

Schools for African-Americans in Horry were poorly funded

Local historian David C. Wilson has written a paper on the history of African-American schools in Horry County. We share it with our readers as a two-part series.

Sixty-four years ago the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that segregation in public school by race was unconstitutional.

This paper examines how black students were treated in Horry County public schools before and after the 1954 court decision, starting with the Rosenwald Initiative.

Julius Rosenwald, a New York philanthropist, partnered with the incomparable Dr. Booker T. Washington in 1911 to perform a public service of the highest order. Together they made a contribution of enduring value that changed the course of American history. It was called the "most influential philanthropic force that came to the aid of Negroes at that time."

It eventually provided seed grants for the construction of more than 5,300 buildings in 15 states, including schools, shops, and teachers' houses, which were built by and for African-Americans. Most of these school buildings are now gone, as is expected because they were

replaced by modern structures during the schools equalization program.

The Rosenwald initiative had four parts:

1. Rosenwald appropriation,
2. white contribution,
3. Negro contribution [local community], and
4. public contribution.

Prior to and during the Rosenwald initiative, children living in rural areas attended classes in their local churches. Even after this initiative, many children continued to attend school in their local churches until the early 1940s.

The typical community school during this period was a two-room wood structure with outdoor toilets and some form of drinking water, usually a hand water pump located on the school grounds. The schools generally housed grades one through seven, some including up to eighth grade.

Few teachers at the time had four-year college degrees. More importantly, the lack of resources



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resulted in poor educational outcomes for black children.

Each step along the way resulted in an improvement in education for African-Americans.

There were only three high schools in Horry County for black students, namely Loris Training School, Poplar Training School (Both schools were established about 1931 and awarded high schools in 1940), and Whittemore Training School (established in 1870 and awarded high school status about 1931).

The latter graduated its first high school class in about 1933, when only grades 1–10 were required to earn a state high school diploma. The eleventh grade was added in 1933 to offer a state high school diploma.

The school added twelfth grade in 1949, following South Carolina's change of its high school graduation requirements in 1944 to include grades one through 12 required to earn a state high school diploma.

Before 1940, Whittemore Training School was the only school in Horry County where a black student could earn a state high school diploma. These



Construction:	1926–27
Rosenwald Appropriation:	\$700.00
White Contribution:	\$0.00
Negro Contribution::	\$700.00
Public Contribution:	\$1,500.00
Total Cost:	\$2,900.00

Most schools for African-American children at the turn of the century were held in churches. Contributions by philanthropists Julius Rosenwald and Dr. Booker T. Washington led to the construction of more than 5,300 schools in the the United States for African-American children. The Aynor Allen Colored School, pictured here, is typical of the schools built under the "Rosenwald Appropriation."

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schools did not have a gymnasium or facilities for indoor sports.

Many African-American high schools during this period in the South were, by law, using the word “training” instead of “high” because most started as grade schools, and grades were added over the years to include the eleventh grade; at that time, high school only went to the eleventh grade to offer a state high school diploma.

The state required grade 12 starting in 1944; however, it took a few years to roll through. It was not until 1929 that the first group of black students received state high school diplomas in South Carolina because there was no black school in the entire state that offered a

high school diploma.

These schools generally housed elementary, middle, and high school students in the same building; therefore, they were not distinct high schools by name. However, the high school diploma given was the same as those for white students. A lack of resources to educate black children before 1954 was a huge problem. As for black students who lived in north-eastern Horry County:

Those students living on the east side of the Waccamaw River attended high school at Poplar Training School, and the students on the northwestern side of the river attended Loris Training School. Whittemore High School served black students from attendance areas of Myrtle Beach, Conway,

Aynor, and Burgess.

The Loris Training School (high school) and Poplar Training School (high school) were established in 1940. Therefore, before 1940, there was only one high school in Horry County for black students.

All competitive sports took place outdoors. There were very few school buses to transport children from their local communities to either of these schools.

Often, in the 1940s, if students wanted to attend high school, they needed to board with a relative or family member living near one of these three schools.

In 1941, South Carolina Gov. Burnet Maybank established a legislative committee to study the state's public education. Part of the com-

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mittee's report focused on the inequalities in schooling between the races. For example, 19 counties out of 46 lacked high schools for blacks, and there were only eight school buses in the state to transport black children to school.

The 1947 report, published in 1948, also found that South Carolina education was inadequately funded compared to other southern states. Once again, the inequities between the races were staggering.

For example, investment for whites was approximately \$221 per pupil, compared with \$45 per pupil for black students.

These monies were over the entire school year and the disparity amounted to a ratio of 5:1.

S. C. Gov. James F. Byrnes (1951–1955) proposed a special tax to improve education for blacks, and, in 1951, the state passed a three-cent sales tax to fund a statewide program of school construction and finance the equalization program, which was designed to equalize white and black public schools.

This campaign was triggered by the *Briggs v. Elliott* case, which was a lawsuit based on Clarendon County's challenge of the state constitution's “separate but equal” education provision, which had made its way to the high court.

The “separate but equal” doctrine was based on the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision in 1896, which ruled that segregation by race was legal as long as equal facilities and

resources were provided to both races.

The equalization school program was intended to construct new African-American elementary and high schools across South Carolina to circumvent a potential desegregation ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Next week: the court cases impacting Horry County school desegregation.

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He attended Todd Swamp Colored School, Poplar Elementary School, and Chestnut Consolidated High School.



and on and on and on.

I taught this kid to walk and talk. So, I guess it's only fair that she should teach me how to exfoliate and conceal.

May 31, 2018

Supreme court ruling changed the course of education here

Part 2

Dec. 22, 1950, Harry Briggs of Clarendon County, filed a lawsuit in Federal District Court challenging the constitutionality of its "separate but equal" education provision. Aside from Briggs v. Elliott (Clarendon County, SC, 1950), there were four other similar cases brought before the court during this period.

They were Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (Kansas, 1952); Davis v. Board of Education of Prince Edward County (Virginia, 1952); Boiling v. Sharpe (Washington, D.C., 1952), and Gebhart v. Belton (Delaware, 1951). All five cases challenged the constitutionality of segregation of public schools by race.

As the other four cases challenging the segregation of schools by race made their way to the US Supreme Court, Chief Justice Earl Warren combined Briggs and the others four cases under the Brown case.

Therefore, the case that came to be known as Brown v. Board of Education was actually the name given to the five separate cases that were heard by the US

Supreme Court concerning the issue of segregation in public

schools.

Although the facts of each case were different, the main issue in each was the constitutionality of state-sponsored segregation in public schools.

Once again, Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund handled these cases.

On May 17, 1954, the US Supreme Court ruled in the Brown v. Board of Education case, in a nine to zero decision, that school segregation violated the "Equal Protection Clause" under the Fourteenth Amendment and was therefore unconstitutional.

The high court also declared that separate schools were "inherently unequal" and said in 1955 that the schools must desegregate with "all deliberate speed."

This was a major decision for blacks, because, after 86 years of trying to gain equality in their state, the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution had final-



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ly lived up to its creed. Not only did this decision reverse the doctrine of "separate but equal" that was refined under the Plessy v. Ferguson decision, it reversed centuries of segregationist practice and thought in America. The name of each grammar school depicted was spelled during that time in state and county history.

For example, the word "colored" was used to describe a black or African-American person. Segregation by race was very rigorous and enforced by state law.

Often, the inside cover of textbooks was stamped in large black capital letters such as "FOR COLORED USE ONLY."

Although most grammar schools in the county were constructed of wooden frame buildings, the schools for white students were substantially better than the black schools, including in the landscape.

After the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court's decision, there was mass construction of equalization schools for black students in South Carolina; therefore, the number of "colored schools" were consolidated under fewer new brick schools, with school buses to transport the children to and

from school.

These new elementary schools became feeders to the Chestnut High, Finklea High, and Whittemore High schools. There were no distinct junior high or middle schools for black students in the county.

To accommodate the middle grades, the three high schools included seventh and eighth grades and it was not uncommon for students to be taught by the same teacher in middle and high school. This equalization school model lasted until 1970 when all public schools in South Carolina desegregated.

Summary

After the 1954 Supreme Court decision, Chestnut Consolidated and Finklea Consolidated schools were established and constructed in 1954 and 1955, respectively.

Also, Whittemore Training School was rebuilt in 1954 and renamed Whittemore High School. In addition, elementary feeder schools were constructed around the county under the program.

Even though the separate but equal doctrine from the Plessy court decision was effectively

overturned, South Carolina continued, along with other Southern states, to pursue it. These states reasoned that the equalization schools program would preserve the racial segregation of South Carolina public schools.

Under this program, the former Whittemore Training School became Whittemore High School in 1954, which made it an equalization school after modernizing, including additions made to the school building and the construction of new elementary schools as feeders, and so on.

These schools and their feeder schools operated under the separate but equal doctrine from 1954 to 1970, when all public schools in South Carolina desegregated. Hence, the South Carolina public school system operated under the defunct Plessy v. Ferguson ruling of 1896, which was effectively overturned by the Brown case in 1954.

Chestnut Consolidated School, Finklea Consolidated School, and Whittemore High School are listed as equalization schools by the S. C. Department of Archives and History because they were con-

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structed under the equalization program; therefore, they qualify for a South Carolina Equalization School Historical Marker.

The Chestnut Alumni Association erected its Historical Marker in June 2011 on the site of North Myrtle Beach Middle School, which is where the former all-black school was located.

The 1954 US Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (making segregation by race unconstitutional) can be traced back to the *Dred Scott* decision in 1857 (upholding slavery by ruling that slaves were not citizens) via the Fourteenth Amend-

ment of 1868 (granting citizenship to all those born in the United States, regardless of color), which overturned the *Dred Scott* decision, and then directly to the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision in 1896 (making segregation by race constitutional).

The irony of the 1896 and 1954 decisions is that both decisions were based on the Fourteenth Amendment (equal protection clause), but they arrived at two completely opposite decisions.

List of Horry County known equalization schools

Allen Elementary School (black), 1954 (Aynor)3

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Bucksport Elementary School (black), 1954 (Bucksport)3

Carver Elementary School (black), 1954 (Myrtle Beach)3

Chestnut Elementary and High School (black), 1954 (Wampee)1

Cochran Elementary School (black), 1954, (Conway)3

Finklea Consolidated School (black), 1954 (Finklea)2

Floyds Elementary School (black), 1954 (Floyds Crossroads)2

Levister Elementary School (black), 1953 (Aynor)3

Longs Elementary School, 1955 (Longs)1

Poplar Elementary School (black), 1954 (Poplar)1

Sweet Home Elementary School (white), 1953

Whittemore Elementary School (black), 1954 (Conway)3

Whittemore High School (black), 1954 (Conway)

Although South Carolina did not comply with the court's 1954 decision until 1970, and black schools were still lacking resources compared to white schools, there were still substantial improvements in the facilities and resources to educate black students in Horry County from 1954 to 1970.

These improvements changed the course of history for the better

and have had a positive ripple effect up to the present.

The author's personal experience in Horry County public schools before 1954 and after 1954 supports this historical perspective.

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