

# HISTORY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY PLANETARIUMS

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The launch of the Soviet Sputnik I on October 4, 1957, spurred the United States government to pass the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958. The NDEA provided funds for states to buy teaching equipment in science, mathematics, language arts, English, reading, history, civics and geography. The federal funds were provided on a matching basis to school systems.

Mr. Wilbert Tucker Woodson and Mr. Armand Spitz may have been the two persons most responsible for the genesis of Fairfax County Public School planetariums. Mr. Woodson, who died July 12, 1983, was the superintendent for Fairfax County Public Schools for 32 years (1929- June 30, 1961.)

Armand Spitz (born in Pennsylvania) was the founder of Spitz Space Systems, Inc., established in Yorklyn, Delaware, and now located in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. In 1946, Mr. Spitz was accompanied by Elam Hetzler, who at the time was an assistant principal in Fairfax County, on a trip to Eastern Mennonite College in Rockingham County, Virginia to install the first Spitz model A planetarium. The building and planetarium instrument have since been updated, but the old model A is on display in a showcase in the new building.

In late 1959 or spring of 1960, Mr. Spitz talked with Mr. Woodson encouraging him to install a planetarium in Fairfax County. Mr. Woodson related the idea in early 1961 to the School Board for consideration; it was discussed, but no action was taken.

On July 1, 1961 Earl Funderburk from Asheville, North Carolina became the Division Superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools. In the 1940's Mr. Funderburk was an elementary school principal in North Carolina, and was active as a civic fund-raiser to build the Morehead Planetarium in Chapel Hill, which was constructed in 1947 and 1948. Mr. Funderburk received his bachelor's degree from University of North Carolina. Dr. Charles Richard Davis was employed by Fairfax County Public Schools as the science supervisor in July 1960. He subsequently held positions as curriculum specialist and served in the department of media services and data programming until 1980. In the early 1990's, Dr. Davis was employed by Planned Research Corp. in McLean, Virginia, and lived in Burke, Virginia. Dr. Davis was born at Harkers Island, North Carolina, received his doctorate degree from University of North Carolina, and together with Mr. Funderburk did much to promote the science program of Fairfax County Schools.

*Written by  
L.L. Koontz*

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When Mr. Funderburk became Superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools, Dr. Davis told him that the county was considering building a planetarium. Mr. Funderburk liked the idea so much that there was little discussion in making the decision. Dr. Davis, then science supervisor (the position now known as county science coordinator), made all the applications for the NDEA funds. In 1961, it was decided that the three schools soon to be built - Woodson, Edison, and Marshall High Schools - would have planetariums. But due to the fact that few school systems had any planetariums, it was considered too bold to ask the school board to approve three. Thus, in the fall of 1961 the school board was presented with the proposal to build two planetariums, one at Woodson and a second at Edison High School. Mr. Funderburk was so pleased by the school board's acceptance of the proposal that he decided that he wanted planetariums built in all of the new high schools. Mr. Funderburk was thus the founding father of Fairfax County planetariums. All nine planetariums were built during the time he was superintendent, 1961-1969. Mr. Funderburk died November 19, 1990 at his home in Wilson, North Carolina at age 76.

William L. Fagan, Jr. was recommended by Charles Davis and hired in 1961 by Fairfax County to be the first planetarium director. Mr. Fagan served as a planetarium director from 1961 until 1977, when he returned to his previous role as a physics teacher. Much of the information for this history was provided by Mr. Fagan based on his experiences as a founding planetarium director. Additional information was provided by Charles R. Davis, who was personally involved in the structuring and implementation of the planetarium program, and is known for his authoritative and meticulous supervision of the planetariums.

A Spitz price list dated November 15, 1966 lists the A3P planetarium projector at \$20,900 with a shipping weight of 1,000 pounds. A 30-foot diameter projection hemisphere is listed at \$10,000 with a shipping weight of 2,000 pounds, and the cove with lamps and wiring was \$3,100. The 24-foot diameter projection hemisphere cost \$5,250 with a shipping weight of 1200 pounds, and the cove with lamps and wiring was \$2,400 for the 24-foot cove. The 30-foot chamber was listed with 78 seats for \$4,900. The 24-foot chamber with bench type seating with Naugahyde covering was listed at \$3,665. The federal government financed fifty per cent of the equipment cost for the planetariums. According to a newspaper article on the front page of the "Northern Virginia Sun" dated January 12, 1963, the planetarium instruments for the Edison and Woodson planetariums each cost approximately \$14,000. The A3P projector was purchased from Spitz and is still given annual maintenance by Spitz Space Systems, Inc. The A3P can project all 88 constellations of the Northern and Southern



Hemispheres and more than 1,200 stars and can simulate planetary motion and daily motion of the sun and the moon.

Fairfax County now has nine planetariums that serve all of the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade classes, and middle school and high school classes upon request. The sixth grade program of studies will be phased out during 1997-1998 and a new eighth grade program phased in. Fairfax County currently has the largest number of planetariums of any one county or school division in the United States except for Dallas, Texas, which has more than twelve according to Ron Davis, a Spitz Space Systems Incorporated employee.

In the month of May 1989, all nine Fairfax County planetariums received a Multivision Composer 301 slide projector dissolve system, a three-projector adjustable rack, and three Kodak Ektagraphic III slide projectors, purchased from Audiovisual Washington, Inc. (2723 Dorr Ave., Fairfax, Virginia 22031), which gave them the capability to produce taped programs. Additional improvements included a laser pointer and an overhead projector. N.E.C. video projectors should be installed in all of the Fairfax County planetariums by the fall of 1997.

Our neighboring Prince William County acquired its first planetarium in the fall of 1991, built in the new Hylton High School and incorporating an automated 512 Spitz planetarium projector. The planetarium director of the new facility is Jack Moyer.

The Edison Planetarium is not only the first planetarium in Fairfax County, but is also the first of the still functioning planetariums of Northern Virginia.

Fort Belvoir Planetarium was the first planetarium opened in Northern Virginia in 1951 as a part of the Engineering school in the topographic division and became a part of the Fort Belvoir Museum in 1981 and was closed in 1985. The equipment went to the T.C. Williams High School Planetarium in Alexandria, Virginia, which was opened in 1966. (Ref. Mr. John M. Dervan, Command Historian for the Fort Belvoir Base.)

The first planetarium opened in Washington D.C. was the Cardozo High School Planetarium, which has a Spitz A2 instrument and was opened in 1956 and is still in service. The only other early planetarium in D.C. was the Rock Creek Nature Center and Planetarium, which was opened in 1960 and is still in operation.

In January of 1992, Fairfax County School Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Robert Spillane released a proposed fiscal year 1993 budget which would have closed all of the Fairfax County Public Schools nine planetariums. This action would have effectively the astronomy component of the elementary school program of studies for over 30,000 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students. With the additional loss of services at the secondary school



level, over 50,000 students would have been adversely impacted, decreasing the level of science literacy in Fairfax County students.

On March 12, 1992, all planetarium teachers received a letter of reassignment. On April 6, 1992, the School Board voted to confirm the reassignments for the school year 1992-93.

Dr. Peter B. Boyce of the American Astronomical Society and Sten Odenwall, an astronomer and Fairfax county resident, spoke on behalf of the planetariums and science education

A vote was taken at about 1:30 a.m. on May 29, 1992 to reinstate the planetariums to full time positions. Unfortunately, the prospects of a planetarium closure were so dire, and their restoration to the budget so late, that two planetarium directors left their positions. Chris Vagonas retired and Darrell Ardoin took a teaching position in Moscow.

The following school year the planetariums were again considered as possible budget cuts. On Monday November 23, 1992 the school board met to recommend budget cuts for the 1994 fiscal year. Dr. Jeff Goldstein and Dr. Lee Jay Rickard spoke on behalf of the astronomy program of studies. Also a letter of support was sent to the school board from Dr. Carl Sagan of Cornell University. The school board voted to preserve instructional programs, including the planetariums.

The following school year 1995-96 the school board recommended budget cuts that would limit the astronomy science program and later decided to cut four of the nine planetariums. Again Dr. Peter B. Boyce of the American Astronomical Society and Jeff Goldstein of the Smithsonian Institution and planetarium teacher Gary Purinton spoke in our behalf before the school board on January 31, 1996. The final result was that the school board voted to preserve the instructional programs again in fiscal year 1997.



**THOMAS EDISON HIGH SCHOOL OPENED SEPTEMBER 1962  
EDISON PLANETARIUM OPENED JANUARY 1963**

**5801 Franconia Road**

**Alexandria, VA 22310-1120**

**Phone 703-924-8057 Fax # 703-924-8097**

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**AREA I**

The Edison Planetarium was completed by January 1963 and Woodson wasn't completed until March, so William L. Fagan, Jr. started work at the Edison Planetarium, which was the first to open in Fairfax County. Mr. Fagan gave his first program Friday, January 11, 1963 for a sixth grade elementary school class. The planetarium was completed for a total cost, including the section of the school that houses the 24 foot dome, for \$92,000. The "Northern Virginia Sun" stated the total cost at \$70,000 but this excluded the building as a part of the cost.

Gene Fox, an earth science teacher at Lee High School in 1962 with a degree in earth science, became the Edison Planetarium director from the fall of 1963 until December of 1966 when he accepted employment in Prince William County schools. In June 1991 he retired as a gifted education teacher in Marumsco Hills Elementary.

In January 1967, Teddy Gates, and Charles Davis provided programs for the pyramid schools until Ellie Euler, then teaching at West Springfield, was hired in February as a planetarium director and was instructed to work at Edison until June 1967. Dr. Gates has retired from Fairfax Co. public schools and served as the assistant superintendent of Prince William Co. schools since July 1987 until his retirement there.

Col. John Kritzer began serving as planetarium director in September 1967 at the Edison planetarium where he stayed until his retirement in June, 1984.

Since June, 1984 Lowell Koontz has been the planetarium director at Edison High School. He graduated in 1967 with a B.S. in Education from Virginia Tech, and received a M. Ed. from Virginia Tech in 1968. He received National Science Foundation stipends in Earth Science and attended University of Iowa, University of California at Berkeley, and Western Washington State at Bellingham and became a certified Earth Science teacher. He also taught an astronomy class at Edison for five years after becoming a planetarium teacher.

On August 17, 1984 the Edison Planetarium was examined by Mr. Rolfe Chandler, Area I Science Specialist and Mr. Floyd Taylor, Electrical Foreman, Maintenance Services and Mr. Gordon Lawrence, Safety Coordinator. It was decided that until wiring could be upgraded,



the planetarium would be closed to the pyramid school science programs. Thus the planetarium programs of 1984-85 for the pyramid school science programs were scheduled at Fort Hunt, now Carl Sandburg planetarium, and a few at Hayfield Secondary School Planetarium.

During the recent renovation of the school, the planetarium was carpeted and painted, excluding the dome. The last phase of the renovation was the carpeting which was completed on September 16, 1987. A new section of the console was designed and auxiliary equipment was wired into the new console section and all of the auxiliary projectors were mounted on wall shelves. The new auxiliary projectors include two slew projectors, a rotating galaxy projector, a black hole projector, a pulsar star projector, a cloud projector, a interstellar cloud projector, two planetary nebula projectors, two T.M.C. projectors, and two carousel projectors for a multiple panorama scene and an auxiliary title slide projector.

Edison served the fourth, fifth and sixth grades in eleven schools in 1987 but as of 1990-91 is serving thirteen elementary schools as well as Lee High School. Each elementary class is visited for an hour in preparation for their visit to the Edison Planetarium about one week later. Fifteen schools, including Lane Middle School, were served by Edison in 1996-97.

The Edison Planetarium is the only Fairfax County Public School. planetarium with a 24 foot dome and only one other county planetarium (Woodson) has circular seating. The Edison Planetarium can seat a maximum of approximately 60 students. The circular bench seating allows about 45 seats with a good view of programs.



## **WOODSON PLANETARIUM OPENED MARCH 1963**

**9525 MAIN STREET**

**FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA 22031-2130**

**PHONE 703-503-4648 Fax. # 703-503-4697**

### **AREA II**

William L. Fagan, Jr. opened the Woodson Planetarium in March 1963, and was employed there until June 1973. Rachel Fitch served as the Woodson Planetarium director from the fall 1973 until June 1975.

Darrell Ardoin taught at Frost Intermediate in Area II from 1972-73 and was a science teacher at Lake Braddock from 1973 to 1975. Mr. Ardoin worked as full time planetarium director at Woodson during the school year 1975-76 then as part time planetarium director and earth science teacher at Woodson in 1976-77. He then was employed as a part time planetarium director at Woodson and Oakton during the school year 1977-78. In the fall of 1978 he started as a full time director at the Oakton Planetarium after Bill Fagan became a physics teacher at Oakton.

David Bruce O'Hara, first met Rachel Fitch in graduate school at Ball State University in 1966-'67. He was employed in Fairfax County as an Earth Science teacher at Woodson from October 1970-78. In 1978 Bruce O'Hara was employed of Fairfax County as a half time Earth Science teacher and half time planetarium director. During Mr. O'Hara's first year as a planetarium director in the fall of 1978 until the fall of 1979, the Woodson Planetarium was closed as a result of asbestos contamination and a damaged heating and air conditioning system.

After the planetarium was repaired in the 1980-81 school year, Mr. O'Hara became full time planetarium director.

The asbestos contamination found in the Woodson Planetarium was not completely corrected until a complete renovation of the planetarium from the summer of 1983 to January 1984. The renovation included ten outlets installed around the cove with split circuits so one circuit was on a slide fader and the other a regular power outlet that were all wired into the existing console. Also new light fixtures and all wiring between the console and pedestal was renewed as well as the installation of a new air conditioning system.

The Woodson Planetarium is the only planetarium other than Edison that has circular seating. It has a 30' dome and an A3P planetarium projector. The Woodson Planetarium can seat approximately 65 students. The circular bench seating allows about 50 seats with a good view during a program.



**WEST SPRINGFIELD PLANETARIUM COMPLETED MARCH 1967**  
**WEST SPRINGFIELD PLANETARIUM OPENED SEPTEMBER 1967**

**6100 ROLLING ROAD**

**SPRINGFIELD, VA. 22151-4150**

**PHONE 703-913-3889 Fax. # 703-913-3897**

**e-mail prals58@aol.com**

**AREA I**

There were four schools -- West Springfield, Herndon, Oakton, and Falls Church -- under construction at nearly the same time in 1966 but the planetariums were completed at different times and were opened in the order listed above.

Ellie Euler worked at Whitter Intermediate School, which was later called Falls Church High School after its renovation from September 1960 until June 1964. She was a physics teacher at George Mason High School, Falls Church City Schools from September 1964 until June 1966. In September 1966 Ms. Euler was employed at West Springfield and remembers taking her class on a field trip to the Woodson Planetarium and that Bill Fagan presented the program. In February 1967 she was recommended by Charles R. Davis and hired as a planetarium director and asked to serve at the Edison Planetarium for the rest of that year even though her planetarium at West Springfield was completed in March of 1967.

It was in September of 1967 when Ms. Euler presented her first program to a West Springfield High School class. She was the planetarium director at West Springfield High School until her retirement in June 1991. She served 25 years, the greatest number of years as a planetarium director in Fairfax County and also holds the record of the greatest number of years service in one individual planetarium.

John Dieringer taught physics at Hayfield High School for 20 years and in 1990-91 opened the physics department at the new Centreville High School. John took the summer course offered by Spitz Space Systems Incorporated at West Chester University as additional job training for his position as director of the West Springfield Planetarium, which he has held since the fall of 1991 until his retirement in the summer of 1997.

The West Springfield Planetarium was renovated from June 1990 to March 1991. The renovation included painting, new carpeting, and a suspended cove mount for auxiliary projectors. The cove mounts have been removed due to improper installation.

John has also added new programs and a new galaxy projector, expanding universe projector and has done much to improve the image of his planetarium within West Springfield High School and area.

The West Springfield Planetarium has an A3P instrument, 37 fixed seats, and 30 portable seats giving a maximum capacity of 67 with unidirectional seating.



**HERNDON HIGH SCHOOL OPENED SEPTEMBER 1967**

**HERNDON PLANETARIUM OPENED OCTOBER 1967**

**700 BENNETT STREET**

**HERNDON, VA. 22070-3270**

**PHONE 703-810-2335 Fax # 703-810-2262**

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### **AREA III**

Rolfe Chandler was employed as a planetarium director in the summer of 1967 and was a full time physics teacher before taking his position as a planetarium director. He helped with the opening and the installation of Herndon's A3P planetarium instrument and presented his first program on October 27, 1967. Mr. Chandler completed the elementary pyramid science programs by December 1967 and worked as director at the Jefferson planetarium from January 1968 to June 1968. He continued as director at Herndon in the fall of 1968 until December 1983. From January 1983 until July 1 of 1985 he served as Area 1 Science Curriculum Specialist.

Leslie Butz was the planetarium director at Herndon from January 1983 until January 1986.

From September 1985 until January 1986 Mr. Chandler was a full time physics teacher and in January 1986 he became a part time physics teacher and planetarium director.

The Herndon Planetarium was renovated from June 1991 until December 1991. The renovation included carpeting and painting.

In the fall 1987 Mr. Chandler became the full time planetarium director and served until his retirement at the end of the 1993-94 school year. Mr. Chandler worked in Fairfax County for a total of 31 years and at his retirement was the senior planetarium director in Fairfax County.

When Rolfe Chandler retired in 1994, Mary Blessing took over as the planetarium director. Mary came to Fairfax County from New York and Pennsylvania school systems where she had experience teaching earth science. She taught earth science at various Fairfax County high schools for six years before becoming a planetarium director. She received graduate credit from the University of Huntsville, Alabama for the Capital Area Space Orientation Program, has participated in two space telescope science institute programs and various astronomy symposiums and workshops. She presented a workshop at the NSTA in Baltimore, MD in 1995 and was chosen as a participant in the Foster Program (Flight Opportunities for Science Teacher Enrichment.)

The Herndon Planetarium has a 30 foot dome with 48 fixed seats and 30 portable seats giving a seating capacity of 78 with unidirectional seating.



**JEFFERSON PLANETARIUM OPENED FALL 1967**  
**THOMAS JEFFERSON H.S. FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY SINCE 1987**  
**6560 BRADDOCK ROAD**  
**ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22312-2800**  
**703-750-8380 Fax. # 703-750-5010**  
**e-mail lahennig@pen.k12.va.us.**

**AREA II**

The Jefferson Planetarium was added to the existing building two years after the construction of the school. The facility has an A3P instrument and a 30-foot dome and 50 fixed seats with unidirectional seating.

Ellie Euler operated Jefferson in conjunction with West Springfield in September of 1967. She worked there for about a month before returning to the directorship of West Springfield. Bill Fagan then worked at Jefferson Planetarium the rest of the fall of 1967 until Rolfe Chandler took over January 1968.

Rolfe Chandler worked at Jefferson until June 1968 after completing the elementary pyramid science programs at Herndon during the first half of the year. Then Walt Tenschert was transferred from Edsall Park Elementary on November 17, 1968 to operate the Jefferson Planetarium until his retirement in June 1988. Mr. Tenschert worked as a half time teacher at Falls Church and Jefferson for 1 year. (1979). Jack Woodard, the science supervisor at the time, recommended Mr. Tenschert for the position. Mr. Tenschert was the first elementary school teacher to become a planetarium director in Fairfax Co.

Lee Ann Hennig replaced Mr. Tenschert at the Jefferson Planetarium in the fall of 1988 and is serving as planetarium director while teaching two astronomy classes and continues to provide much in the way of support to the Jefferson science department.

She graduated in 1969 with a B.S. in Astronomy and Math from the University of Texas at Edinburg, and received a M.S.Ed. in Astronomy from the University of Maryland in 1972. Upon graduation, she was employed by Fairfax County Public Schools as a planetarium teacher at Fort Hunt High School. She teaches two senior level courses in Astronomy, a Senior Research Astronomy Tech Lab, and is lab director for the Astronomy Mentor ship students.

In the fall of 1989 the Jefferson Planetarium underwent a partial renovation that included new lighting fixtures and suspended ceiling, and in the spring of 1990 the west end of the console was added as well as an addition to the central pedestal for additional special effects projectors.



**OAKTON HIGH SCHOOL OPENED SEPTEMBER 1967**  
**OAKTON HIGH SCHOOL PLANETARIUM OPENED APRIL 1968**

**2900 SUTTON ROAD**

**VIENNA, VA. 22180-2050**

**PHONE 703-319-2735 Fax. # 703-319-2797**

**AREA II**

Tom Ferguson was employed by Fairfax County in January 1968 to operate the Oakton Planetarium. The planetarium and A3P planetarium projector weren't actually ready for operation until April of 1968. Mr. Ferguson worked at the Oakton Planetarium through the school year 1969-70. Mr. Bill Chevalier was director from 1970-73 at which time Bill Fagan was transferred to the Oakton Planetarium from the Woodson Planetarium. Mr. Fagan was director from September 1973 until June 1977 when he became a physics teacher and science department chairperson at Oakton.

Darrell Ardoin worked as a part time planetarium director during the school year 1977-78, then became the full time director in September 1978 until the spring of 1982. He held a job as a science and math teacher in Saudi Arabia from 1982-87. Jack Steiffer, a earth science teacher at Annandale High School and a former earth science teacher in Prince Georges County, MD, was then hired in October 1982 to fill the vacancy at the Oakton Planetarium and is the current planetarium director.

The Oakton Planetarium was scheduled for renovation during the summer and early fall of 1991. The renovation included new carpet, painting, and the installation of new slide fades to be wired into the existing console. The Oakton Planetarium had a new high quality sound system installed in March 1991.

The Oakton Planetarium has 56 fixed seats and 28 portable seats in a unidirectional pattern with a maximum seating capacity of 84. Only 75 seats provide a good viewing angle.



**FALLS CHURCH HIGH SCHOOL OPENED SEPTEMBER 1968**

**FALLS CHURCH PLANETARIUM OPENED FALL 1968**

**7521 JAGUAR TRAIL**

**FALLS CHURCH, VA 22042-2090**

**PHONE 703-207-4110 Fax. # 703-207-4097**

**e-mail [gpurinto@pen.k12.va.us](mailto:gpurinto@pen.k12.va.us).**

**AREA III**

The building now known as Falls Church High School was originally called Whittier Intermediate School from at least 1960 until it was renovated and renamed Falls Church High School in 1968. The planetarium was added to the school during the renovation.

The Falls Church and Oakton planetariums are the planetariums that have had the greatest number of planetarium directors. It was opened on schedule in the fall of 1968 with Steve Smith as the director until July 1969 when Julius Cohn was hired by the county and was employed until the spring of 1976, when he retired. Steve Smith is now directing the Arlington planetarium for the Arlington Public Schools located at 1426 North Quincy Street, Arlington, Virginia (phone-703-358-6017).

Blaine Schertz was employed as the director from the fall of 1976 until the spring of 1977. From the fall of 1977 until the spring 1979 Walt Tenschert acted as a half time planetarium director at both Falls Church and Jefferson. Since September 1980 Gary Purinton has served as the director. He graduated in 1972 with a B.S. in science from the Pennsylvania State University. He received a B.S. in education from Clarion University of Pennsylvania, where he took a ten-week course in planetarium operation and management. He has a M.Ed. in earth science from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. He taught Earth Science for five years -- four in Bradford, Pennsylvania and one in Fairfax County, Virginia -- before becoming a planetarium teacher at Falls Church High School in September 1980, when the last of the nine planetarium positions were restored to full time. In 1990, he was one of the original participants in the Joint Education Initiative (formerly known as the JEdI Project, now called JEI). This project pioneered the use of government produced CD-ROM based data sets for educational activities in elementary and secondary classrooms. He has also



participated in several curriculum development projects and teacher training workshops for Fairfax County Public Schools.

The Falls Church Planetarium is the only Fairfax County planetarium with a six to one remote control zoom, which is used in association with an x-y axis slew projector. The most recent equipment addition was a Sony 1270Q video data projection system donated by T.R.W.

The renovation of the Falls Church Planetarium was started August 1989 and completed in February 1990. Sixteen new slide faders in groups of four were wired into a new console section to control 16 cove outlets. The renovation also included carpeting, sub-floor wiring between the console and center pedestal, painting and new florescent light fixtures at the corners of the planetarium room. Gary has developed a web site for the Fairfax County planetariums this year (1996-1997) with the location address:

<http://www.fckps.k12.va.us//DIS/OHSICS/planet/index.htm>

The Falls Church Planetarium has an A3P planetarium instrument with 39 fixed seats and 29 portable seats giving a maximum seating capacity of 68 with unidirectional seating.



**HAYFIELD SECONDARY SCHOOL OPENED AT EDISON SEPTEMBER 1968**

**HAYFIELD PLANETARIUM OPENED OCTOBER 1969**

**7630 TELEGRAPH ROAD, ALEXANDRIA, VA 22310-1180**

**PHONE 703-924-7537 Fax # 703-924-7497**

**e-mail [aklepic@pen.k12.va.us](mailto:aklepic@pen.k12.va.us).**

**AREA I**

The Hayfield Planetarium was being built in 1968-69 but wasn't ready for operation until the fall of 1969. Chris Vagonas was planetarium director of the Hayfield Planetarium from its opening until the end of the school year in 1992. Mr. Vagonas first started a profession in optics at Bausch & Lomb in Rochester, New York then worked for Linfilm in New York. He then taught math and science in Jacksonville Fla. at Bolles Private Military School for 2 1/2 years before starting as a algebra teacher at Hayfield in the fall of 1968. In January 1969, Mr. Vagonas was recommended by Mr. Floyd Worley to become the planetarium director.

Robert Zschoche, a former astronomy student of Bruce O'Hara of Woodson High School Planetarium, and Earth Science teacher at McLean High School took Vagonas's position in the fall of 1992. Mr. Zschoche enrolled in the Spitz Space Systems course in the summer of 1993 as additional job training for his position as director of the Hayfield planetarium. Since Mr. Zschoche has been director, the planetarium has been painted and he has installed a panorama horizon to add realism and rebuilt cabinets to house the slide projector stacker and stereo equipment.

Tony Klepic, a former graduate of Hayfield Secondary School in the class of 1986, became the acting planetarium director in 1996-97. Tony graduated from Emory and Henry College in 1990 with a degree in Earth and Space Science, and has spent five years teaching earth science, physics, and oceanography at Hayfield before becoming a planetarium director.

The Hayfield Planetarium suffered major damage in January 1970 due to the coldest January since 1940. A pipe burst in the office next to the planetarium and the resulting steam destroyed all of the special effect projectors and necessitated the rewiring of the A4 planetarium projector. The Hayfield Planetarium was closed for a 3-month period. The Hayfield Planetarium is the second most recent planetarium built in Fairfax County and has an A4 projector and 41 fixed seats and 35 portable seats giving a maximum seating capacity of 75 with unidirectional seating.



**FORT HUNT HIGH SCHOOL OPENED SEPTEMBER 1969**  
**FORT HUNT PLANETARIUM OPENED JANUARY 1970**  
**NAMED CARL SANDBURG PLANETARIUM 1985**  
**8428 FORT HUNT ROAD, ALEXANDRIA, VA. 22308**  
**PHONE 703-799-6169 Fax 703-799-7013**

**AREA I**

The Fort Hunt Planetarium was built as an addition to the Fort Hunt High School and was completed in the January of 1970 with Lee Ann Hennig as the Planetarium Director starting her employment with this position. Fire destroyed much of the Fort Hunt High School in 1978, and the planetarium received much smoke damage. The Fort Hunt Planetarium was renovated after the fire and is currently the most modern planetarium in Fairfax County and has an A4 planetarium projector and a 30-foot dome. Lee Ann Hennig was the planetarium director until the fall of 1988 when she became the director for the Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology. In 1985, the name of Fort Hunt High School was changed to Carl Sandburg Intermediate School with the merging of Fort Hunt and Groveton High Schools. In the fall of 1988, Darrell Ardoin became the planetarium director and Lee Ann Hennig took the new position of Planetarium Director at Jefferson after Walt Tenschert's retirement in June of 1988.

After Darrell Ardoin left the Carl Sandburg Planetarium, he went to Moscow for a teaching position there. Drexell George, an elementary school teacher at Cameron Elementary School, took Mr. Ardoin's place. He took the Spitz Space System's course for additional job training in the summer of 1993.

In February 1989, a fan in one of the heaters in the lecture demonstration room caught fire and the smoke gained access to the planetarium through the duct system. The minor smoke damage was cleaned up by March 1990.

The Carl Sandburg Planetarium has 54 fixed seats and 24 portable seats, giving it a maximum seating capacity of 76 with unidirectional seating.