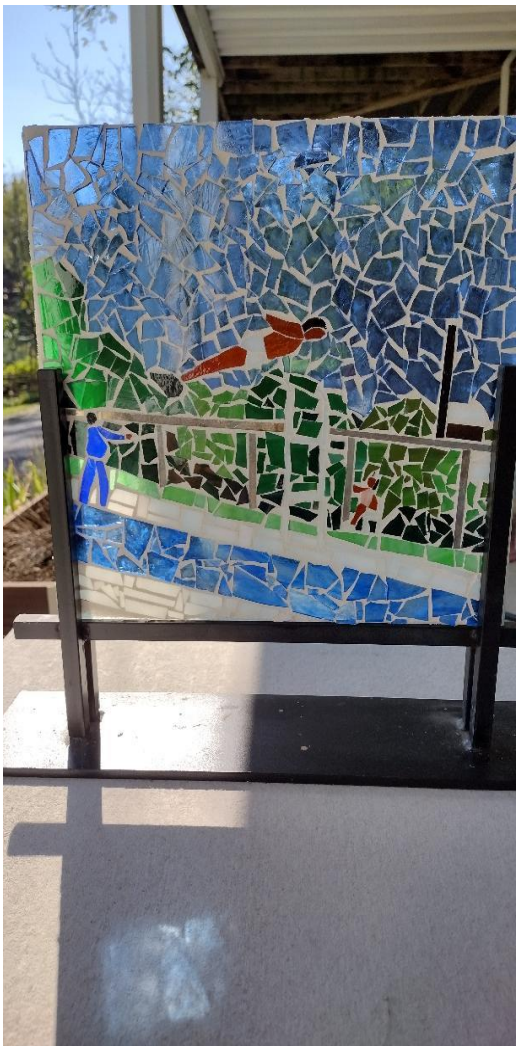
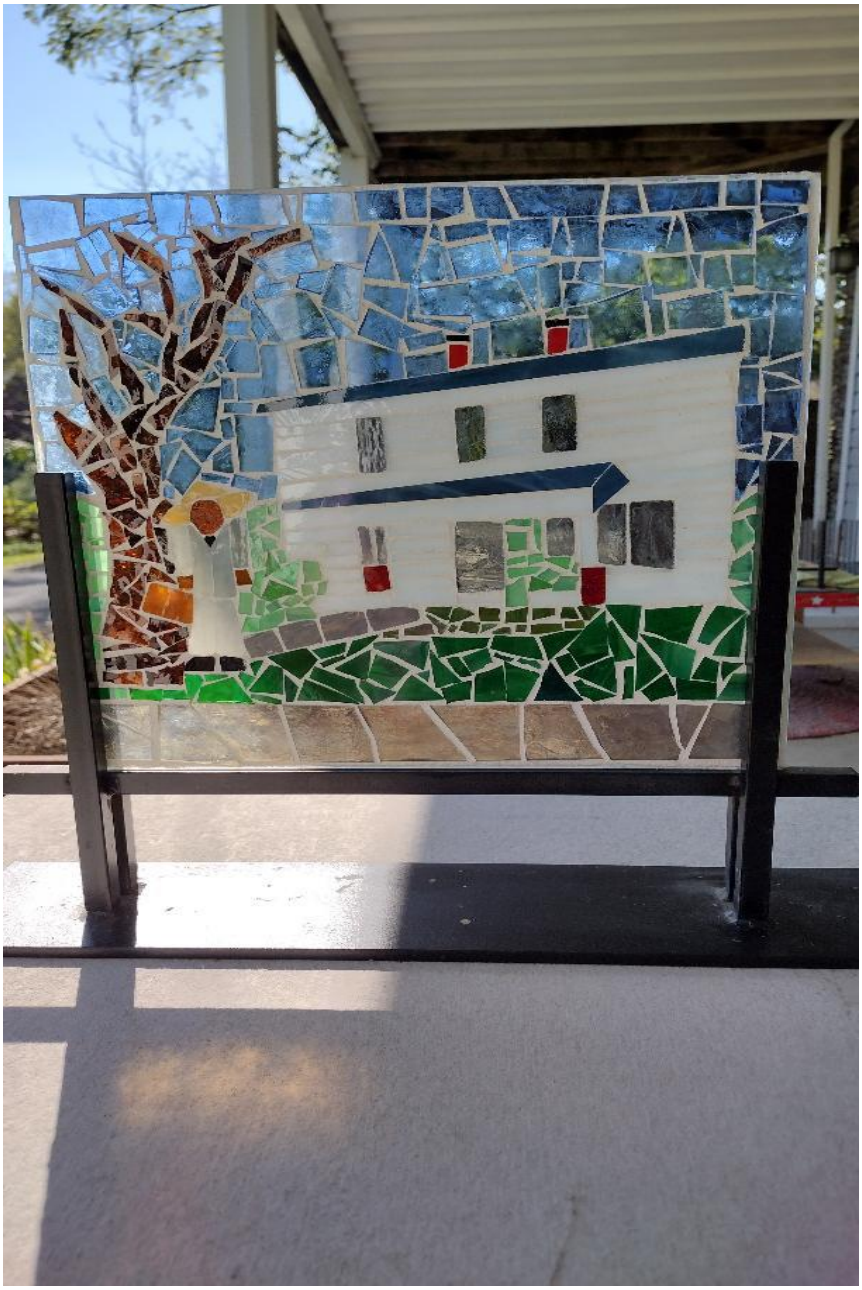
#1. Swimming and diving at the public pool. This is from a photograph by Howard Curry. The young man diving is Alfred Howard, Jr. and the young man standing at the pool is Charles Byrd. From "Roots Run Deep" this was known as the Harris Pool, in honor of W.N.P. Harris and his 36 years of teaching. Harris Pool cost $25,000 to build and funds came from the city and the Cavalier Club. The pool operated from 1959 to 1979. The city's recreation department closed the pool due to vandalism and lack of lifeguards. There was a push to reopen the pool in 1981 by the Harrisonburg-Rockingham County NAACP and community members. The city chose not to reopen the pool and sold the property.



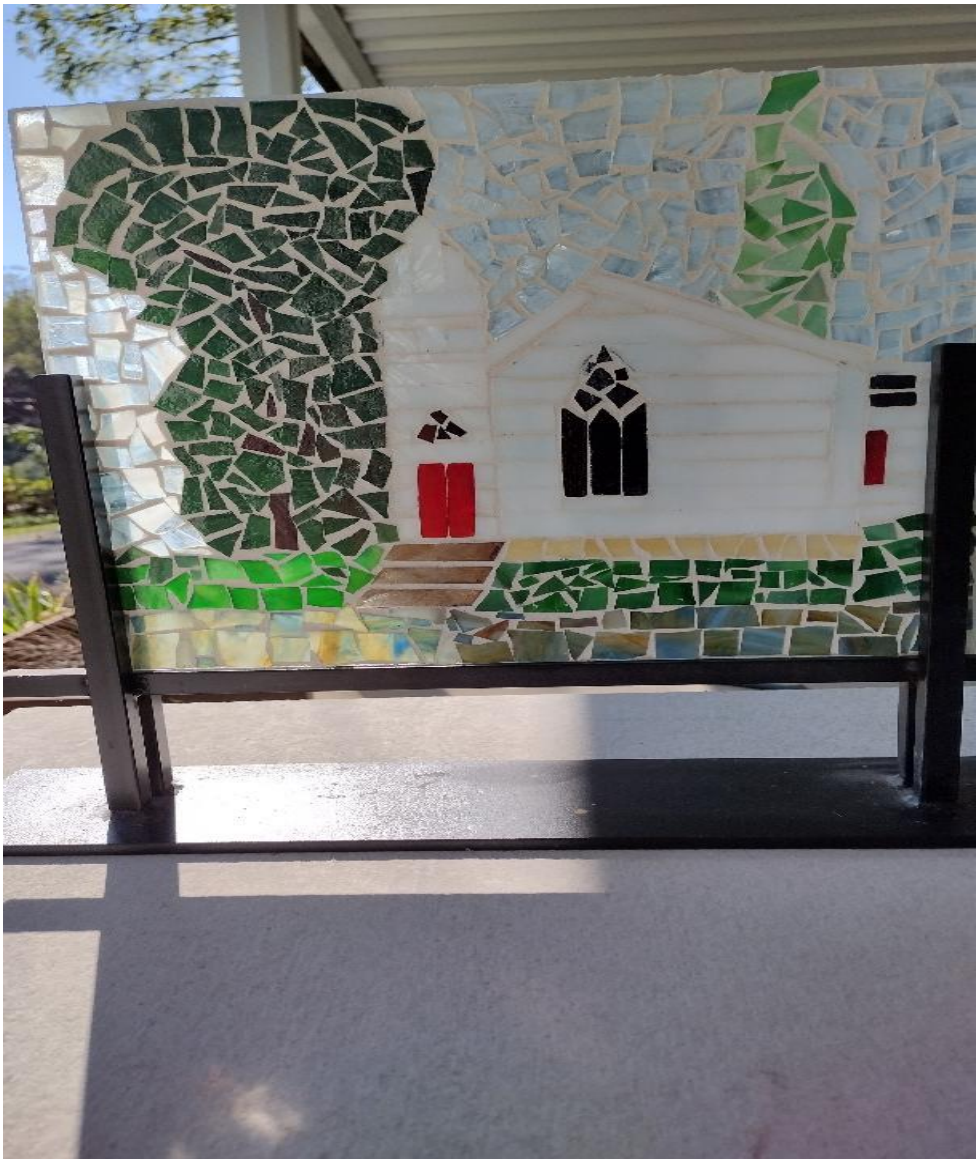
#2. Green Book House in Harrisonburg: This house was a boarding house that served Black travelers from 1912 to 1962. The house is the only property remaining in the city that was on the Negro Motorist Green Book. First published in 1936, the Green Book served as a guide to help African Americans travel safely across the country during the time of Jim Crow laws and segregation.



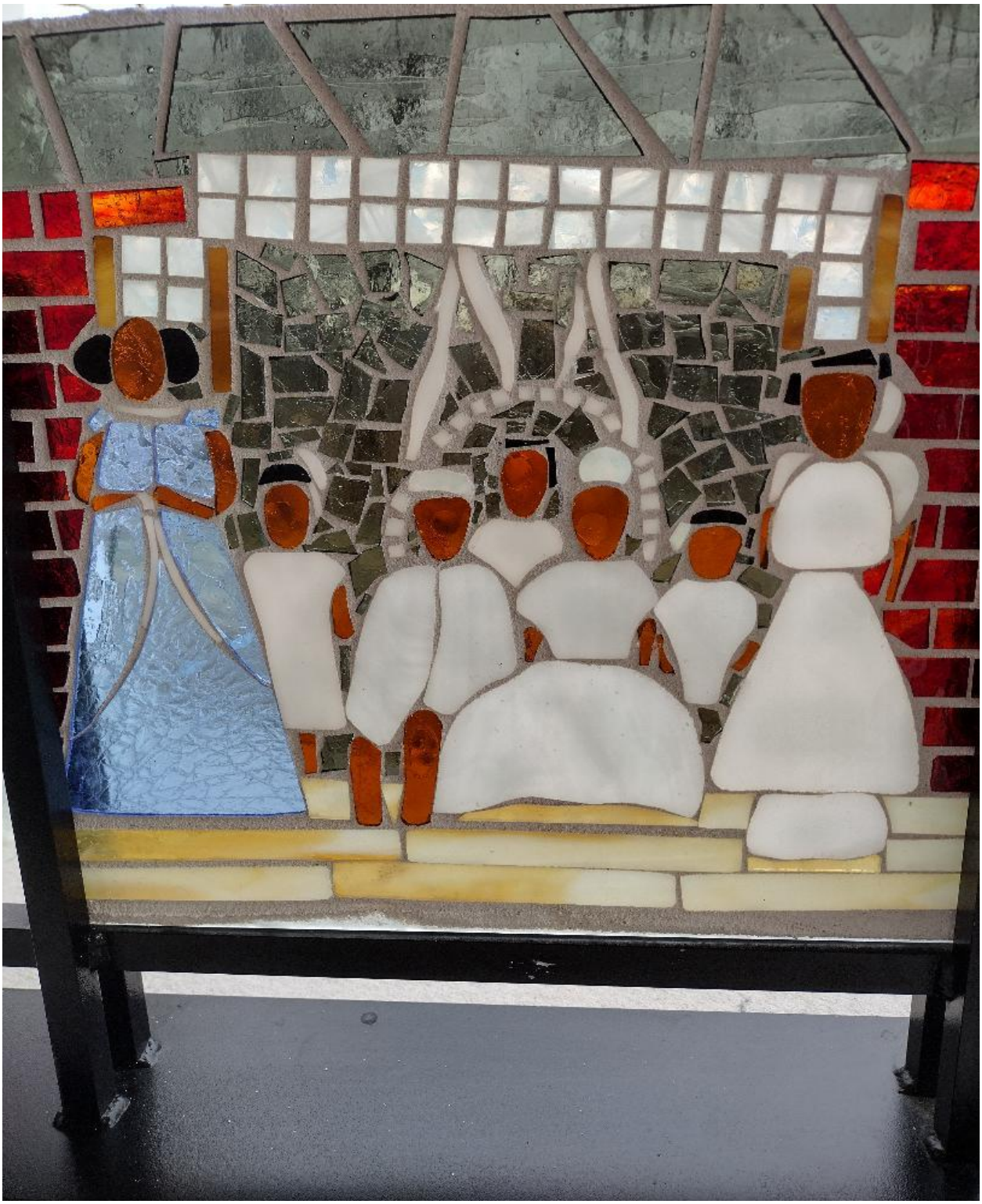
#3. Girls' Church Choir. Church was an important part of life, as was music. The girls' choir is shown in this panel.

#4. Women's Basketball Team. The women's basketball team of 1943 was victorious over all local teams, earning a trip to Richmond where they defeated St. Francis Catholic School for Girls. The photographs from which I worked were in black and white. I needed to know the color of the uniforms and Dale MacAllister (author of "Lucy Simms") found the answer from his contacts: blue because the uniforms were hand-me-downs from the white Harrisonburg High School.

#5. Bethel AME Church. From Doris Allen's book "The Way It was…":
"Everyone went to church. Sunday was a day of praise and thanksgiving to all Newtown residents. Church was fully attended regardless of denomination. All churches had three services on Sunday and prayer meeting on Wednesday."
This panel depicts the Bethel AME Church at 184 Kelley Street. The Northeast Neighborhood Association successfully registered the Bethel AME Church on the National Register of Historic Sites.

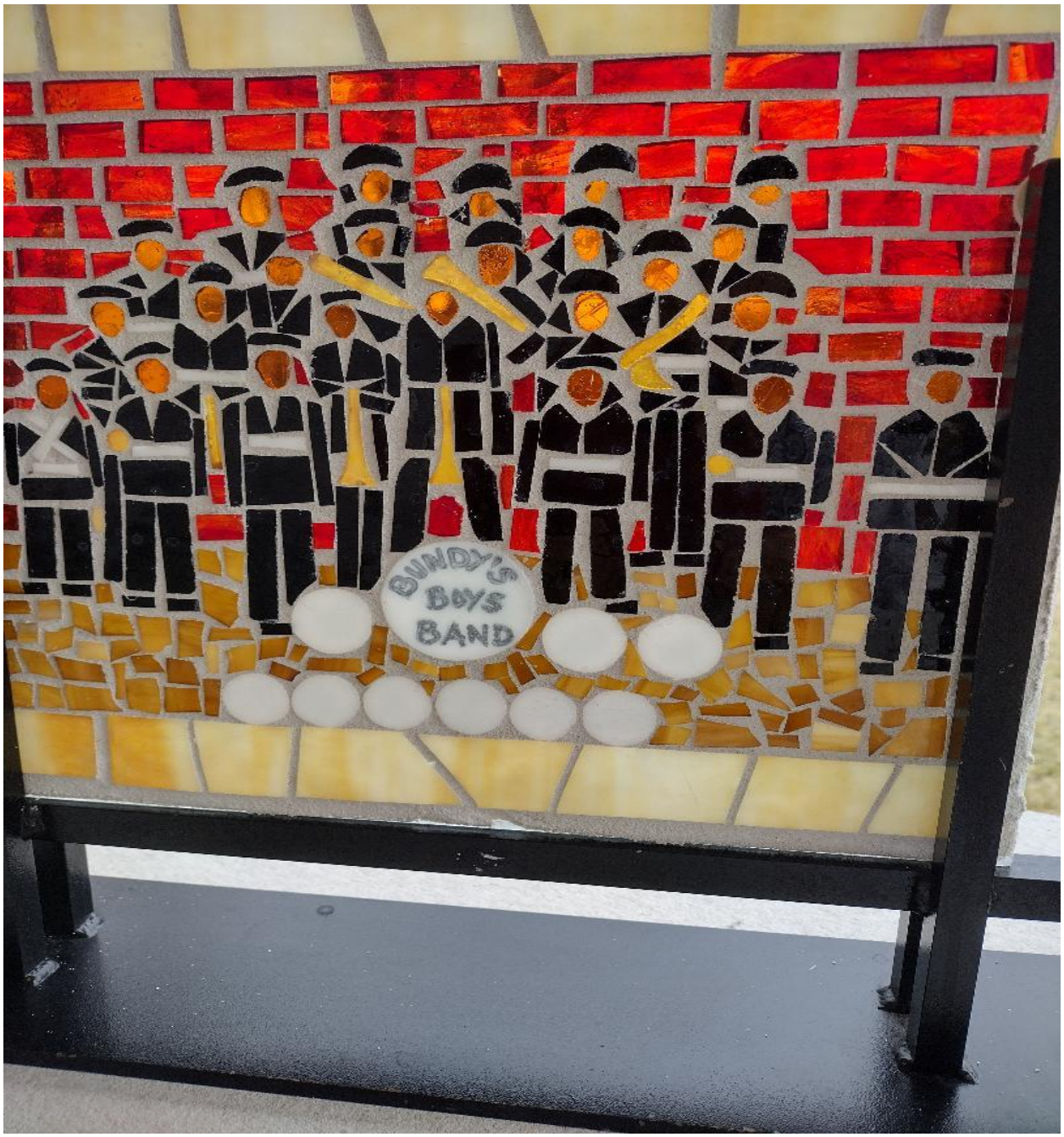


#6. May Day Celebrations. May Day was celebrated by the entire community with food, games, and a king and queen of May Day.

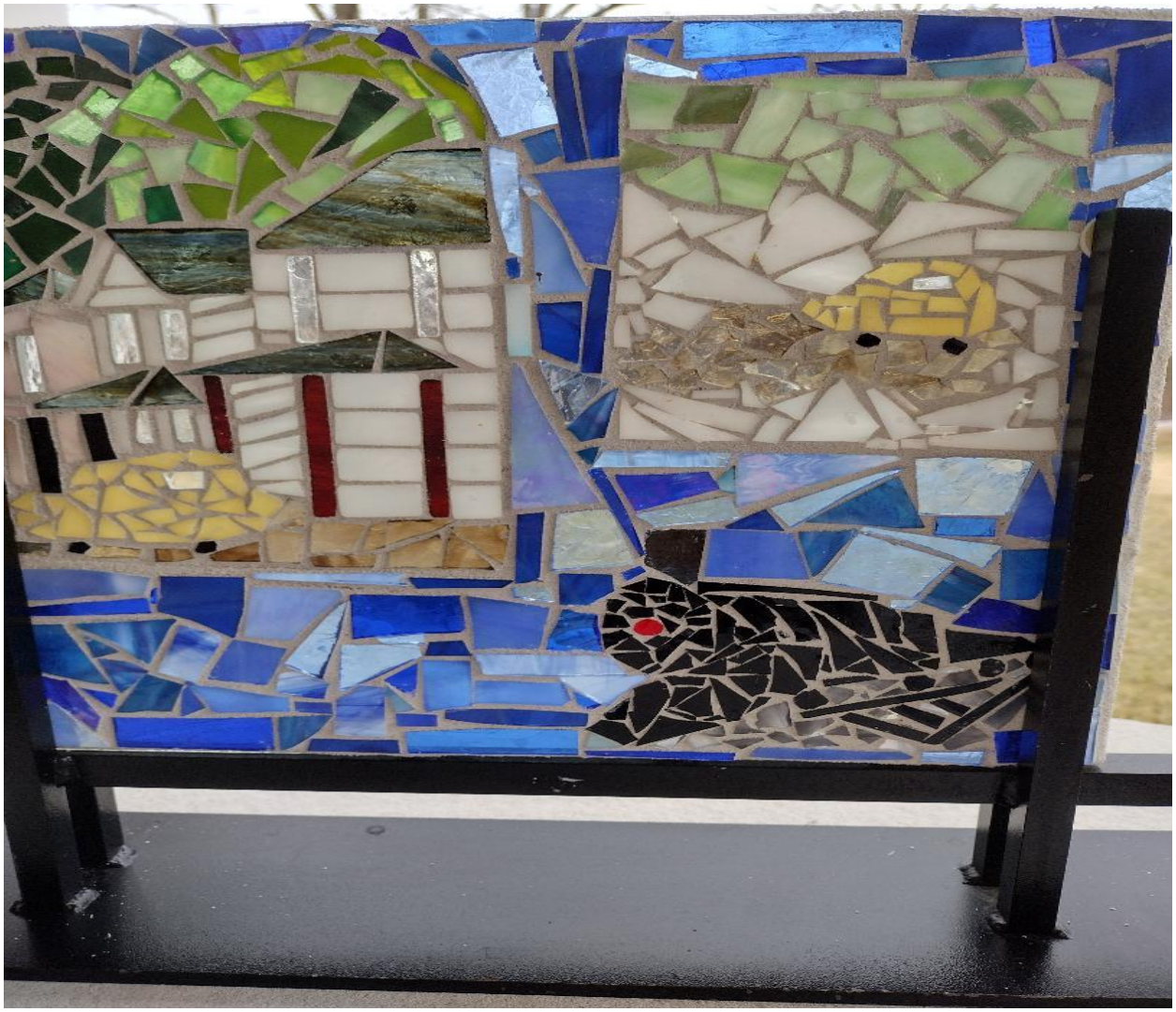


#7. Ebony Players. The Ebony Players at Lucy Simms School was organized, produced and directed by Theodore (Buddy) Toliver in 1940; he was younger than any of the Ebony Players. The Home Economics Department at Lucy Simms made the costumes.

#8. Bundy's Boys Band. From Doris Allen's book "The Way it Was…": "The Bundy's Boys Band was the only African American marching band throughout the valley. The band was unique in that its performances included traditional marching music as well as popular jazz-influenced music by Count Basie and Duke Ellington during the 1940s and 1950s. In the 1930s there were no televisions and few radios but always groups --singers, soloists, duets, quartets-- in practice at school or church.

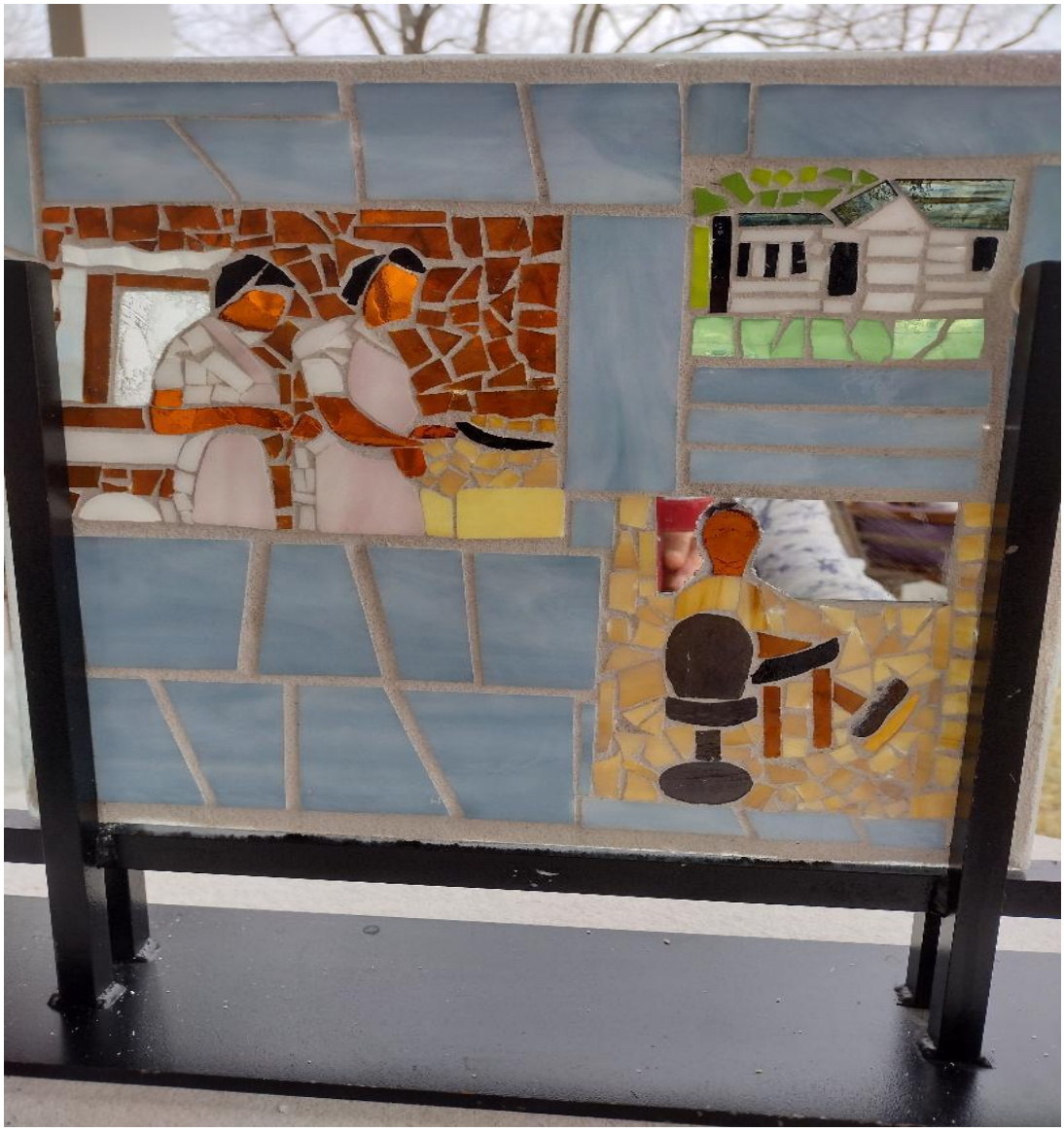


#9. Ways to get to School: The Lucy Simms school was the only school in the county for Black Americans. Some kids came from great distances (such as McGaheysville). There were no school buses. Private cars were used where available. When it snowed, dads would dig tunnels through the snow so that kids could get to school (it was warm at school). I was told a wonderful story about how some kids from McGaheysville got to school: the local train would slow down in McGaheysville so that the kids could jump on, and in Harrisonburg the train would slow down again to allow the kids to jump off. Most kids would hitchhike home.

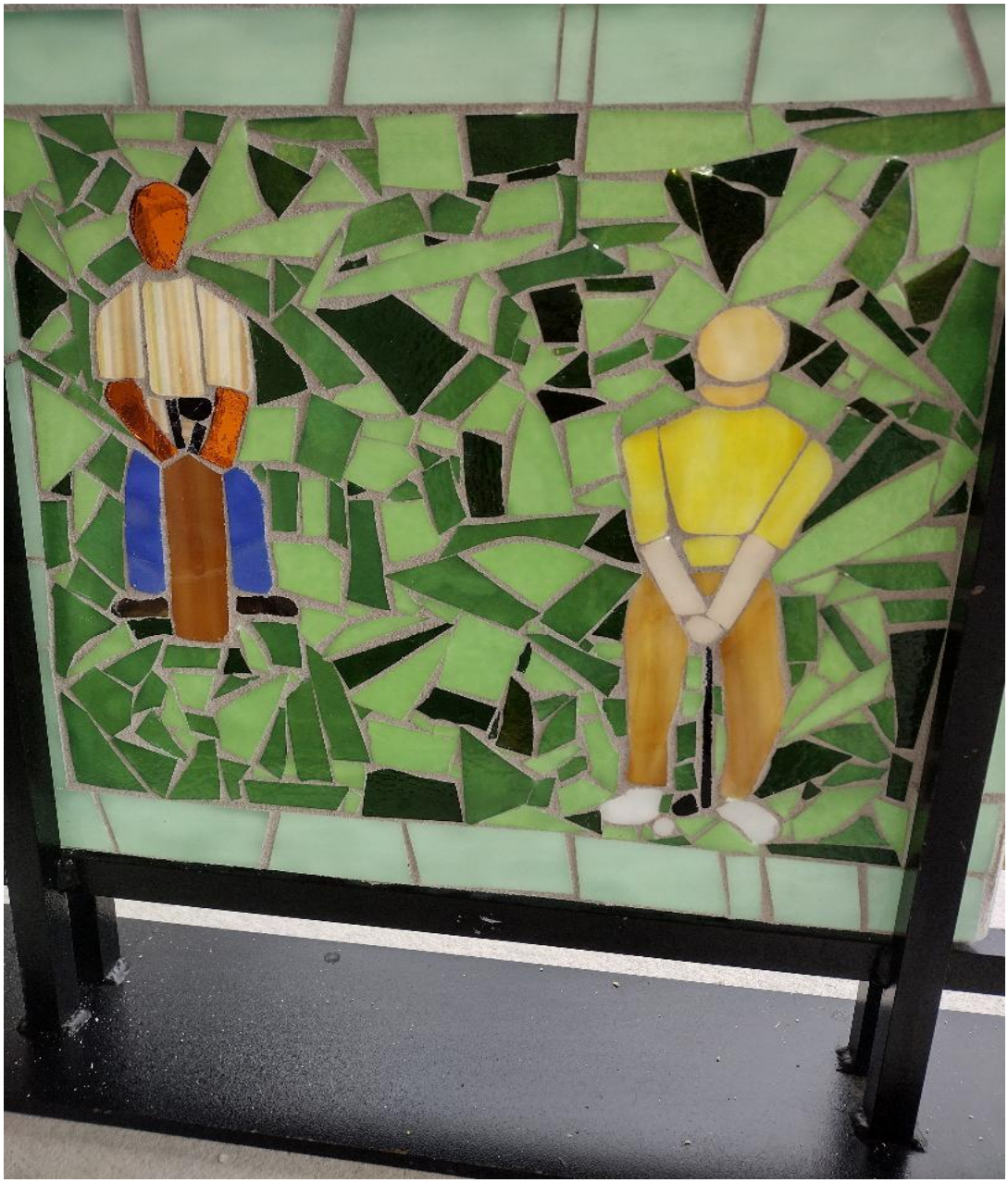


#10. Blakey's Barbershop and Smart Craft Upholstery: From Doris Allen's book "The Way it Was…": "In the Shenandoah Valley, in the first half of the 20th century, there was lots of employment for blacks as maids, cooks, waiters, porters, chauffeurs, garbage collectors as well as independent businesses." One of those businesses was Blakey's Barbershop and Smart Craft Upholstery, which is still in existence. From "Roots Run Deep": "George Henry Blakey owned and operated Blakey's and Smart Craft Upholstery. He was born in 1929 in McGaheysville. He served in the Korean War, was the secretary and treasurer of the Men Against Drugs program, and a member of the Asbury United Methodist Church, as well as many benevolent organizations.

#11. Three Ways to Make a Living: a. Chefs Rhodes and Vickers were sisters, who cooked from their houses. b. "The Record Shop was in the home of Henry and Lena Stuart on Keely Street. They started selling records, then cigarettes and knick-knacks, then ice cream and so on. It was first known as The Record Shop but later became known as Miss Lena' Store." (from "Roots Run Deep"). c. Harry Lee Solomon had a shoeshine parlor. It had five chairs with two places for your feet to rest so that shoes could be shined while wearing them. It cost 10 to 25 cents, plus tip.

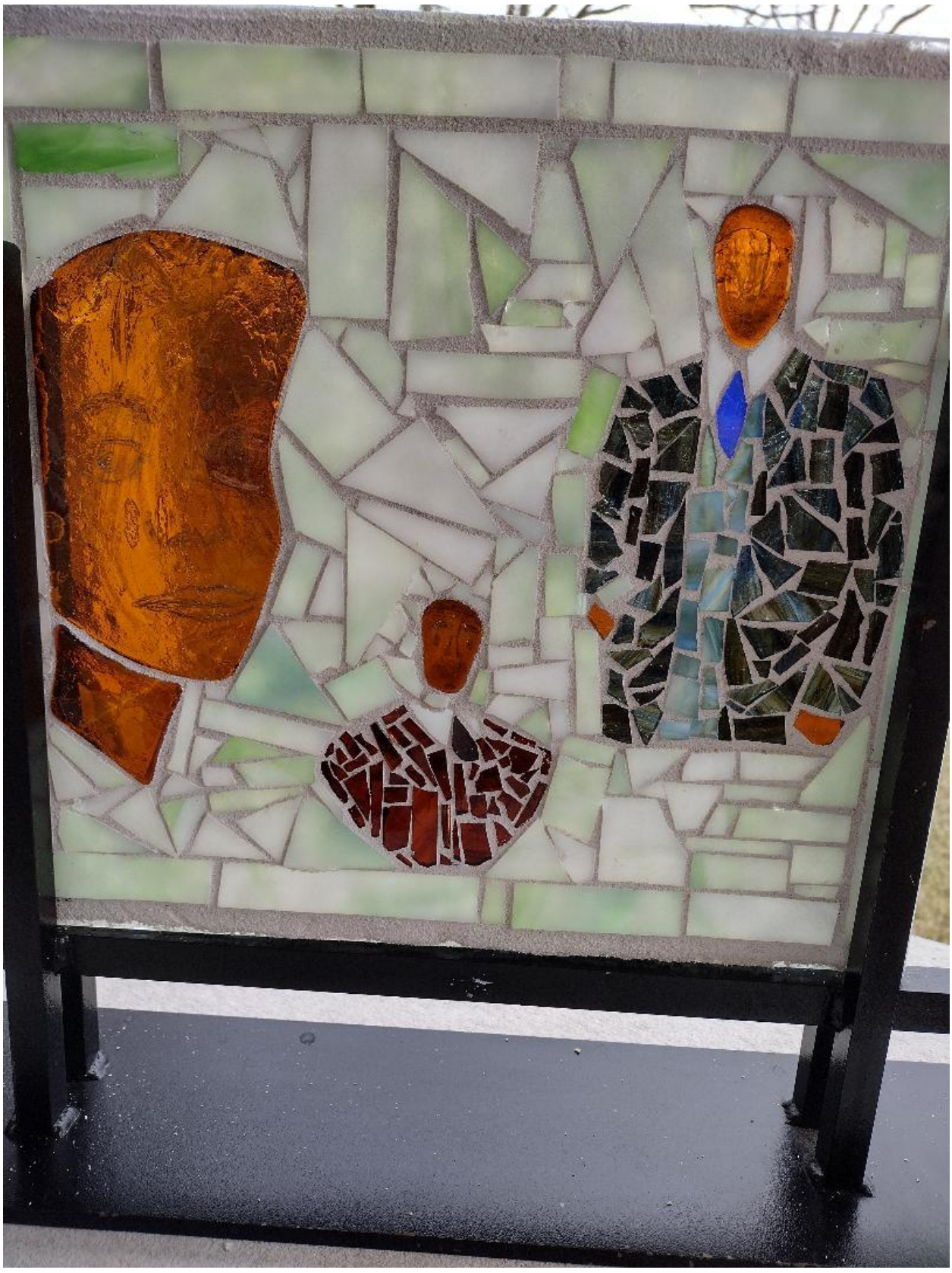


#12. Caddying. This panel depicts Howard Curry at 10 years old, caddying for Mr. Joe Funkhouser. Mr. Curry told me that he was a caddy at the white country club. There were several days that he would caddy for three rounds of golf! He was the caddy for Mr. Joe Funkhouser on several occasions.

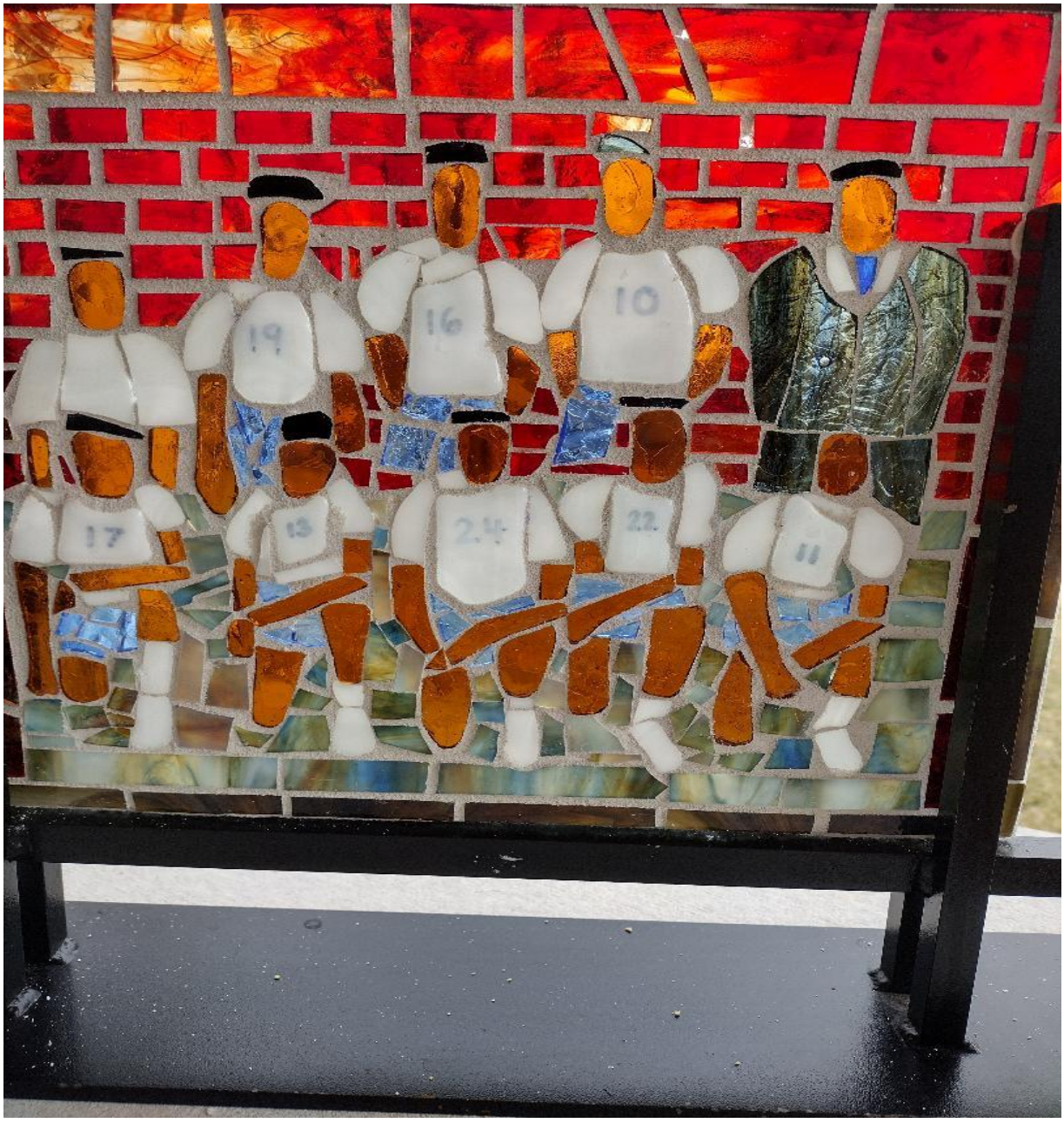


#13. Lucy Simms, Doc Dickerson and W.N.P. Harris. From the JMU on-line site: "Lucy F. Simms is remembered as one of the most influential leaders in African American education in Harrisonburg. Miss Simms was born into slavery in 1856 to the Gray family, who purchased her grandmother from a nearby cousin of Abraham Lincoln. Miss Simms was living in Harrisonburg at the time of the Emancipation Proclamation. Following her own education at Hampton Institute, Miss Simms returned to educate the Harrisonburg community. Her advocacy is commemorated by the Lucy F. Simms School, named in her honor in 1939."From "Roots Run Deep": Dr. Eugene Dickerson was born around the 1870s in Charlottesville, Va. Dickerson received his nearly education at a local African American school in Charlottesville. He studies at the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute (Virginia State University) and earned a bachelor's degree in 1896. Dickerson earned his medical degree from Leonard Medical School at Shaw University in 1900. He continued his post-graduate work at Howard University and interned at Freedman's Hospital, a black medicine institution. In 1910, Dr. Dickerson settled in Harrisonburg and served as a physician for the Black community for thirty years. He was referred to by his patients and community members by "Doc Dickerson". He lived with his wife and children on the east corner of North Mason Street and East Wolfe Street. His home was also his medical office. He was not allowed to treat patients at the Rockingham Memorial Hospital and had to perform surgeries at Freedman's Hospital in Washington, D.C. Dr. Dickerson provided care for all ages.

From "Roots Run Deep": W.N.P. Harris to honor his 36 years in teaching. William “Fessa” Nelson Pendelton Harris obtained a master’s degree in Greek from Lincoln University, and he was a member of the black fraternity, Alpha Pi Alpha. During his time at Simms, Harris served as a prominent figure within the school and the community. Harris was heavily involved in local community organizations like the Direct Teacher Association and the Virginia Teacher Association. While nationally, he served as an organizer for the National Education Association and the Department of Secondary Principles. The Harris Pool was named after him to honor his 36 years in teaching.



#14. Boy's Basketball Team. When Lucy F. Simms School opened in 1939, the basketball teams no longer had to practice and play at the Colonnade. The new school had an inside gymnasium/auditorium, showers, cafeteria, Industrial Arts Department, Home Economics Department, and restrooms with running water.



#15. The Dallard-Newman House and the Newtown Cemetery. From “Roots Run Deep”: “The historic Dallard-Newman House is one of Harrisonburg’s oldest and most enduring monuments to African American history. It is listed on the National Registry of Historic Sites, due to the efforts of the Northeast Neighborhood Association. The Dallard-Newman house is one of the few African American homes to survive the 1960s urban renewal projects that targeted the black community. It remained in the family until 2015.

This structure is worthy of preservation in the Northeast Community and symbolizes endurance, community, family, and history. The Northeast Neighborhood Association (NENA), a black-run community serving non-profit organization, initiated renovations to convert the standing structure into a museum that will be an educational resource telling the history of African American families in the Northeast neighborhood.

From "Roots Run Deep": Newtown Cemetery is a historic African American cemetery in the center of the former Newtown neighborhood. E. Kelley Street, Sterling Street, and Hill Street bound it. The cemetery was formed in 1869 and was dedicated to the burials of formerly enslaved African American members in the surrounding community. Five trustees purchased the 3.9 acres of land for a cemetery “for all persons of color” from the community. There are close to 900 graves, including the resting place of war veterans and notable Black community leaders. In 2014, Newtown Cemetery was placed in the Virginia Landmarks Register and in 2015, the National Register of Historic Places. In 2017, the NENA revealed a memorial for the unmarked graves in the cemetery. The Newtown Cemetery Board of Trustees is responsible for the cemetery’s upkeep. The Newtown Cemetery represents Newtown's era and symbolizes the African American history in Harrisonburg.

Newtown
Cemetery
Est. 1868

#16. Blue Circle Club: From "Roots Run Deep": The Blue Circle 30 Club was a black social organization that shared the Pythian Building with several African American businesses. The club was formed in January 1927. The club's objective was to "promote social and athletic activities and to all behind, all worthy movements for the betterment of the colored race." The group's first officers were President Percy Wells, Vice President Joe Yokley, Secretary H.W. Sellers, Treasurer John P. Harper, and Advisory Counsellor Page Mitchell. They gave back and provided aid, such as raising funds to install a flag at Effinger Street School. It is unclear when the club was dissolved. The Pythian building was torn down during the 1960s Urban Renewal Project. The lot is now a parking lot.

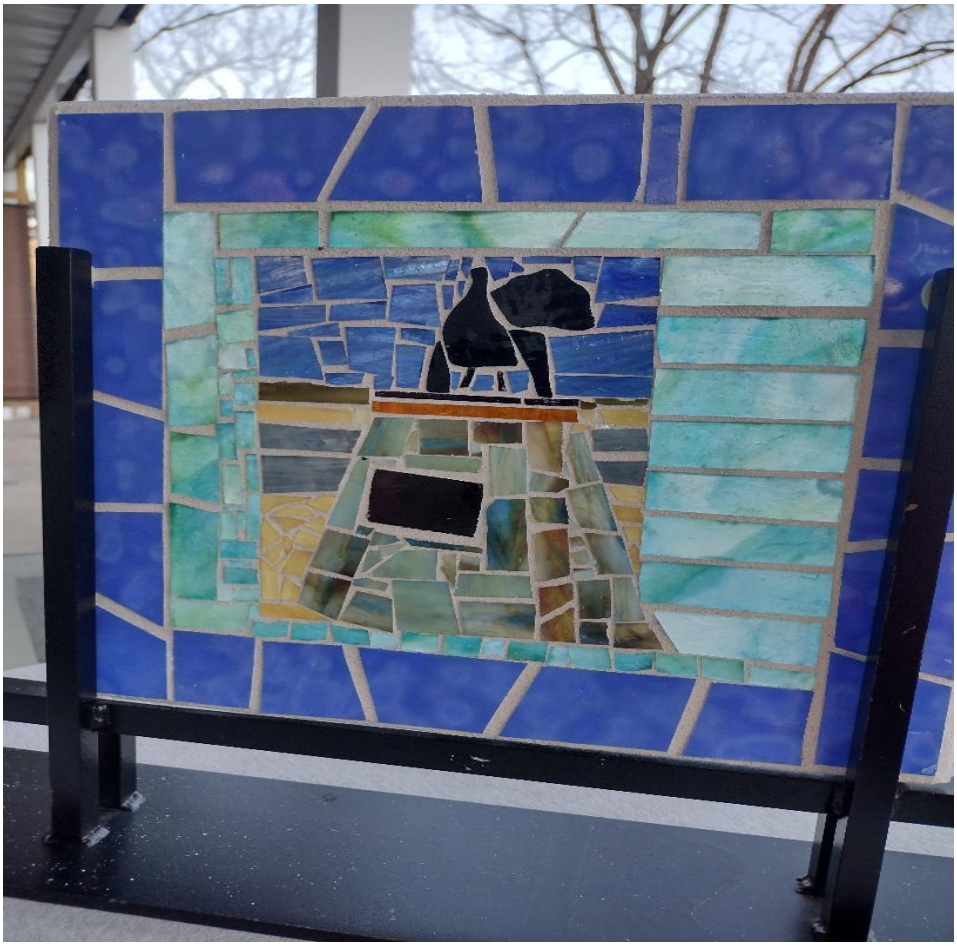
#17. Young Dancers: This panel depicts two sets of young dancers. The top one depicts dancers from an after-school program. The other is a performance of an operetta at Lucy Simms school.

#18. Sunday Lawn Parties and Church Life. From Doris Allen's "The Way it Was…": "Sunday was a day of praise and thanksgiving to all Newtown residents….Church was an essential meeting place for brothers, sisters and cousins…Church was fully attended, regardless of denomination". From Ruth Toliver: "Sunday people wore their hats, they had white gloves; they were dressed to perfection."

From Doris Allen's "The Way it Was…": "Singing was the backbone of our communities. It was our culture…Our elders sang the old Negro spirituals…Songs were also sung during wash day…Singing was a relief from Jim Crow. …We felt free."

Also, from Doris Allen's "The Way it Was…"One exciting event that the whole community would take part in was church lawn parties. Lawn parties were held throughout the summer as a way to fund raise for the churches, each taking their turn to host the party. There were lights since the parties went on til about 10 pm. There was homemade ice cream, friend chicken, pies and cakes, and country ham sandwiches. There would be a quartet of singers to entertain, and children played on the church grounds.

#19. Turkey Statues. From "Roots Run Deep": “Two identical statues stand tall at the north and south ends of US Highway 11, or Lee Jackson Highway, in Rockingham County, Virginia. These statues reflect the history of Rockingham County as the “Turkey Capital of the World,” where poultry is produced. The statues are mounted on a stone pedestal and sculpted from copper; the statues were installed in 1955. The statues came about through the vision of a 10-year-old African American boy in 1951. As a student at Lucy F. Simms in Harrisonburg, Virginia, Gerald Harris submitted the idea of a turkey statue in a contest. Harris was awarded first place. The success of the statutes was accomplished due to Gerald Harris’s bright idea and contributors J. Norwood Bosserman and Carl A. Roseburg. The bronze turkey was chosen as it is a domestic breed that flourished in the county. The Rockingham County Bronze Turkey Statues are featured in the Roman Bronze Works in New York.



#20. The Colonnade. From "Roots Run Deep": The Colonnade was multi-purpose building that operated from the early 1900s until the 1970s. The property was used as a community center by the African American community in Harrisonburg. The top floor was a meeting space for the black American Legion No. 76 and the group also held special events in the building. George's Barbershop, a pool room, and Miss Jennie's Chicken Shack were black businesses housed at the Colonnade. A gymnasium was attached to the Colonnade that was used by the Effinger Street School for basketball games, boxing matches, and dances.

I could not find a photograph of the Colonnade. I am grateful to Emmitt Lee for the hours he spent with me creating a drawing of this most important building.

DIRECTORY
DANCE HALL
LEGION POST 76
LOWER AUDITORIUM
1ST FLOOR: POOL HALL
JENNY'S CHICKEN