



A Community of Hope

Outside of Harrisonburg, African American educators founded in 1865 a small town for the newly-freed slaves. Founded in 1865, it was a plot of land given for the purpose of creating an African American church. The location was one of the most prosperous African American communities in the country. Many Simms residents owned property, and education and religion were key aspects of life.

Immigration was hard on the church, known as Long Chapel, until a dedicated school building was erected in 1880. Students from other areas moved to attend, but their status as a source of African American advancement.

After 1900, the population of Simms began to decline with the migration of African American families. In 2008, Long Chapel opened its doors as a school of the relationship and progress for the African American community in Harrisonburg County.



A Community of Progress

In 1880, the village of Simms was founded by a group of African American educators. The village was founded in 1865, and it was a plot of land given for the purpose of creating an African American church. The location was one of the most prosperous African American communities in the country. Many Simms residents owned property, and education and religion were key aspects of life.



L. J. Simms
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Celebrating Simms exhibit installed in the atrium of Harrisonburg High School, February 2021



Celebrating Simms traveling exhibit installed at the Bridgewater branch of the Massanutten Regional Library, May 2021

Kelly Grady (left) and Catherine Stone have created *Intuitive*, their graphic album about Africa's role in global climate. "Recycling didn't start until we had cars," says Grady. "The car was the first machine that humans had to build, and it was the first machine that humans had to build that was made of metal. And that's why it was the first machine that humans had to build that was made of metal."

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Before the 1970s, when traditional medicine was based on indigenous African knowledge, traditional religious practitioners were more respected and treated as primary gatekeepers for early African medicine when people

Children may have several things out of the box - different 'extra' items! It would be useful to mention the child whose record is like this: first student in school from an Australian to the whole community and how this person made the village proud and is a tribute to the goodness of the education they received.

Hammerburg lived the population used similar Christian knowledge and values to justify their appeal through the Virgin of Loretto. Hammer thus could show *solidarity* to the northwesterners in his own era without any religious and moral

After being asked just how it felt to be good, and how that was different from anyone else who gets that kind of



Celebrating Simms traveling exhibit installed at Rocktown History in Dayton, August 2021



Celebrating Simms traveling exhibit installed at Hillyard Middle School in Broadway, November 2021

Celebrating Simms: The Story of the Lucy F. Simms School

Many people in the community have been working tirelessly for years to tell the story of the Lucy F. Simms School. This exhibition, the result of a multi-year collaboration between Harrisonburg community members and James Madison University students, builds on their work. Enslaved before the Civil War, Lucy F. Simms settled in Harrisonburg and taught over 1,800 students across three generations, becoming the most esteemed educator in the Shenandoah Valley. Named in her honor, the Lucy F. Simms School was built in 1938 to serve African American students from all over Rockingham County and the Shenandoah Valley until integration came to Harrisonburg in 1965. This is the story of that school and the community it served.

Please visit the companion website (<https://omeka.lib.jmu.edu/simms>) to find out more about the images on display here and to view additional archival materials. The website will be updated with new artifacts as they become available, and we welcome you to contact us via the website to provide any comments or additional information.

A Community of Faith

Celebrating Simms
traveling exhibit installed
at the Virginia Mennonite
Retirement Community in
Harrisonburg, March
2022

Before the Civil War, Lucy F. Simms, a young woman, was enslaved in the Shenandoah Valley. Her owner, a prominent Mennonite, tolerated her because she was a primary caregiver for his children.

On the Grayson Hilltop, one of the Gray children, "Aunt Lucy" would herself be teaching the other slaves to read the Bible. One student in particular, known as "Aunt Lucy" to the white community, used these Bible lessons to teach the youngest generation, and is believed to be the grandmother of James.



Lucy F. Simms
"I am now living and working for my race" - Lucy F. Simms

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Reviewing digitized images and possible topics for the Mary Awkard Fairfax exhibit



Mary's Early Years

Mary Aikard Early was born in 1848 in the town of Newburyport, Massachusetts. She was the daughter of a farmer and a school teacher. Mary was a very bright child and was known for her intelligence and her ability to learn quickly.

Mary was the oldest child of her family and was known for her intelligence and her ability to learn quickly. She was a very bright child and was known for her intelligence and her ability to learn quickly.

At 10 years old, Mary was able to read and write. She was a very bright child and was known for her intelligence and her ability to learn quickly. She was a very bright child and was known for her intelligence and her ability to learn quickly.

1848-1849 Mary Aikard Early was born in the town of Newburyport, Massachusetts.

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A Love of Learning

From an early age, Mary was a voracious reader. She was a very bright child and was known for her intelligence and her ability to learn quickly. She was a very bright child and was known for her intelligence and her ability to learn quickly.

When she was 12 years old, Mary was able to read and write. She was a very bright child and was known for her intelligence and her ability to learn quickly. She was a very bright child and was known for her intelligence and her ability to learn quickly.

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Mary Aikard at 10 Years

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Mrs. Fairbank after integration

Mrs. Fairbank was the first African American woman to be elected to the office of the Mayor of the City of Newburyport, Massachusetts. She was a very bright child and was known for her intelligence and her ability to learn quickly. She was a very bright child and was known for her intelligence and her ability to learn quickly.

Mrs. Fairbank was the first African American woman to be elected to the office of the Mayor of the City of Newburyport, Massachusetts. She was a very bright child and was known for her intelligence and her ability to learn quickly. She was a very bright child and was known for her intelligence and her ability to learn quickly.

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A Passion for Music

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East Rockingham High School students visit the Mary Aikard Fairfax exhibit in the conference room of the Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center, March 2022



Celebrando a Simms: la historia de la Escuela Lucy F. Simms

Por años, muchas personas en la comunidad han trabajado, incesantemente, para relatar la historia de la Escuela Lucy F. Simms. Esta exhibición, que es el resultado de un año de colaboración entre miembros de la comunidad y estudiantes de la Universidad James Madison, se basa en ese trabajo.

Habiendo sido esclavizada antes de la Guerra Civil Americana, Lucy F. Simms se estableció en la ciudad de Harrisonburg y fue maestra de, por lo menos, 1800 estudiantes, a lo largo de tres generaciones, convirtiéndose en la educadora más valorada en el Valle de Shenandoah. El edificio en el que usted se encuentra ahora fue bautizado en su honor, y ha permanecido, a la fecha, el núcleo de la comunidad afroamericana en la ciudad de Harrisonburg.

Sírvase visitar el siguiente sitio web suplementario (<https://omeka.jmu.edu/simms>) para mayor información sobre las imágenes exhibidas aquí y para acceder a materiales adicionales de archivo. Este sitio web será actualizado con nuevos material histórico conforme estén disponibles. Lo invitamos a hacernos llegar cualquier comentario o información.

Audio recordings of the exhibit in English and Spanish are being made available on the website and accessible by QR code.