

The John Eaton Elementary School
Centennial Celebration



“...to guide the development of boys and girls so that they may live happily and successfully as individuals and as members of a social group.”

Eaton's mission, as described in 1947 Report Card

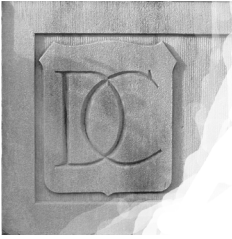


*Eaton students,
between 1910
and 1920*

Library of Congress



**a District of Columbia
Historic Public School
3301 Lowell Street, N.W.**



A New School for a New Suburb

“...the prettiest suburb of Washington...”

Washington Times, May 10, 1903

Around 1900, the neighborhood of Cleveland Park was a rural area of country houses and summer homes. It acquired its name from President Grover Cleveland, who owned a property at 36th and Newark Streets. Bridges across the Rock Creek and Klinge Valleys, new streetcar lines on Wisconsin and Connecticut Avenues, and expanding population prompted the creation of the Cleveland Park subdivision in the 1890s. But the country feel endured; children loved to go sledding down Macomb Hill.

Bridge at the location of present-day Newark Street, between 33rd Place and Ashley Terrace. The road below no longer exists.



Courtesy of Rives Carroll

Courtesy of Lucinda Janke



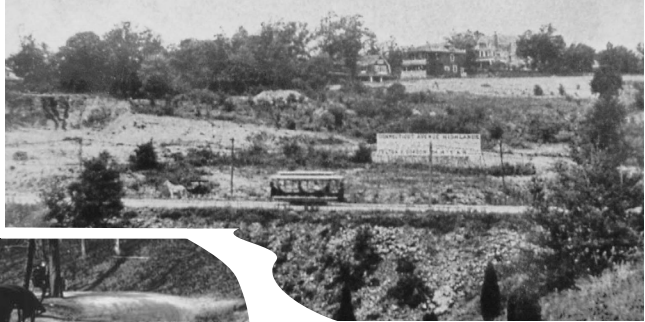
Print of President Cleveland and his wife at their property, Oak View. The Capitol Dome is visible at far right.

In March 1909, a delegation from Cleveland Park lobbied the appointed Board of Commissioners that governed the District to build a new school in their neighborhood. They challenged a recent Act of Congress authorizing the location of a school at Wisconsin Avenue and Macomb Street. They

voiced the concern that the Wisconsin Avenue trolley line and automobile traffic would pose both danger and distraction for the students. They succeeded, for the school was built about midway between Wisconsin and Connecticut Avenues in the heart of Cleveland Park. It was an early example of the notable parental and community involvement that would come to characterize the John Eaton School.

Courtesy of Rives Carroll

Streetcar on Chevy Chase Line passing Connecticut Avenue Highlands (near present-day Ordway Street)



Model T Ford navigating Klinglet Creek

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Eaton **1ST** Underscoring its stature as the first school in the neighborhood, the John Eaton School was often referred to in newspaper accounts as the “Cleveland Park school.” One of the first references to the school by its current name was in the *Washington Post* on July 9, 1910.

The John Eaton School opened its doors on October 24, 1910. It was one of nine new school buildings erected that year, including the Strong John Thomson School at 12th & L Streets, N.W., and a major addition to Western High School. Until Eaton was built as **Public School #160**, children of Cleveland Park had to travel a considerable distance to the H. D. Cooke School in present-day Adams Morgan.



A Model School from the Start

The John Eaton School began as a single building at the corner of 34th & Lowell Streets, N.W. It was both thoroughly modern and respectful of convention. With its eight large classrooms that boasted tall windows inviting generous natural light, the interior was in keeping with the prototype established by Adolf Cluss for city school buildings in the 1860s.

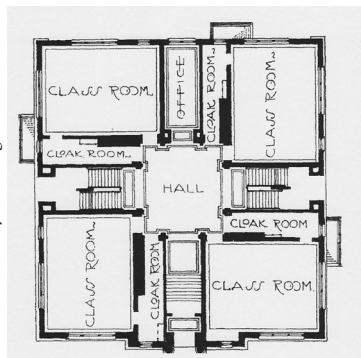
By the late 1920s, girls and boys studied in the same classrooms.

Wilma Withrow private collection



Standard interior of 19th century school buildings in Washington

DC Public Library, Washingtoniana Division



Eaton
Mile stone

Cloakrooms next to the classrooms formed barriers to noise, and boys and girls were separated by distinct entrances and classrooms. There was a library on each of the two main floors, and a “retiring room” for the teachers.

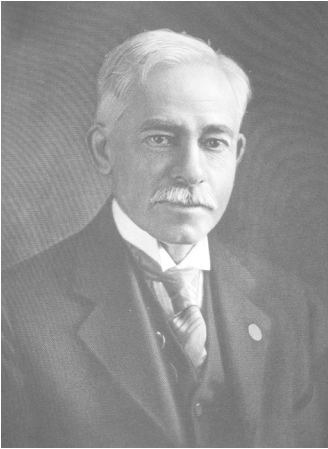
Architect **Appleton P. Clark, Jr.**, (1865-1955) housed the basic Cluss interior in an exterior of red brick with yellow brick trim, in a style that some term “Renaissance.” He also incorporated the latest ideas in school construction. The new school was made fireproof by minimal use of wood. The children were offered generous space: 30 square feet per pupil, broad 12-foot wide staircases, and playrooms in the basement, as well as a large playground outside.

“...one of the models for the rest of the world to follow...”

Evening Star
October 22, 1910

Appleton P. Clark, Jr.

Courtesy of Lucinda Janke



Clark was a native Washingtonian educated in D.C. public schools and an 1883 graduate of the old Central High School. He designed a broad range of buildings in the District, including the old Washington Post building at 13th & E Streets, N.W., Foundry Methodist Church, and three orphanages. He designed several schools in the segregated system of that time, including the Wheatley School for white students in Northeast and the Langston School for African American students in Northwest.

Snowden Ashford

Eaton Municipal Architect Snowden
1st Ashford supervised the construction of city buildings. At Eaton he incorporated a new design for doors he had seen in Indianapolis schools. In the event of fire or emergency, students could rush to the three-door exits at the front and rear of the school, and the doors would be pushed outward, allowing the children to leave safely.

The famous “Indianapolis exits” would function until the 1980s, when their side doors were bricked up. Ashford was one of several officials who inspected and formally accepted the John Eaton School on October 26, 1910.

Flickr.com



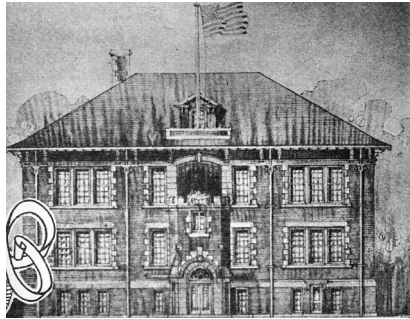
Dedication

The John Eaton School was formally dedicated on the afternoon of November 23, 1910. A chorus of sixty Eaton students sang “America” and other songs.



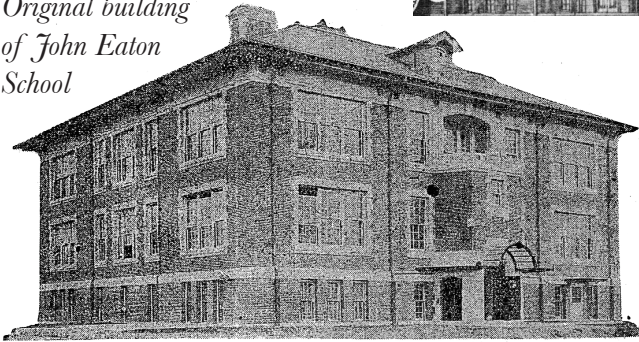
Eaton
Mile
stone

The original John Eaton School cost \$58,000 to build. The cost of 15 cents per cubic foot was the lowest in a study of school construction in seven large US cities, as reported by the Washington Post in August 27, 1911.



Courtesy of Rives Carroll

*Original building
of John Eaton
School*



*Architectural sketch
of original Eaton
School, 1911*

Washington Post, January 22, 1911

At the dedication, the President of the District Board of Education urged the children to follow the example of General Eaton, who began working as a teacher at the age of sixteen for his tuition and board at Dartmouth College. Mr. J. Nota McGill, President of the ***Cathedral Heights Citizens Association***, spoke of the steady expansion of the District school system, from 96 schools housing 6,000 pupils in 1885 to 203 day and night schools educating 50,000 students. Mrs. Ellen Spencer-Mussey, Vice President of the Board of Education in an era when women could not vote, stressed the role the new school could play in bringing together parents, teachers, and pupils.



Namesake: Preacher, Soldier, Educator

General Eaton (1829-1906) had died just four years before the school was named in his honor. An ordained Presbyterian Minister, he supervised thousands of former slaves who massed behind Union lines following the Emancipation Proclamation. Eaton took these desperate people termed “contraband” under his charge, organizing the men into 700 regiments and the women and children as workers in the cotton fields raising money for their upkeep. Eaton’s work served as the basis for the *Freedman’s Bureau*, where he later served as Assistant Commissioner in Washington, D.C.



General John Eaton

Library of Congress

After the Civil War, General Eaton became renowned for his work in education. He organized the establishment of 74 schools for African Americans in Tennessee. In 1870, he was appointed the second *Commissioner of Education*, heading the new federal bureau that promoted educational innovation nationwide. He served as a trustee of Howard University and is buried at Arlington Cemetery. Eaton Street, S.E., in the Barry Farm neighborhood of Anacostia, also bears his name.

“...under General Eaton...the bureau was made the most influential educational office in the world.”

Rev. Dr. Sheldon Jackson at Eaton’s funeral service, February 12, 1906



1910
Principal Josephine Burke

A Culture of Excellence

Eaton established a pattern of excellence with its first principal, **Miss Josephine Burke**, an 1886 graduate of the Normal School then located at the Franklin School downtown. Appointed in 1910, she would remain at Eaton for seventeen years. At a school meeting on October 20, 1911, she joined the Superintendent of Schools in urging the active collaboration of parents and teachers that still characterizes the John Eaton Elementary School.

Eaton students circa 1920



The Cleveland Park Library was established at Eaton in 1911 and would remain there sporadically until 1953, when it moved to its present location on Connecticut Avenue.

Eaton
1st

In addition to her pivotal role at Eaton, Burke was active in her professional community. In 1924, she was appointed to a committee organizing a conference of the National Education Association in Washington, D.C.

On October 11, 1912, the **Cleveland Park School and Community Association** held a meeting at Eaton where District Health Officer Dr. William Woodward emphasized why children needed sufficient rest and nutritious food, arguing that “a healthy child will be able to do much better work.” Almost a century later, Ward 3 Councilmember Mary Cheh would set a new standard in promoting the health of District school children with the Healthy Schools Act of 2010.

1922

Second building added

1923

Eaton's first Kindergarten

1927

Principal Constance Luebker

Expansion



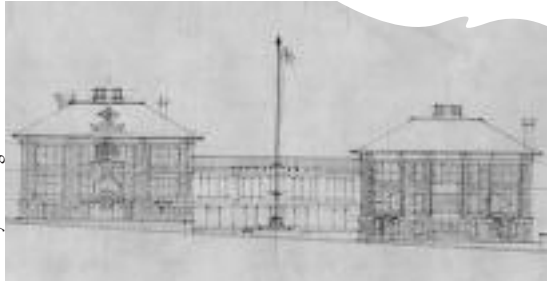
Eaton
**Mile
stone**

As early as 1917, the neighborhood had grown so that Eaton was overcrowded and portable classrooms were needed. An

addition designed by architect Arthur B. Heaton followed in 1922. A connecting corridor joined the original building to the new wing, which contained a memorable feature: a false fireplace in one classroom offering a homelike atmosphere for young kindergarteners.

Design for compatible addition

Library of Congress



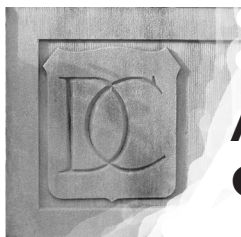
Wilma Witherow private collection



Eaton Class of 1929

By April 1926, Eaton had a ***Mothers Club*** that held a successful card party to raise funds for window shades in four rooms of the old school. It was a typical example of the parental support that ensured Eaton would thrive, even during the Depression years that would follow.

In 1937, Eaton's beloved first principal, Josephine Burke, passed away. Reporting on her funeral service on January 12, the *Washington Post* eulogized her as "one of the most widely known teachers in the District." At Eaton the flag was flown at half-staff that day.



1930

Auditorium/gymnasium added

A Community Gathering Place

1934

Principal Lillian Shewmaker Goodall

The next major change to the John Eaton School was the auditorium/gymnasium, added in 1930 on the north side of the corridor connecting the two main buildings. This multi-purpose room quickly became a meeting place for the school and the Cleveland Park neighborhood.



Eaton Mile stone

Al Neuman, Class of 1938



Courtesy of Al Neuman

During World War II, Eaton almost closed due to declining enrollment, and the War Rationing Board shared the building. On October 23, 1947, six Eaton students were the only youth participants in a panel discussion titled “Should children choose their own books” at the Cleveland Park Book Fair at neighboring ***Cleveland Park Congregational Church.***

In June 1953, kindergarten teacher ***Miss Irene Myers*** retired after 35 years at Eaton. Miss Myers typified the excellence and continuity of teachers at the school. Multiple generations of her students bade her a fond farewell at a tea in the school auditorium.



Miss Myers (center) at her farewell.

Wilma Withrow private collection

1945

Principal Louise Hughes

Increasing Diversity

Following the historic Supreme Court decision in *Brown v Board of Education* in May 1954, the District issued its plan to integrate the public schools. School Superintendent Hobart Corning proposed a one-year implementation plan listing Eaton as one of 18 white schools that would open its doors to area African American students who then traveled an “excessive” distance to school. Integration in the District was of such significance that DC Commissioner Samuel Spencer forwarded Corning’s proposal to the White House at President Eisenhower’s request.

Washington Post, June 14, 1957

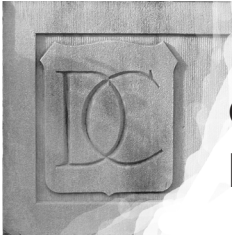


Eaton students on the last day of school

Eaton’s journey toward diversity began slowly. In Fall 1954, just ten of its 347 students and none of its teachers were African American. But its international diversity, established decades earlier, would ease the way.

Eaton
1st

In 1958, the Eaton PTA published an illustrated 14-page pamphlet titled “Off to School and Home Again - Safely!” It contained a map where children were encouraged to plan their route to school, and review and practice their route with an adult. In 1959, the National Safety Council gave the pamphlet a traffic safety award. The following year, it was distributed to all DC public schools and local parochial schools.



Civic Engagement

1970

Eaton's first block party

The Eaton community has a long tradition of civic engagement within the constraints of the city's disenfranchisement. The 23rd amendment to the Constitution allowed District residents to vote for President in 1964 for the first time since 1800, and the Eaton auditorium served as one of 91 new polling places. Eaton continued to serve almost continuously as a precinct polling place for the significant elections that followed: first School Board elections in 1968, first

Mrs. Benesch, with her five year-old daughter, registers to vote at Eaton in 1964.

Washington Post, February 1, 1964



primary for Non-Voting Delegate in 1971, and first Mayoral election under Home Rule in 1974. In the three-way Democratic primary race for Delegate in 1971, Walter Fauntroy would edge out the **2nd Vice President of the Eaton PTA**, Joseph Yeldell.

The Eaton safety patrol in 1970 included girls, noticeably absent the year before.

In June 1966, Eaton received an honorary certificate at the White House presented by **Lady Bird Johnson's Committee for a More Beautiful Capital**.



Macomb Reunion website

The award recognized the Eaton students for their work in soil conservation and beautification of a badly deteriorated section of the school property. This project typified the broad range of achievements of the Eaton community.

1975

Principal
Patricia Greer

1983

Re-dedication of
Eaton

A Community of Learners

In April 1974, the John Eaton Elementary School partnered with nearby Hearst School to produce a three-day program for 500 students called *Operation Write*. The program produced poems, plays, skits, and books -- all designed to engage students in the art of writing. The program was coordinated by *Ms. Patricia Greer*, who would become principal of the school. By this time, Eaton had one of two *bilingual programs* in the District, with 60 native Spanish speakers. These programs symbolized the enrichment that was part and parcel of the Eaton curriculum.



Eaton
**Mile
stone**

The school undertook its most recent architectural expansion in 1981, adding a new entrance and expanding the connecting corridor to furnish new office space and a library. Much of the interior was also modernized and the famous Indianapolis exits were bricked up.

Eaton
1st

The first Cleveland Park House Tour of eight neighborhood houses on September 29, 1962, raised funds to buy books for the John Eaton School library.

In 1983, twenty Eaton students under the guidance of resource teacher *Rives Carroll* conducted oral history interviews about the neighborhood. The project furnished the raw material for a stage production and a 93-page booklet, both called "Cleveland Park

Eaton students conducting interviews



Creative Ideas for Living
October, 1983

Voices." The *Cleveland Park Historical Society* formed in 1985, two years before the establishment of the Cleveland Park Historic District, would adopt this name for its quarterly newsletter.



Students in the Lead

By the 1980s, the Eaton student body more closely reflected the District population, with more than half being ethnic minorities. Eaton proudly maintains its diverse student population to the present day.

Chinese New Year with Principal MacElroy, February 2000



John Eaton Elementary School collection

34th Street Project, 1998



Northwest Current, November 18, 1998

In 1998, 27 Eaton Fifth graders grappled with a perennial issue: safety. They worked closely with local police officers, who offered to use a radar gun to catch speeding

motorists on 34th Street. Despite the crowds of students rallying on the sidewalk, ten speeding motorists were ticketed in 30 minutes. It was the culmination of the 34th Street Project, where students interviewed residents, gathered accident data, and offered their recommendations. Among their findings were that most accidents occurred at 34th and Newark Streets and the worst offenders were Maryland drivers. The project exemplified the student initiative that marks the Eaton approach to learning.

1999

Principal Willie MacElroy

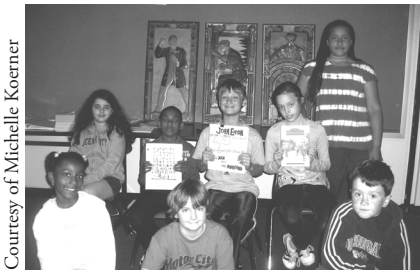
2007

Principal
Jacqueline Gartrell

An Enriching & Challenging Curriculum

Last year, as one of 13 public schools selected for the D.C. Catalyst Project, Eaton chose World Cultures as a school-wide theme. Through an intellectually stimulating curriculum with an emphasis on Chinese language, the program will integrate culture studies across the curriculum connecting the language arts, math, science, physical education, the arts, and technology. The goal is to produce students who are respectful and responsible citizens of the global society.

For the 2010-2011 school year, the focus will be on Egypt, Mexico, Kenya, India, Italy, and Argentina, with each grade focusing on one country. The program will also draw heavily on international resources available in Washington, D.C., including museums, embassies, government agencies, communities, and families.



Courtesy of Michelle Koerner

Centennial Historians with newly discovered artwork from the 1930's Works Progress Administration

To enable students to gain a greater understanding of their school's history, Eaton launched the Centennial Historian Research Project. Seventeen Fourth grade students met once a week to learn about Eaton's past, techniques of locating historical resources, and the basics of research and exhibition design. The Centennial Historians will place their school's legacy in a broader context, by investigating the Cleveland Park neighborhood, Washington, D.C., and national events that occurred during Eaton's first century. A student-designed exhibition will be presented at the end of the project and will serve as the basis for the school archives.



Entering the Second Century

MESSAGE FROM THE **JOHN EATON HOME & SCHOOL ASSOCIATION**

The H.S.A. is Eaton's parent/teacher organization, allowing parents the opportunity to discuss common issues and concerns, evaluate fundraising activities, and plan events that benefit the school. This body promotes mutual cooperation among parents, teachers, school administrators, and the District of Columbia Board of Education.

From its beginnings, as the "Mothers Club" in 1926, to the PTA in 1953, boasting 23 committees (including "Civil Defense" and "Hospitality"), through the days of Sam Smith, our first male President in the 1970's, the H.S.A. continues to bring home, school, and community closer together.

Kindergarten graduation, 2008

Courtesy of Caroline Joss



As Eaton looks towards the future, it is at full capacity with over 400 students, and faces the perennial issues of inadequate funding and insufficient space. Following a major rehabilitation of the playground and surrounding landscape last year, we look

forward to the expansion and renovation of the school buildings in the coming years. Evidence of Eaton's success can be found in the lengthy waiting list of those wishing to attend. Designation as one of the DCPS Catalyst World Culture schools confirms that as Eaton enters its second century, it remains a robustly multicultural and international community.



Courtesy of Jim Wilcox

Class of 1911

MESSAGE FROM **PRINCIPAL JACQUELINE GARTRELL**

One hundred years ago, parents entrusted the educators of John Eaton Elementary School to prepare their children for the twentieth century. Lessons and activities in 1911 resulted in students being able to read, write, and perform arithmetic computations while inspiring creativity and innovation, supporting critical thinking and problem solving, and enhancing communication skills and the ability to collaborate with others.

While our community and society have changed in the past one hundred years, the pillars of John Eaton's culture - our diversity, our international focus, our parental involvement, our civic engagement - are alive and well in our classrooms today. These pillars, our continued focus on the basics, and our integration of technology into the classroom collectively prepare our students to thrive as global citizens in the twenty-first century.

As the principal of John Eaton, I am regularly humbled by the dedication and good work of our students, teachers, and staff and the ongoing support of parents and friends of the school. Please join me as we celebrate John Eaton's centennial and pay tribute to this community that has made our last one hundred years so remarkable and will provide us with an auspicious start to our next one hundred.



*Mayor Fenty and Councilmembers
Kwame Brown and Mary Cheh join
Eaton students at the ribbon-cutting for
the new playground, April 30, 2010*

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Wilma Withrow private collection



Eaton in 1929

**JOHN EATON
ELEMENTARY**

1911-2011

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION



Eaton in 2011

Courtesy of Kesh Laddiwaherty



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