

## THE PITTSYLVANIA SCHOOL

Information from "YESTERDAY'S SCHOOLS by Lucy Walsh Phinney

Manassas School District  
Colored  
1871 and earlier

Although there is no existing record, Pittsylvania may have been a privately run school for black children before it became part of the public school system in 1870. Pittsylvania was the name of a large plantation owned by Landon Carter, a descendant of the Robert "King" Carter family, so prominent in the early history of the western part of Prince William County. The house itself was burned shortly after the Second Battle of Manassas in 1862, but the area continued to be known as Pittsylvania. The Stone House, now at the intersection of routes 234 and 29, was built on the Pittsylvania Plantation around 1812 and it is likely that the Pittsylvania School was located somewhere in the vicinity.

At the second meeting of the Manassas School Board in December of 1870, the members voted to hire Mr. Josiah Thomas "to teach the colored school at Pittsylvania" for a salary of \$15 a month as requested by Mr. Thomas. Likely, the school was already in existence since the Board did not address the question of opening a school.

While the salary was low, it did not have to cover Mr. Thomas' board since that was provided to him by patrons of the school. The school opened on January 23, 1871 as a public school but it did not last long. At the School Board meeting of April 22, 1871 it was reported that the Pittsylvania School fell below attendance requirements and additionally, the teacher was ready to "close his contract" so the little school was closed immediately. Mr. Thomas was not unemployed for long. School Board minutes later that fall show that he had been employed to teach the Manly (Manley) School, which had recently opened.

Other than a very few references in the old Manassas District School Board minutes of 1870-71, no other mention has ever been found of the Pittsylvania School. Perhaps because it was open for such a short time as a public school, it was never given a number as were other schools in the District. When it closed, the few remaining children probably transferred to the Manley School. It opened in 1871 and would have been a three to four mile walk for the students of the Pittsylvania neighborhood, not an unusual distance for black children to have to travel.