

The South River Current



Promoting interest and collaboration for watershed stewardship

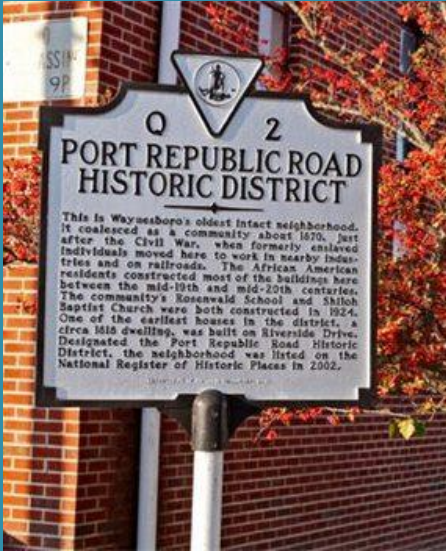


Freshwater mussels tagged for monitoring.

Watershed Restoration: *Musse*/Mass Matters

Why do mussels matter in the South River Watershed? They act as nature's water purifier. Freshwater mussels naturally clean water by filtering out small organic particles like bacteria and algae and eating them. In recent decades, freshwater mussel populations have dwindled significantly across America. Industrial growth, sewage systems, and agriculture have impacted the fresh water these hard-working mollusks depend upon. The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) is using a portion of the DuPont Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration settlement to stock mussels in sections of both the South and Shenandoah rivers. In 2020 they began stocking bunches of tagged mussels and will be monitoring their development over time in hopes that they begin to multiply on their own. To learn more about the history of mussel cultivation in Virginia and the Aquatic Wildlife Conservation Center built, in part, to hold, propagate, and grow mussels for Virginia's rivers, click [here](#).

Did You Know?



- In order to monitor the growth of individual mussels, small tags are cemented to the shells using dental cement.
- The Port Republic Road District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places with one house built around 1818. The community was formed around 1870 by formerly enslaved African Americans working nearby. (See landmark sign in picture.)
- Rosenwald Schools exclusively served more than 700,000 Black children over four decades of operation in various states until desegregation.

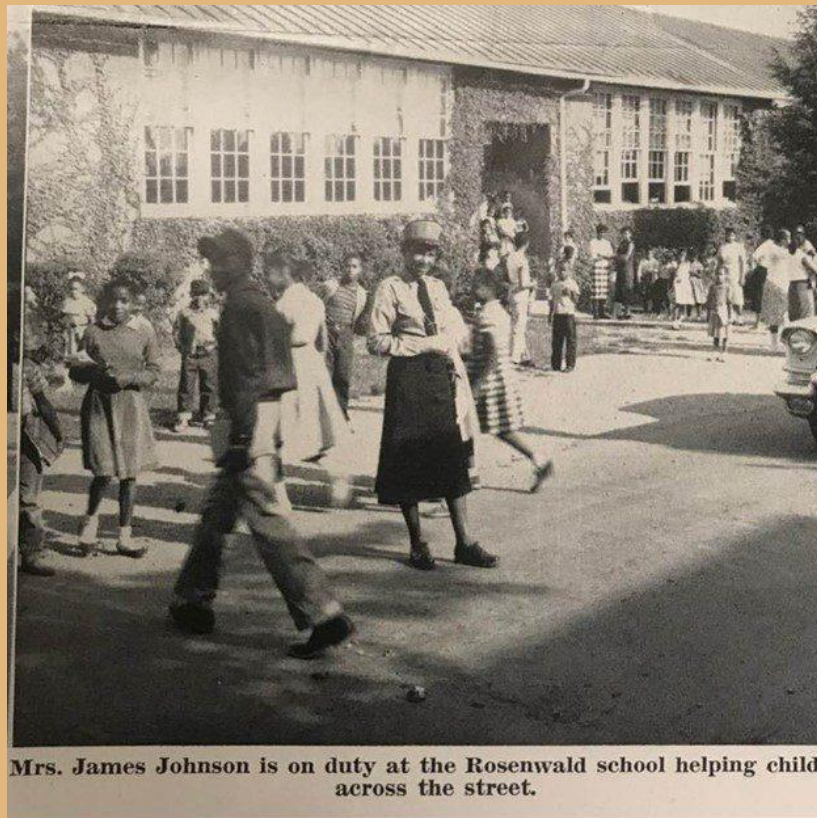


Connie Howard volunteering at Waynesboro Black Heritage Museum. Picture by Mike Tripp/THE NEWS LEADER.

Connections: A Powerful Piece of the Past for the Present

Nestled in the basement of the Rosenwald Community Center you will find the Waynesboro African-American Heritage Museum. There you can get a glimpse of life at the Rosenwald Schools (see *Take a Walk Back*); look at pictures of classrooms, students, and faculty; and explore all the African-American artifacts and memorabilia that Augustine Bellamy, the museum's founder, sought to preserve for future generations.

For years Ms. Bellamy's mom dressed up as characters in history and put on plays to help teach Black children about their history. She'd come to schools, quiz the children, and offer gift certificates as an incentive to study. She recognized the importance of preserving Black history in the area, and her legacy continues in the community even to this day. Former Rosenwald students and their family members volunteer at the museum and tell stories about Ms. Bellamy, Principal William Parry, school life, and living on Shiloh Avenue and Port Republic on the other side of the once invisible wall that marked the racial divide. The museum is open to everyone, but you must make an appointment to visit. Call Estella Randolph, museum curator, at (540) 836-0024 to schedule your visit. Rosenwald Community Center is located at 413 Port Republic Road in Waynesboro.



Early days at Rosenwald School. (Picture credit.)

Take a Walk Back: Overcoming Obstacles

In 1881, Booker T. Washington set out to provide schooling for African-American students around the country. Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears Roebuck and a philanthropist and advocate for the Black community, joined Washington to begin building Rosenwald Schools for Black children throughout the Southeast. Over 5,000 school buildings were built, one right in Waynesboro. In the early 20th century during

the Jim Crow Era, the Black community was separate and educational services were severely underfunded. Julia Barbour Perry taught the children in two small, dilapidated buildings, and the school term only lasted five months. The community worked hard to raise money for a school and, when Rosenwald stepped up, the Colored School in Waynesboro was finally built. The school opened in 1926 and had four classrooms and an auditorium. Additions were built in later years. Excited for the new school, students walked long distances in all sorts of weather to gather and learn. Teachers and faculty were steadfast in their commitment to the education of each student; many of them and their families are still active members of the Waynesboro community today. In 1965 and 1966, schools were integrated. The school eventually became the Rosenwald Community Center. Read some firsthand accounts of life at Rosenwald School in a 2016 article from *The News Leader* [here](#) or see a snapshot of the timeline [here](#).



Upcoming Events

Click on links for more information.

- April 22nd 9AM to noon - Waynesboro Public Works Annual Clean Up. Sign up through link. [Public Works Annual Spring Clean Up](#)
- April 29th 10AM to 4:30PM – [Riverfest 2023!](#) Waynesboro's Annual Riverfest Event.