

Museum Around the Corner

The Georgetown County Historical Society Museum

Howard High School ©

Julie Emory of Coastal Carolina University worked one summer as an intern with the West End Heritage Center. Her story of how Howard High School got its name is told here.

“Howard High School is well-known throughout Georgetown but the origin behind its name, however, is much lesser known. According to the February 1998 “Black History Edition” of *The Community Times*, the initial school property was bought “for the sum of Two Hundred Dollars” on January 1, 1866 by the Board of Trustees (AG Baxter, EL Rainey, HT Carr. Sr., James Murrell Sr., Samuel Johnson, ED Rice, EG Rhue, R. Davis, and RC Wilson) as “the Georgetown Colored Academy.” The original school however, could not hold all of Georgetown’s students. Many recall the original Colored Academy as a collection of buildings along Duke and King Streets prior to the creation of “Old Howard.”

The iconic name, Howard, did not come until the school was torn down and rebuilt on Duke and King Streets in 1908. “It was...renamed the Howard Graded School...by James Dunmore.” Why did Dunmore choose the name “Howard”? The June 18, 1986 publication of *The Georgetown Times* states “the school is believed to be named in honor of a Civil War hero, General Oglethrope Howard, who was also a philanthropist.” It is highly likely that Oglethrope was another name used by General Oliver Otis Howard (most documents credit O. O. Howard), a Union soldier who was instrumental in the Freedman’s Bureau. During Howard’s tenure as a commissioner in the Freedman’s Bureau, he ensured former slaves gained the right to vote and an education. His dedication to education survived through Howard University, a school General Howard himself founded in Washington DC that allowed any student-- regardless of race or gender-- to receive a collegiate education. The strong connection between General Howard and activism for African Americans renders the chance of Howard’s name being a homage to the Civil War general’s legacy highly likely.

In an issue of *Georgetown Daily Item* regarding the school’s dedication ceremony, Principal JB Beck “congratulated the school upon being able for the first time in eleven years to assemble under one roof” while advising “the boys and girls to feel such pride in their new building as could cause them to vie with each other in keeping it in good trim.” The students followed Beck’s advice as Howard continued to grow and thrive over time. “By 1938, the elementary department was relocated into a new structure on Kaminski Street [‘New Howard’]. In 1949, twelfth grade was added and the entire school was relocated to the West End campus.”

Howard High School’s standard of excellence, despite limited resources, continued even after the school closed. *The Community Times* article stated, “after the 1984 commencement, the predominantly Black Howard merged with the mostly white Winyah School to form Georgetown High School.” Even after this merge, the legacy of Howard’s educators and alumni lived through the Committee of African American

Historical Observances (CAAHO) and later the Howard High School Alumni Association. This little-known history of Howard's name, and other aspects of life on the West End, is illuminated at the West End Heritage Center."