



A place in history: The Ninth Avenue School in Hendersonville before it became integrated in 1966.

COURTESY CITY OF HENDERSONVILLE

MONUMENT TO HONOR BLACK SCHOOLS

In 1966, the Ninth Avenue School in Hendersonville was integrated and began educating junior-high students of all races. Before that, both it and the Sixth Avenue School had served black students from Henderson, Polk and Transylvania counties.

Some things have changed since then — the Hendersonville Fire Department burned down the Sixth Avenue School's dilapidated building for practice in 1982 — but the memory of the two schools lives on in Hendersonville. And soon there will be a monument to honor their contributions.

"I love Ninth Avenue, because I look at it as a second home and a place of growing up," wrote Jessie Jenkins-Wilson, chair of the Ninth Avenue Alumni Committee, in an e-mail to *Open*. "I am very proud of the way our history is being preserved for the Sixth and Ninth Avenue schools."

According to a history of Henderson County's black community produced by a local research committee, the Sixth Avenue School opened in 1916, serving as both a school and a community center for 24 years. It closed in 1951, when the Ninth Avenue School was expanded to handle both elementary and high-school students. Jenkins-Wilson was a member of the school's last graduating class before it was converted into Hendersonville Middle School.

On Sunday, June 28, a marker commemorating both schools will be dedicated on Main Street in Hendersonville, in a ceremony featuring alumni and Hendersonville Mayor Greg Newman.

The monument resulted from the research of four Girl Scouts from Troop 404 who were working toward the Gold Award (the equivalent of the Boy Scouts' Eagle Scout award), which requires a community-service project, scout leader Lu Ann Welton explains. Both the monument and the ceremony will incorporate things the girls found while interviewing alumni and going over old yearbooks, notes Welton.

The dedication will take place Sunday, June 28, at 10 a.m. on the east side of the 200 block of Main Street, Hendersonville.

— Brian Powell