

Black History Month

A Florida Focus

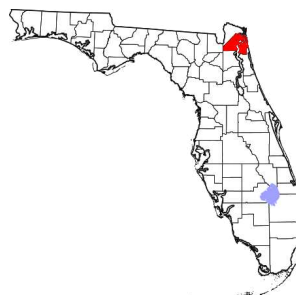
A CIVICS IN REAL LIFE SERIES: CIVICS CONNECTION SPOTLIGHT

Spotlight #7: The Stanton School

The Stanton School is the oldest continuously operating high school in Florida. Founded in 1868 by the Colored Education Society, and named for President Lincoln's Secretary of War, [General Edwin Stanton](#), the Stanton School was built for the sole purpose of providing a quality public education for Black children. Located in the City of Jacksonville, the [Stanton School](#) opened its doors on April 10, 1869. The Stanton Institute housed a teacher training program for Black educators and Stanton Normal School offered elementary classes to 348 Black students in six grades. In time, the school grew, and by the turn of the century, the Stanton School became Florida's first secondary school for Black students. [Considered the preeminent school](#) to educate Black children in the South, the Stanton School experienced significant challenges keeping its doors open during the height of the [Jim Crow](#) era. Despite these challenges, Stanton did remain open and continued to provide a quality public education to the students it served. Among its notable alumni is [James Weldon Johnson](#), a civil rights activist and important figure in the [Harlem Renaissance](#). As a six-year-old student, Johnson exhibited leadership when he garnered the attention of [President Ulysses S. Grant](#) to shake his hand during the President's visit to Stanton. Because of the education he received at Stanton, Johnson would go on to college and come back to Stanton to teach. While teaching, he studied law, and first made history when he became the first Black man admitted to the Florida Bar. At just 35 years old, Johnson would be promoted to Principal of the Stanton School. During his tenure, the school flourished, and in this capacity, Johnson would again make history when he penned the lyrics to [Lift Ev'ry Voice And Sing](#). Today, the Stanton School is known as the [Stanton College Preparatory School](#) and serves an integrated population of students. As so often happens with older buildings, the site of the original Stanton School has fallen into disrepair. Designated as a "[historic landmark in danger](#)," an effort is currently underway to save it from the wrecking ball, so its rich history may be preserved for generations to come.

CONNECTION QUESTIONS

- How is the decision in [Plessy v. Ferguson](#) (1896) a reflection of the story of the Stanton School?
- How would the Court's decision in [Brown v. Board of Education](#) (1954) impact the Stanton School?



Lou Frey
Institute