

*Charles Sumner School  
Museum & Archives*





One of the many photographs featuring the graduating class of the District of Columbia High Schools.



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- 1. Bells top of the Charles Sumner Museum and Archives
- 2. Photograph of Charles Sumner
- 3. Entrance to the Charles Sumner Museum and Archives

## History

### THE CHARLES SUMNER SCHOOL

The Charles Sumner School was first constructed in 1872 and was designed by the architect Adolph Cluss. The school was named after US Senator Charles Sumner, as he was a major figure that fought for the abolition of slavery and the establishment for equal rights for African Americans. The Charles Sumner School is one of the first public school buildings for the African American community in the D.C. Washington area. The School's history is meant to encompass the growing education

opportunities that are presented. When in D.C. make sure you see the Charles Sumner School Museum and Archive stands as one of the few physical reminders of the presence and history of African Americans in one of the most historic areas of the city. The school now houses a museum consisting of three floors with different exhibits, a conference center, and archives of the District of Columbia Public Schools.



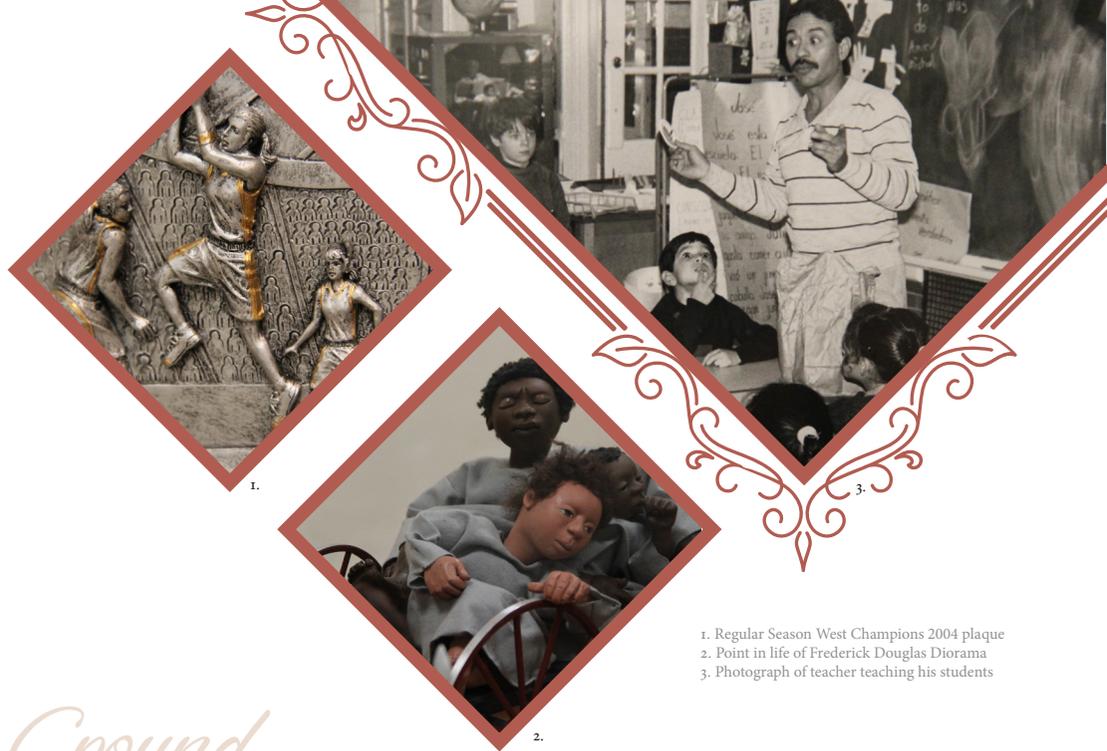
## *Exploring the Exhibits*

When first visiting the Charles Sumner School Museum and Archive you will first be stricken by the historical architecture, as it is a historical site. The building is large and features beautiful architecture the windows are accompanied with arches and ornate flower designs that stands out from the more modern surrounding buildings and museums. The interior of the museum itself is also a reflection of the architecture and history of the 1870s era. At first glance when entering the museum it feels modern but once inside the elevator it is like a historical transformation occurs. The Charles Sumner School Museum and archive has three different floors that feature different exhibits and rooms but all have the same personal historical presence. Each exhibit and room showcases the historical past and advances into modern times through presenting symbols of the education system as well as African American history.

There are many exhibits on display at the Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives, however the majority of the museum houses and showcases school memorabilia. These memorabilia from different high schools; located in the District of Columbia are important because they act as reminders of African American history. Some of the school memorabilia contain artworks from students that are hung throughout the museum as well as trophies, graduation photographs, and even keys. Other exhibits in the Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives feature historical important figures that have made a large difference in African American history such as Frederick Douglass. However some exhibits and rooms feature a more personal connection as the museum highlights individual students, teachers, administrators and staff.



Diorama of the life and times of Frederick Douglass and his accomplishments throughout the years.



1. Regular Season West Champions 2004 plaque
2. Point in life of Frederick Douglas Diorama
3. Photograph of teacher teaching his students

## Ground

### DIORAMA AND PHOTOGRAPHY

When first entering the Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives the ground floor presents a modern feel as you are being greeted to the sign-in center. The museum opens with a high school feeling of nostalgia. The main corridor houses a portrait gallery and school memorabilia while down the hall a memorial gallery of William Thayer Webb is featured. William Thayer Webb is seen through photographs of education activities in the D.C. Public Schools from the early 1970s to the

1990s. In the same hall there are dioramas of The Life of Frederick Douglass that showcase from birth to becoming statesman. To the other side of the hall contains the Public Charter School memorabilia featuring Booker T. Washington High School. These first exhibits on the ground floor showcase the public schools as well as highlight important figures in the school system and how they have impacted history.



Composite of an old schoolhouse after students curiosity of how schools were built and constructed in resemblance of schools today.



## *First* MEMORABILIA AND TROPHIES

To get to the first floor of the museum you enter a very old and antique elevator that likes to take its time in transporting you. Once the doors open from the elevator, it is like the whole building is transformed you have gone back to the 1870s, entering history. Nostalgia creeps as dark green carpets and the walls of wood come forth, a complete transformation from the ground floor. The main corridor showcases a portrait gallery of school memorabilia. In the Dr. Mildred E. Gibbs lecture hall the Women's hall of Fame of the DC Commission for

women is included. In the exhibit hall 103 there is a collection of multiple and various high school memorabilia featuring trophies, photographs, and artworks. Step into the exhibit hall where there is a collection of works from the former Western High School, Wilson High School, and Duke Ellington School of the Arts. The main foyer of the first floor also contains the September 11th, 2001 exhibit the observances of the deceased students, teachers, administrators, and staff that passed on during the event.

1. Rustic copper treated mural in the main foyer
2. Teapot kettle found at the Wilson High School
3. Western High School class signed by thirty-three classmates



Photograph of young children playing in the school yard in a Healthland Dairy Co. car.



## Second VOCATIONAL AND MEMORABILIA

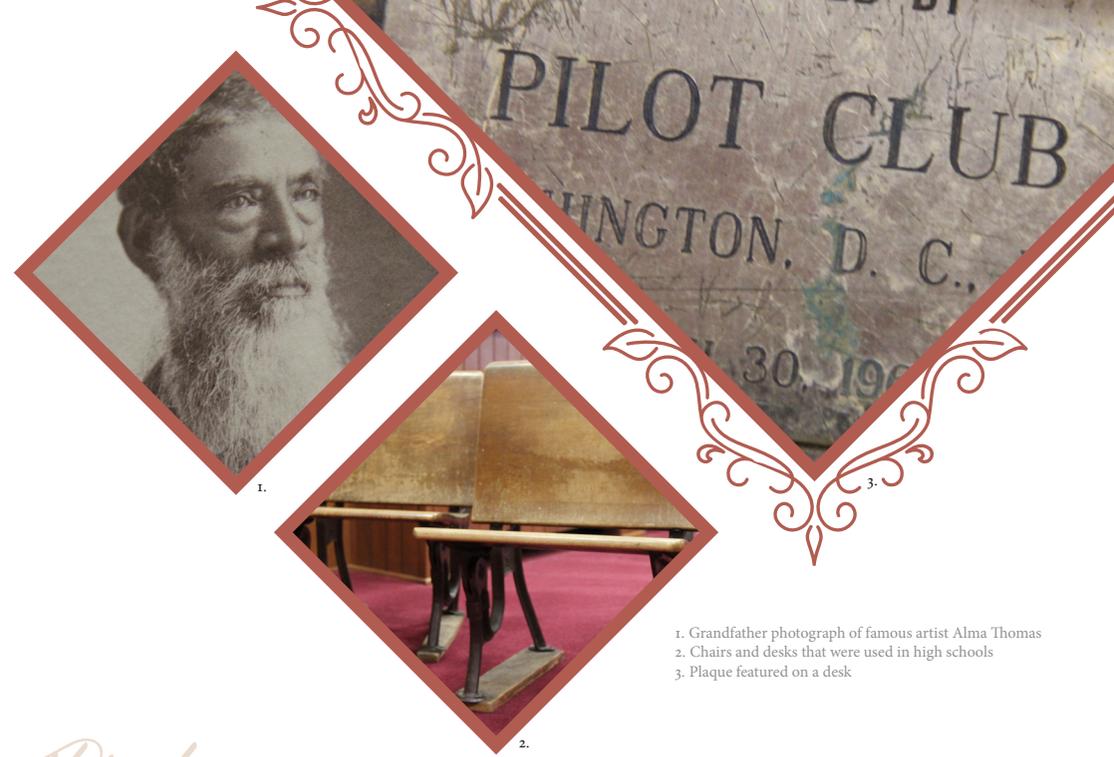
The second floor opens in the same way as the first floor does, however you get the choice of taking the stairs instead of the old and antique elevator. In the staircase it is as if you again have entered into another world. The stairs are modern, like what you would see at a public school nowadays. Most of the main corridor exhibits will include a portrait gallery alongside with various school memorabilia. This is the main purpose of the Charles Sumner School Museum and Archive since it showcases and represents different high schools that promote African American education. In exhibit hall 201 the whole room is dedicated to the former Central

High School. The room feels classic like you are stepping through multiple years of history and living within those days. On the second floor there is also the Tower room but named after Dr. Paul Phillips Cooke, the tower room serves as a reading room. You can spend your time here sitting and reading or just gazing at the multiple books on the shelf, like a quiet escape. Then in exhibit hall 203 showcases and highlights the vocational education as well as the former Armstrong Vocational High School memorabilia. Next to this room is the Frederick Douglass Research Library.

1. The University of the District of Columbia miner building plaque
2. Combination lock used on student lockers in the 1940s
3. Graduation cap featuring student signatures



Year book display of all the memories from the Daniel Roper Junior High School during the 1971-1972 school year.



1. Grandfather photograph of famous artist Alma Thomas
2. Chairs and desks that were used in high schools
3. Plaque featured on a desk

### *Third* PHOTOGRAPHY, DESKS, AND CHAIRS

The third and final floor is as enchanting as the rest of the entire museum as each floor has its own charm and personal memorabilia. Again the main corridor showcases the portrait gallery of multiple and various public schools in the District of Columbia, which includes drawings of the public schools, photographs of the students, and specific items like desks and chairs. In the room 300, which is named, the Richard L. Hurlbut

Memorial Hall features multiple pictures of past schools as well as photographs of children and teachers. Exhibit hall 302 features elementary, and junior high schools memorabilia like graduation keys, photographs, and many more items that talk about the history of these public schools. Lastly hall 303 features the Dunbar and Spingarn High School memorabilia.



## *Visit the Museum & Archives*

After visiting the Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives the visitors are left with the impression of an enchanted historical site. You are left with the personal feeling of having experienced of many historical years of education and African American public schooling in the U.S. The memorabilia featured in the exhibits on each floor captures U.S. Department of Education's drive and ambition to further the education of African Americans. When leaving the Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives you feel a sense of nostalgia as you have witnessed years of public schools. You feel connected to the people and the history the museum offers. It creates a personal connection as you learn about specific public schools in D.C. The members of the schools play important roles in developing equal rights for African American students and members. The Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives serves its place to remember the past and the history of our how our public education has developed.

### **THE CHARLES SUMNER SCHOOL MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES**

Is located on 17th and M Street NW.  
Washington, DC 20036.

The museum is open to the public free of charge  
Monday-Friday, 10:00am to 5:00pm.

The archives are open by appointment only  
Monday-Friday 10:00am to 4:00pm  
Please call 202-730-1421 to schedule an  
appointment for the archives.

If you are interested in arranging for one of the  
meeting spaces, please call 202-730-0478.

If taking the Metro to visit the Charles Sumner  
School Museum and Archives the nearest Metro  
stop is Farragut North on the Red Line.



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