

American middle class and the history of Washington D.C. It is a part of the national historical themes of public education for African Americans and other minority groups. The school offered a top-rated classical education for students under a system of racial segregation, even though the physical facilities were inferior to those for white students in the city. Within a radius of several city blocks, the cluster of historically-related elementary, vocational, and high schools represent the range of educational facilities available to African-American students under the segregated public school system. The interpretive possibilities of M Street High School and its related institutions are extraordinarily rich.

Despite the inequities of the segregated system, M Street High School offered an enviable curriculum that was known throughout the nation. For academically-inclined black students, the school had no peer. Its graduates left a legacy of "magnificent academic achievements."⁶ Today, the lessons provided M Street High School are still vital. The building can continue to instruct and inspire the

public, as policy makers and community leaders seek to upgrade public education and offer outstanding educational opportunities for all students.

Notes

- ¹ David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of A Race* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993), p. 249.
- ² Henry S. Robinson, "The M Street High School, 1891-1916," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, Vol. 51, 1984, p. 123.
- ³ *Ibid*, p. 119.
- ⁴ "Colored High School, Contractor McCartney Completes His Work Within the Specified Time," *Washington Post*, September 11, 1891, p. 2.
- ⁵ Rayford W. Logan, "Growing Up in Washington: A Lucky Generation," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, Vol. 50, 1980, p.503.
- ⁶ Henry S. Robinson, *op cit.*, p. 123.

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The African-American Discovery Trail

A Boy Scout Project in Washington, DC

The African-American Discovery Trail is a hiking trail entirely within the District of Columbia. Totalling about 17 miles, it passes 31 sites significant to African-American history in Washington—houses of well-known persons, churches, schools, parks and statues, cemeteries, and national monuments.

Just as interesting are the neighborhoods to walk through—Georgetown, still looking much as it did in the early 19th century; Anacostia, with its historic Uniontown district ("no coloreds or Italians" was the original covenant in the 1870s); Capital Hill; downtown Washington; LeDroit Park, home to many well-to-do African Americans at the turn of the century; and especially U Street, the "Black Broadway" of Washington in the 1920s and '30s. Although the trail commemorates African-American history, it is not confined to African-American figures, but includes a number of white friends who supported the life of the black community in Washington and the nation as well.

The history of the trail itself is interesting. Boy Scout Troop 98 has met regularly in northeast Washington, DC, for over 50 years, and maintains one of the most active camping schedules in the area. The troop numbers about 15 scouts and has long been racially mixed. Every year the troop takes a hike of at least 20 miles, using various historical trails established throughout Washington.

In 1988, the troop learned that the National Park Service had just adopted the Black History National Recreation Trail originally proposed by an earlier scout, Andre Hutt, as his Eagle Scout project in a different troop; and it decided to be the first troop actually to hike the trail. In visiting the sites, we realized that we were passing many other interesting places; and we drew up a longer trail as a troop project. Seven years and several hikes later, the National Park Service, working with the Parks and History Association and the Humanities Council of Washington, DC, have made this trail a reality.

Scouts walking the African-American Discovery Trail. Photo courtesy Boy Scout Troop 98.

—Hayden M. Wetzel,
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