

2023 MRSPT NEWSLETTER

Greetings and Best Wishes for 2024!

This brand new year offers each one of us an equal number of months, days and hours within which to operate in the present as well as to ponder the future. Like all of you, we at the Military Road School Preservation Trust find it necessary to rearrange our priorities from time to time when facing various challenges that arise with little or no warning. It is with that in mind that we express our sincere appreciation for those of you who reached out to this organization in some manner over the past year in support of our endeavors to continue sharing the Military Road School's story. In whatever form it was offered, your encouragement and participation allowed MRSPT to accomplish much and to finish the year well!

This Newsletter will highlight MRSPT's activities over the past 12 months, including our Scholarship Reception, which is customarily held in December but had to be pushed forward to the beginning of this year. Also, while attending a New Year's Day brunch, several supporters shared ideas about a couple of significant projects which MRSPT hopes to undertake in the very near future. It was a great way to start 2024!

Once again, MRSPT utilized virtual platforms for two annual events which had been held in-person prior to the Pandemic. Although we do miss connecting with attendees personally, using that medium provides an opportunity for some of you who would not otherwise be able to join us to do so. Our Board is, therefore, considering additional presentations during this year which we believe would be of interest to you, and information about all future events will be shared via email. We especially hope you will be available to attend the 100th Anniversary of our annual Lincoln-Thomas Day observance at Fort Stevens, so mark your calendars now to join us on Saturday, September 21st!

We shall do our best to stay in touch by informing you of MRSPT's programs, those in which we participate, and others that may be of interest to you. Also, please visit our website, www.mrspt.org, periodically for possible updates; and those of you with Instagram accounts can check posts @mrspt1864.

We sincerely look forward to remaining connected with you in 2024, so please let us hear from you!

Military Road School Donnesa Lucas Memorial Scholarship Awards

One avenue by which we promote the Military Road School's legacy of educational excellence is through the Military Road School Donnesa Lucas Memorial Scholarship Fund, which gives financial awards to qualified local students pursuing a college degree to assist them with education-related expenses. Because MRSPT does not engage in fundraising to support this program, these scholarships are funded entirely through your tax-deductible donations.

As mentioned earlier, a virtual Scholarship Reception was held on January 10th for our 2023 award recipients, Mr. William Morton and Ms. Laci Joseph, each of whom received financial assistance for the current school year through this Fund.

The reception featured a special presentation by Ms. Kimberly Springle, Executive Director of the Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives in Washington DC, which celebrated its 100th Anniversary in 2023. In addition to explaining the Museum's function as a repository for the history of District of Columbia public schools, Ms. Springle recounted the impassioned endeavors of the Museum's Founding Director, Mr. Richard Hurlburt, who literally prevented the impending destruction of the historic Sumner School building by standing on its grounds as demolition of the facility was about to begin. Many years later, upon learning that Military Road School alumni sought to preserve their school building, he provided invaluable assistance, which resulted in the facility being designated as a local, and, also, a national historic site.

In appreciation for Ms. Springle's support and that of both of her predecessors to preserve the Military Road School's historical legacy, MRSPT virtually presented school-related artifacts during the reception in honor of Sumner's 100th Anniversary; and the items will be subsequently delivered in person for inclusion in the Museum's archives.

Hosting these events provides an opportunity for those whose contributions make it possible for MRSPT to offer scholarships to meet and encourage the students in their studies. It also allows recipients to express their gratitude and to share their various fields of study as well as their accomplishments and goals. Thank you for making these awards possible and please continue to invest in the futures of other deserving students!

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Fort Stevens Day July 15th

“Music and the Defense of the Capital” was the theme of the 159th Anniversary of the Battle of Fort Stevens. This annual event, sponsored by the National Park Service and the Alliance to Preserve the Civil War Defenses of Washington, featured a variety of musical performers as well as speakers, reenactors, historical interpreters, and living history displays. Board members Peter Kissel, Theresa Saxton, and Patricia Tyson greeted visitors at MRSPT’s exhibit area who appreciated learning about the Military Road School, established in 1864 in a deserted army barracks within the Fort’s gaze, and about our mission to preserve its rich history. The event concluded with a “walk and talk” at nearby Battleground Cemetery.

Lincoln-Thomas Day September 16th

Once again, MRSPT deeply appreciates the National Park Service’s support for our annual commemoration of the unlikely but historically significant Civil War-related alliance between a President and a Brightwood resident. Mrs. Opal Bacon, the 31st National President of the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs, and NACWC members from across the country attended the 99th Anniversary observance of Lincoln-Thomas Day, which was initiated by the National Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs of America (NFCWCA) and first observed nationally on September 22, 1924, to honor President Abraham Lincoln and Mrs. Elizabeth Proctor Thomas. **NPS Ranger Franice Sewell**, *Acting Program Manager for the Civil War Defenses of Washington*, welcomed attendees and **Dr. Richard Bell**, Professor of History, University of Maryland, offered the keynote address entitled “*The Destruction of Slavery in the Civil War.*” Program participants also included the **Dunbar High School JROTC** as well as soloists **Ms. Hannah Germaine**, *Montgomery Blair High School*, and **Mrs. Annette Singletary**, **Rev. Aubrey Lewis**, *Pastor of the St. Luke Baptist Church*, and **Rev. Pawel Sass**, *Pastor of the Nativity Catholic Church*. Attendees were also greeted by **Dr. Sheryl Lucas Giles**, *President of the D.C.’s NACWC Chapter*, **Ranger Brian Joyner**, *Acting Superintendent, Rock Creek Park, National Park Service*, **MRSPT Board Member Peter Kissel** and *Washington, D.C. Temple Sinai representative*, **Mr. Matthew Frumin**. This event was further enhanced by local **Civil War Reenactors** who also took part in the wreath-laying ceremony.

It was great to see so many of you at the 2023 celebration and we are looking forward to seeing even more of you at this year’s 100th Anniversary observance on **Saturday, September 21, 2024!**

MRSPT’s Annual Meeting November 2, 2023

Our Annual Meeting is the occasion designated to recognize those supporters who have demonstrated a level of interest in MRSPT’s mission which warrants their consideration as an officer or member of the Board of Directors. However, due to the absence of qualified candidates, current officers and Board members have consented to preside over and manage MRSPT’s affairs by continuing to serve in their positions for 2024. Although we anticipate actively recruiting individuals during the year whom we hope will consider becoming more involved, volunteers who perform essential tasks as individuals or as members of special committees are equally appreciated--and that is especially true as plans for this year’s Lincoln-Thomas Day program continue to develop. You are key to the success of MRSPT’s operations, programs, and events like those highlighted in this Newsletter, so please give these opportunities serious consideration and let us hear from you.

Following an introduction of the officers and Board members at this year’s virtual meeting, attendees were privileged to hear a special presentation reflecting the cultural history of the era surrounding the Military Road School’s closure given by Mrs. Willie Pearl Mackey King, who worked for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference under the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Mrs. King was a member of Dr. King’s executive staff from February 1962 to February 1966, and she shared intricate details of some of the “behind-the-scenes” activity during the height of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960’s. In performing a variety of administrative duties, she traveled with Dr. King; and while in Birmingham, Alabama, she typed his famous *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, which she and Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker transcribed from Dr. King’s notes written on newspaper edges, table napkins, toilet paper, and whatever scraps of paper he could find to write on.

As a result of this enlightening presentation, we have discussed the possibility of offering additional virtual presentations of special interest throughout the year. Therefore, if you would like to be notified so that we may invite you to join these Zoom meetings, please notify us and you will be included on the list of invitees.