

George Washington High School Crew

ALEXANDRIA SCHOLASTIC ROWING started at George Washington High School (GWHS) in 1947 due to the joint efforts of Julian “Whitey” Whitestone and Jack T. Franklin. At GWHS’s inception, they would be competing primarily against private day and boarding schools in the Northeast. However, the competitive landscape quickly changed when in 1949, an MIT educated engineer by the name Charlie Butt Jr was able to convince Washington & Lee High School in Arlington, Virginia, to start a rowing program. He came prepared to pitch the school and



George Washington High School Crew, the first public high school rowing program in the US
George Washington HS Yearbook, 1948



1952 George Washington High School rowing team and their coxswain, Sandy Bremner, display their Stotesbury Championship Cup. Left to right are Coach Julian "Whitey" Whitestone, Curtis Adkins, Dick Rinker, Irvin Dodd, Harry Miller, Maury Browne, John Sullivan, George Gross, George Peyton, and Mr. Jack Franklin. The GW Crew now has its own shell, purchased by the citizens of Alexandria through the Crew Boosters Club, the main support for high school rowing. The new shell — the "City of Alexandria" — cost about \$2,300.

already had Potomac Boat Club's agreement the school could row out of the Washington, DC-based boathouse, plus he had already sourced equipment. In the span of two years a second public school in Northern Virginia had a rowing program.

In those early years W&L dominated GWHS on the water. In fact, during W&L's first year as a Varsity program they beat GWHS to win the Northern Virginia Championships; a week later won the Stotesbury Cup in Philadelphia; and the following week traveled to Detroit and captured the 15th Annual Schoolboy Rowing Association of America's (SRAA) national championship. This was the first victory ever by a Northern Virginia school crew at the Stotesbury and Nationals.

It took three exceptionally long years for the GWHS crew to become competitive. In fact, it wasn't until 1950 that GW made a final of the Varsity 8 at the Stotesbury Cup. In 1952 they broke through by soundly beating W&L by open water to capture their first Stotesbury Cup.

GWHS was poised to win their first Schoolboy National Championship that spring but unfortunately, another upstart crew from New Jersey, Belleville High School, won the race, with the Lafayette High School (Buffalo) placing 2nd, and GW third. Belleville set a new course record that day, besting the one that was held for 17 years by Kent School of Connecticut. GWHS had a strong nucleus of their Varsity returning for the 1953 season to hopefully help them earn the title the following year.

Due to the hard work of its Booster Club, GWHS sent a full crew of



NATIONAL SCHOLASTIC CHAMPIONS—Here are the George Washington High School oarsmen who won national scholastic championships last week at Worcester, Mass., in the eight-oared race and the junior four-oared shells with coxswains. In front, left to right, are the four-oared champions, Robert Kane, No. 1; Bill Hamaker, No. 2; Mel Fortney, coxswain; George Dunham, No. 3, and Roy Gravatte, stroke. Standing, left to right, are the eight-oared crew, Jim Swan, No. 1; Bob Moore, No. 2; John Sullivan, No. 3; Paul Sheridan, No. 4; Al Phillippe, coxswain; Dick Rinker, No. 5; Russ Dunn, No. 6; Harry Miller, No. 7, and Curtis Adkins, stroke. In center, left to right, are Trice Gravatte, president of the GW Crew Boosters Club, and Coaches Julian Whitestone and Jack Franklin. Franklin is president of the National Association of Amateur Oarsmen. —Star Staff Photo.

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25 rowers to Philadelphia in 1953 which included a double scull, a 3rd 8, a Junior 4, and Varsity 8. The outcome of the Stotesbury Cup: W&L avenged its loss to GWHS from the prior year, winning by open water. W&L went on to win the Nationals that year as well.

It's not that GWHS was a weak program, it's just that W&L was just a little bit better. First, the rowing conditions in Alexandria were not great compared to W&L's covered section upstream on the Potomac. W&L had six miles of well-protected flat water on most days. Julian also met his match in coaching as Charlie Butt Jr knew the sport having rowed and coxswaining at MIT. His rowing experience combined with his analytical mind brought a new approach to the sport. Charlie loved tinkering with line-ups, went to the Macon tulip blade first, and brought bucket side rowing to the high school level. It also certainly helped build the roster size having won the national championship the first year in existence.

By that time, it was generally accepted throughout the country that Northern Virginia had become the hotbed of scholastic rowing. It certainly surpassed Philadelphia. There were fast crews in New Jersey, Buffalo, and upstate New York but not at the level of high school rowing in Alexandria and Arlington. Not only were the NOVA (Northern

Results of the 1952 Nationals reflect the emergence of the Philly schools and continued success of the NOVA crews

Varsity 8

- 1st: St. Joe's (Buffalo)
- 2nd: Washington and Lee
- 3rd: George Washington
- 4th: LaSalle (Philadelphia)
- 5th: West Catholic (Philadelphia)
- 6th: Lower Merion
- 7th: Northeast High (Philadelphia)

Varsity 4

- 1st: Washington & Lee
- 2nd: Haverford (Philadelphia)
- 3rd: Lower Merion

Quadruple Sculls

- 1st: Southeast Catholic
- 2nd: George Washington
- 3rd: Washington & Lee

JV 8

- 1st: Washington & Lee
- 2nd: Lower Merion
- 3rd: George Washington
- 4th: St. Joe's
- 5th: LaSalle
- 6th: West Catholic

JV 4

- 1st: George Washington
- 2nd: Washington & Lee
- 3rd: Lower Merion
- 4th: The Hun School (Princeton)

3rd 8

- 1st: Washington & Lee (4th Boat)
 - 2nd: Lower Merion
 - 3rd: George Washington
 - 4th: Pendergrast
 - 5th: Washington & Lee (3rd Boat)
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Virginia) crews winning the 8s, but they also had deep squads and won events including the 4 with coxswains, doubles, and quads.

It looked more of the same in '54 with W&L winning the Stotesbury again. During that time, the Stotesbury was not its own event, it was part of the American Henley Regatta, which was a one-day regatta; heats in the morning and finals in the pm. It was interesting to note that one young man, D'Arcy "Dee" Campbell, was also at this regatta competing in the Senior 1/4-mile dash against notables such as Olympic Champion Jack Kelly, Jr.

GWHS and Julian Whitestone got over the "proverbial hump" when they won the 1954 Schoolboy Nationals in Worcester, Massachusetts, defeating Tabor Academy and Kent School. W&L finished fifth in the race. The other finalists in the Varsity 8 included Allen Park (MI) and Shrewsbury (MA).

In all sports you have likely bared witness to getting the "monkey off the back," or getting over the hump. The result of accomplishing this often leads to a nice run by a program. This did not happen at GWHS. Each year there were more strong scholastic rowing programs competing, including schools out of Buffalo, Syracuse, Michigan, New York, and most significantly, Philadelphia.

In 1955 the best Varsity scholastic crew was St. Joseph's Institute (Buffalo); their championship broke the Virginia stronghold on national championship gold. The Buffalo crew beat W&L by less than a deck, GWHS was third. The regatta was held on the Schuylkill. During that season, GWHS had 91 men on their roster and had a deep and talented group of oarsmen. One could argue this was the pinnacle of rowing in Alexandria for many years. But there were clear signs that scholastic rowing would become even more competitive. Philadelphia was starting to turn out some fine crews; all Boathouse Row clubs had aligned themselves with a high school (primarily private institutions) rowing out of their facilities. This meant that all of those scholastic crews had access to good training, racing equipment, and experienced coaches.

World War II drew thousands of workers to Northern Virginia to work in New Deal agencies, defense plants, and the military, but housing was scarce. The Public Works Agency funded and supervised construction of housing and schools for workers near defense sites; the city of Alexandria was a major benefactor. It created two such housing developments in Alexandria: Chinquapin Village and Cameron Valley. This coupled with the continued integration of the Black population into the previously all-white George Washington High School, a second high school, Francis C. Hammond High School was opened in 1956.

When Francis C. Hammond High School opened, the "dynamic coaching duo" of Whitey and Franklin was disbanded. Now, they would be rivals as Franklin would lead the Hammond Crew. Two younger ODBC rowers also joined the ranks of Alexandria high school rowing

coaches: Louis "Sonny" Wieners became the assistant to Whitey and D'Arcy "Dee" Campbell assisting Jack Franklin.

Short term, the addition of the second high school rowing program in Alexandria did not affect GWHS's success. In fact, in 1956 it was the first time in the history of GWHS rowing they won the "Triple Crown of Scholastic Rowing," winning the Northern Virginia Championships over W&L, capturing the Stotesbury Cup by 4 seconds over St. Joe's of Buffalo, and winning the Nationals by defeating Belleville, New Jersey. W&L did not make the final. Sadly, that would be the last time that GWHS would win either a Northern Virginia rowing title, Stotesbury Cup, or Schoolboy National championship in the Varsity 8.

Unlike W&L, which stayed as the primary school in Arlington, the Alexandria high school talent pool was now servicing two rowing programs. The good news was that more male students would have the opportunity to row but it would be much harder to field a nationally competitive crew. Further, the demographics favored Hammond's West side that included more middle-class whites than GWHS which was predominately Black.

In 1958, both GWHS and Hammond made the finals of the Stotesbury Cup, it would be the only time in the history of Alexandria this was accomplished. The following week at the Nationals held in Buffalo, both crews failed to make the final. The race was won by W&L. It wasn't until 1963 that success came to Hammond's Varsity 8 when they won the Nationals in a dead heat against W&L.

The rowing programs at GWHS and Hammond continued to put out incredibly competitive programs but they no longer could compete against the very top high school scholastic programs in the nation. In those days, the only way a crew from Alexandria could compete in the Stotesbury was to win or place second in the Northern Virginia Championships. So, both Whitey and Jack would assess the talent and many times would break up the top boat—the 8 oared shell—into either a four, quad, double or single. After all, it was all about allowing the guys to learn how to race. Between 1954 and 1968, GWHS and Hammond won a combined 16 gold medals at the Stotesbury Cup in events other than the Varsity 8. Many of those crews would go onto and win the Schoolboy National Championship (SRRA) as well.

While Alexandria had begun to grow it was only the beginning of its expansion. The town nearly doubled in population to over 100,000 residents and by 1965, a third high school, T.C. Williams High School opened and had its first graduating class in 1967.

By then, Whitey and Franklin had retired from high school coaching. In 1965, Sonny Wieners assumed the head coach position at GWHS, and Dee Campbell replaced Jack Franklin at Hammond. The head coach at the newly formed T.C. Williams crew was William "Bill" Burris, a former rower at ODBC and mathematics teacher. At ODBC, by the

Classes Packed In Alexandria

By PAUL HOPE

Alexandria will be able to avoid double sessions in its schools again this year but some of its elementary schools will be extremely overcrowded.

City schools will open on September 10 with an estimated enrollment of nearly 13,000. The enrollment at the end of the 1955-6 session was 12,300.

For the first time in many years, George Washington High School will be operating at normal capacity. The city's new \$2 million Hammond High School in the annexed area will open and relieve the load at George Washington.

Last year George Washington High had an enrollment of more than 2,000 in a building designed for about 1,600.

High school enrollment, including the eighth grade, will jump about 500 this year. Last year the enrollment was about 3,200.

The overcrowding will be more acute in the colored elementary schools.

Both of the city's colored elementary schools will have more students than they can properly handle and the overflow will be housed elsewhere.

Classes at both schools are expected to be large. Some of them numbered more than 40 last year, and prospects are about the same this year. Alexandria's colored school population is expected to be around 1,600 this year.

Plans are in the works for a new building to replace the Lyles-Crouch School and for an eight-room addition at Charles Houston, the two colored schools.

Supt. T. C. Williams said that the integration issue will have no effect on the school board's building plans for colored schools. He said the classrooms will be needed in those sections of the city whether schools are segregated or integrated.

Parker-Gray High School for colored students will be below capacity this year, Mr. Williams said.

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Alexandria Projects Put at \$10 Million

By JERRY KLINE
Star Staff Writer

A \$10.2 million capital improvement budget for Alexandria in 1963-4, most of it for a new high school and elementary school, has been proposed by City Manager Albert M. Hair, Jr.

In his budget submitted to the City Council last night, Mr. Hair said an additional \$3.4 million will be needed through fiscal year 1968-69 for schools, urban renewal and other projects.

He asked the council to authorize the issuance of \$6,660,936 in bonds to finance projects scheduled to begin by June 30, 1964. Only part of the bonds actually will be issued during the period, he said.

Items listed for action during 1963-4 include the construction of the T. C. Williams High School in the Muddtown area at a cost of \$4,725,000 and the erection of an elementary school for \$2,500,000 on a site to be selected in the Brookfield section.

He also suggested the appropriation of \$124,500 to inaugurate the Muddtown urban renewal program, \$445,300 for the three-phase Gadsby urban renewal program and \$283,187 to pay for related capital improvements.

\$5.5 Million Proposed

The acquisition of park and playground land next year would cost \$264,787 under the proposal and a total of \$1,064,000 would be spent for recreation land during the next six years.

Of the \$65,052,788 proposed expenditure through 1968-9, State or Federal payments will total \$7,633,000. The city previously has allocated \$955,336 for the projects, leaving a balance of \$26,564,252 to be paid by the city.

In another fiscal matter, the City Council heard a handful of criticisms of the proposed \$18.5 million city and school operating budget for 1963-64 and set May 14 for adoption.

The major objections raised during the public hearing concerned the appropriations for the library and school tuition grants and the council's procedure of approving the tax rate before considering the budget.

Mrs. Brooke Schumm, president of the Alexandria League of Women Voters, said the council should have held the public hearings before setting the tax rate. Last month, the council cut 2 cents from the real estate tax rate of \$3.13 per \$100 of assessment value.

She also objected to the expenditure of \$20,000 for school tuition grants under the State program "which uses public funds for private schools."

The program, set up to avoid or discourage school integration, provides funds for students to attend public schools in other cities or private schools anywhere.

Edward J. R. Gulewicz, president of the Alexandria Voters and Taxpayers League, asked the council to "knock out every penny in the budget for tuition grants." He called the program a "pork barrel for people who are sending their children to private schools."

Several persons said the council should provide more funds for the operation of the public library. Mr. Hair has proposed an expenditure of \$132,227, a cut of \$45,500 from the amount requested by library officials.

Mr. Hair asked the council to add \$74,834 to his requested budget to cover funds for the Alexandria Tourist Council, improvements in the new City Hall addition and for new personnel. This brings the proposed budget total to \$18,573,601.

Different Voting Machines

In other matters, the council overruled the objections of the Electoral Board and the City Democratic Committee and decided to use two different types of voting machines in the upcoming primary and general elections.

The issue had split the council since March 12 when several members indicated they preferred to run one type of machine although the manufacturer of another type submitted a lower bid. Mr. Hair and Vice Mayor Eugene W. Zimmerman objected to the rejection of a low bid on a machine that meets the city's specifications.

After discussing the matter for two meetings, the council voted on March 26 to rent 30 machines from each of the two companies with an option to buy after the machines are used in several elections.

In other action, the council handed the Old Town Citizens Association and allied groups their latest defeat in their battle to preserve old buildings. By a 5 to 1 vote, with Mayor Frank E. Mann in opposition, the council approved the demolition of a vacant two-story building at 525-527 King street.

Johnson, Roulin, Ack

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time the Alexandria high school program expanded to three different programs, the boat club could no longer house the crews. In the early '60s, the City of Alexandria purchased three blocks of buildings from the U.S. Government, which included the Naval Torpedo Station, and the Federal Records Center including the building now known as the Torpedo Factory Arts Center, for \$1.6 million. One building was converted to a two-bay boathouse for the three high schools high school rowing programs.

Much had changed in Northern Virginia and by 1968, there were at least 7 high schools that fielded Varsity rowing programs. But the last two decades belonged to Charley Butt's W&L crews in which his Varsity 8 crews won six National Championships and eight Stotesbury Cups. Newcomers to Northern Virginia scholastic rowing included: Wakefield HS (Arlington); Yorktown HS (Arlington), Fort Hunt (Fairfax), and JEB Stuart (Fairfax).