



The Effinger Street School

165 Effinger Street

This school became the center of Harrisonburg's black community from its construction in 1882 until the Lucy Simms School replaced it in 1938. In the years following the Civil War, the Freedman's Bureau and Christian Commission made the first efforts toward providing education for the black residents of Harrisonburg. In 1868, Martha Smith and Phoebe Libby established the first black school in the area. Once the public school system was established in 1872, it built a two-room school on Rock Street near Black's Run in the northern end of the city. Mrs. Elizabeth James became the first teacher at this new school. By 1882, these early facilities grew inadequate and the Harrisonburg District trustees appropriated \$2000 for a new school building—a four-room, two-story brick building on Effinger Street. It became known as simply, the Effinger Street School.

With subsequent additions of two classrooms and an auditorium, it served as a combined elementary and high school. Many well-known residents taught at the school, including George Newman and Mary Fairfax. And many black students from Rockingham and Shenandoah Counties attended the school. When school became part of the Harrisonburg City School system in 1916, Mr. William Nelson Pendleton (W.N.P.) Harris continued as principal at the School until it was closed in 1938, at which point he became the first principal at the new Lucy Simms School. The Effinger Street School was demolished in 1965 to make room for the city's redevelopment program.

Photo Courtesy of: Jennifer Vickers



—Robin Lyttle

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