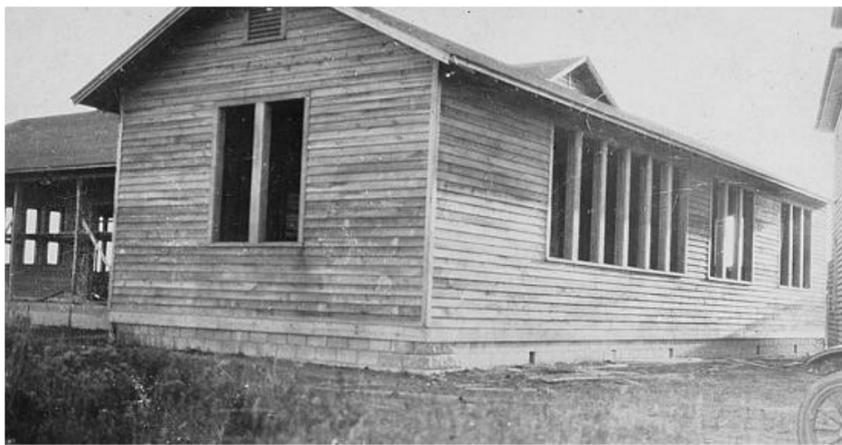


# Thomas Hunter School

*An African American Communities Vision*



Thomas Hunter School opened in October 1927, serving the African American community until 1969, when it was incorporated in the Mathews County school district following racial integration.

Before Hunter opened, many black children were taught at schools held in the county's churches. At the time, these children could not get more than a 6th or 7th grade education without traveling to schools in Norfolk or other major cities.

On April 15, 1923, the Mathews Educational League was formed by members of the black community. This group saw a need to improve the educational needs of the black children of the county.

Three years after the Educational League was founded, they had raised \$6,800 towards their goal. The donations were a community effort — \$6,300 from the black community, \$200 from the white community and \$500 from the Mathews County School Board.

The Trustees of the Mathews Educational League -William Billups, Louis R. White, Major Smith, J. Frank Johnson, Enos Ruff, Victor Morse and Charles Kellum - on April 17, 1924, purchased 3.604 acres of land from E. W. and Clara B. Daniels Walker. And on September 6, 1926 the corner-stone was laid at the new "Training School".

The school was named after Thomas Hunter (1806-1910), a former slave of the family of George Edward Tabb Lane of "Woodstock," Port Haywood. In the early 1920s, when blacks were soliciting money to start a high school, Lane, who was then Mathews County treasurer, donated \$25 with the stipulation that the school be named for the Lane family's longtime faithful worker.

The first school was a H-shaped frame building that stood in front of the site of the present school. Gradually the other nine schools for blacks in Mathews were consolidated until Hunter had classes for all of the county's black children, from grades one through 11.



In 1953, a brick building opened behind the frame structure, which was moved for use as a cafeteria and vocational shop. The frame building was razed in 1965 to make room for an addition to the new school. And in 1969, the facility was converted into an intermediate school for grades five through eight and the name changed to Mathews Intermediate School. In 1990, the school was renamed Thomas Hunter.

