cooperative spirit undergirding the park's work, as well as BOWA's leadership in telling the complicated story of race in Virginia and the United States. Offering much more than the story of one of the nation's most important public figures (Booker T. Washington), the site has and continues to provide richly textured and multilayered stories of the evolution of racial slavery, the

meaning of emancipation, the varied responses of African Americans to Jim Crow, the complex politics of African American memorialization in the post-World War II era, the impact of *Brown v. Board of Education* on Black institutions, and the impact of commercial development on the environment.

Without question, the Booker T. Washington National Monument's contribution to both the NPS and the Commonwealth of Virginia is both immense and singular.

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APPENDIX A

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

86

PUBLIC LAW 464—APR. 2, 1956

[70 STAT.]

“PAR. 1819. Handwoven fabrics imported in good faith by a society or institution incorporated or established solely for religious purposes, to be used by such society or institution in making religious vestments for sale, if there is presented to the Collector of Customs a written declaration of a responsible officer of the importing society or institution, that the substantial equivalent of the fabric is not handwoven in the United States.”

Applicability.

SEC. 2. The amendment made by this Act shall apply to articles entered for consumption or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption on or after the day following the date of enactment of this Act.

Approved April 2, 1956.

Public Law 464

CHAPTER 158

AN ACT

April 2, 1956
[H. R. 6904]

To provide for the establishment of the Booker T. Washington National Monument.

Booker T. Washington National Monument, Va. Establishment.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Secretary of the Interior is authorized and directed to acquire, on behalf of the United States, by gift, purchase, or condemnation, all right, title, and interest in and to the real property located at Booker Washington Birthplace, Virginia.

SEC. 2. The real property acquired under the first section of this Act shall constitute the Booker T. Washington National Monument and shall be a public national memorial to Booker T. Washington, noted Negro educator and apostle of good will. The Secretary of the Interior shall have the supervision, management, and control of such national monument, and shall maintain and preserve it in a suitable and enduring manner which, in his judgment, will provide for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of the United States.

SEC. 3. The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to—

(1) maintain, either in an existing structure acquired under the first section of this Act or in a building constructed by him for the purpose, a museum for relics and records pertaining to Booker T. Washington, and for other articles of national and patriotic interest, and to accept, on behalf of the United States, for installation in such museum, articles which may be offered as additions to the museum; and

(2) provide for public parks and recreational areas, construct roads and mark with monuments, tablets, or otherwise, points of interest, within the boundaries of the Booker T. Washington National Monument.

Appropriation.

SEC. 4. There are authorized to be appropriated such sums not to exceed \$200,000 as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act.

Approved April 2, 1956.

Public Law 465

CHAPTER 159

AN ACT

April 2, 1956
[H. R. 8320]

To amend the Agricultural Act of 1949 and the Agricultural Act of 1954 with respect to the special school milk program, the veterans and Armed Forces milk programs, and the brucellosis eradication program.

Agriculture. Milk. 68 Stat. 899. 7 USC 1446.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the last sentence of section 201 (c) of the Agricultural Act of 1949, as amended,

Calendar No. 476

107TH CONGRESS }
2d Session }

SENATE

{ REPORT
{ 107-199

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON NATIONAL MONUMENT
BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2001

JUNE 28, 2002.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. BINGAMAN, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, submitted the following

R E P O R T

[To accompany H.R. 1456]

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, to which was referred the Act (H.R. 1456) to expand the boundary of the Booker T. Washington National Monument, and for the other purposes, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon without amendment and recommends that the Act do pass.

PURPOSE

The purpose of H.R. 1456 is to expand the boundaries of the Booker T. Washington National Monument to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to acquire an approximately 15-acre parcel for inclusion in the Monument.

BACKGROUND AND NEED

On April 2, 1956, the Booker T. Washington National Monument was established in order to create a public national memorial to the great advocate for African-Americans. The Monument preserves and protects the birth site and childhood home of Booker T. Washington while interpreting his life and his significance in American history.

In 1998, the National Park Service conducted a viewshed study for the Monument. The purpose of the study was to survey the surrounding lands in the highly visited areas of the park to determine the impact urban development would have on the preservation of this site. The study identified a 15-acre parcel of land for addition to the boundary based on its proximity to the birthplace site. The parcel has been on and off the real estate market for several years

99-010

and is currently for sale. The land is currently in agricultural use. Acquisition of this parcel would provide a buffer zone between nearby development and the park. The expansion has widespread support from the surrounding communities in southwestern Virginia.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

H.R. 1456 passed the House of Representatives by voice vote on September 12, 2001. S. 1051, an identical companion measure, was introduced by Senators Warner and Allen on June 14, 2001. The Subcommittee on National Parks held a hearing on S. 1051 and H.R. 1456 on February 14, 2002. The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources ordered H.R. 1456 favorably reported at its business meeting on June 5, 2002.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, in open business session on June 5, 2002, by a voice vote of a quorum present, recommends that the Senate pass H.R. 1456.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

Section 1 entitles the Act the “Booker T. Washington National Monument Boundary Adjustment Act of 2001.”

Section 2 amends the enabling legislation for the Booker T. Washington National Monument (16 U.S.C. 450*ll* et seq.) to modify its boundaries to include approximately 15 acres. The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to acquire the land or interests in the land from willing sellers by donation, purchase with donated or appropriated funds, or exchange.

COST AND BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

The following estimate of the costs of this measure has been provided by the Congressional Budget Office:

U.S. CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
Washington, DC, June 11, 2002.

Hon. JEFF BINGAMAN,
Chairman, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has prepared the enclosed cost estimate for H.R. 1456, the Booker T. Washington National Monument Boundary Adjustment Act of 2001.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contact is Deborah Reis.

Sincerely,

BARRY B. ANDERSON
(For Dan L. Crippen, Director).

Enclosure.

H.R. 1456—Booker T. Washington National Monument Boundary Adjustment Act of 2001

H.R. 1456 would revise the boundary of the Booker T. Washington National Monument. Assuming appropriation of the necessary amounts, CBO estimates that implementing the legislation would cost the federal government less than \$500,000. The act would not affect direct spending or receipts; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures would not apply. The legislation contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would have not significant impact on the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

H.R. 1456 would expand the boundary of the Booker T. Washington National Monument to include above 15 acres of adjacent land, which the National Park Service (NPS) could then acquire by purchase, donation, or exchange. The acquired acreage would be administered by the NPS.

Based on information provided by the NPS and assuming appropriation of the necessary amounts, CBO estimates that the cost of acquiring the property that would be added to the monument would be less than \$500,000 in fiscal year 2003. We estimate that there would be no significant additional cost to develop or manage the new acreage.

On September 21, 2001, CBO transmitted a cost estimate for H.R. 1456 as ordered reported by the House Committee on Resources on September 12, 2001. The two versions of the legislation are identical, as are our cost estimates.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Deborah Reis. The estimate was approved by Peter H. Fontaine, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

REGULATORY IMPACT EVALUATION

In compliance with paragraph 11(b) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee makes the following evaluation of the regulatory impact which would be incurred in carrying out H.R. 1456. The bill is not a regulatory measure in the sense of imposing Government-established standards or significant responsibilities on private individuals and businesses.

No personal information would be collected in administering the program. Therefore, there would be no impact on personal privacy.

Little, if any, additional paperwork would result from the enactment of H.R. 1456.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

The testimony provided by the National Park Service at the Subcommittee hearing follows:

STATEMENT OF DURAND JONES, DEPUTY DIRECTOR,
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 1456 and S. 1051, identical bills, both of which would expand the boundary of Booker T. Washington National Monument, Franklin County, Virginia.

The Department gave testimony on H.R. 1456 before the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation, and Public Land on July 24, 2001. The Department supports both H.R. 1456 and S. 1051. The addition would not contribute to the National Park Service (NPS) maintenance backlog because the land would be added to the park agricultural permit program, and no additional facilities, operating funds or staffing will be needed. The current owners have indicated that they would be willing to sell the property to the United States. If authorized, this acquisition would be subject to NPS servicewide priorities and the availability of appropriations.

The legislation will adjust the boundary of Booker T. Washington National Monument to authorize acquiring from willing sellers a parcel of approximately 15 acres abutting the northeast boundary of the park. The addition and preservation of this 15-acre tract will ensure that park visitors may experience an agricultural landscape while inside the park, in a region that is subject to extreme development pressure. Seven of the 15 acres were part of the original Burrough's farm where Booker T. Washington grew up.

Booker T. Washington National Monument was authorized on April 2, 1956, to create a "public national memorial to Booker T. Washington, noted Negro educator and apostle of good will * * *." Booker T. Washington National Monument preserves and protects the birth site and childhood home of Booker T. Washington while interpreting his life experiences and significance in American history as the most powerful African American between 1895 and 1915. The park provides a resource for public education and a focal point of continuing discussions about the legacy of Booker T. Washington and the evolving context of race in American society.

The park is 224 acres of rolling hills, woodlands, and agricultural fields. The primary archaeological resources include the Burrough's house site, or "Big House," two slave cabin sites with a 1960's reconstructed cabin on one of the sites. The agricultural landscape plays a critical role in the park's interpretation of Washington's life as an enslaved child during the Civil War. Many of his stories and experiences are centered on this small tobacco farm. In his autobiography, *Up From Slavery*, Washington frequently refers to the "rural" life and the influences it had upon him.

A 1998 Viewshed Study conducted as a component of the park's March 2000 General Management Plan (GMP) identified this land as the most critical for addition to the boundary based on its elevation and proximity to the birth-place site. The parcel has been on and off the market for several years and is currently for sale. The land is currently used for open agricultural fields.

The park is located near the regional recreation area of Smith Mountain Lake, which has growth in population and development in the last ten years. The park lies a half-mile from a commercial crossroads called Westlake

Corner. This area has become the primary hub of services for the Smith Mountain Lake community and continues to grow. Acquisition of this parcel would provide the necessary buffer between this development and the park so that the visitors will be able to experience the area as it was during Booker T. Washington's life.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. This concludes my prepared remarks. I would be glad to answer any question that you or members of the subcommittee might have.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

In compliance with paragraph 12 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, changes in existing law made by the Act H.R. 1456, as ordered reported, are shown as follows (existing law proposed to be omitted is enclosed in black brackets, new matter is printed in italic, existing law in which no change is proposed is shown in roman):

Public Law 464

AN ACT To provide for the establishment of the Booker T. Washington National Monument

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Secretary of the Interior is authorized and directed to acquire, on behalf of the United States, by gift, purchase, or condemnation, all right, title, and interest in and to the real property located at Booker Washington Birthplace, Virginia.

* * * * *

SEC. 5. ADDITIONAL LANDS.

(a) *LANDS ADDED TO MONUMENT.*—*The boundary of the Booker T. Washington National Monument is modified to include the approximately 15 acres, as generally depicted on the map entitled "Boundary Map, Booker T. Washington National Monument, Franklin County, Virginia", numbered BOWA 404/80,024, and dated February 2001. The map shall be on file and available for inspection in the appropriate offices of the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.*

(b) *ACQUISITION OF ADDITIONAL LANDS.*—*The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to acquire from willing owners the land or interests in land described in subsection (a) by donation, purchase with donated or appropriated funds, or exchange.*

(c) *ADMINISTRATION OF ADDITIONAL LANDS.*—*Lands added to the Booker T. Washington National Monument by subsection (a) shall be administered by the Secretary of the Interior as part of the monument in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.*

APPENDIX B

VISITATION STATISTICS

Since Congress authorized the establishment of BOWA in April 1956, the park has had a total of 1.3 million visitors. Though BOWA offers a unique historic and cultural experience for its visitors, the site has had to compete with nearby recreational choices and historic sites, including Smith Mountain Lake, Explore Park, and the Blue Ridge Parkway. On average, the Booker T. Washington National Monument has 20,000 visitors per year. The highest rates of visitation were between 1972 and 1976, when numbers peaked to 35,000. The implementation of an entry fee (\$2.00 per day) in 1988 resulted in 15 percent decline in park visitation the following year. Visitation numbers rebounded during the first half of the 1990s, then tailed off again in 1996. The same ebb and flow pattern shaped visitation during the twenty-first century. Even amid government shutdowns and budget restraints, there have been promising moments in the twenty-first century. The renovation of the visitor center in 2010-2011 and the implantation of the “Born Here, Freed Here exhibit” brought more people to the park as visits to the site reached 27,205 in 2015.

Booker T. Washington National Monument Annual Visitor Statistics

Year	Visitors	Year	Visitors	Year	Visitors
1958	6,400	1979	25,507	2000	21,435
1959	8,700	1980	21,575	2001	22,692
1960	8,300	1981	19,874	2002	19,188
1961	8,500	1982	20,461	2003	17,906
1962	12,600	1983	23,007	2004	18,513
1963	14,700	1984	24,972	2005	16,357
1964	20,600	1985	19,644	2006	18,339
1965	25,600	1986	20,859	2007	19,410
1966	21,800	1987	20,588	2008	19,990
1967	17,400	1988	20,070	2009	21,216
1968	15,300	1989	17,571	2010	21,665
1969	19,200	1990	25,060	2011	24,030
1970	20,500	1991	20,887	2012	24,361
1971	23,800	1992	25,983	2013	22,103
1972	31,734	1993	25,894	2014	26,127
1973	35,600	1994	26,210	2015	27,205
1974	32,300	1995	25,704	2016	23,440
1975	35,600	1996	20,134	2017	25,479
1976	33,800	1997	19,172	2018	22,732
1977	24,200	1998	19,226	2019	24,640
1978	30,267	1999	22,623	Total	1,348,750

APPENDIX C

CHRONOLOGICAL LISTING OF SUPERINTENDENTS

Year(s)	Superintendent	Partial Year Dates
1957–1959	Chester L. Brooks	
1960–1961	Roscoe Reeves	
1961–1967	Fred Wingeier	
1967–1971	Stanley C. Kowalkowski	
1971–1974	William Webb	
1974–1976	Sylvester Putnam	
1976–1979	John T. Hutzky	
1979	William T. Wilcox, Acting Superintendent	August 1979–November 1979
1979–1988	Geraldine Bell	
1988	Gordon J. Wilson, Acting Superintendent	May 1988–July 1988
1988–1990	Ronald J. Mack	
1990	Joseph H. Finan, Acting Superintendent	May 1990–September 1990
1990–1991	Richard H. Saunders Jr., Acting Superintendent	September 1990–January 1991
1991–1992	Mary A. Green-Victory	*
1991	Sandy Rives, Acting Superintendent	May 1991–June 1991
1991	Chris Ward, Acting Superintendent	June 1991–August 1991
1991–1992	Hollis G. Provins, Acting Superintendent	August 1991–January 1992
1993	Eleanor C. Long, Acting Superintendent	March 1993–May 1993
1993–1994	Bessie Sherman, Acting Superintendent	May 1993–January 1994
1994–1995	William W. Gwaltney	
1995	Eleanor C. Long Acting Superintendent	February 1995–June 1995
1995–2009	Rebecca L. Harriett	
2009– 2018	Carla Whitfield	
2019	Robin Snyder	

*Superintendent Green-Victory was on leave between May 1991 and January 1992 which is why there were acting superintendents within the time frame (January 1991– March 1993) during which she was the permanent Superintendent.

APPENDIX D

CHRONOLOGY OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

- 1607 The Virginia colony is founded.
- 1625 The census enumerates twenty-three Blacks living in the Virginia colony.
- 1776 Adoption of Declaration of Independence.
- 1784 Thomas Jefferson publishes *Notes on the State of Virginia*. In the text, Jefferson argues that African Americans were inferior to whites in both body and mind. His racial theories elicited outrage and critical responses from a variety of African American intellectuals and leaders, including Benjamin Banneker and David Walker.
- 1785 Franklin County was established in 1785.
- 1794 James Burroughs is born near Smith Mountain in Bedford, Virginia.
- 1800 Gabriel Prosser leads uprising of enslaved people in Henrico, Virginia.
- 1808 United States passes act abolishing the slave trade.
- 1818 On August 5, 1818, James Burroughs marries Elizabeth W. Betsy Robertson.
- 1819 Burroughs purchased a 228-acre farm in Bedford, where he and Elizabeth built a life with their fourteen children.
- 1820 Booker T. Washington's mother, Jane, is born.
- 1850 James Burroughs purchases a 207-acre tract of land in Franklin County from his brother Thomas.
- 1856 On April 5, Booker T. Washington is born enslaved on the Burroughs' plantation.
- 1861 The Civil War begins.
- James Burroughs dies. His property inventory includes a young Booker T. Washington, who is valued at \$400.00.
- 1863 President Abraham Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation.
- 1865 Robert E. Lee surrenders to Ulysses Grant at Appomattox Courthouse on April 9. A day later, he issues his farewell address to the Army of Northern Virginia.

The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution abolishes slavery and involuntary servitude. The Senate passes the amendment on April 8, 1864, the House on January 31, 1865. It is ratified on December 6, 1865.

During the fall, Washington and his family (mother Jane, brother John, and sister Amanda) move to Malden, West Virginia to join his stepfather, Washington Ferguson.

- 1865–1871** Washington works as a laborer in the salt and coal mines in Malden while attending evening school.
- In 1868, Congress ratifies the Fourteenth Amendment, which gives African Americans their citizenship rights. In 1870, Congress ratifies the Fifteenth Amendment, which grants African American men the franchise.
- 1872** Washington leaves his home to attend the Hampton Institute.
- 1875** Washington graduates from the Hampton Institute with honors.
- 1875–1877** Washington teaches school in Malden.
- 1878** Washington spends 18 months studying in Washington DC at the Wayland Seminary School.
- 1879–1881** Washington teaches at Hampton Institute.
- 1881** Washington is named principal of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama
- 1882** The first building of the Tuskegee Institute is built by the students with bricks they made themselves.
- 1882** Washington marries Fannie Norton Smith. A year later, she gives birth to Washington's first child, Portia Washington.
- 1884** Death of Fannie Washington, possibly from injuries suffered in a fall from a wagon.
- 1885** Washington marries his Tuskegee colleague, Olivia Davidson.
- 1892** Death of Olivia Washington.
- 1893** Washington marries Margaret James Murray who had been Lady Principal of Tuskegee Institute for two years.
- 1895** September 18—Washington delivers his famous “Atlanta Address at the Cotton States and International Exposition.”
- 1896** On June 24, Washington is presented with an honorary degree from Harvard University.

Appendix D

- 1900 Booker T. Washington publishes his first autobiography, *The Story of My Life and Work*.
Washington founds the National Negro Business League.
- 1901 Washington publishes his second and most popular autobiography, *Up from Slavery*, in March. On July 16, Washington dines at the White House after a consultation visit with President Theodore Roosevelt about political appointments in the South.
- 1903 W. E. B. DuBois publishes his magisterial study, *The Souls of Black Folk*, which includes a chapter analyzing the political ascendancy of Booker T. Washington.
- 1908 On October 2, Booker T. Washington visits his birthplace in Franklin County.
- 1915 On November 14, Washington dies at home in Tuskegee, Alabama.
- 1922 Tuskegee Institute unveils the Lifting the Veil monument.
- 1945 Sidney Phillips establishes the Booker T. Washington Birthplace Memorial.
- 1954 The US Supreme Court issues its *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which declares the separate but equal doctrine unconstitutional.
Booker T. Washington Elementary School opens in Franklin County, Virginia.
- 1956 Congress authorizes the establishment of the Booker T. Washington National Monument.
- 1957 Chester Brooks is appointed the superintendent of Booker T. Washington National Monument (BOWA).
- 1958 The monument completes its boundary survey. The survey indicates that the monument contains 199.73 acres.
- 1959 On June 26, Superintendent Brooks and park historian James J. Kirkwood submitted their Historic Structures Report entitled “Reconstruction of Slave Cabin.”
- 1960 The slave cabin replica at the Booker T. Washington’s National Monument is completed in August.
Roscoe Reeves is appointed BOWA’s superintendent. The tobacco barn on the “Roll Road” Trail is completely restored.
- 1961 Fred A. Wingeier is appointed superintendent of BOWA.

Appendix D

- 1964** Congress passes the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bans discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religion, and national origin.
- This Act also changes the hiring practices for the position of park ranger. Before this, an employment application for park ranger stated “For Men Only” on its cover.
- 1966** BOWA’s new Mission 66 visitor center opens.
- Booker T. Washington Elementary School closes.
- 1967** Stanley Kowalkowski is appointed superintendent of BOWA.
- 1968** The NPS approves BOWA’s Interpretive Prospectus.
- 1969** Park Historian Barry Mackintosh completes BOWA’s first Administrative History.
- 1971** William Webb is appointed superintendent of BOWA.
- 1972** BOWA launches its “Summer in the Parks Program.” It also holds its first “Living History Day.”
- 1974** Sylvester Putman is named superintendent of BOWA.
- The monument acquires the Booker T. Washington Elementary School.
- 1976** Booker T. Washington Environmental Educational and Cultural Center (EECC) is dedicated.
- John Hutzky is appointed superintendent of BOWA.
- Eleanor Long begins her tenure at BOWA.
- 1979** Geraldine Bell is appointed superintendent of BOWA.
- 1980** BOWA submits its General Management Plan.
- 1981** Alice Hanawalt begins her tenure at BOWA.
- 1987** Connie Mays begins her tenure at BOWA.
- 1989** Timothy Sims begins his tenure at BOWA
- 1994** NPS appoints William Gwaltney as superintendent of BOWA
- 1995** NPS appoints Rebecca Harriett as superintendent of BOWA.
- 1998** Sweet Briar College conducts excavations at Burroughs House.
- The park hosts the Booker T. Washington/W. E. B. DuBois “At the Turn of Two Centuries” Symposium.

Appendix D

Congress passes the National Parks Omnibus Act of 1998, which inaugurates a new phase in resource management for the NPS. Signed into law by President Bill Clinton on November 13, 1998, the act included several pieces of legislation which pertain to National Park Service career development, training, and management, resource inventory and management, fees, and concession management.

- 1999** BOWA completes its General Management Plan.
- The NPS launched Natural Resource Challenge: The National Park Service Action Plan for Preserving National Resources (NRC) program.
- 2009** Carla Whitfield is appointed superintendent of BOWA.
- 2010** BOWA's visitor center undergoes major renovations.
- 2014** BOWA's "Born Here, Freed Here" exhibit opens.
- 2019** Robin Snyder is appointed superintendent of Booker T. Washington National Monument.