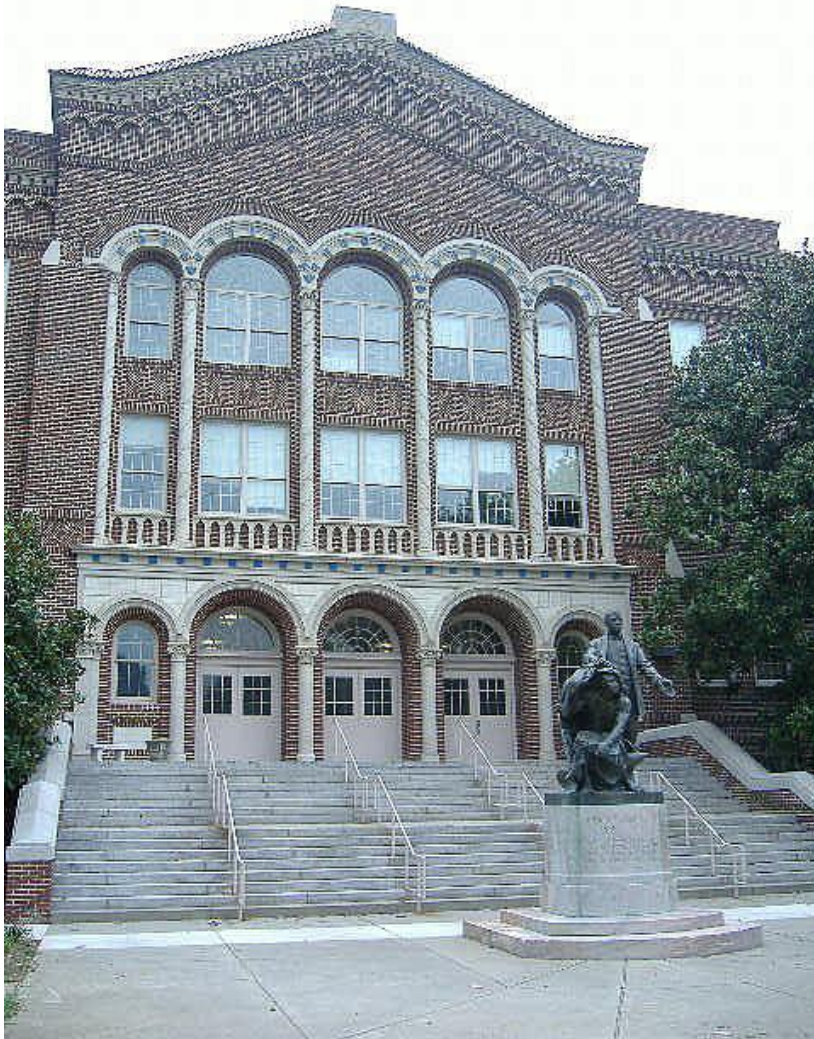


Rooted in Excellence for
100 Years





Welcome! Today, you will explore various points of interest around the BT Washington HS campus - - the first and largest public high school built for African Americans southeast of the Mississippi.

You will learn about Washington High's iconic role in the African American community. It is a proud and rich history, having a presence in the Washington Park community for 95 years. The school was erected in 1922 during Atlanta's major school building program and opened Sept. 24th 1924.



It consists of a four-story building of reinforced concrete with brick veneer walls built in a medieval-eclectic style.

The elaborate main entrance contains five arches in two tiers, using terra cotta and Venetian-style

Some original roof tiles remain, as do original doors, high ceilings.

This entire front is a historic treasured landmark. Nothing about the front of the building can be altered or renovated in any way. In fact, when the renovations were done on this building in 2005, add on were made from the rear of the building - - nothing on the front could be altered in any way, without first getting permission from the National Register of Historic Places. The school was placed on this very historic and prestigious register in 1986.

The student population was not just made up of metro area students. Students migrated from all over the USA and metropolitan Atlanta to attend BTW - - and paid \$43.00 / year for tuition - - because BTW had an outstanding reputation for academic excellence.

Students from all over the southeast region, from anywhere south of the Mississippi on downward, signed up and registered to attend BT Washington. So at times during those early years, the population ballooned to as many as 4000 students.

It was, and still is, an iconic structure and important cultural institution in the African American community -
-educating scores of generations of African Americans during an era when there were no such institutions for Blacks.

The school has produced many outstanding graduates, including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., civil rights leader; Romae T. Powell, judge; Dr. Asa Yancy, surgeon; Lena Horne



Graham Jackson

- Let's learn a bit about the man, behind the renaming of the street on which the school resides.

- Graham Washington Jackson was born in 1903 in Portsmouth, Virginia and proved himself to be a musical prodigy by displaying an ability to master musical instruments with no instruction whatsoever. He could play two instruments at once, even two different songs at once. He played over 24 command performances.



- Jackson, as a result of the fact that he was a touring musician, came to Atlanta in 1923 at twenty years of age. By 1928, he was appointed musical director at Booker T. Washington High School where he remained until 1940.



- Pittypat's Porch, a southern-themed restaurant at 25 Cain Street (now Andrew Young International Boulevard), was a place where Graham Jackson was the featured entertainer for many years.

PITTYPAT'S PORCH

25 CAIN ST., N.W. 525-8228

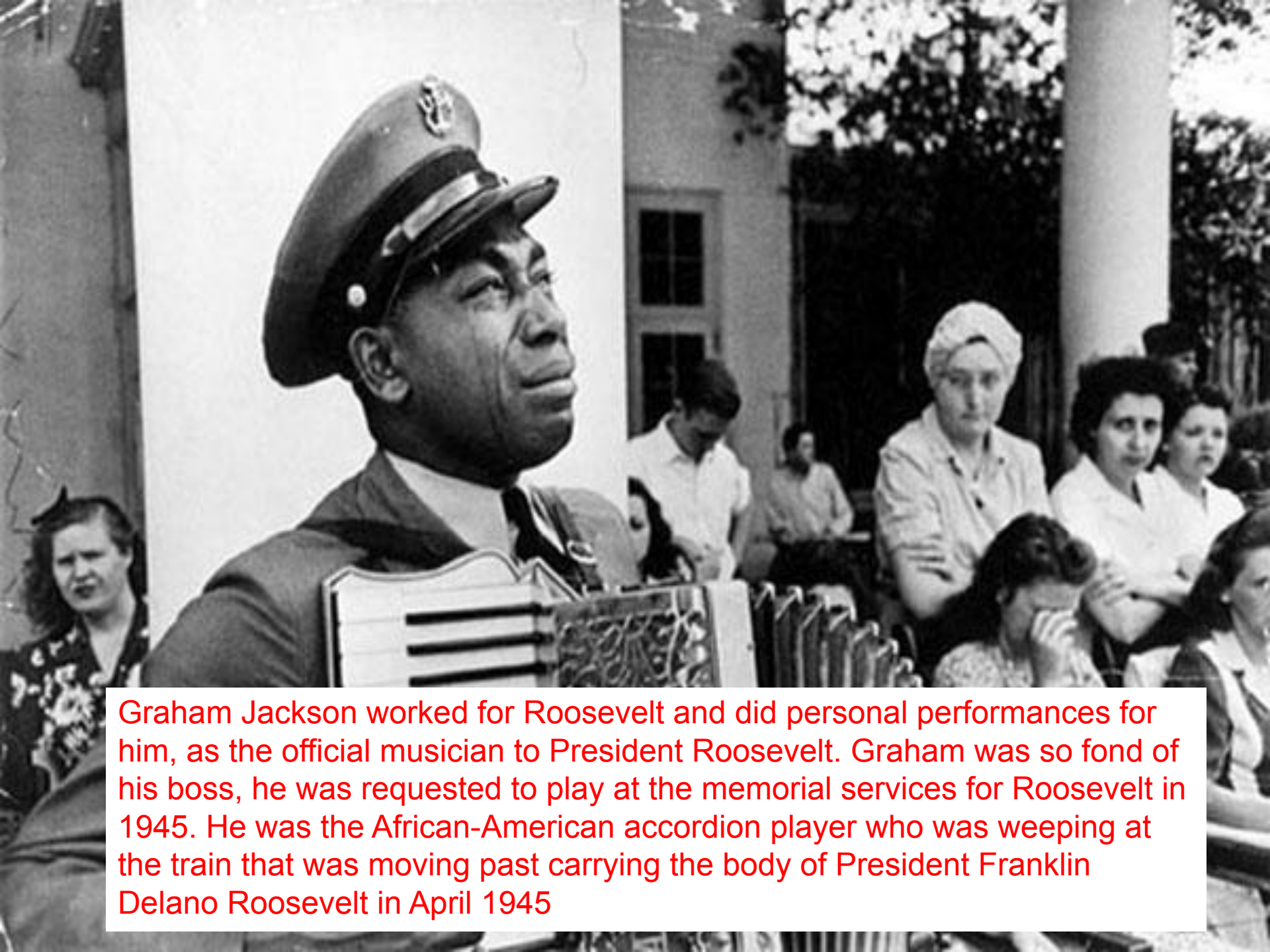
LUNCH • DINNER • LATE SUPPER



Y'all come
calling on Pittypat
for a real taste of true
Southern hospitality.



- The ad refers to Jackson as the "entertainer of presidents" with some justification: he entertained for seven consecutive US Presidents according to a webpage posted by the Atlanta-Fulton County Library, where his papers now reside.
- This photograph of Graham Jackson playing accordion for FDR is hanging on the wall at Pittypat's Porch in downtown Atlanta.

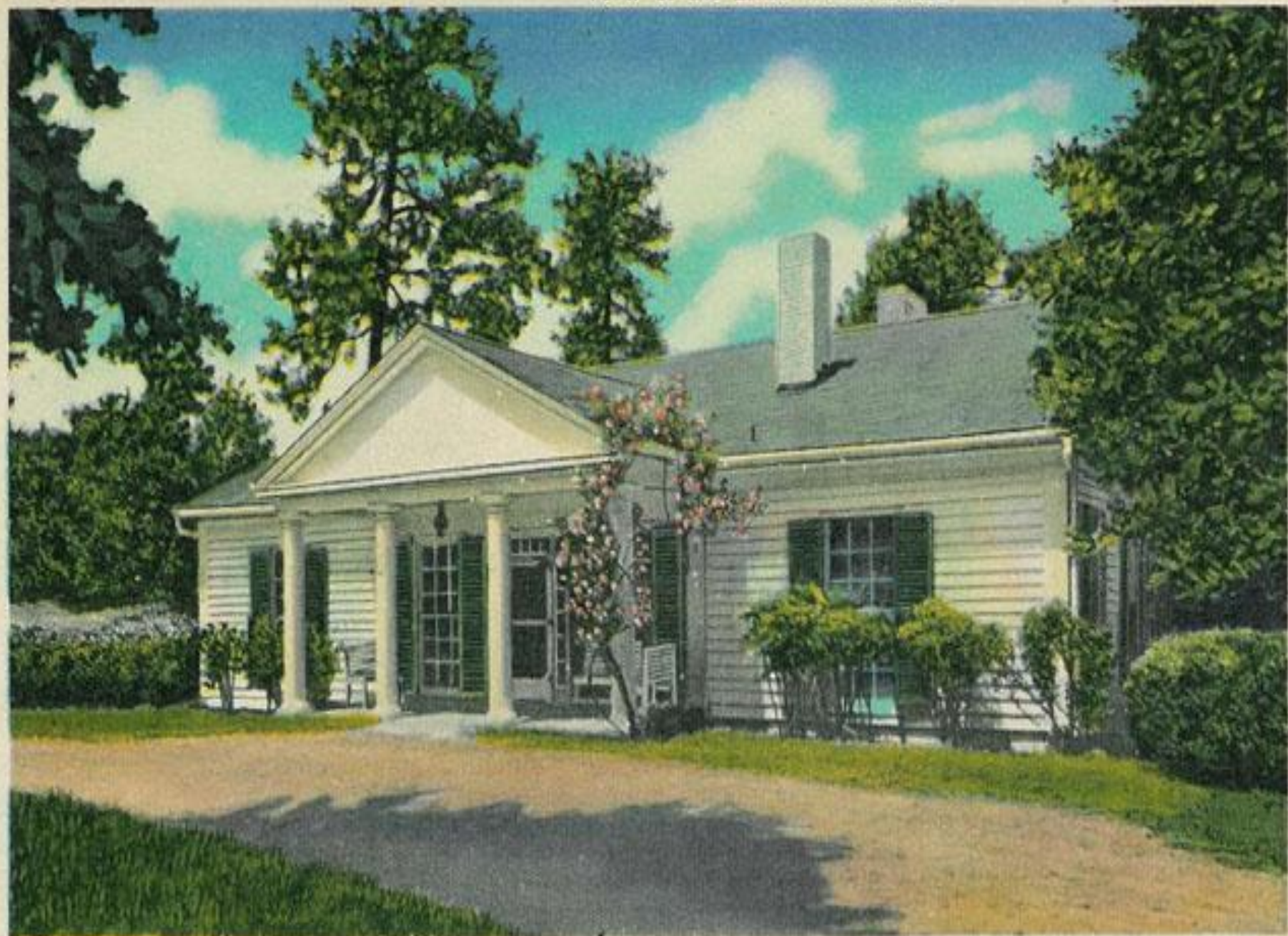


Graham Jackson worked for Roosevelt and did personal performances for him, as the official musician to President Roosevelt. Graham was so fond of his boss, he was requested to play at the memorial services for Roosevelt in 1945. He was the African-American accordion player who was weeping at the train that was moving past carrying the body of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in April 1945



He and the President became such good friends that he remodeled his own house down the street, to resemble the “Little White House” in Warm Springs. He went even further and got the green light from the Atlanta mayor at the time, to have this street renamed from “C” Street to Whitehouse Drive. *(Many people associate the street name “Whitehouse” with the one in Washington DC. . That is a common misconception)*

View of the Little White House



The BTW Statue





By 1925-26 (circa) a \$25,000 monument of BTW in bronze and marble graced the campus. The statue at the front of the building stands as a symbol to freedom, hard work and education - principles that Washington taught and lived by.

The monument depicts Washington lifting the veil of ignorance off his people, symbolized by a terrified slave, by showing them the ways of a better life.

The slave crouches on a plow and anvil, representing tools of agriculture and industry, the fields in which Washington chose to educate his people.

The slave holds a book that represents that education



This heroic sculpture, crafted by architect Charles Keck, is the only exact replica of the original sculpture that stands on Tuskegee University's campus.

It was erected five (5) years after the original one was erected on the Tuskegee campus. Principal Charles Harper, led the ceremonial groundbreaking for the Washington HS statue (pictured far left)



The BTW Statue
(and the front of
the building in
general) was, and
still is - - the focal
point of
ceremonies,
traditions and
special events
taking place at the
school.

The BTW Mural - - - “The Dream”

A mural depicting the dignity of manual labor, painted in 1928 by Wilmer Jennings (a student), is located in the hallway. This mural predates WPA murals of the 1930s, but is painted in the same style. He named it, “The Dream”



The impressive mural on the wall on the main floor was done by artist Wilmer Jennings, a former student of Booker T. Washington High School.

In 1933, Jennings was hired by the PWAP (Public Works of Art Project) to paint a mural for Booker T. Washington HS.

He was inspired to do this magnificent work after having observed the majestic piece of sculpture of Booker T. Washington.

Artist Jennings stared at this empty long space of a wall, and wondered how he could make it colorful. He decided to paint about the dignity of work and how hard work helps you to succeed. Thus, the sculpture and the mural speak to Booker T. Washington's philosophy about education and industry.



The style of art, here is cubist. You may see that in some of these depictions. So you may see various industrial fields represented here -- sports, science, theater, music, manufacturing, carpentry and home renovation, and home economics.

Renovations / Additions to the main edifice

In those early days, Principal Harper was quite resourceful in terms of using what resources he had, in order to stage graduations, assemblies, etc.



BTW high school graduations were even held on the front steps in the 1930's.

The front steps is where Professor Harper held assembly programs. The auditorium was the streets and the lawn of the school, says 1940 BTW graduate, J.Y. Moreland. “and we stood there for an hour or two, however long the program was, we prepared ourselves and didn’t make any noise.”

Subsequent additions to the main edifice would come later: Graduations moved from the front steps of the school, to the City Municipal Auditorium (approx where GA State is now). It was one of the few places designated for Blacks to hold such programs.

The main block of the school sufficed for about a decade.

Then in 1938, six classrooms and a laboratory were added as a WPA project. **In 1948** came a major, half million dollar addition that filled out the original plan. This was handled by the original architect, Eugene C. Wachendorff. **In 1952, the cafeteria was added**, and **in 1954 the physical education/gymnasium were added**. The 1965 building campaign cost \$600,000 and provided for more classrooms and the renovation of the science rooms. **The vocational educational building was built in 1968, as was the teaching theater.**

2005 – Renovations started / School resumes session in January 2006 in renovated building

On January 9, 2006, a new school was born. A newly remodeled BT Washington opened its doors for the first time under new laws and regulations. The teaching theater received a facelift, complete with new lighting, new seating, and a sound system. There is a great new Fine Arts Department wing with spacious new art rooms, a huge band room, and a beautiful chorus room. The cafeteria has beautiful multi-story windows, and sits below the new media center. The gym has much brighter lighting and is air conditioned. In the T-Building, new computer systems have been added, and also new computer labs. There are new sheds connecting the school building and the T Building. As part of the renovations, there are new science rooms with an emergency eye wash center and a shower.

FAQ's

When did Martin Luther King Jr. attend / graduate from BTW?

MLK Jr. attended BTW for all of a semester, was skipped a grade, and entered Morehouse College early, at the age of (approx) 15 or 16 years old. . He never officially received a diploma from BTW, although plans call for one to be given to his family posthumously.

The only visual evidence we have that he attended Washington, is an essay he wrote and published in the 1944 Cornelian, titled “The Negro and the U.S. Constitution”

Interesting Back Story, to MLK's Essay "The Negro and the U.S. Constitution"

At the age of 15, a young Martin Luther King, Jr. entered a high school public speaking competition with his submission called, "The Negro and the Constitution." He was in his junior year, and he won the competition. According to later accounts, during the bus ride home, young King, his teacher and another companion were told to give up their seats to a white couple who had just boarded the bus. King resisted at first, but his teacher, Sarah Grace Bradley, finally persuaded him to leave his seat. They stood for several hours on their way back to Atlanta.

King's oration was published in May 1944 at the end of his junior, and final year at Washington High School in the school yearbook, The Cornellian ([see here](#)).

It has been widely written that the high school speech Dr. King wrote inspired his "I Have a Dream" oration, since all of the concepts in his competition submission were encapsulated into the historic 1963 speech. There are striking parallels between the two writings. That is the power of words.

FAQ's

What year did the 1st BTW senior class graduate?

In a 1974 Atlanta Daily World newspaper article, titled “Atlantan recalls School’s Historic Beginning in 1924” it can be deduced that the 1st graduating class was 192:

“A warm recollection comes from William Culbreath, retired circulation official of the Atlanta Daily World, who witnessed the very beginnings as a tenth grade student . . . “

“Culbreath recalled the educational picture in Atlanta in 1924. . . “I was actually in the second class to graduate. . . I was attending Yonge Street School where they taught at the time extra grades nine and ten. . . Regular elementary classes stopped at the sixth grades but there was no Negro High School [at that time]

“When Washington High opened, I was in the tenth grade. . . Those students who had completed the tenth grade, entered in the eleventh grade, and graduated in 1926. I graduated in 1927, “ he added.

One of the largest graduating classes was in 1947 when over 600 students received diplomas.

