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A Survey of the Vocational Status of Eighty-Eight Graduates of Phillis Wheatley High School, Houston, Texas

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A SURVEY OF THE VOCATIONAL STATUS OF EIGHTY-
EIGHT GRADUATES OF PHILLIS WHEATLEY
HIGH SCHOOL, HOUSTON, TEXAS

-By-

Timothy O. Black

A Thesis In Industrial Education
Submitted In Partial Fulfill-
ment of the Requirements
For The Degree Of

Bachelor of Science

in the

Division of Mechanic Arts

of the

Prairie View State Normal

and

Industrial College

Prairie View, Texas

May, 1936

A C K N O W L E D G M E N T

In the preparation of this thesis, it is impossible for the author to give proper credit to all those to whom he is indebted for many of the ideas and methods that have been used. He desires here to express his gratitude to Professor E. O. Smith and Professor J. C. Sanderson, Principal and assistant Principal respectively, of Phillis Wheatley High School, Houston, Texas, for special information rendered; and to Mr. J. B. Cade of Prairie View State College, who was my advisor.

TABLE OF CONTENT

I. PURPOSE 1

II. METHOD 6

III. SCOPE 7

IV. FAMILY INFORMATION 8

V. COLLEGE ATTENDANCE 12

VI. OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE EIGHTY-
EIGHT GRADUATES 13

VII. THE INFLUENCE OF WHEATLEY HIGH SCHOOL UPON
ITS GRADUATES 19

VIII. THE INFLUENCE OF GRADUATES OF WHEATLEY
HIGH SCHOOL UPON THEIR COMMUNITY 22

IX. SUMMARY AND FINDINGS 24

**

B. College Attendance

1. Reasons for not attending college

2. Reasons for stopping out of college

C. Occupational Distribution of the Eighty-eight Graduates

1. Occupations as related to their attending school

2. Type of work

OUTLINE

A SURVEY OF THE VOCATIONAL STATUS OF EIGHTY- EIGHT GRADUATES OF PHILLIS WHEATLEY HIGH SCHOOL, HOUSTON, TEXAS

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Purpose of the study
- B. Method of Collecting data
- C. Scope of the study

II. DISCUSSION

A. Family information

1. Sex and age
2. Where born
3. Number of sisters and brothers
4. Parents
5. Marriages

B. College Attendance

1. Reasons for not attending college
2. Reasons for dropping out of college

C. Occupational distribution of the Eighty-eight graduates

1. Occupations in school and while attending school
 - a. Types of work

b. Permanency or regularly

c. Wages

2. Occupations since graduation

a. Length of time before securing employment.

b. Types of work

c. Permanency and regularity

d. The rate of shifting jobs

e. The cause of shifting jobs

3. Present occupations

a. Types of work

b. Wages affected by experience

D. The Influence of Phillis Wheatley high school upon the occupations of its graduates.

1. Jobs secured through school aid

2. School courses beneficial since graduation

E. The Influence of Graduates of Phillis Wheatley upon their community

1. Prevalent activities

2. Other activities

III. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

For the last seven years the leading business men and women and educators of Texas have been engaged in a very important matter, known as a study of the curriculum of the high schools in this state. It was the original purpose of this conference "to acquaint as many state educators as possible with significant phases of Negro Education in the Southwest". It was believed that this information concerning Negro education would serve as a stimulant to greater interest and more constructed activities. The creators of the conference, with Principal W. R. Banks of Prairie View College as head, further aimed to stimulate attitude toward Negro schools and therefore secure a more scientific basis for a program of improvement. The problems growing out of the deficiency of organization, equipment and personnel of the Negro schools of

Texas had attracted the attention of these educators. This attraction was such that the State Department of Education, with county and city superintendents, Negroes and white members of school faculties and representatives of philanthropic foundations responded readily to the first call to conference on Negro education, April 11, 1930. In the meeting of this conference a general survey was made of Negro Rural Schools, high schools and colleges. The conditions of these schools were of such that the members of the conference unanimously voted to repeat the conference the next year.

Some said that the present high school curriculum is not suitable because it only prepares one to enter a college for liberal arts. We all know that we have at present, and for a long time to come, too many Negro men and women finishing college with only that which it takes to teach a few high school subjects. Knowing that the success of any nation

or people depends very largely upon the occupational status of its individuals, it was advanced in one of the sessions of the vocational education group that many of the graduates who finish from the various high schools in Texas do not profit; because after finishing high school there is nothing for them to do in the line of making a living.

It was made plain that in order for the graduates who are finishing high school every year to get a suitable position for making a tolerable living the high schools must change their curriculum at least partly to that of a technical one instead of liberal arts. In an effort to clear out the real solution to the problem, an idea was advanced to make a vocational status survey of the high schools of Texas. After studying the situation it was found that a special revised survey would not only furnish the public with the solution or standing of the vocational status of the graduates of the various high schools but would

furnish other material pertaining to personal guidance, family, parents, marriages, and the like. All of this information will help to find out just what the children of our race and state should be taught in the high schools.

Foot note- Proceedings of the Fifth Educational Conference. Bulletin July, 1934, Volume 26, No. 1. Published Quarterly by Prairie View State College, Prairie View, Texas. pp. 8, "Brief History of the Conference".

QUESTIONNAIRE
VOCATIONAL STATUS OF GRADUATES OF
TEXAS
NEGRO HIGH SCHOOLS

1. Name _____ 2. Sex _____
3. Present address _____
4. Age _____ 5. Born in City or Rurals? _____
6. Number of Sisters _____ 7. Number of Brothers _____
8. Father living? _____ Mother? _____ Father and
mother separate? _____
9. Parents or Guardians rural or urban people? _____
10. Did parents or guardians own home when you graduated? _____
11. Did they own any other property? _____ What kind? _____
12. Are you married? _____ If so, how many children? _____
13. How long have you been married? _____
14. Give name and location of high school. _____
_____ Give date of graduation. _____
15. What kind of work did you do in high school? _____
16. Was the work regular or part-time? _____ Seasonal or
for the entire year? _____
17. What was your monthly wage? _____
18. How many months per year did you work? _____
19. Have you attended college? _____ If so, why did you stop? _____
_____ If not, why? _____
20. Do you still desire to extend your education? _____
21. What is your present occupation? _____

22. What is your present monthly wage? _____

23. Is your present position regular or part-time? _____

Seasonal or for the entire year? _____

24. How long have you held your present position? _____

25. Give names, dates, and length of time of other positions held since graduation.

Date	Position or Positions	No. of months held
1932	_____	_____
1933	_____	_____
1934	_____	_____
1935	_____	_____

26. Give reason or reasons for changing jobs.

Date	Reason for changing	Date	Reason for changing
1932	_____	1933	_____
	_____		_____
1934	_____	1935	_____
	_____		_____

27. How long after graduation was it before you secured employment? _____

28. List job or jobs which school aided you in securing since graduation. _____

29. List school courses taken by you in high school which have been of value in jobs held. _____

30. Is your wage affected by experience? _____

30-a. Is your salary raised because of service? _____

31. Does the salary of your present position depend upon "piece work" or do you get a flat wage? _____

32. In which of the following community activities are you a participant?

Name	Positions held by you
The Church _____	_____
The Lodge _____	_____
Social Clubs _____	_____
Others _____	_____

REMARKS

SCOPE

METHOD

This survey did not cover every high school in the state. It covered only the high schools that graduate a reasonable amount of boys and girls each year; mostly classes of 1935 and 1936. Schools are included in the study this year.

After the plan had been made clear to everyone the next problem was to discover a method by which such data and material could be secured. All other plans being set aside, the questionnaire (on page 5) method was mentioned and later adopted because of its efficiency in finding out definite information. Prairie View, participating in the study, journeyed to their respective localities and gathered the information during the first week in February, 1936.

SCOPE

This survey did not cover every high school in the state. It covered only the high schools that graduates a reasonable amount of boys and girls each year; mostly classes "AA", "A", and "B" schools are included in the study; this particular study does not cover any graduates beyond the year 1932. These persons graduated between the years 1932 and 1935. Students of Prairie View, participating in the study, journeyed to their respective localities and gathered the information during the first week in February, 1936.

In the whole group there were 5 between the ages of 16 and 20; 17 between the ages of 21 and 24; and 6 between the ages of 25 and 30.

FAMILY INFORMATION

It was indeed educational to have visited the many homes of the graduates of Phillis Wheatley high school and of the state High School in general, I believe. In the homes that I visited I found 88 graduates of Phillis Wheatley high school; 47 females and 41 males. Their ages ranged from 18 to 26. Among the females there were 26 between the ages of 18 and 20; 19 between the ages of 21 and 23; and 2 between the ages of 24 and 26;

TABLE NO. I

SHOWING AGE RANGE OF THE 88 GRADUATES

Age	Number of Graduates
18	6
19	15
20	13
21	21
22	20
23	5
24	6
25	1
26	1

In the male group there were 8 between the ages of 18 and 20; 27 between the ages of 21 and 23; and 6 between the ages of 24 and 26.

TABLE II

BIRTH PLACES OF PARENTS OF THE 88 GRADUATES

No. whose parents were born in Rurals.....	28
No. whose parents were born in Urbans ...	60

Twenty-eight of these persons were born in rural communities. We can see from this that over one-third of the total number of graduates of this particular city school are rural children. This brings out the fact that city schools are being crowded out because of poor facilities in the rural districts.

TABLE NO. II-A

BIRTH PLACES OF THE 88 GRADUATES

No. born in rurals	22
No. born in urban	66

TABLE NO. III

NO. OF SISTERS AND BROTHERS OF THE 88 GRADS.

Brothers	Graduates
0	47
1	19
2	10
3	3
4	7

Brothers		Graduates
5		1
6		1
Sisters		Graduates
0		46
1		19
2		13
3		6
4		2
5		2

Out of the total of 88 graduates, 46 of them have not any sisters and brothers. There were 82 sisters and brothers among the 88 graduates. Some families were extremely large compared to positions of the parents in the homes.

TABLE NO. IV

SHOWING DATA ON PARENTS OF THE 88 GRADUATES

No. of Persons	Father Living	Mother Living	Separated
47	Yes	Yes	No
4	Yes	No	---
16	Yes	Yes	Yes
20	No	Yes	---
1	No	No	---

Among the 88 graduates there were only one who has neither mother nor father. There were 16 whose fathers and mothers are living but separated; 4 who have father and no mother; 20 who have mothers and no fathers; 47 whose fathers and mothers are living and not separated.

TABLE NO. V

SHOWING THE PROPERTY STATUS OF THE PARENTS OF THE 88 GRADUATES

No. owning homes	46
No. owning other property	6

KINDS OF PROPERTY OWNED

	Number
Rural property	3
Rent houses	1
Automobiles	2

The parents of 46 graduates own their homes; 6 out of the total number own other property such as rent houses, land in rural districts, and automobiles.

TABLE II-A

BIRTH PLACES OF THE 88 GRADUATES

No. born in rurals	22
No. born in urban	66

A good many of the urban people who migrated from the rurals recently have not sold or lost their rural property. That is, the ones that accumulated anything during their stay in the rurals.

Over one-third of the total number of graduates are or have been married since their graduation. To be exact 29 married since graduation. The length of time in their marriages ranges from one month to 3 years. Out of the 29 married, one has children.

TABLE VI

COLLEGE ATTENDANCE OF THE 88 GRADUATES

Number attended college	14
Number dropped out for lack of finance	13
Other reasons for dropping out(ill).....	1
Unfinancial	62
Married	7
Did not desire	5
Ill health	2
Choice college crowded	1
Tired of School	10

It is surprising and even rather startling to know that out of the total of 88 graduates only 14 have attended college. Twelve of these 14 dropped out because of financial conditions; one was ill; and one grew tired and quit school. Out of the 74 that did not attend college at all 58 gave reasons as unfinancial; 7 married; 7 did not desire to continue their education; 1 was ill; and 1 said that the college which she planned to attend was too crowded for time being. Eighty-two of the 88 graduates still desire to continue their education.

OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE EIGHTY-EIGHT GRADUATES

Among the 88 graduates, I found that many occupations were engaged in during their high school career.

TABLE VII

POSITIONS OF 61 GRADUATES BEFORE GRADUATION

Positions	No. of Persons
Waiters	7
Porters	3
Delivery boys	13
Janitors	4
Bootblacks	5
Auto Mechanics	1
Cleaning and Pressing	1
Cooks	8
Maids	10
Common laborers	9

These occupations were house maids, washing and ironing, office work, cook, waiters, common laborers, porters, shoe repairing, taxi service, and cleaning and pressing. The majority of this total number is still holding to their same occupations. Some have found better positions since graduation from high school. All of these occupations were engaged in before and after school hours.

The problems of permanency and irregularity in employment did not set in upon these graduates until they had finished high school. While they were attending high school their wages ranged from \$8.00 to \$30.00 monthly.

TABLE VIII

SHOWING WAGE RANGE OF THE 61 GRADUATES WHO WORKED WHILE IN H. S.

Wage	No. of Persons
\$8.00 to \$13.00	20
\$14.00 to \$19.00	16
\$20.00 to \$25.00	12
\$26.00 to \$30.00	13

Some of these students had to work while in high school and had such hard time physically trying to work and keep up with their school subjects that when they finished high school, their minds were immediately turned from that of an educational outlook on life. Jobs like maids, waiting table, janitor work, taxi driving, and cleaning and pressing requires too much exertion for individuals who are engaged in school work.

TABLE IX

SCHOOL COURSES THAT HAVE BEEN OF VALUE TO THE 88
GRADS IN FINDING AND HOLDING
JOBS

Automobile mechanics	3
Manual training	2
Business arithmetic	5
Laundry	2
Commercial	1
English	16
Cooking	26
Sewing	16

Since graduation from high school 9 persons have held jobs as maids; 2 out of these 9 changed jobs only once; one has changed jobs three times; 5 have held the same job since

graduation. One person has been engaged in social service work since graduation in 1932. Since graduation, 29 have held regular jobs; 9 have held part-time jobs. These jobs continue like this for the entire year.

TABLE X

POSITIONS OF GRADUATES AT PRESENT

Positions	No. of Persons
Porters	3
Truck drivers	2
Common laborers	13
Taxi drivers	2
Waiters	7
Cooks	10
Maids	6
Janitors	2
Laundry (operators)	2
Cleaning and Pressing	1
Delivery boys	4

The length of time these jobs have been held range from 5 months to 4 years. Thirty-six are still unemployed; 52 have worked a good while since graduation, but are now unemployed.

TABLE XI

SHOWING WAGE RANGE AT PRESENT

Wage	No. of Persons
\$20.00 to \$29.00	23
\$30.00 to \$39.00	7
\$40.00 to \$49.00	9
\$50.00 to \$70.00	8

The wages of those who are employed range from \$20.00 to \$70.00 monthly.

It is interesting to know that 27 individuals who did not follow any occupation while attending school are not yet employed. Most of the students who are now employed and making a tolerable living are those who held jobs while attending high school. Out of the number that have secured employment the length of time between their graduation and getting these jobs was from 2 weeks to 3 years and 6 months. (Fifty-two are not employed yet; a few have held at least one job but are unemployed at present.)

From the time of graduation up to the present time out of the number of individuals(56) who have been working they have changed jobs 27 times, as Table X has previously shown. We can see from this that most of the employment is far from permanent.

TABLE XII

REASONS FOR CHANGING JOBS HELD SINCE GRADUATION

Reasons	Number of Persons
Business dull	5
Married	1
Did not like type of work	5
Work gave out	6
Better working hours	1
Better wages	7

Some of the important reasons for shifting jobs so much are as follows; business dull, better wages, better working hours, work closed down, and some few quit because they did not like the type of work. Keep in mind that this is the group that has been steadily employed on various jobs since graduation.

The majority of the individuals as I have said before, who are still holding these positions are the ones who worked while attending high school. This helps to bring out the fact that the students who had a little experience on jobs, and especially private jobs such as waiters and cooks, were the ones who secured employment and were able to maintain it after finishing school. The students who did not work while attending school were left by the wayside in many instances. Many were successful in securing employment but could not hold it because of inexperience and unguarded independence. Too, many had formed the idea that they knew enough to get better jobs than those offered them after graduation. Some few, after finding out that in order to live they had to come down from those high ideas, were successful in adapting themselves to the situation and are now holding, in some instances, better jobs than those who had experience before finishing high school. For example: one boy, while in school, established a cleaning and pressing shop and was

doing well in this business; later, after he had finished school, his business went down and he had to secure a position as delivery boy for a candy company. Six girls are at present holding jobs as maids, in private homes. Thirteen are doing common labor. Some are still holding stout hopes of getting a break, but our present economic condition is rapidly whipping their conscious and changing their attitudes towards a new and better outlook on life.

Among the males there were seven who changed or quit jobs because of low wages. In the various occupations the wages ranged from \$16.00 to \$70.00 monthly. This takes in both males and females. In this wage range majority of the wages were below the \$40.00 mark and it is very difficult to even exist, not live, in an urban community on such a small salary. (see Table No. XI).

THE INFLUENCE OF WHEATLEY HIGH SCHOOL UPON ITS
GRADUATES

Due to the fact that there is not a good follow-up system planned out in the Phillis Wheatley High School, it does not have a reputable amount of influence in helping the students plan their occupation and secure employment after graduation. This is not due to the lack of management of the individuals but to the general setup of the public school curriculum. No definite programs are made in the schools from special training in the various occupations; therefore, it is not necessary to make out a followup program. Persons cannot be recommended for positions that they know nothing of. So far, in securing employment for the graduates this school has done a very little but many students have been recommended so far as character and ability to do satisfactory work.

To be exact or frank, subjects alone do not help the graduates directly in securing employment. When these subjects are revised and placed in courses like cooking, laundering, wood work, commercial, and

the like, they are of grave importance to the graduates after finishing high school.

The curriculum is among the best of its kind for the student who wishes to continue his education in either a trade or towards a degree in arts or science, but the question is will everybody or every student be able to further his or her education after finishing high school. Due to the present condition only the negative side of the question stands out. Does our present curriculum need revising or do we need to establish a different type of free educational institution known as the vocational or technical high school? This problem can be solved only through actual findings and we are finding needs for such type of schools everyday as this economic condition passes against the poorly prepared men and women of our race.

All subjects taught in high schools are important to some extent, but we cannot take the curriculum as a whole and apply it to every occupation that an individual pursues. What good is Latin to a student who plans to follow cabinet making or automobile mechanics as an occupation? Is English

Literature important to the individual who plans to engage in electrical repair work? In our modern technical and vocational high schools, we find such subjects as business English, business arithmetic, shop mathematics, and many other revised courses and subjects that go to make up our various trade courses which are the ones that we are receiving the most benefit from now as a race.

Just as the situation stands, there are some individuals who have gained such recognition and influence in their communities.

Activities which the individuals engage in that are most prevalent are various clubs and auxiliaries of the churches, civic and social clubs for both young and old, and the high school alumni association. I must say here that the social and civic clubs are doing quite a deal for the poor people of the community, especially during the winter season.

TABLE XIII

REASONS FOR EMPLOYMENT OF MEN WITH HIGH EDUCATION

Reasons	No. of Persons
Business deals.....	6
Married	1
Wanted like type of work	0

THE INFLUENCE OF GRADUATES OF WHEATLEY HIGH SCHOOL
UPON THEIR COMMUNITY

Although these individual who are not fortunate enough to be in college now are burdened with the present conditions and very low standard of living some are very active in their communities. Some show ability to become great leaders if they only had the proper training. Just as the situation stands, there are some individuals who have gained much recognition and influence in their communities.

Activities which the individuals engage in that are most prevalent are various clubs and auxiliaries of the churches, civic and social clubs for both young and old, and the high school alumni association. I must say here that the social and civic clubs are doing quite a deal for the poor people of the community, especially during the winter season.

TABLE XIII

REASONS FOR CHANGING JOBS HELD SINCE GRADUATION

Reasons	No. of Persons
Business dull.....	5
Married	1
Didnot like type of work	5

TABLE XIII

REASONS FOR CHANGING JOBS HELD SINCE GRADUATION

Reasons	No. of Persons
Work gave out	6
Better working hours	1
Better Wages	7

There are many other important activities that these individuals are engaged and playing an active part in their respective localities. The main ones of these are those of play-ground programs including baseball, indoor-baseball, tennis, track, basketball, volley ball, marble games and the like. The play-ground movement is very new and holds plenty of healthful activities for those who wish to spend the evenings engaging in something other than sitting around the house all the time.

During my inquiry from house to house I found out many interesting things concerning our people. I visited homes that were humble and showed it in every respect; I went into homes that were not supposed to have been the condition in which I found them; and I visited homes of individuals whom I had observed from their daily appearance and was very surprised to have found the homes in such bad conditions. From this I

am forced to believe that there are still a number of people who are not living properly and economically on their family income. This is one of the main faults that is a great set back to the urban Negro.

4. The ages of the 50 graduates ranged from 18 to 25.

5. Out of the 50 graduates, 50 were born in the urban district; 25 were born in the rural.
6. There were 25 sisters among the 50 graduates.
7. There were 45 brothers to the 50 graduates.
8. Thirty-seven of the 50 graduates have fathers living; 45 have mothers living; the fathers and mothers of 9 of the 50 graduates are living but separated; one has neither father nor mother.
9. The parents of 50 of the 50 graduates are urban people; 25 have rural parents.
10. Out of the 50 graduates the parents of 45 did not own homes at time of graduation; 45 had parents who did own homes.
11. 50 of the graduates owned other property such as property in the rural, land houses and automobiles.
12. Twenty-five of the 50 graduates are married at present. There are 10 children to the twenty-five who are married.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

3. Among the 88 graduates there were 47 females and 41 males.
4. The ages of the 88 graduates ranged from 18 to 26.
5. Out of the 88 graduates, 60 were born in the urban district; 28 were born in the rurals.
6. There were 39 sisters among the 88 graduates.
7. There were 43 brothers to the 88 graduates.
8. Thirty-seven of the 88 graduates have fathers living; 42 have mothers living; the fathers and mothers of 9 of the 88 graduates are living but separated; one has neither father nor mother.
9. The parents of 66 of the 88 graduates are urban people; 22 have rural parents.
10. Out of the 88 graduates the parents of 42 did not own homes at time of graduation; 46 had parents who did own homes.
11. Six of the parents owned other property such as property in the rurals, rent houses and automobiles.
12. Twenty-nine of the 88 graduates are married at present. There are 18 children to the twenty-nine who are married.

13. The length of marriages of the 29 range from 1 month to 4 years.
14. All of the 88 graduates finished Phillis Wheatley High School between the years 1932 and 1935.
15. Kinds of work done by those that worked while in high school: waiters, porters, delivery boys, janitors, bootblack, cook, auto mechanic, cleaning and pressing, maid, and common labor.
16. The work done by the 61 while in high school was for part time and seasonal.
17. Their monthly wages ranged from two to twenty-five dollars.
18. Out of the 61 graduates that worked while in high school, 25 worked from 3 to 10 months per year; one worked 3 months per year; the remaining 35 worked the entire year.
19. Fourteen of the 86 graduates have attended college; thirteen stopped for the lack of finance; one grew tired of school. Out of the 74 that did not attend college 58 gave reasons as unfinancial; 7 married; 7 had no desire to further their education; one was ill; the other could not secure registration in choice college.
20. Eighty-three desire to further their education.

21. The occupations of the 52 graduates who are employed at present are as follows: porters, common laborers, truck drivers, taxi drivers, waiters, cooks, maids, janitors, laundry operators, cleaning pressing, and delivery boys.
22. The present monthly wages of the 52 who are now employed ranges from twenty to seventy dollars.
23. Twenty-nine of the positions are regular; 9 part time; 2 seasonal; 12 are for the entire year.
24. These 52 graduates have held their present positions from 3 months to 6 years. Some hold same positions since graduation.
25. Since graduation from 1932 to 1935, the following positions have been held by 52 graduates: porters, common laborers, truck drivers, taxi drivers, waiters, cooks, maids, janitors, and laundry operators. Two have changed positions one time; 8 have changed positions twice; 6 have changed positions three times.
26. The reasons for changing jobs are as follows: business dull, married, did not like type of work, work gave out, better working hours, better wages.
27. These 52 graduates who are now employed were from

- two weeks to 4 years securing their present positions.
28. The school aided two graduates in securing employment; one was cook; the other was office work.
29. The following courses have been valuable to the graduates who secured employment; chemistry, English, domestic science, manual training, cooking, automobile mechanics, and business arithmetic.
30. The wages of 14 are affected by experience. The salary remains the same.
31. The salary of 31 depends upon flat wages; the salary of 5 depends upon piece work; the salary of 16 depends upon both.
32. The 88 graduates are active in the following activities: The church-78; lodge-2; social clubs-13. The following positions are held; organist at church, president home-mission, matron in Y. W. A., secretary in club.

In conclusion, I wish to refer you to a statement made by our own Principal W. R. Banks of Prairie View State College in the Proceedings of the Sixth Educational Conference, held at Prairie View College, in 1935. "There is a very definite need for systematic Vocational Guidance, not only for the children of our High School, but for the teachers, ministers, and parents as well. Our civilization is too complicated to leave wholly in the hands of children the question of their life's vocation without some definite and judicious system of guidance".