

THE ADVOCATE

HISTORIC PORT ROYAL, INC



January 2024

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In Memory of Herb Ridgeway Collins 1932-2023



Herbert Collins was born and raised in Caroline County, at his beloved Green Falls. After graduating from Caroline High School in 1949, Herb earned his bachelor's degree from Richmond Professional Institute, now Virginia Commonwealth University. While in college, he would come home on holidays and weekends to work on the farm. In 1954, Herb was drafted into the Army Intelligence Division and served several years at the Pentagon. In 1960, he joined the staff of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., where he diligently worked his way up to executive director at the National Museum of



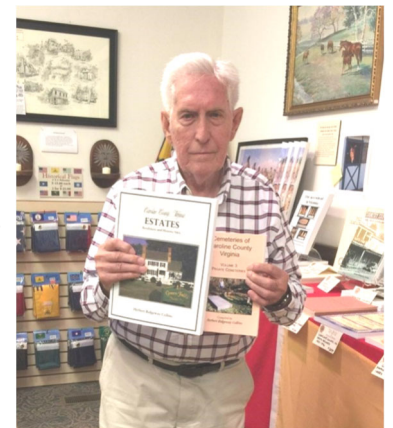
American History. During his tenure, he headed the founding the National Postal Museum, assisted in the expansion the Smithsonian's Presidential and political collections (meeting several Presidents, First Ladies, and statesman along the way), and penned several books on Presidential and political artifacts.



Photograph by Richard Hofmeister.
Smithsonian Institution Archives.

After his retirement in 1992, he did not slow down. As a charter member of Caroline County Historical Society, Herb dedicated much of his time to the organization. He helped establish a Research Room in the Caroline County Library and supplied much of its invaluable research material. He served as keynote and guest speaker for countless history programs and received numerous local and state recognitions for his significant contributions to the preservation of Caroline County history.

In 2012, Herb became a major benefactor to Historic Port Royal and furnishing the new Port Royal Museum of American History with several collections, including White House China, 18th-Century Virginia Furniture, Sidney King paintings, and Toleware. Herb supported numerous Historic Port Royal preservation endeavors, museum exhibits, and special events, often with a hands-on fervor. He loved Caroline County and HPR, and remained an active donor, contributor, and esteemed consultant until his passing in October.



Herb Collins touched so many people in so many ways. He was gifted with an unflinching memory of dates, names, and family lineage. He never hesitated to help one with family research. He could recount historic events like a textbook, but with better footnotes. He was a phenomenal storyteller, making history interesting and meaningful for any audience. Through his contributions, the history of Caroline County is more accessible than ever. Herb will be remembered for his vast contributions in documenting and preserving Caroline County's history and preserving Port Royal. His legacy will live on through the organizations that he loved and supported, and through our future endeavors at Historic Port Royal and The Port Royal Museum of American History.



Photograph by Clint Schlemmer.
The Free-Lance Star, 2015.

100th Anniversary of Old Port Royal School 1924 -2024



Port Royal School was one of at least 20 one-room schools built for Black children in Caroline County prior to the integration of schools in the late 1950s. Often, it fell to the Black community and churches to provide adequate buildings and instructors. On June 20, 1923, a two-acre plot of land was sold to the trustees of the Port Royal Colored School League by the C. Marshall Gravett family. The League purchased the land to build a school for the town's Black children. This would replace an earlier school that was held on the second floor of the Old St. Luke Hall, which was destroyed by a fire in 1921. Trustees who secured the school lot included James Brooks, Thomas Rich, Howell Jeter, J.H. Pratt, W.L. Purse and L.W. Hill. With

assistance from the Black Port Royal community and churches, the League built and maintained the school. The plan for the school resembles one of several furnished by the Julius Rosenwald Fund, a philanthropic program that supported the establishment of schools in Black Southern communities. In 1931, the school became a part of the Caroline County Public School System, which remained segregated until the 1969-1979 school year.



Port Royal School pupils in the 1930s



Old Port Royal School in the mid-1970s.



Mrs. Hortense Rich sitting in her old schoolhouse in 1995.

Mrs. Hortense Brown Rich was the sole teacher at Port Royal School, from the date of its construction (1924) until it closed in 1959. She was trained at Virginia State University and taught all subjects for the seven grades held in the building. She was beloved and respected by students and parents alike. When Port Royal School closed, the children were bused to a new school in Bowling Green, where Mrs. Rich continued to teach her students. At its peak, Port Royal School served 70 pupils.

Shortly after the school closed, the building was moved about 125 feet to the south. In 1974, Union Bank (now Atlantic Union) began construction of its Port Royal bank branch at the former location of Port Royal School. The schoolhouse sat in disuse until the 1990s, when recently retired Robert and Cleopatra Coleman moved to the Town Port Royal. Mrs. Coleman was a native of Caroline County; her family was one of hundreds displaced by the creation of Camp A.P. Hill (now Fort Walker). Upon returning "home," she too, recognized the building's significance. After learning that several alumni and their beloved teacher still lived nearby, Mrs. Coleman's rallied the community for support in restoring the school. In 1992, Old Port Royal School, Inc. was formed, and restoration began. Union Bank, the Port Royal Ruritan Club and Caroline Historical Society were corporate sponsors of the project. Some former students participated in the efforts, as well. Mrs. Rich passed away in October 1995. Before her passing, she saw the schoolhouse restored. Today, the school serves as a living history museum where visitors and students are immersed in an early twentieth-century learning environment in the Segregated South.

This year marks the **100th Anniversary of the Port Royal School (1924-2024)**. Kicking off this year will be a special Black History program on February 10th in the Old Port Royal School at 11am, followed by the unveiling of a new exhibit in the Port Royal Museum of American History. The exhibit will be a narrative on the African American experience, as told through the collection of historic objects and documents saved and cherished by Rich Family of Caroline County. The exhibit will run from February 10th to the end of April. On May 4th, we will celebrate May Day at the Old Port Royal School and unveil additional exhibits honoring the stories of Black Caroline County natives, and their contributions to our American experience.



Mrs. Coleman in the Old Port Royal School during restorations. The Free-Lance Star, 1993

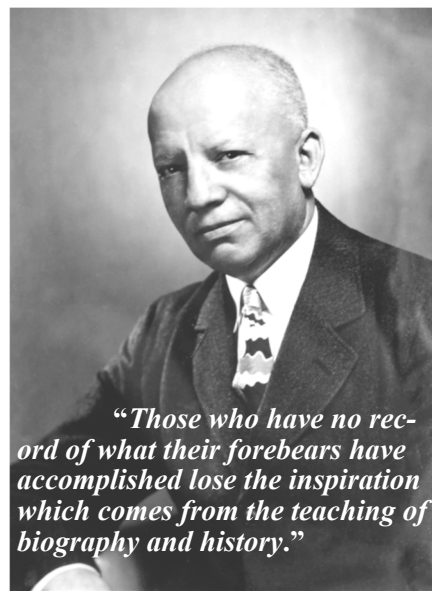
A Brief History of Black History Month

The Father of Black History Month is generally accepted to be scholar, educator, author, and historian Dr. Carter G. Woodson. He was born in 1875 to formally enslaved parents in Buckingham County, Virginia. At an early age he developed a passion for the study of history. Largely self-educated, Dr. Woodson completed his high school studies in less than two years before attending Berea College in Kentucky. After graduating from college, he became a school supervisor in the Philippines (then a US territory) and later traveled throughout Europe and Asia. He went on to earn a master's degree from the University of Chicago, and received his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1912, becoming the second African American (after W.E.B. DuBois) to earn a doctorate from that institution.

During his academic career, Woodson realized that the roles and contributions of African Americans were poorly represented in American history and in society. With the support of like-minded scholars and colleagues, Dr. Woodson founded Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (now known as Association for the Study of African American Life and History [ASALH]) in 1915. A year later, Dr. Woodson launched Journal of Negro Life and History (Journal of African American History).

In 1926, Dr. Woodson and the ASALH launched a two-week Negro Week celebration for the second week of February, to coincide with the birthdays of Frederick Douglas and Abraham Lincoln. The events focused on the twin purposes of honoring the contributions America's Black citizens and that of teaching and instilling racial pride. Over the next two and a half decades, Dr. Woodson and the ASALH witnessed and supported a slow but steady awakening in racial pride and consciousness in Black schools and communities. Dr. Woodson's death in 1950 prevented his witness of the struggles and gains of the civil rights movement. But in 1976, commemorating the bicentennial of the first Negro History Week, the ASALH sought and achieved federal recognition of the month of February as Black History Month, a time to formally observe African Americans' contributions to the history of the United States and the world.

Dr. Woodson authored several books, including A Century of Negro Migration (1918), The History of the Negro Church (1921), and The Negro in Our History (1922). His most celebrated text, The Miseducation of the Negro, was published in 1933.



Dr. Carter G. Woodson, 1947
Source: Library of Congress

“Those who have no record of what their forebears have accomplished lose the inspiration which comes from the teaching of biography and history.”

The HPR Quarterly Meeting - January 23rd at Pot Royal Town Hall 7:00PM



We have a lot to talk about! Join us as we lay out this year's calendar of events. Cleo Coleman and friends have been working diligently to prepare an inspiring program and museum exhibit to commemorate Black History Month. The February 10th program will coincide with the 2024 reopening of both the Port Royal School and the Port Royal Museum of American History. On May 4th, we will commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Old Port Royal School (1924-2024) with another production and new exhibits that celebrate the hope and perseverance that the School embodied a century ago, and which endures today.

For our Independence Day Celebration (Thursday July 4th), we anticipate a stellar line up of performers (including the puppeteers), historic interpreters, and traditional craftsmen. St. Peter's Episcopal Church on Water Street will, again, generously provide the event venue. Fall events are still being planned but keep a look out for even more special exhibits at the School and Museum. And don't forget that quarterly membership meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of January, April, July, and October. If a special opportunity arises, we will make the announcement in the Advocate, as well as via email, Facebook, and our website.



We hope to see you Tuesday night at Town Hall. Please stay for cake and refreshments.

Historic Port Royal, Inc

P.O. Box 233

Port Royal, VA 22535



Historic Port Royal, Inc., is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization dedicated to preserving and sharing Port Royal history and heritage through educational programs, exhibits, architectural restoration, and historic research.



Please Note: The printed date on your address label will tell you when your HPR membership expires.

Thanks for your support!