



# Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

## Out of the Attic

### Seminary School

*Alexandria Times, April 10, 2008*

*Image: Seminary School. Photo, courtesy Rosenwald Fund Archives, Fisk University.*

**D**ecades before T.C. Williams opened in the 1960s, a school for African-American students stood on the same site.

Construction of the Seminary School would not have been possible without the efforts of Douglass Wood, a former slave who raised money, rallied local support and provided two acres for the school. During a period when public support for black education was

extremely limited, Wood was able to get a commitment from the Julius Rosenwald Fund to donate money, which helped secure Fairfax County funding. Rosenwald, the son of immigrants, was a wealthy businessman who helped fund thousands of black schools throughout the South.

In October 1927 Seminary School opened, and a large turnout of both black and white residents attended the dedication ceremony. The school had three rooms for classes, a small library and an outside toilet. Water was obtained from a nearby well on the Smith Roy property. Three teachers taught grades 1 through 7, and according to former students, the school day began with a song of prayer. Children studied reading, arithmetic, geography and history and paid \$1.50 each to rent books.

Because of its close proximity to Arlington, students across the county line enrolled at Seminary School. During the school's first year, 27 students, approximately one-third of the total enrollment, were from Arlington. Due to annexation, the school later fell under the City of Alexandria and in 1932, 81 children were enrolled there. Seminary School closed around 1960. Several residents and graduates remember the school and rural community, and two streets next to the T.C. Williams campus commemorate the Wood family contribution.



*“Out of the Attic” is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as “Marking Time” and explored Alexandria’s history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into “Out of the Attic” and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.*

*These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by Amy Bertsch, former Public Information Officer, and Lance Mallamo, Director, on behalf of the Office of Historic Alexandria.*