

The Historic Huntsville Quarterly

Volume 22 | Number 1

Article 7

3-20-1996

The Buildings Among the Oaks

Maureen Thomas

Follow this and additional works at: <https://louis.uah.edu/historic-huntsville-quarterly>



Part of the [Historic Preservation and Conservation Commons](#), and the [History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Thomas, Maureen (1996) "The Buildings Among the Oaks," *The Historic Huntsville Quarterly*. Vol. 22: No. 1, Article 7.

Available at: <https://louis.uah.edu/historic-huntsville-quarterly/vol22/iss1/7>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by LOUIS. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Historic Huntsville Quarterly by an authorized editor of LOUIS.

The Buildings Among the Oaks

By Maureen Thomas

*Down, down, deep in the South, by the foothills of Appalachia;
nestled in the Tennessee Valley is a school for colored people
and they call it Oakwood College.*

*It has nine slave cabins, a stopped-up well, a plantation house,
and 65 oak trees, if you please.*

*That was all on the 380 acres of land in 1896, when 8 black boys
and 8 colored girls with 4 white teachers arrived there.*

But they had "Yankee grit" and "Negro courage" and they survived.

*They worked the land, deep, down, in the South, and hoisted
structures to keep them warm, so they could learn to read and
write and make more room for their brothers and sisters.*

*They built the "Morning Star" school house, Henderson hall, West and
East halls, Study hall, Irwin and Butler halls, and they stood tall.*

*They added Oaklawn, the Normal and Hammond buildings, the Pines,
the President's house, the milk house, a dry kiln, garages and pump
houses, an orphanage barn, and orphanage, all in 40 years from 1896.*

*Most are gone now for fire and old age have taken their toll;
but East hall survived.*

*So they brought more land, deep, down in the South and built more
buildings; for the Negro boys and girls kept coming to enjoy the
Oakwood experience and get an education.*

*And so from their own stone quarry they erected Moran hall and added
more buildings: Cunningham hall and the teacher's cottages
to the acreage.*

*Green, Ford, and Peterson halls; and Ashby auditorium with the store,
bakery and post office complex, and the laundry continued
the expansion to 1959.*

Some of these buildings have been refurbished, but they still survive.

And still they built more buildings, deep, down in the South:

*Anna Knight Elementary, the dairy barn, Peters and Carter halls,
Blake Center, and Edwards hall to accommodate our boys and girls.*

*Eva B. Dykes library, W. R. Beach natatorium, J. T. Stafford building,
Oakwood College church and Moseley religion complex came next.*

*W.O.C.G. radio station, the science complex, Natellka Burrell education building,
the skating rink, and Wade hall were all completed by 1996.*

*Twenty-seven buildings still standing, silhouetted against oak trees,
and they survive, keeping Oakwood alive.*

Maureen H. Thomas was born in Guyana, South America, where she spent the first ten years of her life. She later migrated to Trinidad and attended Caribbean Union College. Between 1975 and 1977, she completed a B.S. degree in Business Education. In 1981, she received a Master of Science degree in the same area from Alabama A&M University. Mrs. Thomas currently resides in the Huntsville area and is a 7th grade teacher at Whitesburg Middle School. She has one daughter and has been writing poems for the last three years.



Sunnyside