

The Old Cabin Branch School/Clarkson School  
Source – Yesterday's School by Lucy Walsh Phinney

When the Cabin Branch Mine opened in 1889 to produce high grade pyrite ore, a community of support services grew up in the area near where the North and South branches of Quantico Creek met. As miners and their families began to create a community, a school house was established to serve the black children who lived around the mine. The community became known as Batestown and the school was called the Cabin Branch or, later and more formally, the Clarkson School. The Superintendent of Schools beginning in 1891 was W. M. Clarkson and very likely the schoolhouse was named in his honor. It was located on the east side of Mine Road about two miles northwest of the village of Dumfries in what is now Prince William Forest Park.

The Prince William County School inventory reports that a new one room frame Cabin Branch schoolhouse was built in 1916 on the west side of Mine Road less than half a mile south of the site of the old school. The total cost was \$1400. Located next to the Little union Baptist Church, the new school continued to serve the children of Batestown until 1950.

Reference is made in the April 10, 1924 School Board minutes to the decision of the Board to sell an abandoned school and lot in the Cabin Branch area. This was the Clarkson or Old Cabin Branch School. Apparently no sale occurred because four years later records show the school site was again offered for sale by the Board. It was finally sold to Mr. J. H. McInteer at a public auction in front of Ratcliffe's Store in Dumfries on Friday, March 29, 1929. The winning bid was \$10.