

The Legacy of Hooper-Renwick



Portrait of an elderly African American man.



Exterior view of a large building.



Portrait of a man with a mustache.



Group of people in graduation gowns.



Aerial view of a campus.



Portrait of a woman in a graduation cap.



Portrait of a man in a suit.



Exterior view of a modern building.



Portrait of a man in a military uniform.



**DRAFT: Hooper-Renwick Text
for Aurora Theater Display**

Introduction

Seventh grade was the highest grade available for Black students in the segregated Gwinnett County Public School System until the mid-1940s. Any Black student desiring to attend high school was required to travel to Atlanta or Athens. Mr. Mack Renwick donated three acres of land and in 1944 Renwick High School was founded in a little 3-room white building, educating students in grades 8-11. During this time, simultaneously in the early 1940s prominent local Black citizens including Mr. Timothy Summerour, Sr., Mr. Hubert Langston, Professor J. P. Howard, Professor Marshall Hooper, and Mr. Mack Renwick, began to advocate for an actual school building for the county's Black children. As a result, Hooper-Renwick Elementary-High School was constructed in 1951, right next to Renwick High School, on the same acreage lot donated by Mr. Mack Renwick.

The Hooper-Renwick Elementary-High School was built in 1951 and during segregation it was the only high school Black students in the Gwinnett County Public School system could attend. Students came from across the county to attend the school, making it the hub for the community of Black families across the county. In the years 1968 and 1969, the Hooper-Renwick Elementary-High School completely closed and all Black students were directed to attend the White schools in their respective districts following integration.

In 2016, the current historic rehabilitation efforts began to preserve the school. The Hooper-Renwick Library is a partnership preservation project between the City of Lawrenceville, the Hooper-Renwick Legacy Preservation Committee, Gwinnett County Public Library and Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners. This will result in the old school building being converted into the Southeast's first themed library. The restoration project will also include historic displays of artifacts and oral histories related to the school's history during segregation.

Professor J. P. Howard: 1876 – 1952

Professor J. P. Howard was a noted educator and a member of various educational staffs throughout Georgia for some 50 years. Professor Howard served as the first principal for Renwick High School until his retirement in 1949. He made use of his positive relationship with The Gwinnett County Superintendent and The Board of Education. Professor Howard continued his push for the county to have a school to educate Black students.

Professor Marshall M. Hooper: ~1870 - 1959

Professor Marshall M. Hooper moved to Gwinnett County between 1880 and 1900, where he met and married Lillie Bonds, who was also a teacher at Hooper-Renwick. Both Hoopers attended college and were English teachers. Professor Hooper was a noted Jeanes Educator and served as the first teacher at Salem School in Lilburn, organized in 1894. Professor Hooper was very instrumental in the drive for a county high school for Black students and partnered strongly with Mr. Renwick in this endeavor.

Mr. Mack Renwick: 1858 - 1948

Mr. Mack Renwick rose to prominence as a businessman and landowner in Lawrenceville. His wife, Lillie Belle, was a public-school teacher, who became one of Hooper-Renwick's teachers. Mr. Renwick strongly campaigned for a high school for Black students. After much collaboration with Mr. Hooper and other concerned citizens, Mr. Renwick donated some three acres of land for the construction of the Renwick High School, which is where the original Hooper-Renwick building stands today.

Dr. Miley Mae Hemphill: 1914 -2016

Dr. Miley Mae Hemphill was a lifelong Gwinnett County educator and advocate for the education of Black students. Dr. Hemphill was a noted Jeanes Supervisor (the last one for Gwinnett County), as well as an educator teaching for many years in different counties. She also served as principal at New Bethel School, one of the 13 centers that educated Black youngsters in Gwinnett County from 1937-1956. Dr. Hemphill was employed as Curriculum Director for Gwinnett and Jackson Counties, as well as Winder City schools. A graduate of Morris Brown College (BS), Dr. Hemphill went on to complete her Master Program at Atlanta University. This is where she submitted her thesis, "**A Study of the Negro Public Schools in Gwinnett County, GA 1937-1956**", which is a prime source of information on early Black schools in Gwinnett County. She went on to receive her Doctor of Divinity from a university in Evanston, Indiana.

Mr. Hubert Langston: 1905 -1993

Mr. Hubert Langston grew up in Lawrenceville and was educated in the Gwinnett County Public School System. He was a member of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Lawrenceville. Mr. Langston attended Tuskegee Institute in Alabama but is a graduate of Morehouse College in Atlanta. He enlisted in the Army Branch of the Armed Forces on October 16, 1940, and served in World War II. He proudly earned the rank of Corporal. Corporal Langston subsequently wrote to the U.S. Congress, appealing to them regarding the need to have a school for Black students in Lawrenceville.

Mr. Timothy Summerour, Sr.:1905 – 1980

Mr. Timothy Summerour grew up in Lawrenceville, Ga. He worked many years for the Seaboard Air Line Railroad, becoming a Railroad Section Foreman before his retirement. Mr. Summerour was a long-time member of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, where he served many years as Chairman of the Deacon Board. Deacon Summerour was instrumental in going into nearby communities, gathering concerns and creating a consensus confirming that a high school was desperately needed for the children in the Black community.