

*"We can use this land that was designed to segregate the county and split it apart to bring the county together, to make Buckingham a better place and improve the quality of life."*

*-Wilbert Dean*

## Our Park

Ellis Acres Park features modern technologically pristine facilities for patrons to conduct an array of personal, civic, and professional activities. All facilities meet Americans with Disabilities Standards, Suggested activities may include classes, seminars, meetings, conferences, reunions, picnics, weddings, anniversaries, and holiday celebrations. This is a super site for a class field trip with an outdoor lunch. It is a great place to relax among the hardwoods from the daily stresses and enjoy the good life in Buckingham. These are just a few ideas for a super day or a break from daily routine. Come, relax, and enjoy the good life!

### Visit Us At

Ellis Acres Park, Inc.

245 Camden Street

Dillwyn, VA 23936

<http://ellisacrespark.org>

## Our History

A local hero, Stephen James Ellis [1865-1937], arrived in Buckingham during an era of turbulent division in the United States with the introduction of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 01, 1863. The Emancipation was to correct a grave injustice of humanity, Slavery. Reverend Ellis' mission was to equalize education to free locked minds to the empowerment of knowledge. The Constitution of Virginia declared that "white and colored children shall not be taught in the same school."

The Reverend Stephen J. Ellis organized support and fiduciary means to establish the Buckingham Training School [BTS] Campus which opened in 1924 and operated until 1954. BTS was the first school offering secondary level education in Buckingham for citizens of African American heritage. The school consisted of four rooms with wood-burning stoves and wooden floors treated with oil. Annual supplies consisted of one math book, one history book, a box of chalk, one can of oil, a water pail with a dipper, a broom and a dustpan. There was no public school bus service, library, cafeteria, electricity, indoor plumbing or outdoor privy. Water was retrieved from a nearby spring for the two students and teacher to consume using the same dipper. The two students were Reverend Ellis' son and niece, Burton Ellis and Georgie Morgan [aka Georgie Morgan Robinson Cousins]. The students shared reading the history book while the other student and teacher listened. Occasionally when the teacher dozed; Georgie and Burton engaged in child's play until the teacher woke up, per oral history interview with Georgie. On Monday mornings, Nathan Morgan carried his daughter, Georgie, from the First Liberty Baptist Church area on Rock Ridge Road to the Town of Dillwyn by buggy to stay with Uncle Stephen for the week while attending BTS. On cold winter mornings a heated rock wrapped in cloth was placed in the buggy to keep Georgie's feet warm. After graduation at the 11th grade, she was hired as a teacher at BTS during the school year, and she attended Virginia State College during summer sessions. Burton Ellis taught at Cedar Elementary One Room School on Bell Road.

Documentation and remnants revealed that as many as 33 such tiny schools existed. Facilities, resources, equipment and supplies were meager or worse in these tiny schools. A single teacher faced seven grades with ages ranging from six to 14 years old in a single room, grades were divided by seating arrangement without partitions. The teacher was also responsible for recesses and outdoor activities, discipline, lunch program, first aid medical care, and counseling boys and girls entering puberty. Oral histories revealed that some young girls were molested and raped by their young male classmates. Many of the students did not complete the seven grades due to the institutional challenges placed in their paths. The challenges were created to generate failures before entry to BTS. The challenges included the hardships of walking to school on muddy roads in rainy weather during summer and in cold freezing weather during winter while being taunted by white students riding on public county buses. Some students walked seven miles daily; smaller children were carried on the backs of older children. There were more than 5,000 plus similar colored schools in southeast from Texas to Maryland.

In 1954 Buckingham Training School was renamed Stephen J. Ellis Elementary School in honor of its founder when Carter G. Woodson High School opened. In 2007 Ellis Acres Memorial Park, Inc. was established in honor of Reverend Ellis. In 2015 Buckingham Training School Campus was listed in the National Register of Historic Places, 208-5001.

In 1954 Carter G. Woodson High School opened on Route 20 to continue the inequalities of the 'Separate-But-Equal-System' and delay the integration of public schools. The newly constructed CGWHS was designed at a substandard level to the earlier constructed Buckingham Central High School. Areas of marked differences were noted in auditoriums, classrooms, libraries, dining areas, gymnasiums, athletic grounds, transportation and salaries, Most glaring was the average cost per student in Virginia, \$40.17 per White student compared to \$10.47 per Black student. The development of African American education in Buckingham reveals a generational gap in the level of educational facilities. During the early 1900s African Americans were educated in churches and homes while their counterparts had one and two-room schools. By 1915 there were 33 one and two-room grade schools and no high school for black students, but four high schools [Curdsville, Dillwyn, Arvonnia and Gold Hill] for white students.

## Our Mission

**EDUCATE EMPOWER ENHANCE**

Ellis Acres Park, Inc. was established in July 2007 with the mission is to educate, empower, and enhance our community. Our park occupies a lofty hill in Dillwyn, Virginia which once served as the Historic Buckingham Training School (1924-1954) 9.25 acre campus. The tradition of education continues to be the prime focus of the park today. The park is an inviting venue for formal and non-formal levels of education for all age levels.



## Phase II of the Restoration of Ellis Acres Park and Buckingham Training School



**Join us in this positive impact on our community.**



# Our Accomplishments

During the **Phase I** process of the Ellis Acres Memorial Park restoration we as a community renovated the Buckingham Training School Vocational Shop Building, restored outdoor restroom facilities, constructed a play zone, constructed a 20'x40' covered pavilion, and removed 800 cubic yards of debris from the land. In addition to those renovations we established sewage, water, and electrical services to the park. We hope to achieve so much more during the **Phase II** renovation process.

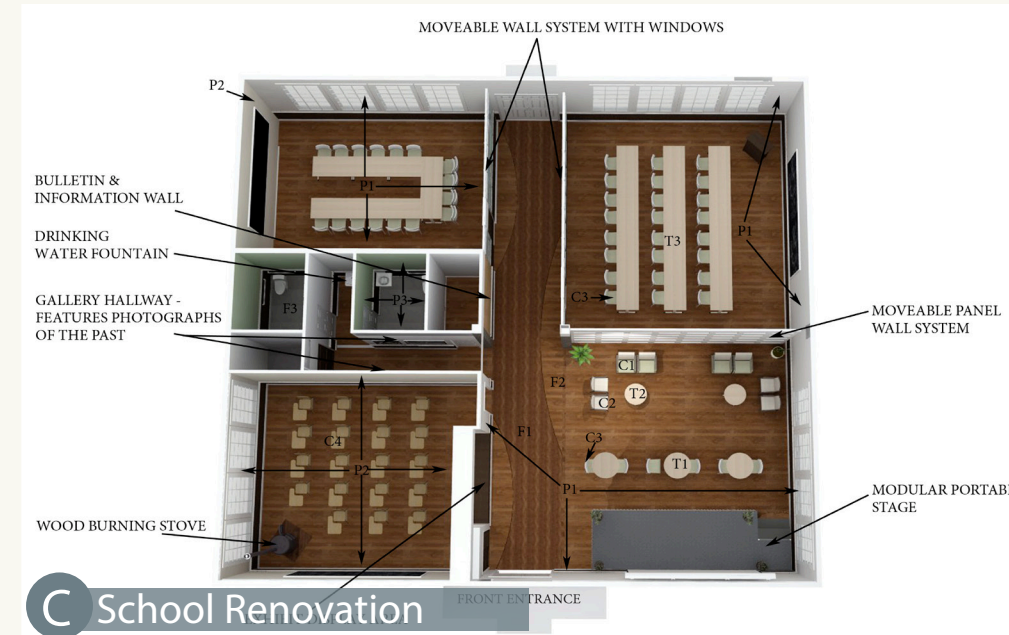
## Our Goal

**This Phase II [\$2.5 million] completion of the Ellis Acres Park 9.25 Acre Campus opens multiple facets to its full potential.**

- The Training School restoration increases capacity for workforce training with schools & colleges, leadership skills with community & business leaders, and digital skills with industry. The Walking/Jogging Trails and Amphitheater construction expands facilities for healthier lifestyles with stress release options and positive after work alternatives.
- These results will generate positive spins on the trajectory, from poverty to generational wealth, of demographics in our county. Our residents face a 15.8% below poverty level and 79.8% high school and higher graduation level. The parity level indexes of poverty, unemployment, healthcare, property ownership, and education do not equate to adjacent populations.

Demographics					
County	%Poverty	%Black	%White	Med. \$Inc	%HS Grad
Cumberland	17.8	32	63	47,469	83.5
<b>Buckingham</b>	<b>15.8</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>49,025</b>	<b>79.8</b>
Appoxmattox	13.5	19	79	56,176	85.9
Nelson	13	13	81	64,313	85.8
Albermarle	6.2	9	77	86,399	95.2
Poverty is 1.5 times the rate in Virginia 10.6%/; 20 percent higher than the rate in US 13.4%.					

# With Community We Can



Improving our community is our top priority. With your help our goals can become achievements. These achievements help to build up our community for those that live in it now and those that will in the future. This is a chance to give this historical park a renewed purpose. With these improvements to our park we can create a safe healthy environment to learn, exercise, and gather as a community in harmony.

### Donate Today:

Ellis Acres Park, Inc.  
245 Camden Street, P.O. Box 111  
Dilwyn, VA 23936

(434) 983-5600 / Alternate (434) 547-4900

ellisacres2011@gmail.com

http://ellisacrespark.org

Donations are tax-exempt under 501 (c)(3)of the Internal Revenue Code.

# Celebrating Our History



Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail sign installation  
Shown Ncci Edmonds Zoning Administrator of Buckingham County, Jason Schaefer Installer, and Wilbert M. Dean of Ellis Acres Memorial Park.

Ellis Acres Park received its Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail signage September 30, 2020. This sign reveals the role of the Historic Buckingham Training School Campus in the education of African Americans in Buckingham, VA from 1924 to 1954 which was later designated as Stephen J Ellis Elementary School from 1954 to 1964. History is an important lesson for all generations. Virginia played such an important role in education. It is the birthplace of the current free public education system that everyone in our country enjoys. It was in Virginia where many African and Native Americans as well as women developed the right to a free equal education. Let's celebrate, protect, maintain, and improve our history. Together we can and together we will.



**Ellis Acres Park, Inc.**  
EDUCATE EMPOWER ENHANCE