

History of Martin County Schools



The Morotoc MarConians
Advisor: Minnie Hoggard

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Old E. J. Hayes School

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Foreword

The "History of Martin County Schools" is an outgrowth of research done by Mrs. Minnie Hoggard's Fifth Grade Language Arts Class at E. J. Hayes School in Williamston, North Carolina. This class is also known as The Moratoc MarConians. The club project consists of individual and group reports of the various schools in the County. The students were allowed to choose the school for their research. They gathered material from a variety of sources. The students interviewed former and present teachers, principals, and students from their schools. They studied pamphlets, books and other historical documents. The compositions herein have been proofread for grammatical errors only. The content remains the product of the students' efforts.

Table of Contents

Foreword

Introductory Reports

Martin County Schools	1
Schools in Williamston	3
Education Throughout Martin County	5
E. J. Hayes	6

Academies

Horner's Academy	10
Williamston Academy	12
Williamston Female Academy	14

Schools

Bear Grass Elementary School	16
Bear Grass School	18
Biggs School	21
Burroughs	22
Church Street School	24
Church Street Elementary School	25
Cooper's School	27
Corey Elementary School	28
Edna Andrews School	30
Everetts	31
Everetts School	32
Griffin's School	34
Hamilton School	37
Hardison's or Kelly Hill School	39
Jamesville School	41
Old Hurst School	43
Old Roebuck School	44
Poplar Point School	45
Poplar Point Colored School	47
Powell Schoolhouse	48
Rodgers School	50
Robersonville Elementary	51
Robersonville Elementary School	53
Robersonville Elementary School	55
Sandy Ridge School	56
Smithwick Creek School	57
Turkey Swamp	59
Williams Lower School	60
Williams Lower School	61
Williamston Colored Graded School	63

Williamston Graded School
Williamston Junior High School
Woolard's School

64
65
66

Cover Note: Sketch of Hardison's or Kelly Hill School

Martin County Schools

Martin County was formed in 1774. When the county was formed there were no schools within the county. The children had to learn from their mothers and fathers. Not many parents at this time were capable of teaching their children. If the family was financially able, they could send their children to a boarding school or have a private tutor.

During the early part of the nineteenth century a few private schools and academies were in operation. Among the earliest academies was the Williamston Academy. This academy was chartered by the General Assembly in 1817. Construction began in 1817 and was completed in August 1818.

The first public school in the town of Williamston was begun in 1849. This public school was located in the courthouse. Later in the 1930's this school was moved to the American Legion Hut. At a later date, the school was moved to the City Hall Building.

The people who live in Martin County have devoted more time and money for the education of their children over the past two hundred years than to any other concern except for clothing, food, and shelter for their families and themselves. Beginning from almost nothing, the operation of the public schools has developed into one of the most complex developments involving more people than any other phase in community life.

Consolidation became a major concern of public education in Martin County in the beginning of the twentieth century. This caused many problems, but they have been worked out. Today we are proud of our schools in Martin County.

Shannon Zeko

Source:

Cooker, W. H. and Francis M. Manning. Religion and Education in Martin County 1774-1974. Williamston: Enterprise Publishing Company, 1974.



J. Sam Getsinger in Front of Old Getsinger School

Schools in Williamston

There were two schools in town in 1926, one white and one black. The white school was the Williamston High School. Grades one through eleven were housed in one building. There were no school buses. One pick-up truck had seats on it and a top over it. This truck brought a number of these children to school.

At this time, there was one teacher for each grade. But in 1926 it became necessary to add another teacher for the first grade. Gradually as the need arose, there was added two teachers for each grade. Because more rooms were needed, the auditorium was partitioned off to provide space for two grades. A first grade was put on the stage.

There was no lunchroom so students went home for lunch, as did the teachers. The teachers took turns at being on duty during lunch time, so the ones on duty had to bring their lunches.

The library for the entire school was housed in a very small room on the first floor.

The school continued to grow until it was necessary to build a new high school. When the new high school was ready, the high school and the sixth and seventh grades were moved into the new building.

By this time, school buses were in use. As the needs arose, new buses were added. More teachers were added also.

The old high school became known as the Church Street School. It housed grades one through five. When this school became too crowded a new building was built for the first and second grades. Finally, these two buildings would not take care of the large number of children so two mobile classrooms were added. The high school needed more rooms so mobile classrooms were added there, too. By this time, both schools had lunchrooms and many buses.

When integration came about another new high school was built and a new primary school. Now we have a high school, junior high, elementary, and primary school.

Chris Warren

Source:

Barnes, Lucille. Interview. March 29, 1983. Williamston, N.C.



The Old "Church Street" School built on the site of the old Williamston Academy.

Education Throughout Martin County

Miss Addie Lee Meador taught in all of the Martin County Schools. She taught in Martin County for thirty years. She thought the schools were pretty good. She was a speech therapist in Martin County. In speech therapy she worked and tried to help students make sounds they could not make and incorporate these sounds in everyday speech. Weekly lessons were thirty to forty minutes long. She worked with three or four students at a time. Some individual sessions were held, particularly with those students with severe phonological disorders and stuttering. As a third grade teacher, Miss Meador taught academics.

In Martin County there was a dual school system. They did not have aides, and they did not change classes. There were more self-contained classrooms than today. There were not any special education classes. They had prayers and bible readings daily. They had a speaker each week who talked about the subjects in school, or they had a play that was just for fun.

Today, students possibly have been exposed to more things and have more experience, but they are much harder to motivate.

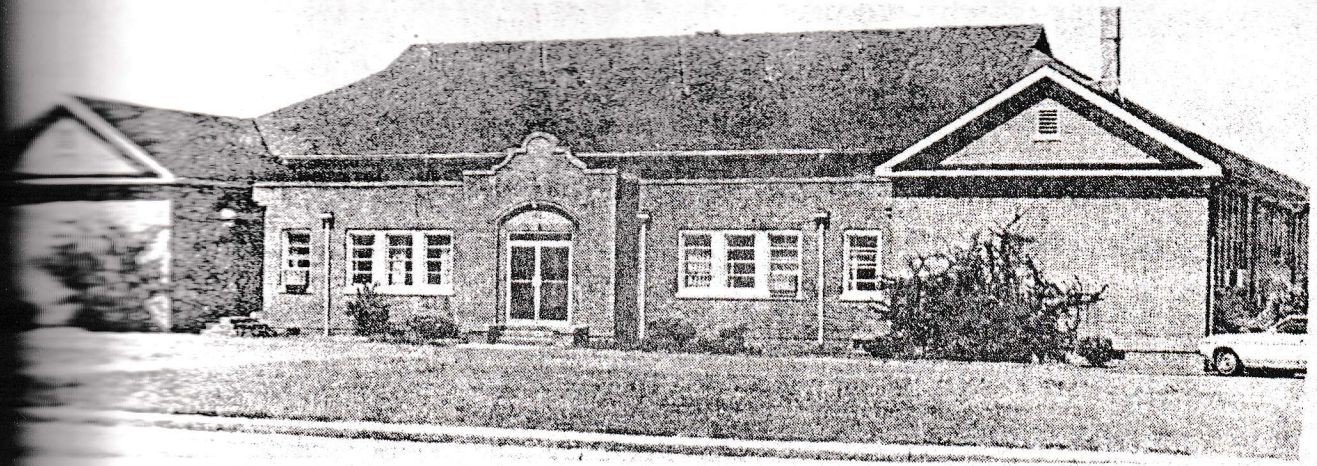
Discipline is a thing of the past.

Sarah Rawls

Laura Martin

Source:

Meador, Addie Lee. Interview. March 29, 1983. Williamston, N.C.



The Old E. J. Hayes School

E. J. Hayes School

There were two hundred fifty-nine Blacks that needed to go to school, so there was a school established in the town of Williamston in 1885 to serve these people. The location of this building was not known, although sometime later on a school was built between Williams Chapel Methodist Church and the present municipal cemetery.

In 1924 Mr. Edgar J. Hayes, then employed as principal, began the operation of the high school. Efforts of people and the principal were begun immediately to secure the equipment needed for standardization of the school. Athletics were encouraged, and the school's basketball teams were champions in the area for several seasons.

This building burned in 1925 or 1926 (not known which), and the school's sessions were held at Black churches and

lodge halls in Williamston. What is now E. J. Hayes School and the Northeastern Regional Center was built in 1930 on Washington Street Extension.

In 1934 the high school became standardized by meeting the requirements of the State Board of Education. They had a school newspaper entitled "The Hi-Spotlight." They also formed a school band. During the last year of Mr. Hayes' administration, a primary building containing a gymnasium, an office, and eight classrooms were constructed.

After twenty-eight years of service, in 1952 Mr. Hayes stepped down, and Mr. William A. Holmes took the leadership. At this time the school increased to sixteen classrooms, and many other things were added. The principal's office was redecorated, and the science and home economics rooms were furnished with new cabinets, and better equipment. During Mr. Holmes' term, the students formed a government organization of the school. They also formed a Debating Club, National Honor Society, Future Farmers of America, the Dramatics Club, the Future Teachers of America, the Library Club, Arts and Crafts, and the School Patrol. Several students under Mr. Holmes participated in the North Carolina Advancement School Projects. Both the Hayes Band and Dramatics Club received state recognition. The football team received national recognition. For two consecutive years, it captured the North Carolina High School Athletic Conference Triple "A" Championship.

Mr. Holmes retired after the 1969-1970 school year. This was the last year of E. J. Hayes being a black school. In 1970-1971 E. J. Hayes was integrated..

Mr. John Slade in 1970, took over the leadership of E. J. Hayes. At this time, the school had grades one through eight, rather than one through twelve. Mr. Slade was principal until 1973.

In 1973, Mr. William E. Honeyblue became principal at E. J. Hayes School. He was principal until June, 1982 when he retired. In 1974-75 the seventh and eighth grades were transferred to the present Williamston Junior High School, making a middle grade organization at Hayes. During Mr. Honeyblue's administration, several new programs were introduced and implemented at E. J. Hayes. Some of his accomplishments during his service were curtains in the gymnasium, a modified library, air conditioning in the lunchroom, carpeting the sixth grade classrooms, employment of part-time art, physical education and music teachers, and mass renovations and improvements in the physical facilities. Through Mr. Honeyblue's civic and political activities, the community became more involved in the school. During the reign of Mr. Honeyblue's leadership, there was much progress in students' test scores. When Mr. Honeyblue retired, ninety percent of the students at E. J. Hayes were reading on grade level.

At the beginning of 1982-83 school year Mr. Willie C.

Peele became principal of E. J. Hayes School. Mr. Peele was a former student of this school. After he graduated from college, he started teaching science in the seventh and eighth grades. Mr. Peele is an eager principal who wants the very best education for the students. He has already started many improvement projects. Mr. Peele is striving to meet the needs and wishes of the students, parents, and teachers.

We think we are getting some of the best education we could possibly get from our school, our principal and our caring teachers.

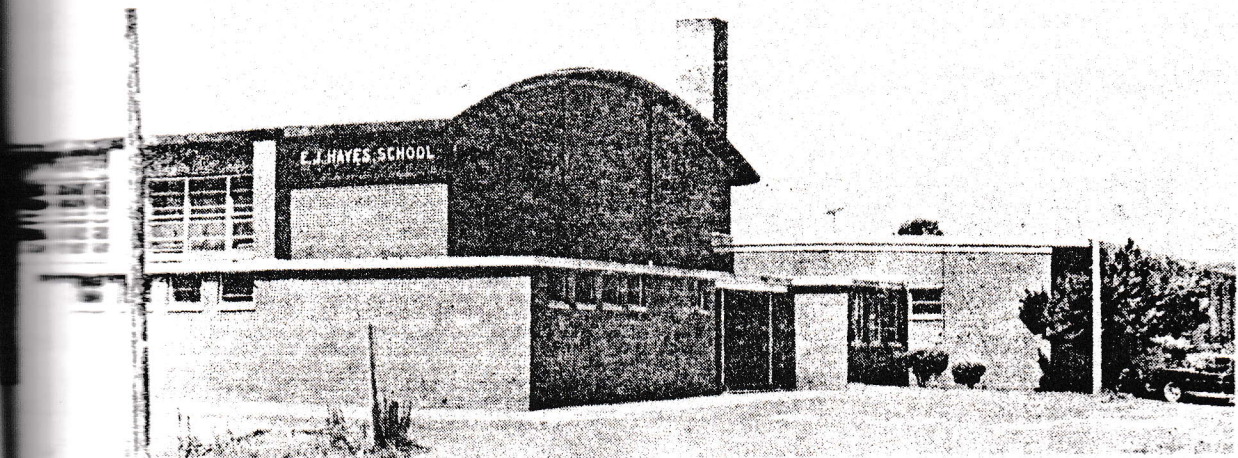
Pam Bailey

John Oglesby

Sources:

Boneyblue, William E. Interview. March 24, 1983.
Williamston, N. C.

Jones, Jessie Marie. Interview. March 25, 1983. Williamston, N. C.



E. J. Hayes School



Hamilton Academy or Hamilton Preparatory Institute called "House of Knowledge"

Horner's Academy

In the early 1840's a school was opened in Hamilton. This school was opened by Professor James H. Horner. He taught students at Horner's Academy for twelve years. Then he later moved to Oxford. In Oxford he operated his own school. This school was known as Horner's Military School. Later this school became very famous.

Hamilton, North Carolina is where Horner's Academy is located. It is a very historic place. Some people have restored this building. This one hundred forty-three year old house is now seen by many people.



Williamston Academy Building—About 1914—After Enlargement and Second Story Added

Williamston Academy

The first records of the Williamston Academy meeting stated that on May 19, 1817 the first meeting was held. Six members signed the minutes. They were Edward Yellowley, Richard Williams, Samuel Hyman, James Bennett, William Watts, and Joseph Biggs.

The school had many problems. Teachers were hard to get and did not stay long. Best known of the earliest teachers was Luman Whittlesay who headed the school for almost four years. During the school's earlier years, he served and then came back in the 1840's. Asa Matthews was head of the institution for seven years. Sylvester Hassell also taught at the academy at different times. He took over after the Civil War.

This school continued to operate until after 1890. In August, 1903 the academy building and grounds were sold to the trustees of the Graded School in Williamston. In the beginning the schools taught both girls and boys. Later there were separate schools for girls and boys.

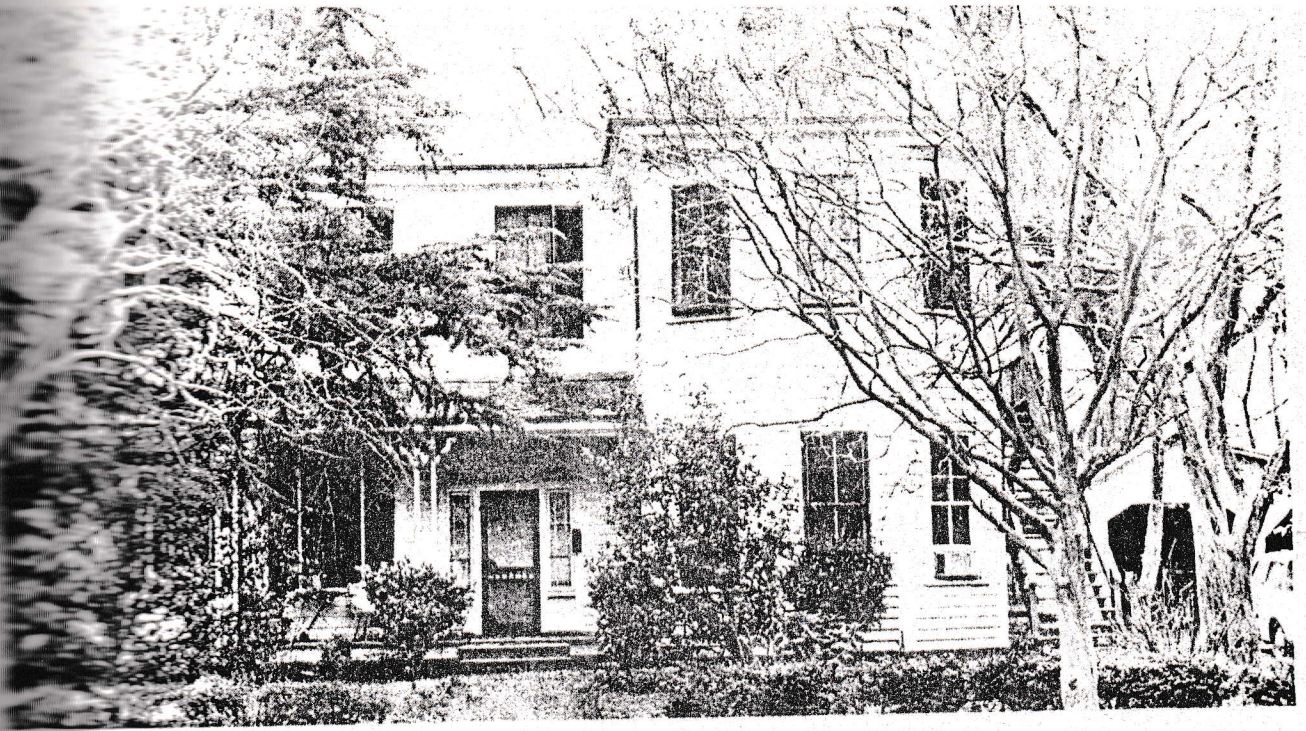
Todd Pittman

Source:

Booker, W. H. and Francis M. Manning. Religion and Education in Martin County 1774-1974. Williamston: Enterprise Publishing Company, 1974.



Taking calisthenics at the Old
Williamston Academy c. 1914



Williamston Female Academy Today—After Addition and Conversion Into Smith Family Residence

Williamston Female Academy

Up until 1849 the Williamston Academy had been operated as a coeducational institution. That same year they decided to build a school for girls only.

Miss Catherine W. Bridgman was the first principal of the Female Academy.

The Female Academy was to have a short life. This academy opened on October 1, 1850 and remained open until the middle of 1866.

The building was sold a few days after the meeting which had taken place on August 9, 1866. A man by the name of W. W. Brown offered one thousand dollars for the building and lot.

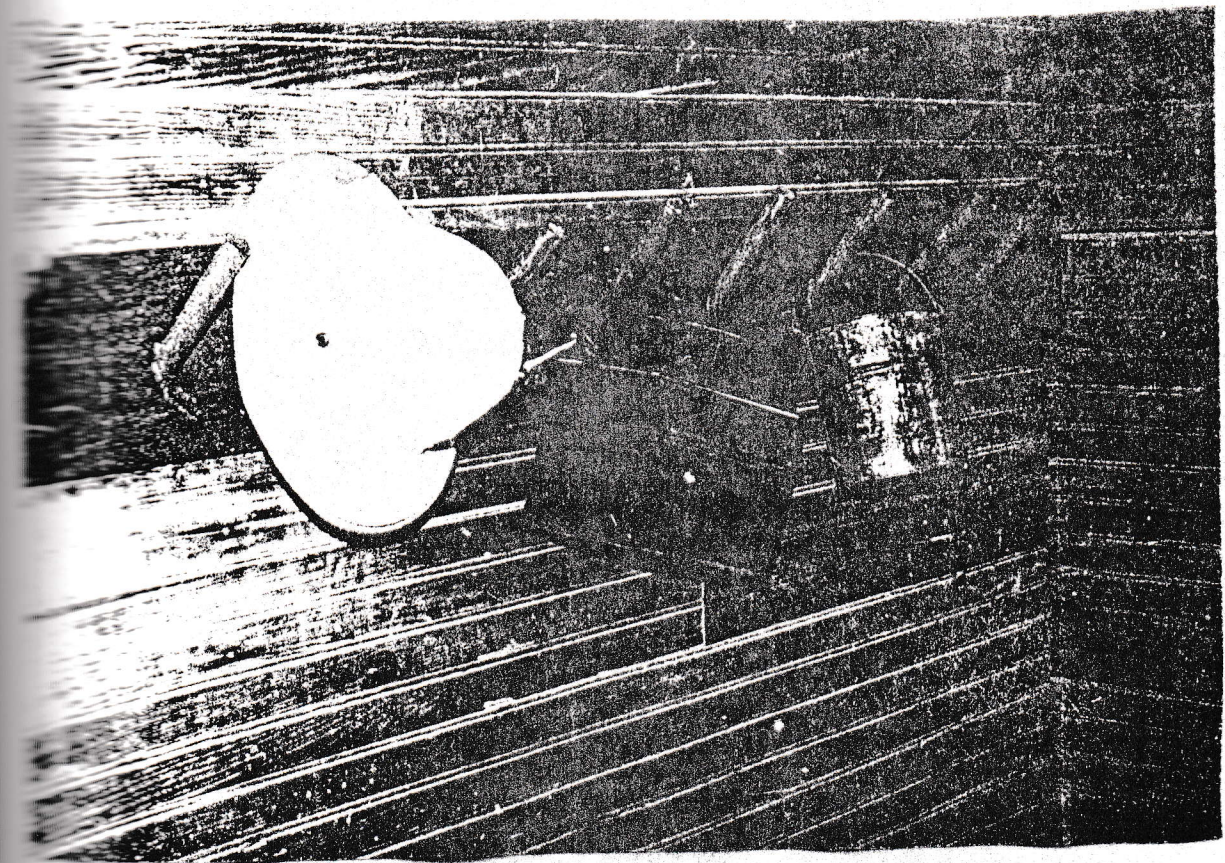
Today the building is known as the old R. Alexander

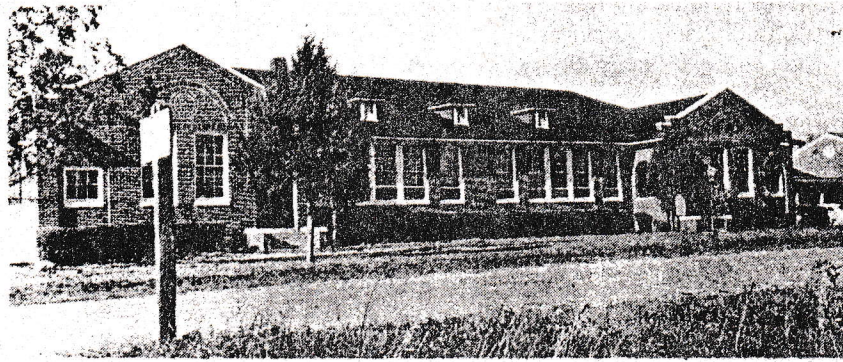
which is located on the west side of South
Street in New Town. Part of the building is original,
and it is located in the same place.

Rene Howell

Source:

Banker, W. H. and Francis M. Manning. Religion and Education
in Martin County 1774-1974. Williamston: Enterprise
Publishing Company, 1974.





Bear Grass Elementary School—Constructed in 1926

Bear Grass Elementary School

The original Bear Grass School was located in Bear Grass just across the road from the present site. In 1885 there were eighty-seven students who attended this school. In 1926 the new Bear Grass Elementary School was built. In 1952 the high school was built, and in 1954 the Bear Grass School added a gymnasium.

Mrs. Rosalie Froneberger, a teacher, taught the third grade in the Bear Grass School in Martin County, North Carolina over forty years ago. Mrs. Froneberger described the school as a brick building with ten or twelve rooms which is still in use today. The school was busy from 8:30 to 4:00 p.m.

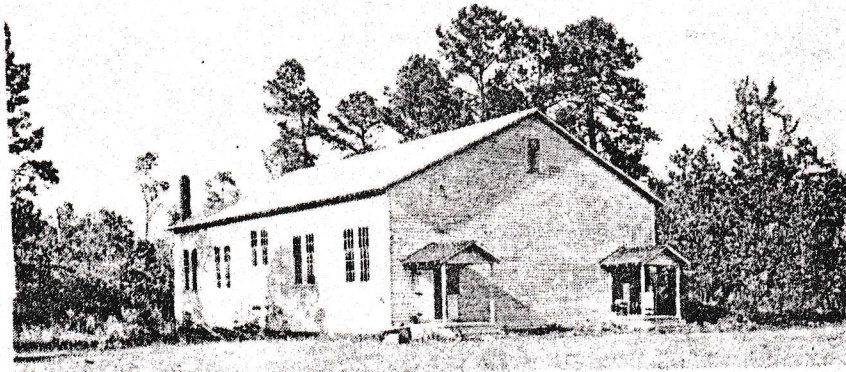
Mrs. Froneberger's class was made up of only third graders who sat most of the day in wooden desks learning the basic subjects. These subjects are reading, writing, and arithmetic. The children had very strict discipline in the classroom, but on the playground they had a good time playing Fox in the Well and Redlight. Fairness was the leading rule

on the playground. The field trips they took were walks
and nature studies.

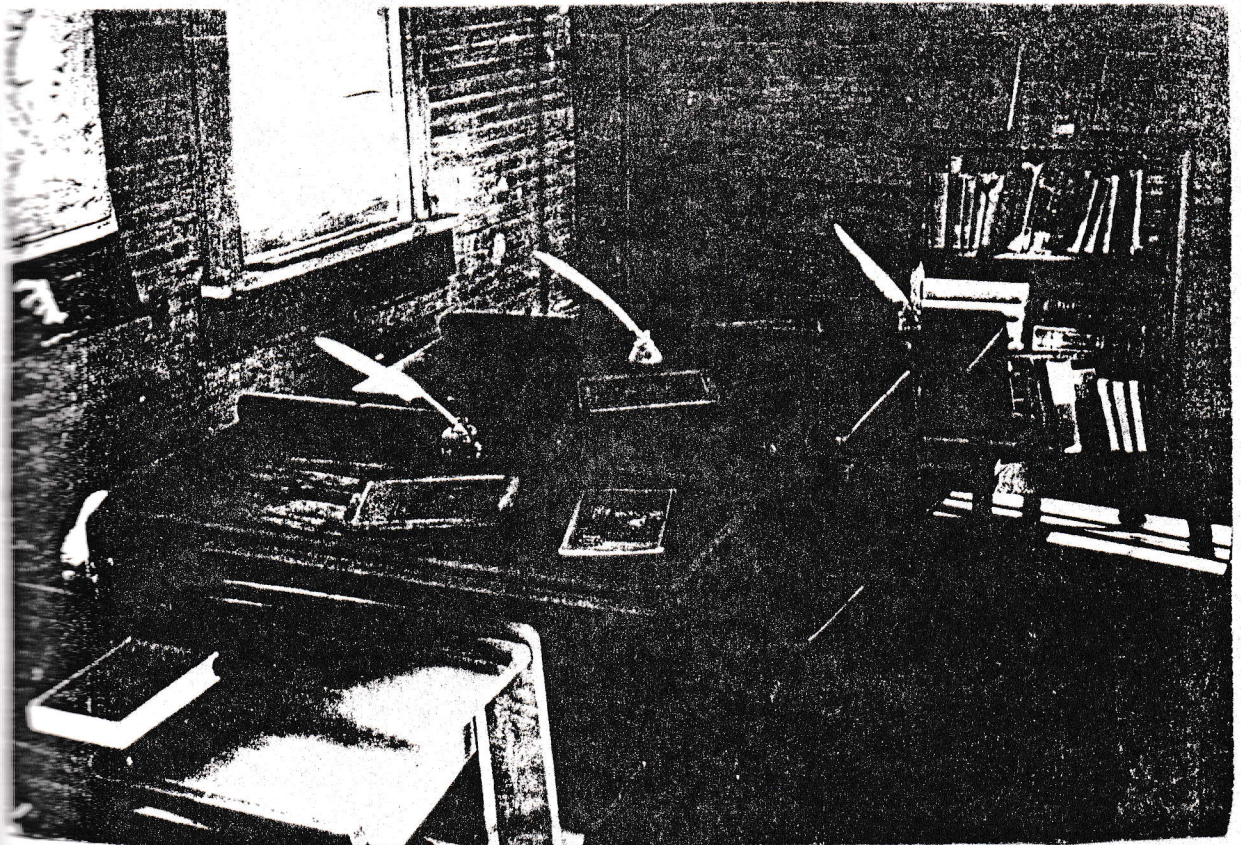
Chad Duke

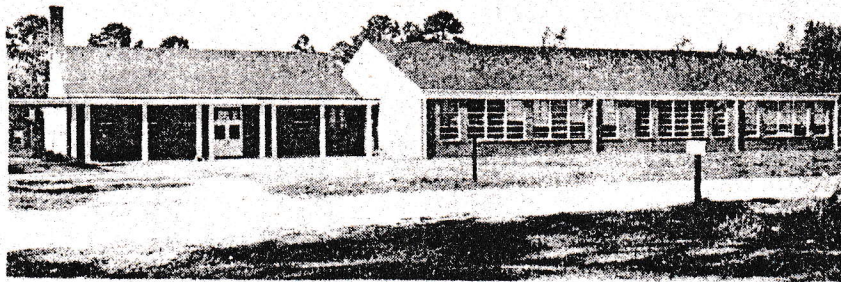
Source:

Eroneberger, Rosalie. Interview. March 24, 1983.
Williamston, N. C.



First Bear Grass Gymnasium—Built Prior to World War II





• Last Bear Grass High School Building—Built in 1952

Bear Grass School

Mrs. Grace Ayers, a retired teacher who lives in Everetts, taught her first year at Jamesville with fifty-two first grade students. She taught school two years at Bear Grass, seven years at Everetts, and then returned to Bear Grass where she taught the fifth grade.

Construction began at Bear Grass School in 1925 and was completed in 1926. Mrs. Ayers started school at Bear Grass in 1926 and graduated in 1937. Mr. T. O. Hickmon was principal at this time. Some of the later principals were Mr. Lee, Mr. Van Parker, and Mr. Jim Sawyer.

Before the high school was added to the school, seventh grade students were taught in a building next to the church. Mrs. Ayers was one of the students that went to the church annex for classes.

Mrs. Lucy M. Ayers taught the fifth grade in the janitor's home just behind the school. She taught fifty-two students in that small home.

Before a teacherage was built, all the teachers boarded with Mrs. Ayer's mother, Mrs. Hessie Rogers. Eight teachers lived there. Meals were served to ten teachers.

After the teacherage was built across the street from the school, some teachers and principals lived there.

The school did not receive any federal or state help to feed the students. Food was donated by the parents. Mrs. Hessie Rogers and other parents took turns helping to serve meals. Soup and sandwiches were served to the students for lunch.

The lunchroom was built from 1937 to 1941. This was during the time that Mrs. Ayers was in college. The high school was added to the school while she was in college.

The students sat in double seats until the seventh grade, then single seats were used.

The school did not have any bells, just one big dinner bell. Mr. Hickmon would ring the dinner bell at lunch. The students had one hour for lunch. Many students walked home for lunch.

Chapel assembly was held once a week.

While Mrs. Ayers was teaching, the school went through recertification. Someone from the state department came down and observed every subject. Mrs. Ayers said, "We passed all with flying colors." One of the reasons why was because of the Music Department.

Mrs. Edith Tarkington was head of the Music Department. The teachers stayed two hours after school while Mrs. Tarkington taught them how to teach a song to the children. Everyone worked hard to make the recertification a success.

The Music Department was known to be the best in North Carolina at that time.

At the time that Mr. Jim Sawyer was teaching business, the Business Department was the best in Martin County. When business tournaments were held in Greenville, the Bear Grass students always won. Businesses were proud to hire a graduate right out of high school.

Approximately twelve years ago, the primary students (grades 1-6) were sent to Rodgers School. Students in grades seven through twelve attend the Bear Grass High School.

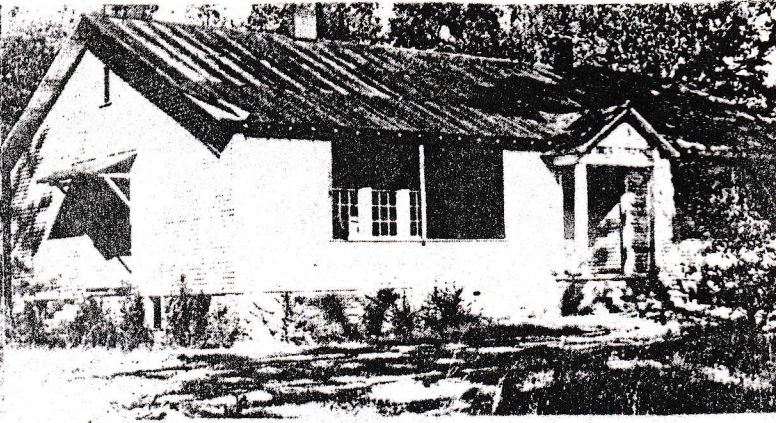
Donnie Martin

Source:

Agers, Mrs. Grace. Interview. March 28, 1983. Everetts, N.C.



Biggs School—Built Prior to Present Century



Biggs School—Built After Original Building Burned in 1932

Biggs School

The Biggs School was located behind Black Swamp Church near Williamston, North Carolina. In 1932 there were four teachers, and Mr. W. V. Ormond, Sr. was principal. Mr. W. V. Ormond, Sr. was a teacher and principal. The other teachers were Mrs. Fagan, Mrs. Modica, and Mrs. Purvis.

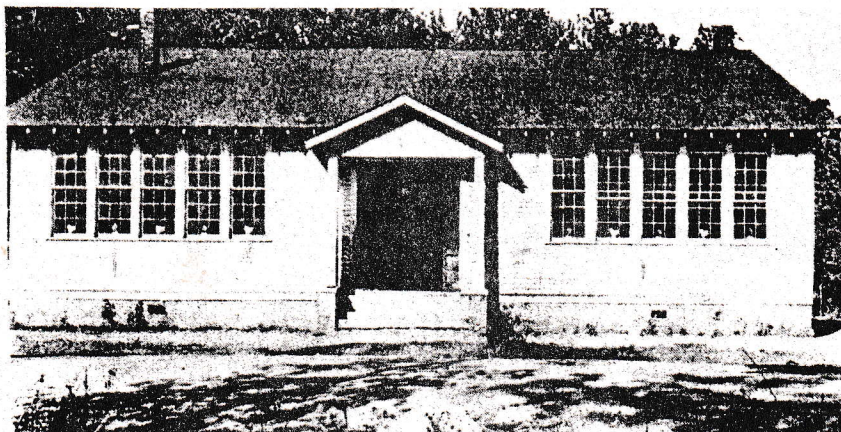
During the 1932-33 school year the school was destroyed by fire. After Biggs School burned, Rosenwald School was built at the present site. The school was located near the present Roanoke Country Club. This is near Highway 17 just off Williamston-Washington Highway.

A high percentage of the students that went to Biggs School went to college. This school consolidated with Rodgers in 1960.

Demetrice Wilson

Source:

Ormond, W. V., Jr. Interview. March 15, 1983. Williamston, N. C.



Burroughs School Building Constructed About 1926

Burroughs

The school census count in 1885 was one hundred thirty-two students. This school was located about one-half mile off the old Williamston-Everetts road. At this time, there was a swamp on both sides of the building. Because of the swamp, the people in the community built a footway so students could get to the school. The first building was burned before 1923, and they used the church until the new school was built around 1926.

Burroughs and Spring Hill consolidated and became Burroughs-Spring Hill School. Later Burroughs consolidated with Rodgers School after a new building was built in Bear Grass Township.

Before the consolidation with Rodgers, Mrs. Gussie Jordan, Mrs. Edwards and Mr. J. O. Buffaloe ran the school. Mrs. Jordan taught first and second grades. Mrs. Edwards taught third and fourth grades, and Mr. Buffaloe taught fifth and sixth grades. When Mrs. Jordan was teaching, the teachers had to make the fires. Students would pick up pine cones to

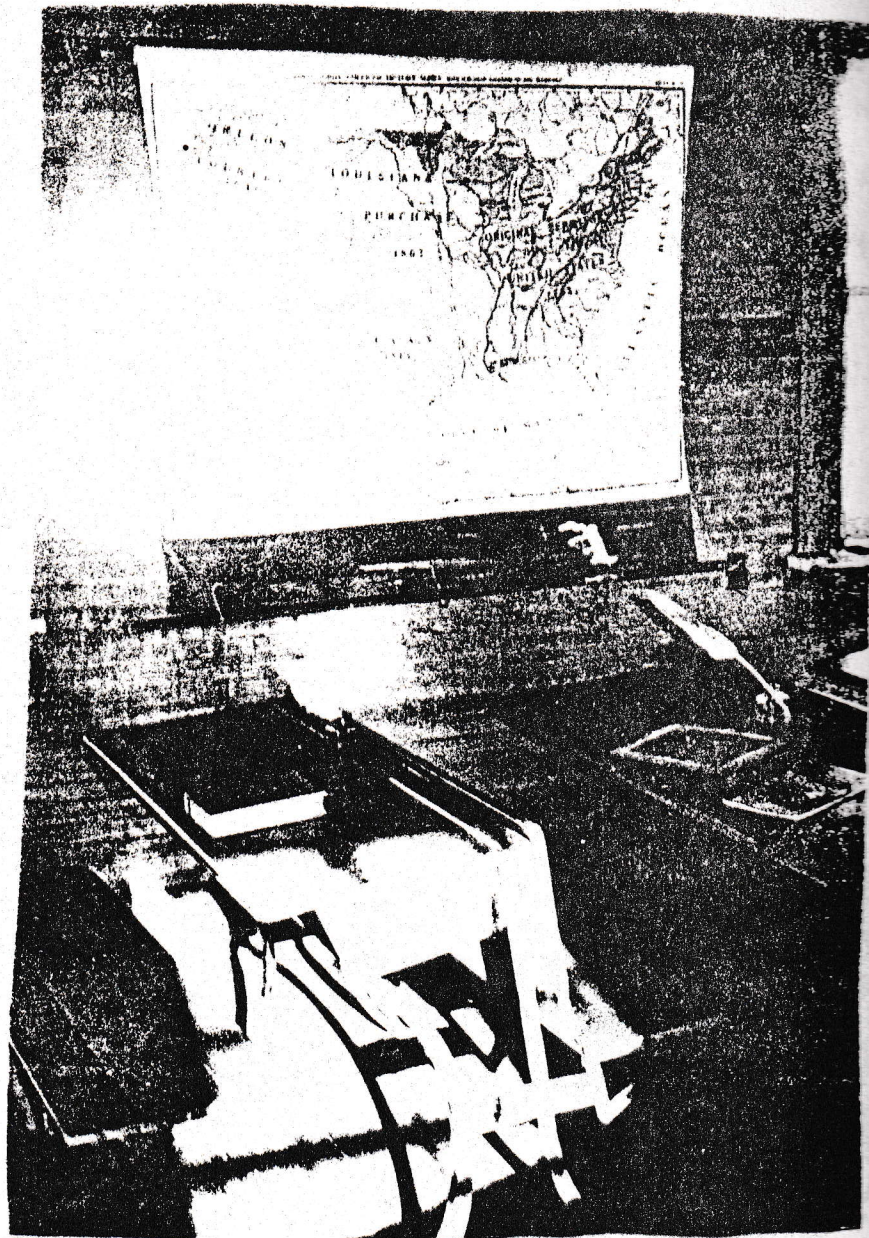
start the fires. They did not have a janitor, and the teachers took care of all kinds of jobs. They did not have a lunchroom, but the state furnished milk.

Donnie Martin

Chris Rodgers

Source:

Jordan, Gussie. Interview. March 20, 1983. Williamston, N. C.



Church Street School

Ms. Manning taught all subjects at Church Street School. She had forty-five children in her room at one time. She taught a large number of students until a law was passed that you could only have thirty-two in a classroom.

At Church Street School there was one grade in each room. This school later became known as Williamston Elementary School. This school was built by Ms. Manning's father. This school is built on the site of the old Williamston Academy which was used during the Civil War.

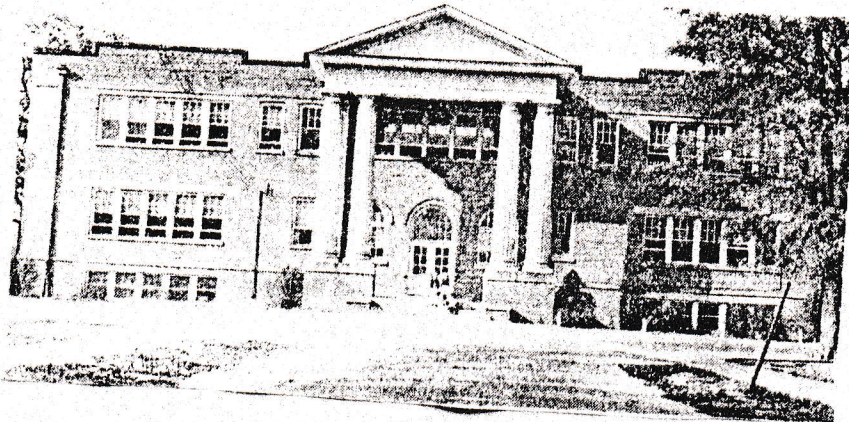
The students went to school at Church Street School from 8:30 in the morning to 3:25 in the afternoon.

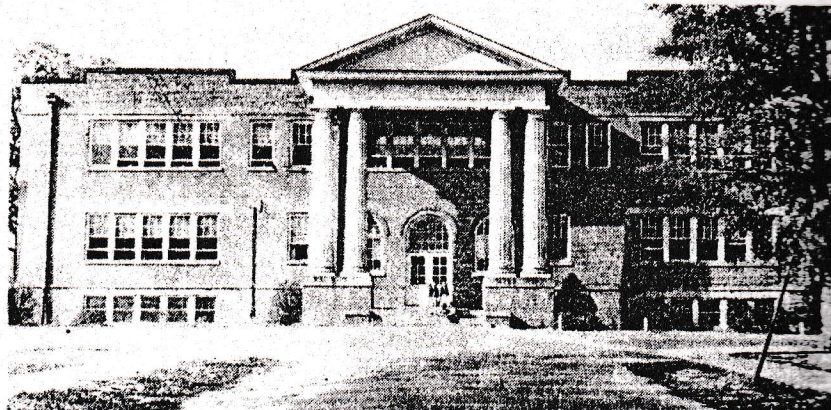
Ms. Manning taught for twenty-two years.

Kelly Allsbrook

Source:

Manning, Ruth. Interview. March 20, 1983. Williamston, N. C.





Williamston's First Brick School—Occupied 1918
(Later Became Church Street Elementary School)

Church Street Elementary School

Mrs. Anita McKnight, a retired school teacher, taught at Church Street Elementary School. Church Street Elementary School was Williamston's first white brick school. This building contained ten classrooms and an auditorium. This new building was located on the old academy site and became known as Church Street School. The old academy and later graded school was moved to the corner of the yard and continued operation until 1918. Mr. Edgar E. Bundy was superintendent.

Mrs. McKnight started teaching in 1927 after she graduated from high school. During several summers she got her degree. She began teaching in Arkansas but moved to Williamston where she taught fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. When Mrs. McKnight began her teaching, the school year lasted only eight months. Later it lasted nine months. Discipline was a problem at times, but children got whippings. During the school years methods have changed.

Mrs. McKnight enjoyed teaching very much. She retired after twenty-eight and one-half years. This was in 1975.

Beth Roberson

Source:

McKnight, Anita. Interview. March 20, 1983. Williamston, N.C.



Cooper's School—Built About 1918

Cooper's School

The first building named Cooper's School was located near the home of Colon Martin in Jamesville Township. It was a white wooden school. It served one hundred and thirteen students. This school was at the intersection of the Manning Road with Brown Road. The first building was used until the community built a new two-room building that was approximately one mile east of the former location.

Cooper's School consolidated with Brown School in 1918. It later consolidated with Jamesville in 1931.

Mark Summerlin

Source:

Booker, W. H. and Francis M. Manning. Religion and Education in Martin County 1774-1974. Williamston: Enterprise Publishing Company, 1974.

Corey Elementary School

Corey Elementary School had only one teacher. There were thirty-one students in the class in grades one through seven. The students started to school when they were six or seven years old.

Seven subjects were taught at Corey Elementary School. These subjects were Arithmetic, Spelling, English, Social Studies, History, Geography, and Science.

The teachers used chalkboards. The students used No. 2 pencils that had hard lead. Their grades were the same as ours today, but they only got their report cards every three months.

The teachers did not run off papers. They wrote down what they wanted the students to know, and the best student writers would copy for the other students.

The lights that were used in this school were kerosene for the first year. Later in the second year they had electric lights.

The restroom facilities for the boys and girls were separate. When the students wanted water, they had to pump it.

The lunch time was from 12:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The students brought their lunch to school. Two went home for lunch.

At Corey School the teacher was the principal, nurse, doctor, janitor, parent, and all kinds of teachers.

The students enjoyed having resource people from the community to come visit them. At night they had PTA as we have today.

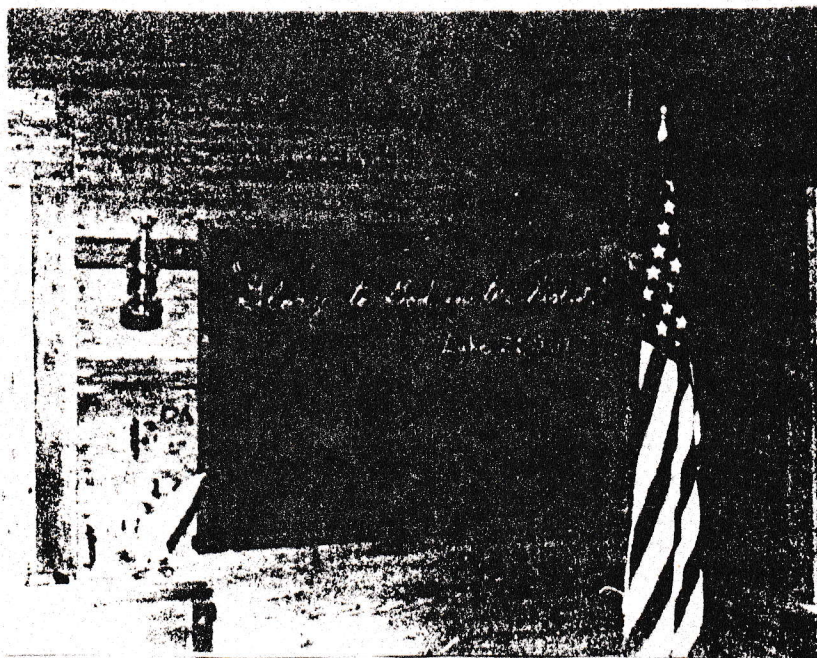
School hours were from 8:30a.m. to 3:00p.m. The students walked to and from school.

This school was originally a white school but was consolidated with Farm Life in 1922. It later became a black school. It is located beyond Farm Life School about two miles south.

Ingram Land

Source:

Hayes, Elizah. Interview. March 22, 1983. Jamesville, N.C.



Edna Andrews School

The Edna Andrews Elementary School is located in Hamilton, North Carolina in the northwest section of Martin County on twelve and one-half acres of land. The school serves approximately three hundred students in grades K-8. The school was built in the early 1960's and opened its doors to students in 1963 as an all black school. The Edna Andrews School replaced a one-room school house located on the Roanoke River. In 1970 Edna Andrews became a four through six grade school. The school was named for a black woman from the Williamston area of Martin County. She taught school in Hamilton for many years, and she was considered to be a great influence on the black children of the community.

Bill Daniels

Source:

Daniels, Herman. Interview. March 25, 1983. Williamston, N. C.

**DUE TO THE LARGE SIZE
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HAS BEEN SPLIT.
PLEASE GO TO PART 2
FOR THE REMAINDER
OF THE BOOK.**