

## **CAPSULE SUMMARY**

**PG: 72-064**

**Fairmont Heights High School**

**1401 Nye Street**

**Capitol Heights, Prince George's County, Maryland**

**1950**

**Public**

Fairmont Heights High School opened in September 1950 at 1401 Nye Street in Capitol Heights and was originally known as Fairmont Heights Junior-Senior High School. Constructed as the larger of two high schools for African American students in Prince George's County, Fairmont Heights was the culmination of many years of struggle for the area's African American citizens seeking a modern school facility equal to those schools attended by white students. Serving the western part of the County, Fairmont Heights was the first to offer the twelfth grade to its African American students. Under the leadership of its first principal, G. James Gholson, the students were confronted with a broad curriculum focused on the humanities. With the landmark United States Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), Fairmont Heights High School became the local focus for numerous initiatives over almost twenty years to desegregate the schools of Prince George's County. Such initiatives included the "freedom of choice" plan, becoming a "Model Urban School," and extensive busing of students to and from area schools. In 1972, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and the American Civil Liberties Union filed a class action suit on behalf of all African American students, for nine African American parents (one did not sign the affidavit), of students residing in the immediate community. John Williams, President of the Fairmont Park, North Englewood, Chapel Oaks Civic Association and Jesse Warr, newly elected first Black member of the School Board, recruited all plaintiffs. Williams served as lead plaintiff, though the suit was filed in the name of Sylvester Vaughns because Williams was the only plaintiff employed by Prince George's County Schools. The action sought to further eliminate segregation within the County's schools. *Vaughns v. Board of Education of Prince George's County*, 355 F.Supp. 1034, 1037 (D.Md.1972), resulted in the transfer of approximately 32,863 students in an effort to abolish the last vestiges of the dual-school system. Several efforts to close the school in the 1970s and a proposal to change the name of the school in 1983 were thwarted by the dedication of students, faculty, alumni, and community. Fairmont Heights High School retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance as the only remaining secondary school for African American students constructed under the dual-school system in Prince George's County and the first to offer grades 9-12. It is further significant for the role it played in the desegregation fight in Prince George's County beginning in 1954 and ending in the mid-1970s. It is a significant landmark as a point of pride and achievement in the African-American community.

Fairmont Heights High School is a 174,128 square-foot building constructed of concrete-block with a stretcher-bond brick veneer. Set on a solid foundation, this school has an irregular form loosely based on an H-shaped plan with large appendages on the southeast and northwest corners. Much of the building features a wide fascia composed of concrete panels over a stretcher-bond brick string. The main entry is located in a canted corner in the northeast corner of the courtyard. The main entry, accessed via a concrete walkway, includes two, double-leaf metal doors set in a wide surround of one-light fixed windows. A concrete band, similar to that found along the roofline and above the window openings, extends across the main entry. Window openings include predominant casement and awning windows, with a small number of double-hung windows.