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History And Development Of The Jasper Negro High School 1975 to 1935 at Jasper, Texas

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HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE JASPER
NEGRO HIGH SCHOOL
1875 to 1935 - at
JASPER, TEXAS

By

J. H. Rowe

A Thesis in Arts and Science Submitted
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Bachelor of Arts

in the

Division of Arts and Science

of the

Prairie View State College
Prairie View, Texas

August

1935

OK
[Handwritten Signature]

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DEDICATION

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TO MY GRANDSONS

W. H. Junior

and

Joseph Rowe Palmer

I

Dedicate

This

Thesis

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Present Board of Education

Since we began our work here in 1903, we have been asked many times by persons in various parts of the state and out of the state just how we have done what we have in a community like this, which is almost wholly rural, where the school people can not talk little and apparently are illiterate and are indifferent to educational progress.

Supervisors from the Department of Education in Texas and from Prairie View State College have visited us from time to time and have inquired "How did you do it?"—I'll give you the general answer that we have had the State Board have sent to us several times and they always expressed their admiration for the progress we have made and asked us to explain how we did it.

Does our people local people who have been in the thick of the fight, or the people, and the members of the teaching staff and members of the local Board of Education have asked us to do it.

It is the purpose of this study to make an effort, through a public one, to explain briefly how we did it.

The main end in this study has been to describe the work, both what has been done and the results that have been obtained.

INTRODUCTION

Since we began our work here in 1924, we have been asked many times by persons in various parts of the state and out of the state just how we have done what we have in a community like this, which is almost wholly rural, where the colored people own such little and apparently are illiterate and so indifferent to educational progress.

Supervisors from the Department of Education in Texas and from Prairie View State College have visited us from time to time and have inquired "How did you do it?" Field agents from the General Education Board and the Slater Board have come to us several times and they always expressed themselves as agreeably surprised at our accomplishments and asked us to explain how we did it.

Even our lovable local people who have been in the thickest of the fight, so to speak, and members of the teaching staff and members of the local Board of Education have asked how we did it.

It is the purpose of this study to make an effort, though a feeble one, to explain briefly how we did it.

The method used in this study has been to interview old residents, both white and colored and to make personal observations.

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE
JASPER NEGRO HIGH SCHOOL
JASPER, TEXAS
1875 to 1925

PART II

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL

- 1875- Two miles from Jasper, Texas, at Cold Springs (on five acres of land) Jasper Negro High School was founded.
- 1875- J. W. Moore (a wide awake white man) was the first principal.
- 1875-1880 Jack Adams was the second principal.
- 1880-1883 Frank Blunt (white) was the second principal.
- 1883-1888 C. N. Vinson was the fourth principal.
- 1888-1889 W. C. Lewis was the fifth principal.
- 1889-1894 J. A. Jones was the sixth principal.
- 1894-1896 W. H. Pinder was the seventh principal.
- 1896-1900 W. W. Frazier was the eighth principal.
- 1900-1908 P. P. Sharp was the ninth principal
- 1908-1911 W. L. Calhoun was the tenth principal
- 1911-1915 J. E. Horton was the eleventh principal.
- 1915-1922 J. C. Reid was the twelfth principal.
- 1922-23 C. O. Rogers was thirteenth principal.

1923-1924 E. B. Childless was serving as fourteenth principal.

In 1912 it was felt that the two acres on which the school was located was too much so one acre was sold for church purposes. The school had three rooms and three teachers.

Summary

The town of Jasper has a population of about six thousand people and of that number about two thousand are colored. The scholastic population at the present time is 633.

In 1884 the majority of the colored people in Jasper made their living by working at the saw mill, logging camps, turpentine camps, tin camps, and piling camps; some of them formed on a very small scale took in 1884.

Since 1884 the situation has just about reversed itself, that is, the majority of the colored people farm on a more or less large scale. Two years in succession colored farmers here won the prize by picking and ginning the first bale of cotton. Most of the colored people in the immediate town of Jasper had at various in the white hands about the premises of their employees.

An unusually fine relationship exists be-

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL

Location

The Jasper Negro High School is located in the town of Jasper, in Jasper County, in East Texas, about thirty miles from the line of Louisiana.

Surroundings

The town of Jasper has a population of about six thousand people and of that number about two thousand are colored. The scholastic population at the present time is 608.

In 1924 the majority of the colored people in Jasper made their living by working at the saw mills, logging camps, turpentine camps, tie camps, and piling camps; some of them farmed on a very small scale back in 1924.

Since 1924 the situation has just about reversed itself, that is, the majority of the colored people farm on a more or less large scale. Two years in succession colored farmers have won the prize by picking and ginning the first bale of cotton. Most of the colored people in the immediate town of Jasper work at service in the white homes about the premises of their employees.

An unusually fine relationship exists be-

GRADUATES SINCE 1894

tween the races in Jasper which accounts for a large extent for how well we have done with our school. We are aware of the fact that without this fine relationship it would have been impossible to have made such progress in our school.

- 1894.... 1 (a year before we had any graduation exercises)
- 1895.... 1 (the first year to have a class)
- 1896.... 7
- 1897.... 8
- 1898.... 8
- 1899.... 11
- 1900.... 12
- 1901.... 19
- 1902.... 20
- 1903.... 24
- 1904.... 20
- 1905.... 17

This makes a total of 157 graduates in eleven years.

On October 1, 1904, a full time vocational agriculture teacher was employed and paid wholly by the Board of Trustees. The Home Economics Department established, a teacher for this department was employed and paid by the Board and the Smith-Hughes agency. A science teacher was employed in 1905.

DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 1924

Academic Improvements

In 1924 the enrollment was 116. Since that time we have had a steady increase in enrollment until in 1935 we had an enrollment of over 500. The class graduations stand as follows:

1924.....	1	(a year before we had any graduation exercises)
1925.....	4	(Our first year to have a class)
1926.....	7	
1927.....	8	
1928.....	4	
1929.....	12	
1930.....	22	
1931.....	19	
1932.....	20	
1933.....	34	
1934.....	20	
1935.....	17	

This makes a total of 167 graduates in eleven years.

On October 1, 1924, a full time Vocational Agriculture teacher was employed and paid wholly by the Board of Trustees. The Home Economics Department established, a teacher for this department was employed and paid by the Board and the Smith-Hughes money. A science teacher was employed in 1928.

Full four year courses in both Vocational Agriculture and Home Economics were offered in October 1924.

One half year course in each of School Management and Rural Education was offered in 1928, upon the recommendation of the General Education Board. One full year course in Science was offered in 1928. Also, a course in General Science was offered in 1934.

Community Relationships:

a. Health. In 1924 when we took charge, the school was in a very unsanitary condition. It was located on one acre of land and the toilets were right at the back doors. Many of the mill toilets, which were in close proximity to the school, were on the line of the school campus.

The first thing we did was to persuade our school board to get more land for our school so that we could move our toilets further away. The surface toilets had been in use for many years but, after a while, we persuaded the trustees to use the pit toilets, since they would not only be more sanitary but also more economical.

Our second step was, in company with two of the patrons, to call upon the mill superintendent to talk with him about the mill toilets that were so near our school building. It did not take us very long to convince him that they were a menace to health conditions of our children, especially on account of the many flies that carried malaria. He at once had these toilets moved.

Our next move was not so easily carried out. It consisted of cleaning up the house and the student body. In our chapel talks, we began to work up sentiment in favor of cleanliness. We also emphasized this in other places, churches, meetings and other gatherings where we were present. We set the example for the teachers and the student body by taking a broom ourselves and sweeping and scrubbing until things really looked better. Our other teachers caught the spirit and joined us and, finally, the students became interested and the work was done so far as the house was concerned.

We do not as yet have a janitor in our school. All these years we have kept the cleanest school house in our section by simply following

the plan of making out a sweeping roster, assigning two girls to sweep each day. These girls do their work well because they like to do it, because they have been made to feel that it is absolutely essential to keep healthful surroundings in order that we may be healthy.

We next undertook the delicate and not at all fascinating problem of cleaning up the student body. We tried many things with varying results but, finally, hit upon sympathy, true interest, tact and example. Now, not with one but with all of them, we have one of the cleanest looking student bodies to be found anywhere.

Very often we have been told that "near miracles" have been wrought in our school. However, we have not used any "rough stuff" to get things done. We have used the method of giving people the facts about health, we have used kindness (yet we have been positive) and we have set the example day by day and have really gotten results. We know that instinctively children imitate those whom they like so we endeavor by all honest means to make the children like us, then they will imitate us. We have not

used any "Clean Up Campaigns" or "Clean Up Days." We have simply set ourselves to the task and have kept everlastingly at it day by day and secured results. Many such days have been declared since we have been in our work, but we have paid no attention to them because we were already clean.

All people work better when they have a specific problem. All people have problems but many are not conscious of their problems so we must with indisputable facts make people conscious of their problems, then they usually are willing to do something about them. The right kind of leadership with the proper methods can get things done with a group conscious of its problems.

b. Improvements in living quarters. Our next and last problem in connection with our health program was to get the houses screened. The first problem was that the people could not make screen doors and windows. Many were working at the mill and could get the material, so we proposed to make the necessary doors and windows in the school shop if the patrons would furnish the material. That got the thing going. So, a large number of the

workers bought material to put on the Company's houses. Then, the Company itself decided to screen all of the houses in the Negro section. And, it did.

Such an idea is contagious so it spread throughout the other Negro sections of the town and, as a result, most (not all) of the homes among the colored people are screened. With the wave of screening homes went the idea of better homes in which to live and, as a result, many (but not enough yet) new homes were built not only in the town but in the country near by modern homes have been built.

As a means of stimulating the children to help their parents keep the homes clean, the Principal makes an occasional visit to the homes and afterwards reports what he saw. He takes care to pick good cases and that his visits are not announced. That keeps all the children on the alert for him. The Principal would not embarrass anyone for anything. He knows where the bad cases are and states that it will be time to visit them some day and, my! how the children

work to get their houses in order for that visit. Since they know not the day nor the hour, they just keep on cleaning up until it becomes a habit. Then, the work is done.

Physical Improvements:

1. Increase in School Land. In 1924, ten acres of land were added to the school property by purchase from the Houston Oil and Pipe Line Company.

2. Additional equipment for instructional purposes. During 1925 and 1925 equipment for use in Vocational Agriculture and Home Economics work in the amount of \$1,000 was purchased (\$500 for each). The colored people raised \$500 of this amount and the General Education Board and Smith-Hughes Fund furnished the other \$500.

Books were purchased for the library in the amount of \$300. The colored people, Rosenwald Fund, and the General Education Board secured the funds for this purchase. This was done in 1926. In this same year, \$250 worth of equipment (\$125 each) was purchased for the Vocational Agriculture and the Home Economics work. The colored people paid the major part of this money.

In 1927 \$200 worth of books was added to the library, \$139 of the amount being paid by the

Rosenwald Fund and the remainder being paid by the colored people.

In 1928 the school was fully accredited by the State Board of Education at Austin, Texas.

While in 1925 the school became recognized as Jasper County Training School, in 1933 the name of the school was changed to the Jasper Negro High School, as the Slater Board withdrew its aid in 1933.

We have steadily added books and equipment until today we have \$1,500 worth of equipment for use in Vocational Agriculture and \$1,500 worth of equipment for use in Home Economics. We have \$1,000 worth of books for the library including seven sets of up-to-date encyclopedias, supplementary books for teaching English, History and the elementary grade subjects amount to about 501 volumes.

3. Additional Buildings. Two rooms were added to the original building in 1917 and a two room building was erected in 1922. All of this happened before our connection with the school so that we began work with seven rooms and seven teachers.

In 1924 a wood-house was erected at a cost of \$1,250. This has probably been the greatest saving since our time. We were told by the man who hauled the wood that the wood-house saved \$50.00 for the school the first year. Before the construction of this house the mill people would steal the wood the night following the day upon which it was unloaded on the campus.

Early in the spring of 1925 the Principal's Home was erected at a cost of \$2,300. Of this amount, the General Education Board paid \$900 and the remainder of the money was furnished by the local citizens, colored and white. Several of the colored citizens donated as much as \$25 each and some of the white people donated as much as \$60 each. Every cent of the cost of construction of the building was paid at the very first commencement.

The Bludworth Farm Shop was also erected in 1925 at a cost of \$800. The General Education Board furnished \$400 of this amount and the remainder was furnished by the colored people.

In 1926 an addition for an extra class-

room was added to the Bludworth Shop at a cost of \$600. The colored people paid \$200 of this amount and the remainder of the money was furnished by the School Board.

In 1926 also a basket-ball park was built at a cost of \$500. The park was built by the coach, teachers and students and paid for by the colored people. In fact, the entire park and all buildings were wired and paid for by the colored people, except the Home Economics building which was wired by the Board of Trustees in 1924. A rural telephone line built into Jasper (one mile away) and paid for by the colored people was also an achievement of 1924.

In 1935, the new high school building was constructed at a cost of \$17,000. It is one of the most modern little buildings, both in construction and equipment, in all rural Texas. It consists of eleven rooms - eight classrooms, a book room, a library, chapel and the Principal's Office, really making a total of twelve rooms.

The chapel is seated with 600 folding chairs at a cost of \$450. The School Board paid \$300 of this amount and the remaining \$150 was

contributed by colored people, greatly assisted by their white friends. This was the first time the white friends had been called upon in large numbers and they responded cheerfully and liberally.

Our school building was a PWA project and was constructed with PWA labor, otherwise it would have cost from \$30,000 to \$40,000.

Methods of Raising Finance:

We used various methods, but for the most part we used the method of friendly rivalry among the students or classes or teachers. Always, the emphasis was upon "friendly rivalry" We cannot tell how we worked it up to such a high pitch, but the interest really ran high at times. Each winner's picture was done in oil and placed in the school's studio or, if preferred, the winner might have \$10 in money, the cost of the picture. Not one winner chose the money prize, so anxious was each to let coming generations see the person who had done so much for the school.

The scheme has worked marvelously well for the past ten years and it still works. The

first year we offered a fountain pin and a wrist watch to the winners. The campaign lasted six weeks and we realized the magnanimous sum of \$32.50. We gave a \$7 fountain pin as a prize, thus leaving us the handsome balance of \$25.50 to operate upon.

At this time the people had not been educated to the point where they would give. Many times the solicitors came back with the complaint that the people would not give them anything, and would curse the new teachers. But, they were always told not to become discouraged and not to say anything that would offend the public but to go on their way to the next person with a smile.

The second rally campaign we offered the picture described above and set six weeks as the time limit. At the end of the period when we counted up the money we found we had \$435 and that only one winner qualified for the \$10 picture. In the third rally we raised \$560; in the fourth, \$830 and, so on for the remainder of the time. We never raised one cent less than we asked but oftentimes realized

from \$50 to \$200 over what was asked. Many times individual contestants would raise over \$100. A few times, individual contestants have raised over \$200. Mrs. Geneva Peters, now an instructor at P. V. C. raised \$205 and some time later, Mrs. Thelma Stewart-Rowe raised \$240. No campaign lasted longer than six weeks.

We would figure out very carefully what money we needed and would then organize for raising it by encouraging two of the most popular students to run for the prize. Much interest would be manifested by the students in this part of the campaign, which soon resolved itself into a "Popularity Contest." These students would be expected to raise about \$200 of the money requested, and they very often raised more. The teachers were given a small quota each. For instance, high school teachers \$15; grade teachers who were known to be good hustlers, \$10; grade teachers who were not such good hustlers, \$5; the Principal was asked to raise what the high school teachers raised. It came.

All of the financial transactions were above board and as a result there has not been

any unpleasant aftermath following any of our financial campaigns. We always buy what we say we need with the money raised.

There are some other things for which we raise money other than for school purposes, namely:

1. Tubercular stamps or Christmas Seals.

We always sell from \$10 to \$15 worth each year.

2. Charity. We teach our children that there are many orphan children and very old people who do not have anyone to brighten Christmas time and life for them and that it is our duty to do just that kind of work that our own joy may be fuller. There is no compulsion about the giving. The children give just what they feel they are able and willing to give. For eleven years their gifts have run all the way from \$8 to \$11 yearly. This money is taken to the wholesale house and spent for confectioneries and groceries. These confectioneries and groceries are divided among the needy. For two weeks, the children submit the names of all the orphans and old people they know in the community. We take the list and fix a bag for each one and deliver the packages to them on Christmas morning. What a

joy it is to perform this pleasant task! The children assist at times. They like it.

3. Inter-Racial Commission. The Negro male members are requested to make contributions each year. In 1929 our contribution was \$50. Since that time we have paid from \$5 to \$10 each, just whatever has been requested of us. Mr. W. R. Banks, Principal of Prairie View State College, is the Secretary of the Commission.

4. The Older Boys' Conference. Each year we send our boys to the Older Boys' Conference at a cost from \$20 to \$40.

5. Educators. We employ the best educators in the state to come and address our student body at commencement time.

6. Caps and Gowns. Since 1929 we have furnished our students with the standard caps and gowns at commencement time.

SUMMARY

What has been done in this rural community can be done in almost any other community in Texas. However, one must get started right by making a careful and thorough survey of the community in order to ascertain the needs, both local and general. Select from both the most pressing needs and organize to meet them.

There are two kinds of organizations spoken of by Almack and Bursch, namely; Formal and Informal. Both are good but the informal method has been used in this particular community, the leader or Principal most always taking the lead and organizing the remainder of the group around him as a nucleus and getting things done.

The leader must always be able to see things in their proper perspective, keeping first things first, always planning carefully and always working his plans. There is a cause for everything and the leader must be able to find and remove the hindering causes and the results will disappear.

The toilets were the cause of much of the unsanitary condition in this study. The scarcity of land caused the toilets to be so near the building in one case, and pure negligence in the other. Lack of money caused the lack of buildings and equipment and teachers necessary for good work.

We have dealt honestly and sympathetically with our group here and no other group will ever cooperate better with a leader than this group has done. Groups generally will cooperate with leaders who will cooperate with them.

PRESENT BOARD OF EDUCATION

Our present Board of Education is as follows:

Hon. John H. Seale, President.
Mr. H. N. Gibbs, Vice-President
Mr. D. M. Smith
Mr. B. G. Lindsey
Mr. A. L. Mays
Mr. J. A. Lanier
Mr. B. S. Ratcliff
Prof. J. F. Parnell, Superintendent
of Schools.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

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OLD RECORD OF THE SCHOOL

SCHOOL RECORDS SINCE YEAR 1924

MR. B. R. ADAMS

MR. JOHN H. SEALE