

Sulphur Springs
(Towles' Gate) Vancluse
Hazelwood School

Brentsville District School #5
White 1871-1908

The first school in the southern part of the Brentsville District was the Sulphur Springs School. It was located about a mile southwest of the village of Aden, on Hazelwood Drive at the intersection with old Law's Ford road. It was probably located in a rented building for the first seven years, taking its name from the location near a branch of Sulphur Springs. The Brentsville District School Board, in November of 1877, agreed to contract for a permanent schoolhouse to be built at Towles Gate, replacing the Sulphur Springs schoolhouse which would continue to function until the new building was finished.

A notice was put in THE MANASSAS GAZETTE asking for bids to erect the new schoolhouse at Towles' Gate on the corner of Fleetwood Drive and Deepford Lane about one mile east of the old school. Specifications for the building were set forth in School Board minutes and giving a good picture of what it must have looked like. It was to measure 16' x 24' with ten foot pitch to the roof. Three twelve-paned windows with venetian blinds were built into each side wall and there was another window fronting the door at one end, the exterior was covered with undressed weatherboarding; the roof had cypress or drawn oak shingles. Inside, there was wainscoting on the lower four and a half feet of the walls with white washed plaster above that. The floors were of 4" – 6" wide pine boards. The building of the school at Towles Gate was combined with the building of the new schoolhouse at Bristoe and both were built according to the same plan by the same contractor. Mr. w. Raymond Free's bid of \$219.50 was the lowest of seven submitted to the Board which agreed to pay half when the materials were deposited on the school grounds and the other half when the job was completed.

Unfortunately, Mr. Free still had not finished the Towles Gate School by June 1879 and it was badly needed. The District Board, therefore, hired Mr. E. C. Taylor at the rate of \$1.50 a day to complete the job. Mr. Free apparently lost half of his pay because he did not meet the schedule agreed upon.

The need must indeed have been great because in its opening weeks, an assistant teacher was added at a salary of \$10 a month. The new school was named the Vancluse (or VanCluse) School, although the origin of that name is unknown. Towles' Gate was simply a way to refer to the school under construction by its location in the community. The first teacher in the new building was Miss Mollie Bryant who remained there for several years. In 1886, Mr. H. H. Washington took over the school at a salary of \$25 a month. He stayed for several years, too.

In 1890, the name of the schoolhouse was changed from Vancluse to Hazelwood. Why this was done is not known. There is no record of a new building at that time, nor does the school patrons (parents) requesting a change. Perhaps, with the growing number of schools in the District, the Board decided to make things easier by calling the school houses by their geographic location. The Sulphur Springs and Vancluse Schools were both located on land belonging to the plantation

called Hazelwood. Hazelwood itself was built on the site of the old Truro House which was destroyed during the Civil War. Historically, the name Hazelwood meant something to the community and so the name change made sense. When the District renumbered their schools in 1900, Hazelwood became number #4 after thirty years of being School #5.

Beginning in 1904, debate began over closing the Hazelwood School and building a centrally located schoolhouse in the village of Aden. Several meetings were held with the public, the District Board and the Superintendent of Schools to discuss whether to move the school and, if so, what size the building should be. All of this was sidelined when the Board became embroiled in the business of providing high school courses at the Nokesville Village School.