

WE ARE WINCHESTER

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

As many of you know, I (Misty) missed one step in a garage resulting in one fractured ankle and a severed ligament on the other foot that needed surgery. For almost three months I was unable to put weight on one or both feet, making real estate a bit difficult, and my mindset wasn't much better dealing with pain and accessibility needs. The Winchester community showed up for me, and I learned even more about the services our city and businesses offer.

My handicap placard has helped me find parking during all of the snow (it's FREE to park anywhere with it), Loretta Briede gave me a golf cart ride to my car at Briede Family Vineyards, and so many more. While we have places to improve, it has opened my eyes more to what is available so I can help direct others when the need arises.

We'll see you in Old Town!



*Misty Weaver
& Katie Jordan*

(Probably still in a boot!)

**WE ARE
WINCHESTER**

WINCHESTER'S MEDICAL COLLEGE



By Mike Robinson

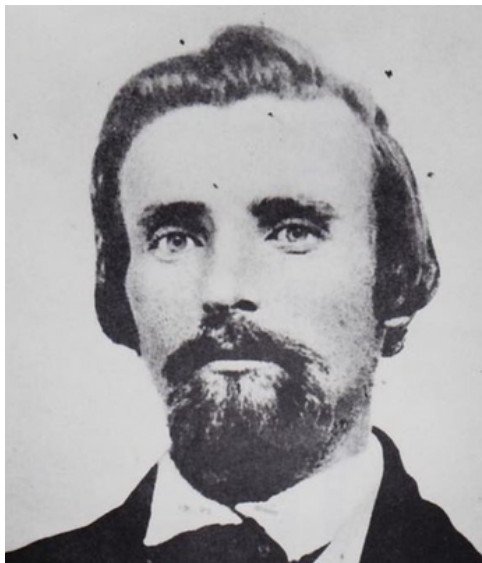
Author of Winchester Tales book series

The College of Physicians of the Valley of Virginia at Winchester was incorporated in December 1825. It closed its doors in 1829 but reopened in 1847 under a new charter as the Winchester Medical College. Among the faculty was surgeon Hugh H. McGuire, a native of Winchester. His son, Hunter Holmes McGuire, would graduate from the school and teach as a faculty member before commissioning as a surgeon in the Confederate Army, where he served as medical director of the Army of the Shenandoah on General Thomas Jackson's staff. The College was a red brick structure that contained a surgical amphitheater, two lecture halls, a dissecting room, a chemical laboratory, a museum, and offices.

As abolitionist John Brown and his followers raided the armory and arsenal at nearby Harpers Ferry in October 1859, Winchester's medical students, goaded by curiosity and sensing opportunity, travelled there by train. As the story goes, they were forced by military authorities to detrain before they reached the station, and they happened upon the body of a man. They put the body into a container and shipped it back to the college, where they later examined his papers and discovered that he was one of John Brown's sons. The cadaver was dissected, and the skeleton

displayed in the college museum. As described by Louis De Caro, Jr., "The remains of Watson Brown...were maliciously stolen away by students of the Winchester Medical College...and 'the whole hung up as a nice anatomical illustration'." The body of Watson Brown would be joined in December by the recently hung, buried, and disinterred bodies of convicted African American co-conspirators John Copeland and Shields Green. As reported in the Richmond Dispatch, "They will be interred tomorrow on the spot where the gallows stand, but there is a party of medical students here from Winchester who will doubtless not allow them to remain there long." Thus, while John Brown's body lay "a-mouldering in the grave," the corpses of his son and two followers had little time to molder before falling prey to the resurrectionists.

For Winchester Medical College, the resurrectionists' zeal would bring about destruction. The start of the Civil War drew students and faculty away from studying and toward the excitement of battle. The medical college ceased teaching and transformed into a hospital for the wounded. In May of 1862, while Winchester was occupied by Union forces engaged in the Shenandoah Valley Campaign, the college was burned to the ground supposedly on orders of Union General Nathaniel Banks in retaliation for the dissection of Watson Brown's body.



BLACK HISTORY OF WINCHESTER

On a windy day last February I sat in a trolley guided by Terry Sloane while Judy Humbert told us stories of growing up in Winchester as a black child and lifelong resident. It was enlightening to hear her personal perspective that didn't always line up the way history stories are told in media today. I felt honored to hear, and remember, for those that have passed. There is a lot of black history to explore in Winchester so I thought we'd highlight some people and places you can visit and learn about to get a full picture of historic life in Winchester.

ROBERT ORRICK

Robert Orrick's journey from enslavement to prominence in Winchester is a testament to his resilience and leadership. Initially under the ownership of Joseph Kean, Orrick secured his freedom in 1863, embarking on a path that would see him emerge as a respected businessman and a pillar in the community. He established a thriving livery service and served with devotion as a Methodist minister. His philanthropic efforts were noteworthy, particularly in expanding the local cemetery dedicated to African Americans, now known as Orrick Cemetery. In a remarkable milestone in 1865, Orrick was among the first African Americans to receive a U.S. mail contract, a significant achievement in that era. His commitment to education and faith led him to provide space for the Freedman's Bureau's school and to support the rebuilding of a church in Stephens City. Explore the Orrick Cemetery at 501 S Braddock St.

THE BROWN FAMILY

Charles and Maria Brown, despite Charles' illiteracy, successfully navigated life in post-Civil War America, prospering through his barbershop and real estate investments, including a fruitful orchard. Their eight children, though experiencing early loss with two siblings, all achieved remarkable educational and professional milestones, largely due to the family's financial stability. Their six surviving children, Sara, John, Edward, Harrison, Nancy, and James, each carved out significant careers in medicine and pharmacy, contributing vastly to their fields and communities. Notable achievements include Sara's groundbreaking role at Howard University and John's substantial philanthropic efforts. The Browns, rooted in Winchester, also maintained connections to their hometown, with significant land purchases and their final resting place in Orrick Cemetery, testifying to their enduring legacy.

EVANS HOTEL

Not to be confused with the Hotel Evans, the Evans Hotel was originally a 1 ½ story building thought to have been built by John Markell as rental property, became a significant part of Winchester's mid-20th-century African American history. It was transformed into a hotel, acquiring a large shed dormer and a rear wing during its

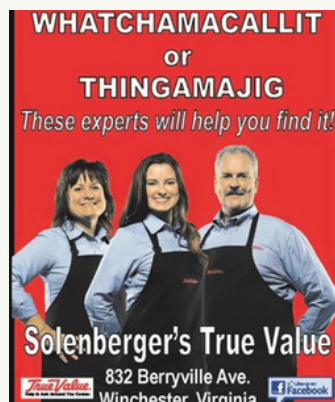
conversion. In its early days, around 1914, Harriet Bell ran a beauty shop here. By 1927, Cyrus and Velma Evans took over, operating it as a hotel, which continued under various managements including Meta Harper, but retained the Evans Hotel name well into the 1960s. The hotel, listed in the Green Book as the (New) Evans Hotel, provided accommodation for Black workmen involved in notable constructions like the George Washington Hotel and Handley High School. A reflection of the times, Hattie Bell, who ran a grocery store from here in 1947, faced segregation restrictions, limiting her even entering her own business to a side entrance. This historical building, situated at 224 Sharp Street, not only tells a story of architectural evolution but also mirrors the societal changes and challenges of the era.

WINCHESTER COLORED SCHOOL

The Winchester Colored School, housed within the historical Old Stone Church at 304 E. Piccadilly Street, holds a special place in the city's educational history. Established in 1878, it was the first public school for Black children in Winchester. This venerable stone structure, originally built by the city's Presbyterians over two centuries ago, transformed into a beacon of learning and hope for the African American community. The school, initially operating in a single room heated by a wood stove, symbolized a significant step towards educational equality. Despite its humble beginnings, with the older boys responsible for keeping the fire going and the street serving as their playground, the school was a cornerstone in the local Black community's pursuit of education and advancement. Over the years, as the student body outgrew its capacity, the community's advocacy led to the establishment of larger educational building at Douglas School on Kent St which served as the only African American school until 1966 when schools were integrated.

LEARN MORE

The Winchester-Frederick Historical Society has taken on the role of helping collect stories from black residents with the help of Judy Humbert and others. Handley Library has collections of documents detailing the history of black residents. and the Winchester Visitors Center has multiple trolley tours where you can hear more about these locations and others during the month of February! You can also find self guided printed tours on their website at VisitWinchesterVA.com



SELAH THEATER PROJECT

La Tasha Do'zia, the founder of Selah Theatre Project, Inc., is redefining community theater. With a passion for the arts that began in her youth, Do'zia's journey is a testament to the power of creativity and perseverance. "I wanted to do more theater, but there was nothing for my age group here," she explains. After adopting her son, the need for local theater options became more apparent. "I couldn't keep traveling to DC or Maryland." Her solution? Creating drama programs for recreation departments along the East Coast. This journey eventually led her to Front Royal, Virginia, where the community's demand for theater led to the birth of Selah Theatre Project.

Today, Selah Theatre Project stands as a beacon for the arts in the region, offering eight shows a year and catering to all age groups. "We focus on a variety of topics, including those often shied away from," Do'zia says. The theater blends different generations, believing in the power of learning from elders and peers alike. "Our shows integrate adults, teens, and younger kids. It's about more than just acting – it's about learning life lessons," she adds.

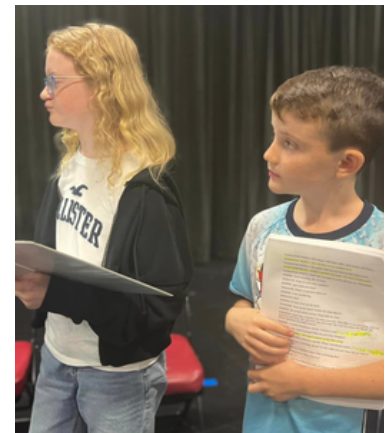
Selah Theatre Project's educational ethos extends to its classes. Ranging from five-year-olds to adults, the program is tailored to meet diverse needs and skill levels. "We integrate all levels. It's about storytelling and truthfully representing human life," Do'zia emphasizes. Her approach has seen shy, inexperienced individuals transform into confident performers, embodying roles with authenticity and courage. She proudly recalls the growth of one adult participant: "From a nervous first-timer in 2018 to a lead role in 'Guess Who's Coming to Dinner,' her journey was incredible."

When it comes to selecting productions, Do'zia and her team follow a thematic approach. The upcoming season focuses on original works, providing a platform for local playwrights. "We want to give new life and meaning to humanity and emotions through our plays," she shares.

Despite the success, Selah Theatre Project faces its share of challenges, notably the need for a permanent home. Currently operating in a rented space, the theater is in a continuous search for a location that can accommodate its growing patronage and

diverse activities. "We're in a discovery season, figuring out which direction to take," Do'zia explains. Her ultimate goal is ambitious yet inspiring: to transform Selah Theatre Project into an arts hub, a sanctuary for artists of all forms to create, present, and collaborate. This vision stems from her belief in the transformative power of the arts, a conviction strengthened during the pandemic. "The arts are not a luxury, but a vital aspect of life," she asserts.

Under Do'zia's leadership, Selah Theatre Project has become more than a theater group; it's a community catalyst. The theater collaborates with other non-profits, using plays to raise awareness about various causes. It's this ability to connect and build community that truly sets the theater apart.



As we conclude our conversation, Do'zia reflects on her growth as an advocate for the arts. She acknowledges the theater's current needs: theater chairs, costume donations, lighting equipment, and supporting its scholarship program that ensures no child is turned away for financial reasons. "Do you know what's the most rewarding part?" Do'zia pauses, her eyes reflecting the passion that drives her. "It's seeing the change in people – not just the actors, but the audience, the community. We're not just a theater; we're a movement, shaping lives through the power of storytelling."

Learn more about classes, shows, and fundraising needs at SelahTheatreProject.org

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FREMONT STREET NURSERY

The Fremont Street Nursery has been providing child care for residents of Winchester for 80 years. Created as the Negro Daycare Center, originally on Pall Mall Street in 1943, it was intended to support families during World War II. While many men left to serve in the war, black women continued to take on employment and needed help caring for their own children while they were out of the home. Today Fremont is a melting pot of students and staff managed by the effervescent Executive Director, Freda Roberson.

With 29 years of dedication, Roberson has transformed the nursery into a haven of learning and love, guiding children and their families towards a brighter future. Roberson's journey began unexpectedly. Originally hired as a kitchen manager, her undeniable connection with the children led her to transition from the kitchen to the classroom, eventually climbing her way up to become the Executive Director in 2004.

As Roberson takes us through various classrooms, highlighting the tailored activities and programs for different age groups, we realize Fremont Street Nursery is more than a daycare, it's a nurturing ground for young minds. From baby rooms, where attention to individual needs is paramount, to two-year-old classes brimming with playful energy, the nursery is a vibrant tapestry of learning stages.

Roberson proudly discusses the nursery's unique programs like soccer shots, basketball, and gardening. The involvement of Master Gardeners and the practice of donating to local food pantries reflect the nursery's commitment to community and healthy living. The emphasis on fresh, homemade meals underlines the importance of nutrition in early development. Roberson's emphasis on creating a family-like environment is not just extended to the children but also to the staff, many of whom have been part of the nursery for over a decade, something that is



rarely seen in childcare settings. Her approach fosters a sense of security and belonging, crucial in early childhood development.

The nursery is on the brink of an exciting new chapter, with plans to expand and create new classrooms to meet the high demand, evident from their seven-page waitlist. This expansion aims to cater to specific age groups and developmental stages, such as providing a dedicated space for three-year-olds who are not yet potty trained.

One of Roberson's proudest achievements is the scholarship program funded by grants, allowing 43 children to attend the nursery for free. This initiative is part of her broader goal to make quality child care accessible to all families, regardless of their financial situation.

As the interview concludes, Roberson expresses her desire for community engagement, particularly in areas like literacy and volunteerism. She underscores the importance of partnerships and collaborations in meeting the diverse needs of the children and their families. Roberson's work stands as a beacon of hope, love, and community spirit, offering a model for others to emulate in child care and education.

Learn more at FremontStreetNursery.org

Winchester Book Gallery Recommends:



Ada adores spending every summer in a Turkish seaside town with her mother and grandmother at the family villa. The glittering waters, endless olive groves, and her spirited friends make it easy to leave her idle life in California behind. But no matter how much Ada feels she belongs to the country where her mother grew up, deep down, her connection to the culture feels as fleeting as the seasons.

When Levent, a mysterious man from her mother's past, shows up in their town, Ada can't help but imagine a different future for her mother—one that promises a return to home, to love, to happiness. But while playing matchmaker, Ada has to come to terms with her own intensifying attraction to Levent. Does the future she's fighting for belong to her mother—or to her alone?

Lush and evocative, İnci Atrek's *Holiday Country* is a rapturous meditation about what it means to experience being of two worlds, the limitations and freedom of a life in translation, and the intricacies of a love triangle that stretches across generations and continents.

CHRIS MITCHELL

Chris Mitchell's voice resonates with warmth and familiarity, a voice that has become a quintessential part of daily life for residents. Chris is a local radio personality who's much more than just the host of a popular morning show. He's a friend, a confidant, and for many, a morning coffee companion to start their day on a positive note.

Chris's radio career began unexpectedly. A theater student at James Madison University, his knack for accents landed him a job doing voice-overs for commercials. His big break came in 1987 when a DJ's car broke down, and he was asked to fill in. From there, his love for radio grew.

Working at radio stations around the country, from Los Angeles to Virginia Beach, a chance interview at Winchester's Q102 changed everything. Despite initial reservations and warnings of career suicide, Chris felt a gut instinct about Winchester. "This is where I'm supposed to be," he said, reflecting on his decision.

For Chris, Winchester wasn't just another job location; it was a community that embraced him wholeheartedly. He shared stories of his interactions with locals, from business owners to people on the streets, and how these experiences solidified his love for the city. "It was a community that loved and took care of itself," he noted, highlighting the city's unique blend of care and connection.

Our conversation took a turn towards the evolution of radio in the digital era. Chris expressed admiration for the advancements in technology, particularly at iHeartRadio, where he works. He described the shift from playing records to digital systems,

emphasizing how these changes have enhanced the intimacy of radio. However, the essence of radio, according to Chris, remains unchanged. It's about having a one-on-one conversation, providing a respite from the daily grind. "It's so personal, so intimate," he explained, describing the deep connections formed with his listeners over the years.

Chris's approach to his show is deeply personal. He takes pride in selecting interviewees, focusing on local businesses, community heroes, and selfless individuals. "It's about highlighting those who make a difference," he shared. One of the most touching moments of our conversation was when Chris spoke about his former co-host, Rosie, who passed away after a 23 year co-host run. He detailed the emotional impact of her loss, not just on him but on the entire community. "We all cried together," he recalled, emphasizing the profound bond shared with his audience as he broke the news of her passing on air last year.

As our interview drew to a close, Chris spoke about the future with optimism. With a new co-host, Lori, he's excited about the next chapter. "It's the best thing that's happened in the last year for me," he said with a hopeful smile.

Listen to The Chris and Lori Show on Q102 weekdays from 6-10am or on the iHeartRadio App:

ShenandoahCountryQ102.iheart.com



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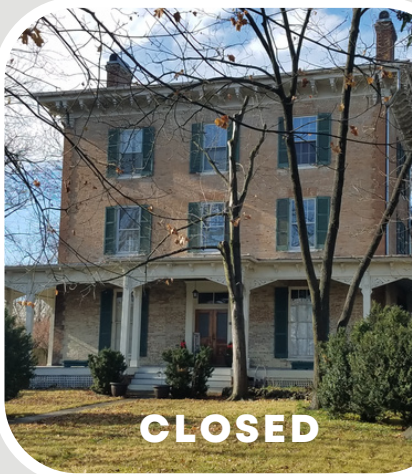
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