

Alexandria Library Sit In

On August 21, 1939, William Evans, Edward Gaddis, Morris Murray, Clarence Strange and Otto Tucker entered the Barrett Library and requested library cards. When refused, they sat down and began to read. All five were arrested. Their attorney Samuel W. Tucker, a civil rights advocate, helped organize the protest. They hoped this action would lead to equal access for the city's African American residents, but the city delayed the case and no ruling was ever issued. In 1940 Alexandria built a separate facility, the Robert H. Robinson Library, for African Americans. Seen by many as a positive outcome, it was not the equality that Tucker sought. The Robinson Library now houses Alexandria's Black History Museum. Desegregation of the library system began by 1959.



Picture of the new Barrett Library taken in the late 1930s. The building has been expanded over the years.



Interior of the Barrett Library taken in the 1940s.



The protestors being escorted from library by police.

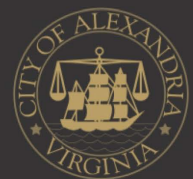


Samuel W. Tucker (1913-1990) Attorney Tucker spent a long career battling for equal access across the commonwealth. He served as an infantry officer in the Second World War and is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.



The new Robert H. Robinson Library not long after its opening in April 1940. The new library for African American citizens was opened just seven months after the Sit In.

All photos from the Alexandria11dirt Library, Special Collection11s.



CITY OF ALEXANDRIA EST. 1749

City of Alexandria/Office of Historic Alexandria/Alexandria Archaeology and Safeway Inc.

www.Alexandriava.gov/Archaeology

