

# Chapter Five: Henrico County\_Virginia, 1907

**\*\*Chapter Five: Henrico County, Virginia, 1907 - The Small and the Mighty\*\***

In Henrico County, Jackson Davis, influenced by Booker T. Washington's educational philosophy, reached out to the Jeanes Fund to support Black education. Washington, renowned as a Black educator, advocated for self-help and practical skills over protests, hoping to gradually improve the economic status of Black citizens. Davis proposed to use the funded salary for Virginia Randolph, a supervising teacher who exemplified the educational approach he admired.

Virginia Randolph expressed gratitude for her selection as the first supervising Jeanes teacher, believing it was due to her commitment to educating Black children as productive citizens. Her work at Mountain Road School became foundational, inspiring other districts to request their own Jeanes teacher, a role that gained traction across the South.

Randolph's success was rooted in her community engagement. She attended local church services and events, sharing her students' achievements and establishing trust with parents. These efforts included health checks, evening classes for adults, and teaching hygiene, which reflected her belief in education's transformative power. Virginia's tireless dedication earned her the admiration of families, leading her to expand educational programs, including Sunday School and health initiatives for her students.

Despite the community's economic hardships, Virginia's relentless efforts resulted in a new school being built in 1915, funded largely by local families' contributions. As the school thrived, it garnered attention far and wide due to her methodologies, which focused on a holistic approach to education.

Tragedy struck in 1929 when a devastating fire destroyed the Virginia Randolph Training Academy. Virginia's distress was palpable as she witnessed the loss of her life's work, but her resilience shone through as she began planning for reconstruction soon after.

In her long teaching career, Virginia adopted many children and looked after various community needs, embodying a nurturing spirit. Even as she struggled financially, she continued baking bread and later turned towards farming education, hoping to empower her students toward self-sufficiency.

Her legacy extended beyond Henrico County, training other educators and promoting a vision of comprehensive education. Virginia Randolph didn't retire until 1949, having dedicated nearly sixty years to teaching. Even after her passing in 1958, her impact continues to resonate in the local educational landscape, where students and teachers remember her commitment and passion for uplifting Black communities through education. Her story is a testament to resilience against systemic oppression, highlighting the profound effects of a single dedicated educator's work on future generations.