

2009 Virginia Women in History

Virginia Estelle Randolph's account of how she improved the grounds around Mountain Road School.

The first day I enrolled 14 pupils. The school was old and the grounds were nothing but a red clay hill. Having been taught to make the best of what you have, I began trying to improve conditions. I met with many obstacles from the beginning, as it was something new, but “Nothing is achieved without great labor,” so I journeyed on. My first work was to try and improve the grounds. Mrs. Gary who lived just opposite the school, had a gravel pit. I went to her to buy gravel, but she said, “pay for the hauling, you may have the gravel.” I had no money, but I organized a “Willing Workers Club,” gave entertainments, and secured the necessary funds. After getting the yard level, my next thought was a green lawn. One of the oldest patrons in the community, Mrs. Valentine, gave me the lawn grass seed. I had a nice soil put on the ground and then sowed the grass. Before this, the ground was unsightly. I remember on many occasions, the School Board would go in mud to the hub of their buggy, trying to get to the school.

I saw in the paper where Governor Swanson had issued a proclamation for “Arbor Day.” I waited until the time appointed, cut out the clipping, sent notices to the churches, had twelve of my patrons to bring trees and on that day in the presence of a large crowd, celebrated the first Arbor Day program held in Henrico County. The trees were named for the twelve Disciples. Mrs. Kate Minor, then in the State Library Building, thought it such a splendid idea, she said she would file one of the programs. The twelve trees lived and remained standing until we had to add on another room, and Judas stood in the way and had to be cut down.

Jones, Lance G. E. *The Jeanes Teacher in the United States, 1908–1933*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 26.

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An angry mother had learned that her children had been punished for being involved in a quarrel after school had finished for the day. The next day near the close of school the upset mother appeared. What followed Virginia herself told.

The children told me a lady was coming to the school, and by and by I saw a big woman standing in the porch with a long stick, taller than she. I was jus' praying, and was scared too. She said "I want to speak to you," and I answered, "Walk right in. I'll speak to you in a few minutes. Wait till we have devotions." We got ready for prayers, and it happened that the verses that day were from the 13th Chapter of Corinthians, and they were recited by the children. Then I said, "Children, this morning I'm going to pray, 'Lord have mercy on dear mother that come to school: so glad to see you, dear mother.'" I was scared to death and without waiting I said, "Let us sing, 'I need thee every hour.'" When the children had finished I said to them, "Now, children, I know you all feel proud that this is the first mother that has been to school. She is a mother with two lovely children and you know 'the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.' Children, don't you feel proud? I'm going to ask her to speak to us." The mother was touched, and with tears in her eyes she said, "I came for one thing and I have found another: I'll never come to disturb this school any more." She kept her word, and became one of the school's Willing Workers. Soon afterwards she had a picture made of me, and hung it on the walls of her house.

Jones, Lance G. E. *The Jeanes Teacher in the United States, 1908–1933*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 29–30.