



By David C. Wilson—May 17, 2018

Public Schools for African-Americans in Horry County, South Carolina (1930–1970)

INTRODUCTION

Today, 64 years ago, on May 17, 1954, the US Supreme Court ruled that segregation in public school by race was unconstitutional. The journey to equality in the United States between the two predominant races, white and black, in school can be traced back to an 1857 US Supreme Court decision also known as the Dred Scott decision, in which the US Supreme Court ruled that slaves were not citizens, which effectively legalized slavery. In 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, which defined citizenship and included the equal protection clause, essentially overturning the Dred Scott decision. Subsequently, another major US Supreme Court case known as *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) resulted in the separate but equal doctrine for blacks and whites. South Carolina and the other southern states complied with the segregation part of the law, but the equal part was a dismal failure. In 1954, the US Supreme Court ruled that segregation by race in public school was unconstitutional.

THE ROSENWALD INITIATIVE

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. Mr. 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



Poplar Training School (1940–1954)

Poplar Training School was the high school for black students in northeaster Horry County from 1940–1954. The building was erected in 1926 with seed money from the Rosenwald Foundation as Poplar Grove Colored School. There was another building on the campus at the time called Poplar Grove Vocational School. In 1940 when a high school was approved to offer high school diplomas, both Poplar Grove Schools were consolidated under a new name, Poplar Training School, which served grades first through eleventh. The twelfth grade was added about 1949.



Chestnut Consolidated High School (1954–1970)

*Chestnut Consolidated High School replaced Poplar Training School as the high school for black students in the area from 1954–1970. In addition, Chestnut served black students from the northwestern side of the Waccamaw River. The school opened in the fall of 1954 as an equalization school and operated in the spirit of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) court's decision's "separate but equal doctrine" until all public schools in South Carolina desegregated in 1970.*



Public Schools for African-Americans in Horry County, South Carolina (1930–1970), cont'd

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 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 twelve (1–12) 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 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 twelve 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 Northeastern 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.

SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOLS EQUALIZATION PROGRAM

In 1941, South Carolina Governor Burnet Maybank established a legislative committee to study the state’s public education. Part of the committee’s



Public Schools for African-Americans in Horry County, South Carolina (1930–1970), cont'd

report focused on the inequalities in schooling between the races. For example, nineteen counties out of forty-six 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 \$221.00 per pupil, compared with \$45.00 per pupil for black students. These monies were over the entire school year and the disparity amounted to a ratio of 5:1.

South Carolina Governor 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 US Supreme Court.

THE COURT CASES

On December 22, 1950, Mr. Harry Briggs of Clarendon County, South Carolina 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, DC, 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.

THE LANDMARK US Supreme COURT DECISION

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 finally 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.

GRAMMAR SCHOOLS FOR BLACK PUPILS

The name of each grammar school depicted on pages 8–13 are shown the way it was spelled during that time in state and county history (*Courtesy of South Carolina Department of Archives and History*). It is encouraged that all of this paper in its entirety and the schools be viewed in the context of the time. For



Public Schools for African-Americans in Horry County, South Carolina (1930–1970), cont'd

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. The pictures were taken for insurance purpose, but they offer valuable information for historians and those looking to put that challenging period into historical perspective.

Before the Rosenwald initiative, schools for black students were held in the community church. Once the Rosenwald Initiative got underway, the new schools were almost always built near the community church. There were some schools constructed that were not part of the Rosenwald Initiative (about 50%), which will become clear to readers as they browse the next pages. These schools generally educated grades 1–7, after which children living in rural areas had no chance of attending high school because of the lack of transportation as mentioned in the first pages of this paper. After the 1954 US 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 South Carolina Department of Archives and History because they were constructed 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 Amendment 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



Public Schools for African-Americans in Horry County, South Carolina (1930–1970), cont'd

(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
- 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 (Loris)

- 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.■

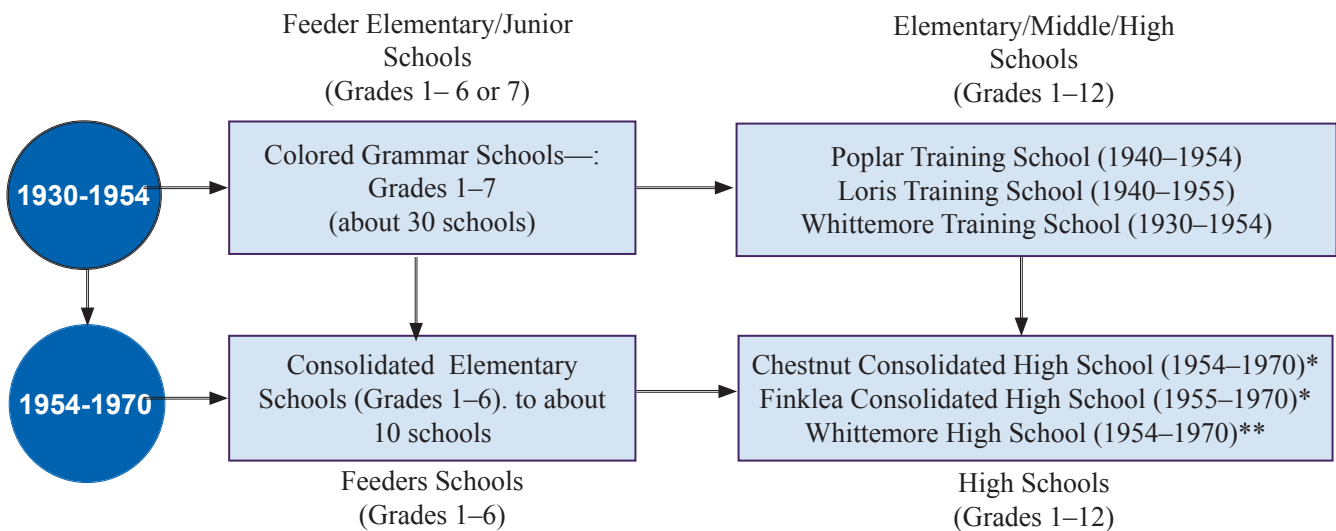


David C. Wilson

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Note: Dave attended Todd Swamp Colored School, Poplar Elementary School, and Chestnut Consolidated High School.

Summary Flowchart of Schools for African-Americans in Horry County (1930–1970)



¹Feeder schools to Chestnut Consolidated High School

²Feeder school to Finklea Consolidated High School

³Feeder schools to Whittemore High School

*Included grades 1–12.. Other feeder elementary schools were in separate buildings with their own name recognition.

**The feeder elementary schools were in separate buildings with their own name recognition.

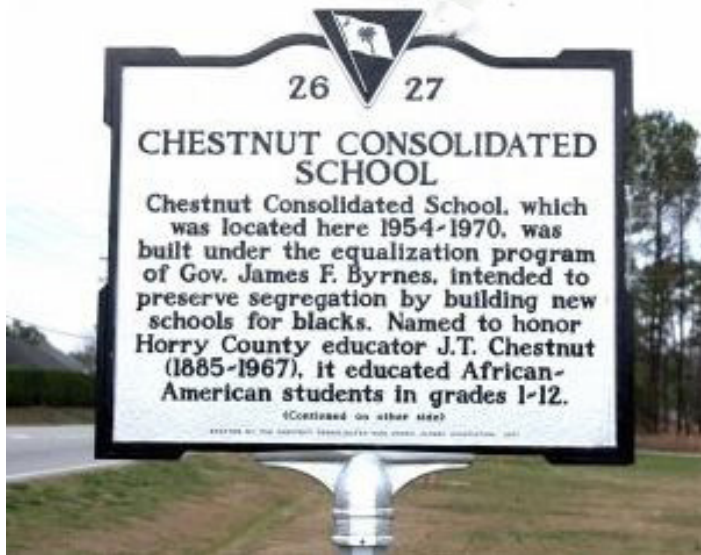


Gallery 1: Historical Markers for African-American High Schools—Equalization Schools

Only two of the twelve known equalization schools in Horry County have erected historical markers based on their equalization status. The schools are Chestnut Consolidated High School and Levister Elementary School. Their historical markers are shown below. Please note the front side

of Chestnut's marker does not include "High" in the name, but it is included on the backside of the marker. This is because the school housed grades one through twelve; therefore, the name did not represent a distinct high school.

Chestnut Consolidated High School



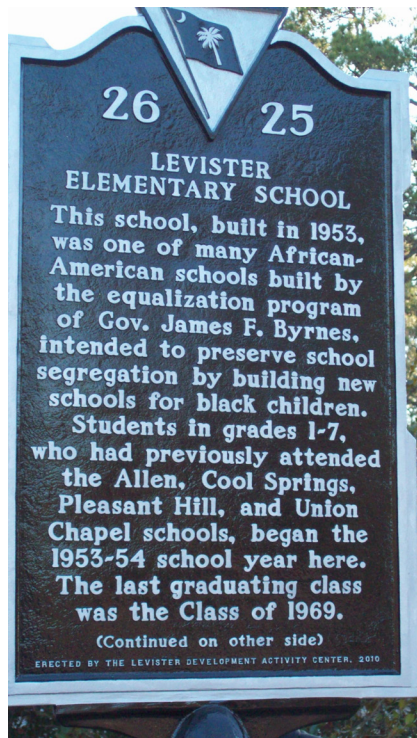
Front



Back

Marker erected by Chestnut Consolidated High School Alumni Association, 2011.

Levister Elementary School

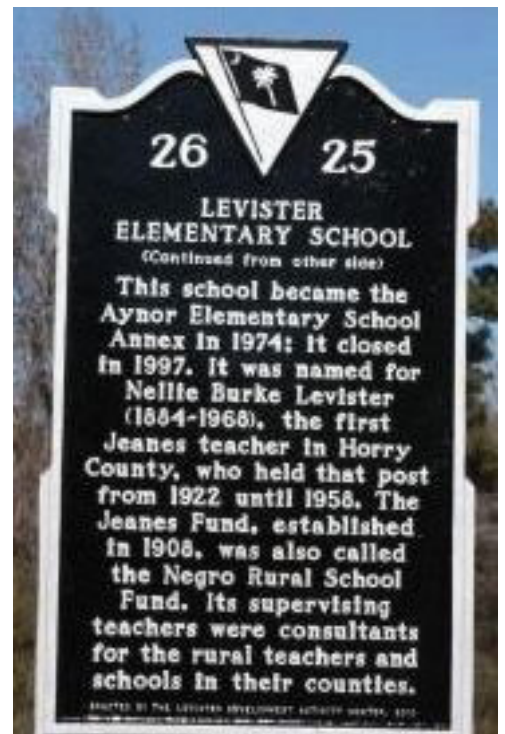


Front



Levister Elementary School (1953–1969)

The establishment of Levister Elementary School is an example of how the many colored schools around the county were consolidated under the governor's school equalization school program. Hence, the word "colored" was one of the legal methods to identify black people in the South. Therefore, its use here and throughout the paper in keeping with the context of the time.



Back

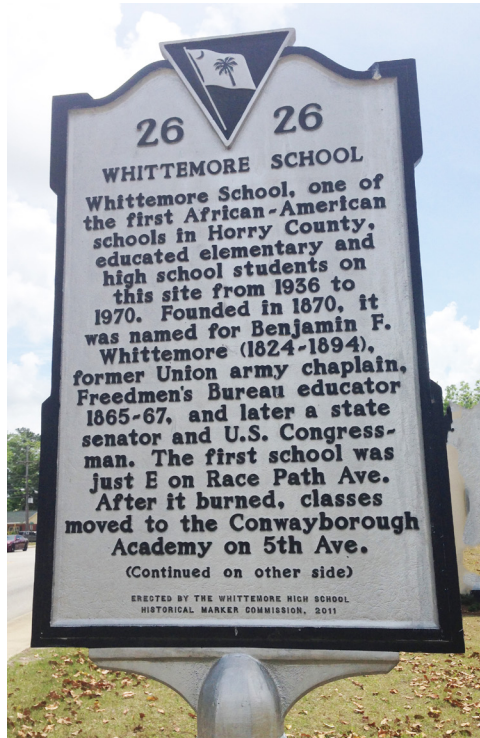
Marker erected by the Levister Development Activity Center, 2010.



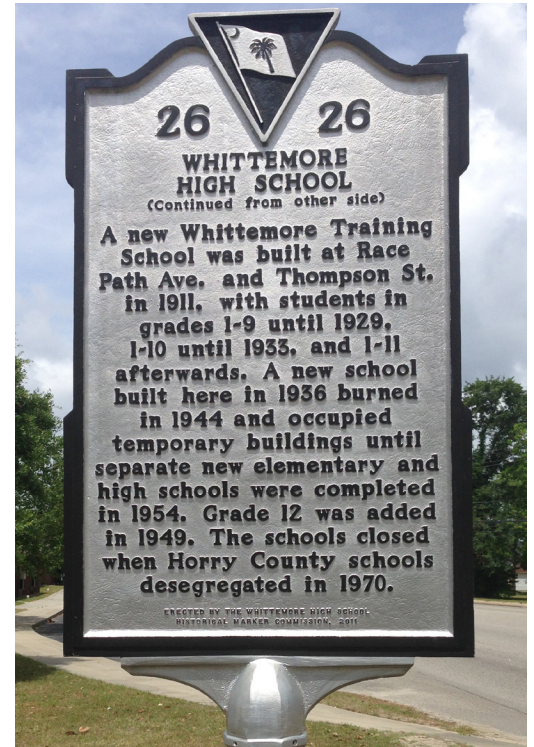
Gallery 2: Historical Markers for African-American High Schools—Non-Equalization School Markers
Whittemore High School

Whittemore High School and Whittemore Elementary School were deemed equalization schools by the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. Although Whittemore High School has a historical marker for its historic value, it might also be eligible for another historical marker based on its equalization status when the school went from Whittemore Training School to Whittemore High School (1954–1970).

Marker erected by the Whittemore High School Historical Marker Commission, 2011.

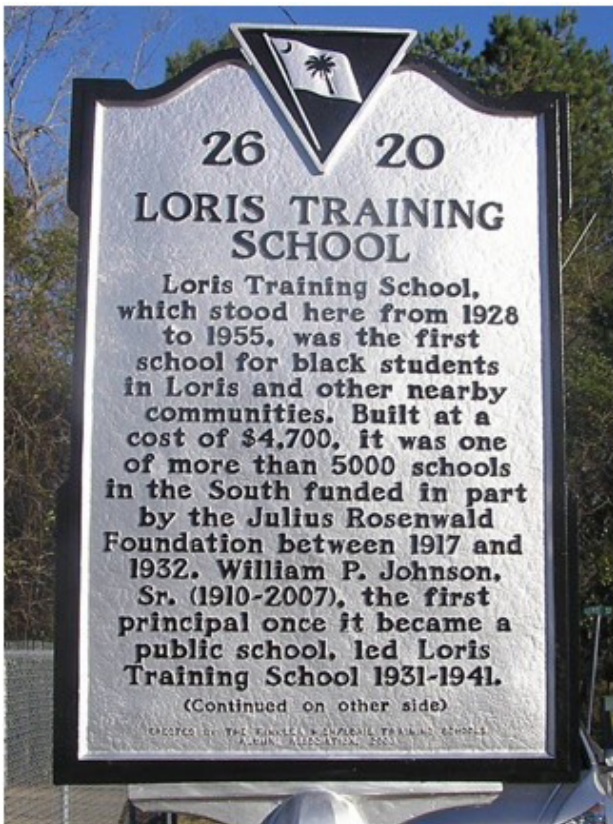


Front

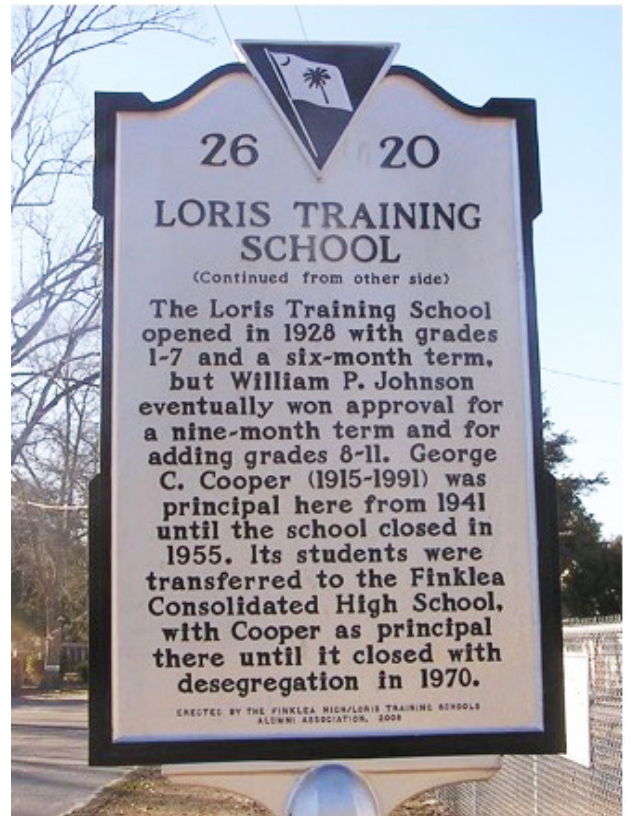


Back

Loris Training School



Front



Back

Marker erected by the Finklea High/Loris Training School Alumni Association, 2008.



Gallery 3: Photos of Horry County African-American Grammar Schools (ca. 1925–1954)

Aynor Allen Colored School



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
Original Acreage:	4
Number of Teachers:	2
Location:	Aynor, SC

Big Swamp Colored School



Cedar Branch Colored School



Construction:	1930–31
Rosenwald Appropriation:	\$400.00
White Contribution:	\$0.00
Negro Contribution:	\$627.00
Public Contribution:	\$1,433.00
Total Cost:	\$2,460.00
Original Acreage:	2
Number of Teachers:	2
Location:	Cedar Branch, SC

Brooksville Colored School



Construction:	1926–27
Rosenwald Appropriation:	\$700.00
White Contribution:	\$0.00
Negro Contribution:	\$700.00
Public Contribution:	\$1,500.00
Total Cost:	\$2,600.00
Original Acreage:	4
Number of Teachers:	2
Location:	Little River (Brooksville), SC

Dogwood Neck Colored School



Gallery 3: Photos of Horry County African-American Grammar Schools (ca. 1925–1954), cont'd

Cedar Creek Colored School



Construction:	1927–28
Rosenwald Appropriation:	\$700.00
White Contribution:	\$0.00
Negro Contribution:	\$1397.00
Public Contribution:	\$1,600.00
Total Cost:	\$2,697.00
Original Acreage:	4
Number of Teachers:	3
Location:	Nicholas, SC

Cockran Colored School



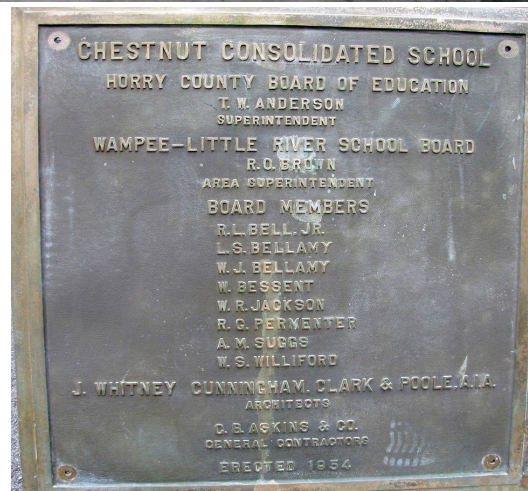
Construction:	1928–29
Rosenwald Appropriation:	\$500.00
White Contribution:	\$0.00
Negro Contribution:	\$1,050.00
Public Contribution:	\$1,200.00
Total Cost:	\$2,750.00
Original acreage:	3
Number of Teachers:	2
Location:	North Conway, SC

Cool Spring Colored School



Construction:	1929–30
Rosenwald Appropriation:	\$500.00
White Contribution:	\$400.00
Negro Contribution:	\$700.00
Public Contribution:	\$1,200.00
Total Cost:	\$2,800.00
Original Acreage:	4
Number of Teachers:	2
Location:	Cool Spring (near Aynor), SC

Ebenezer Colored School



Chestnut Consolidated School
Cornerstone, 1954

Gallery 3: Photos of Horry County African-American Grammar Schools (ca. 1925–1954), cont'd

Felton Colored School



Construction:	1929–30
Rosenwald Appropriation:	\$500.00
White Contribution:	\$0.00
Negro Contribution:	\$700.00
Public Contribution:	\$1,300.00
Total Cost:	\$2,500.00
Original Acreage:	4
Number of Teachers:	2
Location:	Cool Spring (near Aynor), SC

Finklea Colored School



Construction:	1929–30
Rosenwald Appropriation:	\$1,100.00
White Contribution:	\$0.00
Negro Contribution:	\$1,715.00
Public Contribution:	\$2,000.00
Total Cost:	\$4,815.00
Original Acreage:	4
Number of Teachers:	4
Location:	Green Sea, SC

Flag Patch Colored School



Construction:	1929–30
Rosenwald Appropriation:	\$700.00
White Contribution:	\$0.00
Negro Contribution:	\$700.00
Public Contribution:	\$1,200.00
Total Cost:	\$2,600.00
Original Acreage:	4
Number of Teachers:	2
Location:	Loris (Flag Patch community), SC

Freemont Colored School



Construction:	1929–30
Rosenwald Appropriation:	\$500.00
White Contribution:	\$0.00
Negro Contribution:	\$750.00
Public Contribution:	\$1,200.00
Total Cost:	\$2,450.00
Original Acreage:	4
Number of Teachers:	2
Location:	Longs (Freemont community), SC



Gallery 3: Photos of Horry County African-American Grammar Schools (ca. 1925–1954), cont'd

Holly Hill Colored School



Construction:	1927–28
Rosenwald Appropriation:	\$500.00
White Contribution:	\$0.00
Negro Contribution:	\$750.00
Public Contribution:	\$1,200.00
Total Cost:	\$2,450.00
Original Acreage:	4
Number of Teachers:	2
Location:	Unknown

Jackson Colored School



Lewis Colored School



Little River Colored School



Mount Oliver Colored School



Todd Swamp Colored School



Truevine Colored School



The school was located in the Red Bluff community near McNeil Chapel Missionary Church.

The school was located in the Nixonville community near Truevine Missionary Baptist Church.



Gallery 3: Photos of Horry County African-American Grammar Schools (ca. 1925–1954), cont'd

Loris Colored School*



Construction:	1927–28
Rosenwald Appropriation:	\$1000.00
White Contribution:	\$200.00
Negro Contribution:	\$1,500.00
Public Contribution:	\$2,000.00
Total Cost:	\$4,700.00
Original Acreage:	4
Number of Teachers:	4
Location:	Loris, SC

Mount Zion Colored School



Construction:	1925–26
Rosenwald Appropriation:	\$700.00
White Contribution:	\$0.00
Negro Contribution:	\$700.00
Public Contribution:	\$1,200.00
Total Cost:	\$2,600.00
Original Acreage:	2
Number of Teachers:	2
Location:	Little River area, SC

Myrtle Beach Colored School



The school was located in Myrtle Beach, SC. The building has been reconstructed and made into a museum. It was originally constructed about 1932 and resembles the Rosenwald construction.

Mount Calvary #1 School



This structure was different from the other schools because it was not constructed as a school. Rather it was purchased by parents so that their children would not have to walk three miles to attend Todd Swamp Colored School.

Oak Hill Colored School



The school was located near Conway, SC.

*This school evolved into the Loris Training School in 1940 and additions were made.

Pleasant Hill Colored School



The school was located near Aynor, SC.



Gallery 3: Photos of Horry County African-American Grammar Schools (ca. 1925–1954), cont'd

Poplar Grove Colored School



Construction:	1925–26
Rosenwald Appropriation:	\$1,100.00
White Contribution:	\$0.00
Negro Contribution:	\$1,550.00
Public Contribution:	\$2,000.00
Total Cost:	\$4,650.00
Original Acreage:	5
Number of Teachers:	4
Location:	Poplar Community, SC

Poplar Grove Vocational School



The school was located in the Poplar Community on the same campus where Mr. Jacob T. Chestnut was the principal. In 1940, when Mr. Chestnut obtained approval from South Carolina to add the eleventh grade and offer a state high school diploma, the two schools were merged and the Poplar Training School was established. The school housed grades 1–11. An addition was made before 1954 with the construction of a cinder block building. After 1954, the wooden buildings were demolished and replaced with a modern brick structure. The school remained the Poplar Elementary School until all South Carolina schools desegregated in 1970. The former Poplar Elementary School is classified as an equalization school.

St. James Colored School



The school was located in the Burgess, SC

St. John Colored School



The school was located in Longs (Sandridge), SC.

St. Paul Colored School



Construction:	1926–27
Rosenwald Appropriation:	\$900.00
White Contribution:	\$0.00
Negro Contribution:	\$1,100.00
Public Contribution:	\$1,600.00
Total Cost:	\$3,600.00
Original Acreage:	5
Number of Teachers:	4
Location:	Little River, SC

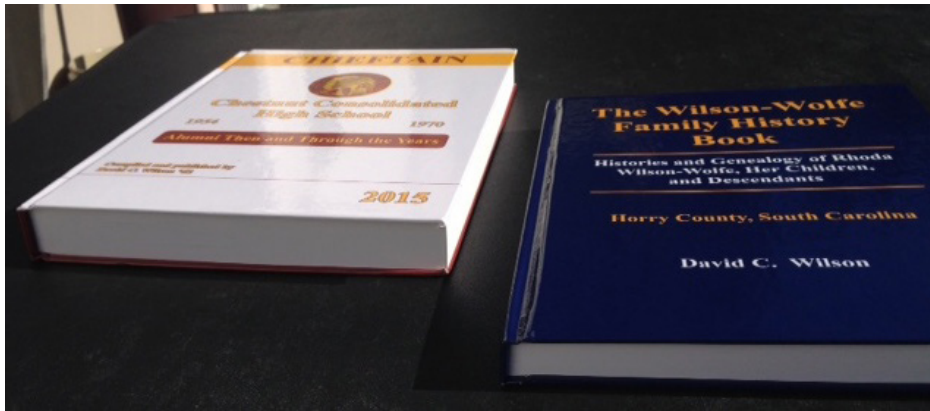


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Wilson Consulting Services, LLC
 Improving Student Performance: Horry County Parents and the Church Community
 August 1, 2017
 David C. Wilson
 Founder/CEO
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 ACCREDITED BUSINESS
 "It must be demonstrated..."

CHIEFTAIN
 Chestnut Consolidated High School
 1954 1970
 Alumni Then and Through the Years
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 2015

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The Wilson-Wolfe Family History Book
 Histories and Genealogy of Rhoda Wilson-Wolfe, Her Children, and Descendants
 Horry County, South Carolina
 David C. Wilson

Wilson Consulting Services, LLC
Poplar Training School (1940–1954)
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