

2023 IMPACT

THE ROBERT RUSSA MOTON MUSEUM

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A **PUBLICATION** FOR THE FRIENDS AND PARTNERS OF **THE ROBERT RUSSA MOTON MUSEUM**

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EMERITUS MEMBERS

Dorothy Holcomb

Edwilda Allen Isaac

Charlie Taylor

Grace Moton

WELCOME

I am humbled and honored to serve as the third executive director of the Robert Russa Moton Museum. I took on this role as of July 1st, 2023. In my first six months as director I have spent quite a bit of time listening and learning. I look forward to you all seeing the fruits of that labor.

2023 was a great year at the Moton Museum. Our educational outreach has expanded into western and southern parts of Virginia. Leah Brown has taken on leadership of our educational programming with great effect. From the continuation of Ed. Eagle our mascot and his efforts to a children's book that we look forward to sharing more about.

Our Moton bookstore has also had quite a few changes. We have a new selection of items for sale alongside some new ways to interact with the museum. Sherre Atkins led the program Museum Store Sunday which was a great way to show that our bookstore is a great source for academics and retail.

We very excited about two new additions to our staff. Jill Ahmad our Assistant Director for Marketing & Community Engagement and Quadarra Walker our new Guest Services Associate. They both bring institutional knowledge and areas of expertise what will greatly benefit Moton. We are thrilled to have them on the team and you will read more about them later in the impact report.



Our visitation numbers are steadily returning to pre-COVID levels. We have had over 10,000 visitors to the museum this year. We continue to work on UNESCO World Heritage status alongside the other sites on the US Civil Rights Trail. The statue of Barbara Rose Johns that will be erected in Statuary Hall in Washington D.C. continued construction. We also had the pleasure of hosting a symposium for the sites associated with the Brown v. Board Cases also known as the Brown 5. It has been a busy, but a very good and productive year.

2024 looks to be another momentous year. This year marks the 85th anniversary of R.R. Moton High School's construction, 70th anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education, 65th anniversary of the Prince Edward County School closures, and the 60th anniversary of the schools reopening through the Griffin v. Prince Edward County decision. We hope you will join us in our commemoration.

Cainan Townsend
Executive Director





JILL AHMAD

Jill Ahmad joined the Robert Russa Moton Museum in October 2023 as the Assistant Director of Marketing and Community Engagement. In her multifaceted role, she manages Moton’s advertising campaigns, leads community outreach to local organizations and schools, and spearheads public programs and events, including the annual Moton Live fundraiser.

A longtime community leader in Prince Edward County, she also serves as the president and owner of United Community Nexus, an LLC specializing in community engagement, and is also the vice president of Autumn Bridges, a 501c3 nonprofit. She recently concluded a three-year

term as the coalition lead for the Piedmont Alliance for the Prevention of Substance Abuse (PAPSA).

In addition to her professional roles, Jill serves on the advisory boards of the Longwood Center for the Visual Arts (LCVA), Southside Electric Cooperative, and Piedmont Senior Resources. She is a dedicated community activist and a “chronic” volunteer for various local organizations.

Jill and her community works have been featured in local publications such as the Farmville Herald and Farmville Magazine and have also appeared in Southside Electric’s Community Living Magazine. She is a proud member of the Farmville Lions Club and a recipient of the Lions Club International President Appreciation Award. A native of Washington, D.C., Jill has been married for over 30 years, has four grown children and five grandchildren. She and her family have resided in Charlotte County since 2004.



QUADARRA WALKER

Quadarra Walker

joined Moton Museum as guest services associate in 2023. A native of Prince Edward County, she graduated from Prince Edward County High School in 2010 and went on to earn her Associates degree in Human Services, from Southside Virginia Community College, in 2020.

Quadarra is an active volunteer and is civically engaged in Prince Edward, serving in both the dietary and activities departments, at Brookview at The Woodland in Farmville and as an active member of, the Prince Edward County NAACP. Before beginning her role as Guest Services Associate at Moton, she volunteered in the Visitor Services department from 2014-2023. In 2021, she was named Moton's Volunteer of the Year. As an active member of Apostolic Faith Church of All Nations in Farmville, she serves on the Praise Team, Usher Board and in various other capacities. Her heart for hospitality and serving others permeates into her everyday work.

BRIDGE BUILDERS

Moton welcomed the second cohort of Bridge Builders Fall 2023: 3 students from PECHS and 6 students from the Fuqua School. Students learned Prince Edward history by meeting speakers, primary resource analysis, and by reading P. Pearson's Book, *We Are Your Children Too*. The class connected to local history on field trips around the county and was introduced to the wider Black American story on a trip to the National Museum of African American History and Culture. The semester ended with student project proposal presentations in December.

COLLECTIONS

Moton staff are working closely with Greenwood Library staff at Longwood University to organize Moton Museum Collections.

Staff have evaluated collections material and are currently working on preparing the collection for cataloguing and study.

EDUCATION + OUTREACH

Moton education staff spoke to students from over 20 locations in the Commonwealth. Places that stand out are Bedford County, Rockingham, Virginia Beach, and Pittsylvania County. We engaged with over 40 teachers in onsite, virtual, or museum visits. Moton staff has worked hard to create engaging experiences for students in a K-12 format. Leah Brown, Associate Director for education and Collections, has designed programming and assessments that introduce students to the Moton School story while helping teachers with student skill-building.

MMTI 2023



Executive Director Cainan Townsend leads a Mindfulness exercise with educators participating in MMTI 2023 at The Moton Museum.

We had a fantastic cohort of 13 teachers from all over Virginia. Teachers learned about Moton, investigated primary resources, traveled to Twin Lakes, and were able to collaborate and discuss strategies for the upcoming school year. We have received great lessons plans, reflections, and look forward to MMTI 2024.

MOSS SCHOLARS

Megan Bowles has been a tremendous addition to Moton. As a Moss Scholar, she has worked directly with Leah Brown, Associate Director for Education and Collections, to expand early education materials focused on Ed Eagle, the Moton Education mascot. Megan will also volunteer with some of the Moton Museum school visits.

Kadyn Bunting is working on drafting tours that will be incorporated into Moton intern trainings.



The opening of the Prince Edward County Free School System at the old R. R. Moton on 16 September 1963.

Photo by Carl Purcell.

About UNESCO and the World Heritage List

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted in 1972 the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage that authorized the inscription of sites to a World Heritage List. Only properties of Outstanding Universal Value that meet at least one of ten strict Criteria as vetted by the World Heritage Committee are inscribed on the World Heritage List. To date 1,121 properties from 167 countries claim that global distinction.

Efforts to Designate R. R. Moton a UNESCO World Heritage Site Continue to Gain Momentum

The Moton Museum continues to be actively engaged with The Georgia State University (GSU) World Heritage Initiative formed in 2016. This initiative continues efforts to develop a potential serial nomination of U.S. Civil Rights Movement Sites to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage List.

These sites include: The Moton Museum, Monroe Elementary School / Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Park, Little Rock Central High School, Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church, Martin Luther King Jr. Birth Home, Historic Bethel Baptist Church, F.W. Woolworth Department Store / International Civil Rights Center and Museum, Greyhound Bus Station and Bus Burning Site / Freedom Riders National Monument, Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Monument, Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, Lincoln Memorial and Grounds, Edmund Pettus Bridge, Dr. Martin Luther King. Jr. Assassination Site / The Lorraine Motel.

It is an honor for the Moton Museum to be included as part of this initiative. More broadly it has allowed the Moton Museum the opportunity

to be connected with a number of key civil rights sites, be represented as part of the National U.S. Civil Rights Trail, and be given the opportunity to receive World Heritage Designation which is the highest historic designation a site can receive internationally.

Statewide and locally, it has allowed us the opportunity to foster relationships with key constituencies including the Town of Farmville and Prince Edward County, Virginia. The Town of Farmville has worked to help further protect the buffer zones surrounding the museum through the creation of the Moton Gateway Overlay District. Prince Edward County worked to update its county seal which now prominently features the Robert Russa Moton Museum. We are so grateful for both partners.

The GSU World Heritage Initiative has had many activities during 2023 that have helped to further advance efforts for the sites involved to obtain World Heritage designation including hosting a Historic Preservation Training for the participating sites, and the U.S. Civil Rights Movement Sites Lecture featuring Robert G. Stanton, former Director of the National Park Service. The initiative continues to await a review from the International Council on Monuments and Sites as they help to review the nomination. We look forward to continued advancements in 2024 with the hopes to be included on the U.S. Tentative List managed by the National Park Service Office of International Affairs which is a next important step.



Lori Isaac, Niece of Dr. Edna Allen Bledsoe Dean shares remarks. Also pictured are Taylor W. Reveley, IV (Right), President of Longwood University, and Cameron Patterson (Left), Vice President for Student Affairs, Longwood University, and Senior Partner for Strategic Initiatives, Moton Museum.

Longwood University Dedicates Allen Hall in Honor of Dr. Edna Allen Bledsoe Dean — Associate Professor Emerita and the School's First Tenured Black Professor

In an emotional and triumphant ceremony, on Friday, November 10, 2023, Longwood University dedicated its newest academic building on campus in honor of Dr. Edna Allen Bledsoe Dean, the first tenured Black professor in university history.

Family, friends, former students, and colleagues joined together in Allen Hall, a building that sits

just behind the Rotunda in the heart of Longwood's historic corridor, to honor the legacy of Dean, a social work professor for more than 20 years who led myriad changes to campus that have led to an increasingly diverse university community.

Lori Isaac, Dean's niece, said her aunt was a standard-bearer in a family that is proud of its legacy of breaking ground and leading calls for change. Dean's older sister, Edwilda Allen Isaac, was a participant in the 1951 Moton student strike that produced many of the plaintiffs

in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Her father was a local community leader operated a thriving business E.B. Allen Funeral Home. Her mother, local educator Vera Jones Allen, worked with the Kennedy Administration in 1963 to open the local Prince Edward Free Schools while public schools were shuttered in response to desegregation. In later years, together the family worked together to establish the R.R. Moton Museum, now a national historic landmark.

We have a legacy of pushing back, of pushing for change, of making wrongs right. I'm proud to be a part of that legacy, and I am so grateful that we are honoring her in this way and embracing her qualities of generosity and empathy.

— Lori Isaac

Dr. Edna Allen Bledsoe Dean's niece

"The Allen family has lived here for a hundred years," she said. "It's been a long time coming, but a change has come. My aunt remembered the rafters showing in the Black maternity ward at Southside Community Hospital. She remembered having to crawl through windows to sneak in and learn music. We have a legacy of pushing back, of pushing for change, of making wrongs right. I'm proud to be a part of that legacy, and I am so grateful that we are honoring her in this way and embracing her qualities of generosity and empathy. In a world where wearing your heart on your sleeve is not always considered valuable, this building embraces those qualities that my aunt had."

Dean began teaching part-time at Longwood in 1973 and joined the faculty full-time in 1980 after spending many years as a licensed clinical social worker in New York City, Los Angeles, and Virginia. Very soon after she became a full-time



1. Melanie Littlejohn-Lee leads the audience in singing "Lift Every Voice & Sing." 2. Joan Johns Cobbs, Moton Striker and Plaintiff shares remarks recognizing the Allen Family. 3. Longwood alumna Tracey Armwood Wade (Left) and Valarie Harris (Right) celebrate the dedication of Allen Hall.



Family, friends, former students, and colleagues joined together in Allen Hall, a building that sits just behind the Rotunda in the heart of Longwood's historic corridor, to honor the legacy of Dr. Edna Allen Bledsoe Dean, a social work professor for more than 20 years who led myriad changes to campus that have led to an increasingly diverse university community.

faculty member, she continued her family's legacy of pushing for change, serving as coordinator of Minority Affairs, where she worked with the admissions department to develop strategies to recruit and retain Black students, like developing the Summer Transition Program for under-represented students to ease the transition to college. At the same time, she served as advisor to the Association of Black Students, AKA Sorority, and BASIC Gospel Choir.

"And this community that she loved is different than it once was. The Farmville Town Council voted unanimously to remove its Confederate statue. The partnership between Longwood and the Moton Museum is in so many ways the bed-rock for all of Farmville and Prince Edward and is really thriving. The museum, a national historic landmark, is now in the process of seeking to become a world heritage site. And to me this has always felt particularly poignant, Prince Edward County revised its seal recently and a picture of

Moton is the heart of the Prince Edward County Seal. There are a lot of dreams Dr. Dean had and there is distance yet to travel, and probably always will be. But there is great distance that has been traversed."

Two of Dean's students, Kamala Benjamin-Allen '88 and Charlease Hatchett '87, spoke about the impact that she made on their lives.

"Edna, as I fondly referred to her, was more than just a mentor, professor, and friend; she was my second mother, a guiding light, and a source of inspiration for all who had the privilege of knowing her," said Hatchett. "She was known by many names — Edna Bledsoe, Edna Allen Dean — but what remained constant was her unwavering commitment to education, equality, and progress. Her marriage to John Dean, whom we affectionately remember as a character and a doting figure for our children, was a testament to the love and joy she brought into our lives."



1. The Kappa Rho Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated attends the dedication to support fellow soror Dr. Edna Allen Bledsoe Dean. 2. Taylor W. Rev-eley IV, President of Longwood University greets Dr. Linda Person, a family member of Dr. Edna Allen Bledsoe Dean and retired professor and coach at Virginia State University.

That commitment to education continues in a scholarship that bears Dean's name. The scholarship is awarded to a student studying social work. Each year, the scholarship fund grows as family, friends, colleagues and former students make contributions to its endowment. Gifts to support the Edna Allen Bledsoe Dean Scholarship can be made by contacting Longwood University Institutional Advancement.

At Friday's ceremony, another former student, Melanie Littlejohn-Lee '87, who

is a practicing social worker, led the audience in signing "Lift Every Voice and Sing" before Dean's nephew Elder Warren Reid delivered a stirring rendition of the Lord's Prayer.

Joan Johns Cobbs, one of the original Moton school strikers, was close with the Allen family, and remembered Edna as "the funniest, most generous person I think I've known."

Dean was born in 1938 in Farmville and graduated from Robert Russa Moton High School in 1956. She earned degrees from Springfield College and Columbia University, and completed her Ph.D. in Instructional Pedagogy at the Union Institute in Cincinnati.

Dean received the university's honorary alumni award a few months before she passed away in 2020. A plaque in the lobby of Allen Hall reads:

Dr. Edna Allen Bledsoe Dean

**Associate Professor Emerita of Social Work
1980-2004**

During her distinguished career as a licensed clinical social worker, and as Longwood's first Black tenured professor, Dr. Edna Allen Bledsoe Dean profoundly influenced generations of students, guiding them through personal challenges and turbulent times. In 1996, her former students honored her by establishing a scholarship in her name. This building bears the name Allen Hall in recognition of the countless ways Dr. Allen, her parents E.B. and Vera, and her sister Edwilda served the Prince Edward community. Most notably, as leaders of the Martha E. Forrester Council of Women, they spearheaded efforts to preserve the Robert Russa Moton High School, now a National Historic Landmark and civil rights museum.

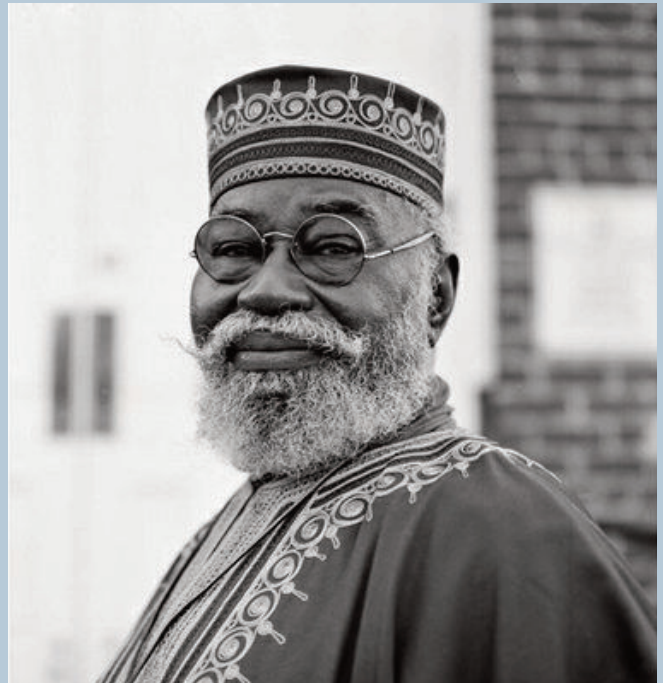
**Allen Hall Named by The Longwood University
Board of Visitors on 11 September 2020**

Town of Farmville Honors Reverend J. Samuel Williams

Farmville, December 15 — In a significant nod to its civil rights heritage, the town of Farmville has officially renamed Watkins Street, 'Williams Way', paying tribute to the esteemed Reverend J. Samuel Williams, a local pastor and civil rights legend.

The renaming ceremony, held on December 15, marked a significant moment in the town's history, celebrating Reverend Williams' enduring legacy. A man of principle and courage, Reverend J. Samuel Williams is renowned for his dedication to civil rights and community service and has been a pivotal figure in shaping Farmville's cultural and social landscape.

The renaming ceremony brought together his family, residents and community leaders, all echoing a shared sense of respect for Reverend Williams' enduring impact. The event marked a moment of reflection and celebration of the strides taken in the realm of civil rights, directly influenced by Reverend Williams' contributions. This symbolic act serves as a constant reminder of Reverend Williams' contributions and the path of equality and justice he championed. It is more than a street; it represents a path towards a future grounded in the values Reverend Williams upheld, the same values he instilled while raising his family on this very street.



Reverend J. Samuel Williams

With the unveiling of 'Williams Way', Farmville takes a symbolic step forward, honoring its past while paving the way for a future that embodies the ideals Reverend Williams has long stood for. This renaming serves as a daily reminder of the town's commitment to the values of equality, unity, and progress. — Cainan Townsend

EVENTS+CELEBRATIONS

A large, stylized blue number '85' is positioned on the left side of the page, serving as a visual anchor for the 85th anniversary section.

In 2024 we commemorate the 85th anniversary of R.R. Moton High School's construction, the 70th anniversary of the Brown v. Board of Education landmark Supreme Court decision, the 65th anniversary of the Prince Edward County School closures, and the 60th anniversary of the Griffin v. Prince Edward County Supreme Court decision and the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

In May we will honor former students that were strikers from the 1951 student walkout, plaintiffs from Davis v. Prince

Edward County and subsequently Brown v. Board of Education, individuals impacted by the Prince Edward County School closures from 1959-1964, and a final group of individuals who were denied admission or discouraged from applying to Longwood on the basis of race.

We hope you will join us in September as we work alongside the Prince Edward Branch of the NAACP to hold a symposium in Prince Edward County to commemorate the anniversaries.

A large, stylized blue number '65' is positioned on the right side of the page, serving as a visual anchor for the 65th anniversary section.



VISIT THE MOTON MUSEUM

900 Griffin Boulevard • Farmville • Virginia • 23901

MUSEUM HOURS

12 p.m. — 4 p.m. Monday — Saturday

ADMISSION

Admission is free for the general public.

CONTACT US

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