Bulloch County One-Room Schools

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Bulloch County Historical Society
and Smith Callaway Banks
Present
Bulloch County One-Room Schools:
A WALK THROUGH TIME
Narrative collected by the
Portal High School Journalism Class
2000-2001

Oak Grove School
Bulloch County
1919
Bulloch County Historical Society
and Smith Callaway Banks
Present

Bulloch County One-Room Schools:

A WALK THROUGH TIME

Narrative collected by the
Portal High School
Journalism Class 2000-2001

Bulloch County Historical Society
PO Box 42
Statesboro, GA 30459
Portal High School
Journalism Class 2000-2001

Pictured left to right: (Front) Marsha Nesmith, Alicia Williams, Jeremy Scott, Mary Herrington, Ashley Hooks, (Middle) Erica Contreras, Crystal Mincey, James Herrington, Thelma Tippens, Amber Brown, Hope Bolton (Back) Josh Lanier, Mark Lanier, Raul Jones, Justin Tyson, TJ Moore, Journalism Teacher -- Daniel Edenfield.

This book is a collection of interviews conducted by the Portal High School Journalism class during the 2000-2001 school year. The subjects of these interviews are students who attended one-room schoolhouses in Bulloch County. In the year 1909, there were over 100 one-room schoolhouses located within walking distance throughout Bulloch County. Many of these schools remained open through the Great Depression and the early years of World War II. The purpose of these interviews was to document the typical day in a one-room schoolhouse and to also map the approximate location of each of these schools on a modern day Bulloch County map. To a great extent, we feel we were successful in our endeavors except where the shortcomings of the human memory left questions unanswered.

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This book is based on audio tapes and hard copy transcriptions of interviews with 48 former one-room school students. These materials have been placed in the Bulloch County Historical Society Section of Special Collections in Henderson Library of Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, Georgia.

Jesse N. Akins
Mill Creek School
Interviewed by: Amber Brown and Alicia Williams
October 10, 2000

Mrs. Jesse Akins, daughter of Jasper L. Kingerey, was born on December 29, 1909. Mrs. Akins, now 91, began attending school at Mill Creek and continued until the eighth grade. From there she completed her education at Statesboro High School. According to Mrs. Akins, Mill Creek was a brick school with electricity and a furnace heater. Water was obtained from a well across the road. She and her classmates had the basic subjects that students have today, such as math, English, science and history. Pencils, blackboards, and textbooks were all available due to the great support of the school from the local community.

Jesse had to walk to school each day about two or three miles in order to get to Mill Creek. School began around 8:30 a.m. and let out around 3:00 p.m. The only holidays were Thanksgiving and Christmas. Discipline in this school was very strict, and all the students were aware that cutting up was intolerable.

Each student brought his or her own lunch to school, usually in a pail or tin box. During recess the kids played games such as baseball and jump rope. Whenever the school needed to raise money, they had a “box supper.” This is a fundraiser in which the county supplied boxes of food and the school auctioned them off to members of the community. Mill Creek, then located off Highway 25 in Hopulikit, was shut down due to the school system expanding and becoming larger.
Beautine Yvone Anderson
Riggs School and
Statesboro High Industrial
Interviewed by: Mark Lanier and Jeremy Scott
September 19, 2001

Beautine Anderson began attending Riggs School when she was four years old. Her grandfather owned the building, which was constructed of wood. Windows, lamps and lanterns were used to light the school, and an old pot-bellied stove was the main source of heat in the winter. There were desks and a blackboard in the front of the students, who numbered about twenty-five with an equal number of boys and girls. The entire class had to receive immunizations, which were administered by Dr. VanBuren and Dr. A. J. Mooney.

Beautine walked about three miles to school every day. When she got there about eight in the morning, a devotion was read, and each student would recite a verse from the Bible. Later in the morning, the class would get out for lunch. Beautine usually had her boyfriends bring food for her, but when she would pack her own lunch, it usually consisted of peanuts, potatoes, and sausages.

When Beautine was old enough, she began attending Statesboro High Industrial School. The students there got out for every major holiday, and many students stayed out to help their parents on the farm or even played hooky. The school had teams for several sports, including baseball, football, and basketball. Beautine’s favorite teacher was Mr. Hill, her science teacher, but her favorite subjects were “lunch and recess.”

Vera McGalvin Arab
Arcola School
Interviewed by: Marsha L. Nesmith
September 26, 2000

Vera McGalvin Arab was born January 27, 1912. She has an older sister as well as a younger brother. Mrs. Arab began attending Arcola School when she was five years old, in the year 1917. Arcola School taught grades first through seventh. After Vera completed seven years at Arcola, she had to go one more year because she was too young to be moved to the high school. Also, her parents wanted her to stay with her younger brother. After completing the seventh grade, she was transferred to Brooklet High School.

Arcola School was made out of wood materials. It had two rooms, but only one was used because there was only one teacher. The other was mainly used when there was bad weather and the students could not go outside to play. There was no electricity when Mrs. Arab went to Arcola. It was a fairly large school with about six or seven windows. The school was segregated, and it is not standing today due to a fire.

School started in September and let out for the summer in the month of May. One year there was no school because of the hardships of the Great Depression. There was no way for parents to get their children to school because they were always working. About twenty-five students attended Arcola School, and Mrs. Josephine was the teacher. Benches separated the different grade levels as each grade level had a bench to sit on. The students sat in
double-seated desks that had inkwells on the left-hand corners. The teacher taught on a big blackboard in front of the room. The boys and girls were separated with the boys on the left and the girls on the right.

Vera walked five miles to school every day. When there was severe weather, she and her brother would ride to school in a buggy covered by a tarp. While school was in, Vera’s teacher boarded with her cousin, whose house was in front of the school, but during the summer, the teacher lived at her own house. At eight o’clock a bell rang to let the students know school was letting in, and a bell rang at noon to let them know it was time for lunch. Lunch for Vera was a biscuit, a piece of ham, and a sweet potato. She had one hour to eat lunch and to play ball. She said her favorite subject, by far, was math. She got As on all of her report cards.

A lot of people stayed out around the beginning of the school year due to sharecropping. Mrs. Arab said her parents never came to school, except when she glued pink paper dolls to the back of another student. The teacher made her stand in a circle on the floor with her nose in another circle on the board. Her father thought that was a very cruel punishment. She was never to be punished again.

A few of the games they played at recess were hopscotch, baseball, and red rover. There were no organized sports they could play with other schools. Mrs. Arab loved all of her teachers dearly. Her most memorable moments were when her teacher punished her and when she left Arcola to go to high school.

Bernice Brannen was born on December 20, 1924. She married J. B. Brannen, Jr., and she has two children, Nancy Strachan and Breck Brannen III. Mrs. Brannen began attending Clipronreka School in 1931 at the age of seven. Her school was 1st through 6th grade, and all the grades were combined, but they had separate rooms. The wooden building was yellow with concrete floors. The students sat in wooden desks. They had windows to give them the light that they needed to do their work by. The school consisted of about fifty to seventy-five students.

Bernice’s instructors would teach on a blackboard while the students used paper and pencil. Students got their books from the state and gave them back to their teachers at the end of the year. The subjects that were taught were spelling, math, and reading. Students were promoted to different grade levels by report cards that their parents would sign. The students had an hour-long lunch break and brought their own lunch, which usually consisted of a sandwich, cookies, a piece of fruit, and a jug of tea. Bernice’s teachers would drive to school while she and her sister walked about one and a half miles.

Her best friend was Minnie Lee Calls. When Bernice was in the 1st grade, someone had told her that her house was on fire. Minnie stepped forward and told Bernice to go on home and that she would put up Bernice’s work for her. They were friends from then on.
A parent only came to school if a child got really sick. Bernice’s parents participated in sharecropping, and so she would miss school some, but mostly the boys were absent due to farm work. Her most memorable moment was the Junior-Senior Prom and when she went to Colaboratory High School and graduated. Mrs. Brannen later went on to work in a Navy Center. Then she got married and took care of her children.

Lorrina Bursen
Mitchell School
Interviewed by: Crystal Mincey and Hope Bolton
September 26, 2000

Lorrina Bursen was born in 1907 and is now 93 years old. She was one of eleven children, but only two are alive now. She began attending Mitchell School, a segregated white school, in 1913, when she was six years old. The school is located by Lawrence Church, about eight miles from Pembroke School. The school was a combination of all grades: first through tenth with only two female teachers and no principal. The school building was an old house with wooden floors, cloak rooms, and about four windows that gave enough light for the children to do their schoolwork.

School began in October and ended in March. There were about forty students who attended Mitchell School. They had a wood stove for heat, and the teachers taught on blackboards while the students used refillable pens and blank paper. Lorrina walked to school about four miles in all weather conditions. School began at 8:00 a.m. and ended at 4:00 p.m. They had a fifteen-minute lunch break and brought their lunch in buckets, which might contain a biscuit and syrup. The school consisted mostly of girls, but they also had a few boys.

Lorrina’s favorite teacher was Mrs. Pearl Lanier because she always took time with each and every student. The boys and girls played baseball at recess, and after school they went home to do chores and homework. Their books were given to them by the teachers and were taken up at the end of the school year. Parents only came for conference meetings, and the teachers could spank a child without a parent’s permission. Several tricks were played at school; for example, they tied a boy to a sap tree and told him to hold on to the top of it. When they let go, he flew in the air. The students also would sometimes hide their books from the teachers.

Lorrina Bursen later went on to be a housekeeping supervisor.

John Robert Chester
Mill Creek School
Interviewed by: Marsha NeSmith and T.J. Moore
November 30, 2000

Mr. James Robert Chester was born on October 18, 1912, as the son of John Morgan Chester and Addie May Newsome Chester. Mr. Chester’s childhood address was Route 3, Statesboro. Mr. Chester and his wife, Stephanie Kate Williams, have four children. Their names are Josh Chester, Naomi Chester Miller, Lafayette Chester, and James Morgan Chester.
James began attending Mill Creek School in the year 1919 at the age of seven. Mill Creek School was made of wooden materials, and there was no electricity. After attending Mill Creek for only one year, James transferred to Portal School. Although he went to Portal School, he never graduated from high school. According to Mr. Chester, the students got out for normal holidays, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Twenty-five to thirty students attended the school along with James. The principal at this time was Mr. Pye Bunk. There were two rooms, a small one and a big one. The small room held grades one through four, and the big room held five through seven. The students sat in wooden desks, and a wooden stove heated the rooms. There was a big chalkboard at the front of the room. James walked two miles to school every day with his friend Rufus. The teachers had a choice to walk or ride. One teacher, Mr. Womack, walked two miles to school every day.

School began in September, letting in at eight o’clock a.m. and letting out in the afternoon about three o’clock. A bell rang to let the students know when to come in and when to leave. Every morning there was devotion. Sometimes a student got up and spoke, but the teacher spoke most of the time. Writing utensils consisted of pencils and paper. Books were bought for the less fortunate. The subjects that were taught were geography, English, history, and spelling. To be promoted to a higher grade, a student had to do well on his report card. If a student made too many Xs, he couldn’t go to a higher grade. At ten in the morning there was a recess, and in mid-morning there was another. There were no organized sports, but every now and then the students got together and played town ball, which is also known as softball.

At Mill Creek there were no dances or social events. Mr. Chester said the only dances the students did were when they were paddled. His favorite teacher was Mrs. Ruby Deal. Leslie Marsh was the closest James came to having a best friend. There were a lot more girls than boys at Mill Creek because a lot of the boys would have to stay out to sharecrop.

Students could get lunch in the school cafeteria, but many didn’t want to. The majority of the population brought lunch. It consisted of an apple or an orange. To go to school there were no immunizations required, and there was no school nurse. Mr. Chester said there are a lot of differences in the school system today, but a lot of things are still the same.

According to Mr. Chester, parents never came to the school unless a child was in trouble. Teachers stayed in boarding houses during the school year, and some just stayed at their own homes. Discipline was very strict. No pranks were played on anyone. They all knew better. However, when a child did something wrong, he got his hand whipped. Sometimes the teacher even threatened to whip students with the horsewhip that was kept in the corner.

Memories are important to Mr. Chester. Sometimes he just sits back and thinks about the old times. His most memorable moment at Mill Creek was when he got in trouble and the teacher made him stand on the stage with one foot in the air. He got tired and walked off the stage and went home. His mother was so mad at him that she made him walk all the way back to the school.
James dropped out of high school to help his father around the farm. Farming was and still is his occupation.

John Wesley Chester
Mill Creek School
November 23, 2000
Interviewed by:
Josh Lanier and Justin Tyson

John Wesley Chester was born on January 1, 1921, to John Morgan and Bibi May Newsome Chester. He later married Jessie Smith Chester and had three children: Thomas Wesley Chester, Todd Huey Chester, and Jessie Emerson Chester.

John began attending Mill Creek School at the age of six. He went there for only one year before transferring to Portal School. Mill Creek School was located near Hopeulikit on Highway 25. The school was an old framed wooden house that a family had once lived in. It had three rooms: two of the rooms were used as classrooms while the other was used as a cloakroom. There was no electricity. An outhouse was available for the girls, and the boys went "to the branch." The school had an open well with a bucket and a tickle. The students would draw the water with the tickle and drink out of a dipper. After a while, however, they were provided individual cups to drink out of.

Mill Creek School had two teachers, Jessie Wynn and Ruby Deal, who taught fewer than one hundred students. The students sat on desks and benches and wrote with pencils and paper. They were sometimes given homework, but not often. Students who misbehaved were sent to a corner where some long whips were hanging.

Usually the sight of those whips was enough to deter any would-be class clowns. Parents would come to the school for the Valentine's Day parties and box suppers that the school had. The box supper was an annual fundraiser for which several ladies cooked suppers, put them in boxes, and auctioned them off.

Most the students, including John, had to walk to school, rain or shine, and they usually traveled in groups. The teachers used a horse and buggy or an old car to get there. School started around nine o'clock when the teachers rang a bell. Later in the morning the children were let out for a fifteen-minute recess, followed by a half-hour lunch at twelve o'clock and another break in the afternoon. The students brought their own lunches, which might have consisted of meat, potatoes, biscuits, and sausage. During recess, the children played games such as baseball and jump rope. School ended at about two-thirty or three in the afternoon.

John's parents, along with many other students' parents in the school, were farmers. Often, he would have to stay out of school to help out in the yard, the garden, and in the fields, where they grew cotton, tobacco, peanuts, and corn. After leaving Mill Creek School, John began attending Portal School, where he finished eighth grade. He never went to high school. He grew up to be a successful farmer.
Wallis Gray Cobb was born on September 30, 1902, and is 98 years old. Mr. Cobb is the son of Eva May Bradley and Thomas Cobb. His maternal grandparents were David Bradley and Emmie Lou Miller. His paternal grandparents were Gray Cobb, Jr., and Nelly Conley Cobb. He was married to Mary Virginia White Cobb and had two children. His daughter, Mary Virginia Cobb, was a missionary in Lebanon. His son is Wallis Gray Cobb, Jr., and he stays close by.

Wallis started school at the age of eight. His father was sick, so Wallis had to wait to go to school for another year. Mr. Cobb attended Statesboro High School, which was not a one-room school. Some schools near Statesboro High included Register, Denmark, Brooklet, and Stilson. The school had supplies that consisted of individual desks, individual books, pens, and pencils. They had no electricity. "We just did not have light," noted Mr. Cobb. The school was heated by wood burning heaters or stoves. The students were taught English, history, Latin, French, general math, algebra, and geometry. The students stayed in class about six hours each day. Statesboro High sent out a report card to show a student's progress and to say if a student got promoted.

While Mr. Cobb was in school, Statesboro High's principal was Mr. R. M. Monds. Also, the grade levels stopped at tenth. However, Wallis graduated in the first 11th grade class in 1920. His teacher were: second grade, Ms. Neall Jackson; third grade, Ms. Mary Lou Carmichael; fourth grade, Ms. Lester; fifth grade, Ms. Clark; sixth grade, Ms. Sally Zetterower; seventh - eleventh grades, Ms. Mary Lou Carmichael and other teachers. Mr. Cobb said that some of his teachers boarded with different folks in the community.

Statesboro had organized sports. They had football, basketball, and, in a limited way, baseball. Mr. Cobb shared that he was on the debating team, but they never won a debate.

The students of Statesboro High were out on very few holidays. They were out for Christmas and Thanksgiving. "We had a flu epidemic in 1918 which shut things down for two weeks," noted Mr. Cobb. Those were about the only times students were out of school.

Wallis had to walk to get to school. He walked about one-fourth of a mile everyday. When asked how long it took him to get to school, Mr. Cobb said, "It depended on how late I was and how fast I had to run." Every now and then his friends J. B. Johnston and Harold Suptrine joined him for the walk.

Mr. Cobb's family sharecropped with others back in the day. His family grew corn, peanuts, and cotton. His father hired help so that Wallis could stay in school.
Mae Everlyn Cone Coleman
Scarboro Grove School
Interviewed by: Erika Contreras, Crystal Mincey, and
Hope Bolton
November 14, 2000

Mae Everlyn Cone Coleman was born on May 16, 1926, and is now 74 years old. She began attending Scarboro Grove in 1933, when she was seven years old. The school was a combination of all grades, primary through seventh, with only two female teachers and no principal. The school building was an old wooden house.

There were about thirty or forty students who attended Scarboro Grove. They had a wood stove for heat, and the teachers taught on blackboards while the students used pencil and templates. Mae's teachers' names were Mrs. Angus and Mrs. Lowery. They taught by having one teacher teach primary through third while the other taught fourth through seventh. Mae walked to school about four miles with her Aunt Angus, her older sister, and kids who would join them on the way to school. Their school began at 8:00 a.m. and ended at 3:00 p.m. They would start the day out with a prayer and a song. They had a lunch break that started at 12:00 p.m. and ended at 1:00 p.m. They brought their lunch in buckets, which usually held biscuit, sausage, and teacake. The school had a variety of students—both boys and girls.

Mae's class had recess at 10:00 a.m., and the boys and girls played baseball and basketball. They did not have many books, just a reading book, and the subjects that were taught were arithmetic, spelling, and reading. The teachers would handle discipline by simply taking the students and spanking them on their hands 10 times, but if the trouble persisted then the student's father would be notified. The only tricks or pranks that were played were at Halloween and April Fool's, when the students would pretend they were not at school and then show up and say "April fool." Mrs. Coleman says that students today have a better chance to get an education than what they did back then. After school was all over with, she helped her parents work on the farm.

Mary Lee Deal
Middleground School
Interviewed By: James Herrington and
Marsha NeSmith
October 12, 2000

Ms. Mary Lee Deal attended Middle Ground School in the early nineteen hundreds. She started attending Middle Ground School at the age of six in 1916. She continued until Middle Ground School was consolidated when she was in the 6th grade. After the consolidation, she tried to stay with the same group of children by riding a horse and buggy several miles to school. However, this lasted for only one year or until Portal's only bus changed its route to include a road that was about a mile from Mary's house. Mary and a few friends then walked to the bus stop and waited there to go to school. The next year, Portal rearranged its bus route again, and the new route did not include a stop near Mary's house. She then rode to school with a student named Gordon Denmark, who was taking a subject in Statesboro not offered in Portal. For most of her school career, Mary Lee Deal walked to school.
No matter the temperature, the walk was long and miserable. However, Mary was one of the lucky children whose parents owned an automobile, so she did not have to worry about walking in the rain. In fact, Mary always welcomed the rain because it meant that her parents would be coming to pick her up after school.

Middle Ground School itself was made of wood. It had two or three fairly large rooms. One room had homemade chairs that sat two to a seat. The other rooms had desks for the higher grades. There would be 50 students or more at times in each classroom being taught the same material. The school did have chalkboards in the classrooms that were used to present material, and books were available to every child. The books used were standard books for reading, math, and social studies but had to be brought by the students and passed down from sibling to sibling. Lunches were not served at school but brought from home in a pail. Mary's typical lunch consisted of a piece of ham, a few biscuits, a potato, and a piece of cake. The lunch break was around noon, and the children were given an hour to eat. Lunch had to be eaten outside around the schoolhouse.

Will Womack was the principal of Middle Ground School. Some of the teachers were Alice Clark, Theris Therey, Jessy Whan, Audry Story and Lilly McCorder. They were all good teachers, and Mary did not have a single favorite. The teachers were mostly boarding teachers who stayed at students' homes. Mary's home had a spare room in the front, and occasionally her parents would house a teacher for a short period of time.

The typical school day started at around eight a.m. and lasted until around three in the afternoon. There was always a bell that rang to signal the beginning of school every day, followed by a morning song and prayer. The students would then go to class. There were three breaks given throughout the day: one recess in the morning, a lunch break, and a playtime in the afternoon. At recess, the students would play games such as baseball, tag, or volleyball. There were very few activities held at the school or hosted by the school after school hours. There were, however, box dinners held to raise money for the school. A box dinner was a fundraiser in which everyone in the school decorated boxes and put all kinds of food in them. The boxes were then auctioned off to the highest bidder.

Lucille Brannen DeLoach
Tyson's Grove School
Interviewed by: Ashlee Hooks and Mary Herrington
September 26, 2000

Mrs. Lucille Brannen DeLoach was born on May 27, 1915, the youngest child of Julia Brannen and John Brannen. Her grandparents were Julia and Robert Olliff and Sarah and Elliot Brannen. She started her school days at Tyson's Grove School in 1921 at the age of six. She graduated from Statesboro High in 1932.

Her teachers throughout her years at Tyson's Grove were Mrs. Naomi Harville, Mrs. Lola Whitte, and Mrs. Neal. Mrs. Lola Whitte was not only a teacher at Tyson's Grove but also the principal. Lucille's school day started at eight o'clock and ended at three o'clock. Tyson's Grove began in September and ended in May. The school taught about sixty students from first to sixth grade. A wood heater warmed the school, and the trustees gathered wood
for the fire. The school trustees were John H. Brannen and P. B. Brannen, among a few others. The classroom had wooden floors, four windows and two doors. It contained a chalkboard, wooden desks, and a teacher’s desk on which a globe was perched. To get to school Lucille would catch a ride with her neighbors in their buggy. This went on for two years until the neighbors had to move to Statesboro High. She then had to walk a mile and a half to the school. During a rainstorm her father drove her in the car to school. When the teachers boarded at her home, she and the teacher would walk to school.

At eight o’clock the teacher would ring a hand-held bell. The school day would start as students recited the Lord’s Prayer as a devotion. They would then get to work on their reading, writing and arithmetic. The teachers paddled the students if they acted up, but most students behaved because the teachers knew their families.

The students had a lunch break during which they ate the lunches they brought, which usually contained biscuits, sausage and sweet potatoes. The lunch break was around noon. They also had two recesses: one in mid-morning and one in mid-afternoon. During these two recesses, they usually played volleyball, softball, or catch.

Lucille moved on to receive her full education and become a teacher.

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Mr. John Paul Ellis was born on May 26, 1917, to Mr. Ben Ellis and Mrs. Sarah Pennington Ellis. Back in the early days, he lived on Route 4 in Statesboro, Georgia. Now, he lives in Hopeulikeit, Georgia, a small community just five miles from Portal. He is eighty-three years old and is married to Beatris Hubert Beasely. He is working as a farmer and grows many crops each year. He and his wife have five children both married and single. Their children are named John Wendell Ellis, Janis Ellis Lanier, Ben Grayson Ellis, Connie Ellis Mathis, and the youngest is John Paul Ellis Jr. Back in his early days, Mr. Ellis attended the small school of Mill Creek. It was torn down, but recently the county built a new one in its place.

John started attending second grade at Mill Creek School. Seventh grade was the highest a student could go before having to attend high school. However, John had no further education such as going to high school. He dropped out of school when he was in the fourth grade, mainly because he had to help his father on the farm. Mill Creek School, as described by Mr. Ellis, was made of wood and had no luxuries in it whatsoever, not a fan, a heater, and certainly not an air conditioner. The bathrooms at Mill Creek School were very simple. The boy’s bathroom was at the creek in the branch, and the girl’s restroom was a small toilet inside of a building just outside of the school. However, the toilet had no water running to it. The building had two rooms, but one of them was not used. The school was heated by wood, and there were desks for
the students to sit on while learning, and a table for the teacher to sit at while watching over the students. There was also a blackboard on which the daily lessons and such were written. This was a very primitively built school compared to the ones of today.

The teachers were also very nice at Mill Creek School. John had two teachers whom he liked over all the others: Mrs. Ruby Akins (Deal), who taught the lower grades, and Mrs. Bernis Wynn, who taught him in the second grade. In addition to these two teachers, the school had a principal named Mr. Pye Womack. Later on, he became Bulloch County's superintendent. The teachers had to walk to school everyday for at least a few miles. The students got to school as early in the morning as they could. A lunch bell rang for them to go to class. The students wrote with pencils on paper and used chalk on the blackboard. They bought their own books to use for the school year. The subjects included the following: arithmetic, spelling, and maybe a little geography. Also, in order to be promoted to another grade, the students received report cards telling them of their overall grade for that year. If they failed with a "F," then they would stay in the same grade next year.

The students also had a lunch break for which they carried their lunch in a metal bucket. Their recess was centered around the branch in which they played. Mr. Ellis remembers one time when he and another student went down to the swimming hole in the woods. He said they went down there and saw that the waterhole was full and dove right in because it was so hot that day at the schoolhouse. He said when they got back, they were whipped by the teacher for swimming. This was the only recollection he had of getting whipped while at school.

The last teacher of his to die was Mrs. Jessie Wynn. Back in the old days, she had lived with them at their home. His best friends at the school included J.R. Chester, John Wesley Chester, and Herman Marsh. Of course, all of the students were friends. They had no sports at these schools, and the only sport they ever did play was an alternate form of baseball called town ball. They had only one fundraiser at this school, and this was when the school made box suppers. The parents and their students came and bought them. There were no dances at Mill Creek School.

There were no school nurses, and immunizations were not required to go to school. There were an equal number of boys and girls who sometimes had to stay out due to sharecropping. They had no industrial or craft classes and had no visiting teachers at any time here. Most teachers lived at their own homes. The games played at recess separated the boys and girls from playing together. The nearest school to his was Middleground School.

Mr. Ellis went on to become a member of the Bulloch County Board of Education for six four-year terms. He served a year in World War II. He now works as a farmer and has lots of grandchildren. Hardly any of his friends from school are still living.
Jane Whitaker Fordham
Register School
Interviewed by: Justin Tyson, Rusty Nolen, and T.J. Moore
September 26, 2000

Jane Fordham is eighty-eight years old, born on July 25, 1912. She is the eldest child of Debbie Woods and James Talmadge Whitaker, and she later married Wilbur Fordham. She has four children named Don, John, Christy, and Becky.

Jane began attending Register School when she was six years old. The schoolhouse was made of wood, with about ten rooms for the ten grades that were present. Among the subjects taught were English, which was Jane's favorite; math, which was her least favorite; history; and science. School began in September and let out in May, with several holidays including Thanksgiving, Christmas, President's Day, and Easter. Jane and her siblings rode a bus about five miles to school, while most of the teachers drove cars. School began with a prayer at about eight o'clock or eight-thirty, and there was a thirty minute recess later in the morning. Basketball was the favorite game of most of the students. They had an hour-long lunch break around noon, and their final recess was for another half hour in the afternoon. School let out at about three o'clock, but the students had plenty of homework to keep them busy when they left.

When Jane was a senior in high school in 1930, the school trustees were no longer able to provide the money to keep Register School open after Christmas. Her father and her classmates' parents were forced to take out loans to pay the teachers for the second half of the school year so that the senior class could graduate. Jane's younger siblings—four girls and two boys—had to attend a different school to graduate. Times were tough for her family because this coincided with the Great Depression, and she was not able to attend college under the circumstances.

M. E. Ginn
Donaldson School
Interviewed by: James Herrington and Josh Lanier
September 8, 2000

M. E. Ginn was born on October the 11th 1918. At the age of 5, in 1923, he started school at Donaldson School. Donaldson was later consolidated into Nevils School. M.E. walked to Donaldson School everyday. The walk was about one and a half to two miles. In that day and time, two miles was nothing to think twice about. Some students were able to ride in an ox-cart that passed by their house on the way to school. When it was cold or raining, the students just bundled up and walked anyway. Sometimes M.E. would get to ride to school, depending on the circumstances. Every morning a bell would ring to tell the students when school started. After the bell there would be a morning prayer or devotion for every student in the school. Classes would start after devotion. There were always four to seven classes going at the time in the schoolhouse. One teacher who walked from class to class taught everyone. The students were allowed recess in the morning and in the afternoon. Students ate lunch around noon. They usually ate ham or some kind of meat and a
cake or biscuit. School let out sometime around mid afternoon.

Donaldson School was a large one-room building, built out of sawed timber. The room was a typical four-cornered room with a large wood heater over to one side. There was a blackboard in the room for the teacher to use. In that one room, there would be four to seven classes taking place, usually some in each corner and one in the middle. All of the desks in the classroom had been made by the community for the school. While M.E. was attending Donaldson School, another room was added on to the side of the original building. That new room was used to separated the higher grades. The trustees also hired a second teacher to help teach at the school after the add-on.

In 1926, Donaldson School was closed down due to consolidation efforts being made by Bulloch County. Most of the students who attended Donaldson School were transferred to Nevils School. Nevils School was a brick school much like the ones we see today, only smaller. M.E. attended that school for a few years before his father, who was on the board of trustees, and a friend convinced the board to let them have a bus to haul the students who could afford to go to Statesboro for school. The county bought the gas but didn’t buy the tires. One of M.E.’s friends drove the bus for the first year, and then M.E. drove for the next two years. By the grace of God, there were no injuries during this time, and many students were able to acquire their high school education thanks to those two boys.

Randy Joe Grant
Bethlehem and Nevils School
Interviewed by: Raul Jones and Jeremy Scott
September 26, 2000

Randy Joe Grant, a 63-year-old Statesboro native, was born on June 1, 1937. He has eight children: Lonnie Joe Tremble, Tony Tremble, Lonnie Tony Brown, Ashley Curtis, Renee Hills, and two other daughters in Connecticut. His mother’s name is Mary Geneva Grant, and his father is Jerome Grant.

At the age of eight, Randy started attending Bethlehem School, but transferred to Nevils School about a year later. Mr. Grant never went to high school, and he only has a third grade education.

The subjects taught at Randy’s school were reading, writing, and arithmetic. He didn’t have a favorite subject. His teachers were Ms. Nelson (Bethlehem), Mrs. Thomas (Bethlehem), Ms. Brooks (Nevils), and Ms. Williams (Nevils). Bethlehem School was a two-room school made out of wood, while Nevils School was a four-room school made out of sheetrock and wood. Both of the schools had lights, one or two windows, and two doors. The schools went from grades one through seven. Each school consisted of about seventy-five students. They sat on rugged benches during class. There was a heater in the middle of the floor and a blackboard. Randy had to walk six to seven miles to get to school. The school hours were from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The Bugle, a newspaper, bought the students’ books, which were left at school. The students received report cards, and Randy received mostly A & Bs. They had a lunch break, which lasted for about one and a half hours.
Those who couldn't afford to buy school lunch, like Randy, brought their own lunches. This generally consisted of pork-n-beans, hotdogs, and an apple or orange. Most of the students who attended school were female. Randy's family were sharecroppers who grew cotton, peanuts, soybeans, tobacco, and corn. He worked outside every day, even on holidays, if the weather permitted. At his school there wasn't a school nurse. Instead, the teacher would assist a student with an illness or problem. His school hadn't any industrial or craft classes.

When Randy did attend school, he usually didn't get into any trouble because he was a quiet individual who kept to himself. One time, however, he did get into a fight with a boy because the boy swung an ax at him in attempt to harm him. At recess girls and boys played catch, hopscotch, jump rope, and the dozens. When he received homework, some of it was difficult, but his sisters would help him out with it.

Iva Lou Heape
Denmark School
Interview by: James Herrington
Amber Brown and Alicia Williams
October 30, 2000

Mrs. Iva Lou Heape, now 79, attended Denmark School in the late 1920s. At the time, she was seven or eight years old. She walked two and one half miles to Denmark School every day. Denmark School was an average sized one-room building. It was made of wood with a wood heater in one corner for heat during the winter months. Desks were aligned in rows facing a blackboard that the teachers used. Each student supplied his or her own pencils and paper every day for class. Students were expected to purchase their own books every year. A devotion or prayer was conducted in the morning before class began.

Students brought their own lunches to school each day. These lunches normally consisted of sandwiches and something to drink or whatever else was available to eat. It was also at this time that the students were allowed recess. About an equal number of boys and girls played games such as tag and hide-and-seek.

Later, the school was destroyed due to a fire. Iva and a few of her fellow classmates then began attending Warner School three to four miles away from Denmark. This school was made of brick and had electricity. Denmark School was later rebuilt.

Bessie Deal Hollingsworth
Smith-Allen Deal School
Interview by: Hope Bolton and Crystal Mincey
January 30, 2001

Mrs. Bessie Deal Hollingsworth attended Smith-Allen School. She went here from first to sixth grade; her father was a trustee. The school was shaped like a big house and was made out of wood. There were about seventy-five children who attended the school. They had to use a wood heater for heat, and they used candles and windows for lighting. The school contained grades first through ninth. They observed holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas. There were no principals. Bessie
remembers one teacher who walked to school with the children about two and half to three miles. The students were separated by grade level. They sat on wooden benches and shared desks. The teacher wrote on a blackboard while the students wrote on paper or slates. They used pencils, pens, and chalk to write with. The subjects that were taught were math, reading, history, and geography. The school started at 8:00 and ended at 3:00 with a bell that was rung by the teacher. The students had to buy their own books, and at the end of the year they would pass them on to family members. Students had to bring their own lunches which usually consisted of a potato, bread and some kind of meat and water. The students had a recess twice a day, in the morning and afternoon. They played games of all kinds such as baseball and kickball. Mrs. Hollingsworth went on to become a housewife.

Annie B. Jenkins
Statesboro School
Interviewed By: Ashlee Hooks and Mary Herrington
September 26, 2000

Annie B. Jenkins was born on June 29, 1927. She is the seventy-three-year-old daughter of Frank and Claudia Jenkins. She started school in August when she was five years old. She went to Statesboro School from first to eleventh grade. Her principal was William James, a stout man who later had a middle school named after him. In her class were about nineteen other students, each with his or her own personality. Her first grade teacher, Mary Hicks, was the person who gave Annie her first report card. Students walked to school every day. At eight o’clock in the morning, Annie would begin school, and at twelve she would go home for lunch, returning again to school at one, and finally returning home at three-thirty to do her daily chores.

Annie used paper and pencil to write, sat in a desk, and walked on a wooden floor at her school. Among about 19 other students, she would sit and learn. On cold days a fire would be a necessity to warm the students. Annie would sometimes help start the fire before class with the wood that the trustees would supply for the school. There was no school nurse; the only time the students actually saw a medical physician during school hours, unless there was an unfortunate accident, was when they visited the health department to get immunization shots.

Due to sharecropping, some students had to stay out of school for parts of the year. Surprisingly more girls were out than boys. Sometimes, to raise money, the school would have fundraisers and would have the students sell candy to the community. The teachers of the schools did not have houses, but boarded with the students' families. None boarded with Annie's family, but she recalled that she liked all of her teachers until she got punished. When students were punished, they would be expelled from school.

There were basketball games against Portal, Metter, and Register. Annie played basketball alongside her fellow classmates.
Mrs. Willie Alice Heard Johnson was born on January 26, 1920, the seventh child of thirteen children, to Silace and Matilda Heard. On May 12, 1940, she married Ivy Johnson. They had seven children, but only two are alive. Their names are Donald Johnson and Irene Relevant.

Mrs. Johnson’s childhood address was located somewhere on Old Dill Road. She lived there until she was eleven years old. She lived in Plainfield, New Jersey, for twelve years, and her occupation was an electrical engineer at the following companies: RCA, Odd Color, Westinghouse, Siegels (a plastics company), True Story (a magazine), and Cornel Dubnear (where she helped construct condensers for the very first missiles). She was an electrical engineer for thirty-two years. She retired in 1968 due to a severe back injury caused by a slip and fall on ice on January 15, 1968, and after her husband injured himself in a car accident in June of 1968. She and her husband moved back to their hometown of Portal, where they bought a house.

Willie Alice started school in 1944 at the age of four at Bennett Grove School. Throughout her years there, her teachers were Mrs. Ledanice Lester, who dated her brother; Mr. Roberts; and Mrs. Freida Mae Burns. Bennett Grove was a one-room/teacher schoolhouse. It only had an estimated twenty students who attended on a regular basis. Inside the room were little desks to sit in and a potbellied stove for heat in the winter. The parents would have to cut the wood and garner it outside the schoolhouse in a pile for their kids. The boys would carry the wood in the schoolhouse and put it into the stove, and class would resume. School started at 8:30 a.m. and ended at 4:00 p.m. Willie Alice had to walk twelve to thirteen miles roundtrip to school, which means that she left for school about two hours before class began. On rainy days, they could use the mule wagon to go to school. There were buses back then, but blacks were not allowed to ride them. Her family did not sharecrop. They owned their land. They had a farm, where they grew cotton, pecans, velvet beans, sugar cane, and raise pigs and chickens.

Another school Willie Alice attended was Scarboro Grove, a one-room schoolhouse of about fifteen children. She attended Scarboro Grove for only a short while due to repairs on the schoolhouse. Her teacher was Mrs. Lane Stewart. Scarboro Grove was in very bad condition. Students had no desks. They had to sit on wooden benches. They had limited space and few books.

In the seventh grade, Willie Alice attended Newton Grove, a one-room schoolhouse of about thirty students. Newton Grove was more of a middle school than an elementary school because they were getting prepared for high school. After Newton Grove, she went to Ridgeway School for the eighth grade. She went to Statesboro High Industrial from ninth grade until graduation.

All the one-room schoolhouses that Willie Alice attended basically consisted of a blackboard, one or two kerosene lanterns, a potbellied stove, no more than 10 books, and one or two windows. They had a devotion and would sing a song such as “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” would say the Lord’s Prayer, and quote a different scripture.
from the Bible daily. Also, on Friday, they would exercise and stretch in the morning. They ate leftovers from dinner for their lunches, which were mostly sweet potatoes, corn bread, or bacon. They ate lunch at noon. At recess, the students played baseball, hopscotch, merry-go-round, and freeze tag. All the schools she attended offered reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, history, and geography. The students were divided into groups by grade level. Then the teacher would go around teaching each group, and students from higher grade levels would help with the younger kids. As a form of punishment, students would receive a whipping with a mulberry switch in front of the class. There were no fire drills. The only holidays celebrated were Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Gertrude Woodcock Keel
Mill Creek School and Middleground
Interviewed by: Leslie Hutchens
October 4, 2000

Mrs. Gertrude Woodcock Keel was born in 1909. The first school she attended was Mill Creek School.
The school was about a mile from her home, and she rode in a buggy pulled by their horse, "Charlie," to get there. One of the teachers named Maggie was a boarding teacher who used to live with them.

Gertrude’s family then moved, and she started to attend Middleground School. She lived three miles from this school and got there by buggy also. She sometimes walked to school, but only if it were sunny. Middleground School consisted of two rooms with one teacher per room.

The teachers were Hassie Davis and Mattie Akins. Gertrude studied reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic, and she carried her own lunch to school.

Dorothy McElveen Knight
Denmark School
Interviewed by: Ashlee Hooks and Mary Herrington
November 30, 2000

Mrs. Knight is the daughter of Leona Anderson and William Anderson. Her grandparents are Mary and Bowen Anderson and Jessie Theo and Moses J. McElveen. Mrs. Knight went to Denmark School. Born July 16, 1913, she is currently 88. She was home-schooled her first-grade year and then started at Denmark in second grade at the age of six. The trustees of the school were Mr. Deloach and Mr. Miller.
The school was built of wood and lit by a single light bulb hanging from the ceiling. The holidays observed were Christmas and Thanksgiving. About fifty students attended Denmark School. Dorothy had three teachers: Mrs. Curie, Mr. Meeks, and Ms. Anderson. The grades were not separated, so to speak, but just sat in groups. The students sat in regular chairs.
The classroom was heated by coal that burned in a pot-bellied stove. A chalkboard was in the front of the room. Dorothy was picked up by the school bus. In the class, there was an even amount of boys and girls. When time came for sharecropping, more boys stayed out than girls. The subjects taught were reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, and a little bit of English. There were report cards issued to tell if students were promoted to the next grade.
The writing utensils used were pencils and notebook paper while the youngest students used special writing tablets.

The school day started at 7:30 and ended at 3:00. During the day, the students had a lunch break and then a recess during mid-afternoon. For lunch Dorothy would take a pimento cheese sandwich on a biscuit, a piece of fruit and a jar of chocolate milk. The school at Denmark had playground equipment like slides and swings.

The teachers disciplined the students, sometimes a pop on the hand with a ruler and at other times as drastic as a spanking. Other times the teacher would make a student sit in a corner with his or her back to the class. Sometimes the students were made to sit inside during recess and write sentences like, "I will not talk in class." The school consisted of an auditorium, a classroom and outhouses. Later on there was a lunchroom built.

In school the teachers taught the students folk-dancing and square-dancing. They learned songs and put on little programs for Thanksgiving, Halloween and Christmas. At recess the students played dodgeball, basketball, drop the handkerchief, red rover, hide and seek, and tag.

Her mother was the grade mother and did anything the teacher needed her to do. Mrs. Knight says she always loved going to school.
free. However, at the end of the year, the students left their books with the assigned teacher.

Recess began at 10:00 or 10:30 in the morning, and lunch began around 12:30 in the afternoon. During recess, the children played games such as softball, hopscotch, Sally-Go-Round-the-Sunshine, hide and seek, and sometimes the girls would braid the grass as if it were hair. The children had fun at recess.

There were no after-school activities. The boys and girls were the children of sharecroppers, so some had to go home and help their fathers in the fields. Mrs. Lee remembers one special event where the girls would make suppers and the boys bought them. Mrs. Lee says that the best thing about Rehovia was that no one played pranks on anybody, including teachers. The school closed down late in the year, and on the last day, parents would come to see their children make speeches about the past year in school.

The Rehovia Church School was very promising for Mrs. Lee while she was a teacher there. Modern for its time, it was a very good educational sanctuary for Mrs. Lee's students.

Unice Eudell Lee
Leefield School
Interviewed by: Josh Lanier, Mark Lanier, and Justin Tyson
October 28, 2000

Unice Eudell Lee, born on March 25, 1919, is the daughter of Josie Hodges and William Franklin Morris. She was married to John Cecil Lee and has five children named Nellie Jean, Helen, Betty, John Daniel, and Darryl Lavern.

Unice began attending Leefield School when she was six years old. Her family moved to Augusta the next year, so she only attended Leefield School in the first grade. Leefield was a wooden, one-room schoolhouse with only one teacher, Ms. Scott, for about forty students. Unice had to walk three miles to school every day, unless it was extremely cold, in which case she would ride to school in their old car. The building was heated with a wood stove, and there was one big blackboard in the front of the class.

Every morning, when class began, the teacher would ring a hand bell. They would all gather together and have a devotion, followed by a group singing. The students sat in old fashioned desks and used pencils and notebook paper to write with. The school provided the books, which were taken up at the end of the year. They were taught English and arithmetic, but at that age there was no science or history. When they got home from school, they sometimes had homework in addition to their household chores. Unice's favorite subject was arithmetic.

At about noon, the children would sit around the campus in groups and eat their lunches, which they brought themselves. Unice's lunch would typically consist of...
piece of chicken and a baked sweet potato or an egg sandwich. They drank water from a pump-handle well. Later in the afternoon, the students were let out for recess. Most of them played baseball, but they also played jump-board. In jump-board, one boy would stand on the end of a long board that was laid across a log, and another would jump on the opposite end. The other boy would then fly off of the board. Most of the students’ families at that time were farmers, so both boys and girls would stay out to work in the fields. Unice’s mother was sick for most of Unice’s childhood, so Unice also had to stay home to take care of her mother.

All in all, Mrs. Lee said that Leefield School was wonderful. She had an excellent teacher who made her look forward to coming to school each day.

Levanna Wilson Lester
Bennett Grove School
Interviewed by: Crystal Mincey, Erika Contreras, and Hope Bolton
November 30, 2000

Levanna Wilson Lester, who is 93 years old, was a teacher for four years at Bennett Grove. Her school was from primary through seventh grade, and all grades were seated in the same room. The wooden building was only one room, and students used the windows for light. They sat on benches; there were two black boards and a wooden stove for heat. The school year began in October and ended around March or April. Bennett Grove consisted of about forty-five to sixty students, mostly girls.

Mrs. Lester would start school about 8:00 a.m. and would end about 3:00 p.m. She started out with a small devotion, and then she would begin with the first grade and then on down the line to the seventh grade. The kids who attended were from ages six to eighteen. Everyone walked to school from as far as four miles, except when it rained and some came by wagon or car. Lunch was about 12:00 a.m. and lasted forty-five minutes; the meals consisted of chicken, light bread, biscuits and jelly. Mrs. Lee let the students have recess for about an hour when they would play baseball.

Mrs. Lester would stay at a neighbor’s house while school was in progress. She would discipline her students with either a switch, or she would make them stand on the wall for fifteen to twenty minutes. The students had to buy their books, and if they didn’t have the money, they would share. A supervisor would come once a month to see how she would teach her class. Students would play pranks or tricks, so they had to be watched at all time. She made twenty-eight dollars a month and later on got a raise to thirty-six dollars a month. Bennett Grove was an all-black school. The reason Mrs. Lester became a teacher was because after she graduated from school, her mother died, so she stayed home to help her father take care of her other brothers and sisters.
Mrs. Dorothy May Lewis was born on September 4. She lived right beside Woodson Grove Baptist Church School, which she started attending when she was five years old.

Woodson Grove consisted of one room, and all the grade levels were taught in this room. Students sat on comfortable benches. The building was wooden with electric lighting. During winter a wood heater warmed the room. Mrs. Lewis also said that Woodson Grove employed only one teacher and a principal named Mr. Jordan.

Since Dorothy lived right next door to the school, she and a group of her friends walked together each morning. The teacher also walked to school from her home in the town. During school, books were issued to the students. These books covered subjects such as English, math, spelling, and reading. Spelling was Dorothy's favorite subject. The students did their work by writing on paper with pencils. At lunchtime, those who brought their lunches were expected to stay on campus to eat. Some students went home for lunch. In addition to being let out for lunch, students were also let out for at least one or two recesses per day. At recess, the students played fun games such as hide and go seek, baseball, and softball. Woodson Grove was a very fun school.

Although students did play organized sports at recess, they did not play them for the school. On the other hand, they did have activities in the school in which the parents and the students participated. Students also took part in holiday celebrations such as Labor Day and Arbor Day. Also, at Woodson Grove there were not any immunization shots required. There weren't any nurses, either. There weren't any poorly disciplined kids there because students knew if they acted up that they were going to be spanked.

Dorothy loved her teachers and her school. After attending Woodson Grove Baptist Church School, she went on to William James High School, two miles from her house. The good thing about Woodson Grove was that it had no violence in it except for an occasional fight. The students were let out for holidays such as Christmas. There were no tragedies there while she was attending school. Woodson Grove was a very highly recognized and loved educational sanctuary.

Ruby Lewis was born on January 1, 1909, and is now 92 years old. She married Vonzy Lewis, and she has two children, Dean and Verlon. Her parents' names were Mindy and Robert Lewis. Mrs. Lewis began attending school in 1917 at the age of seven. Grinner School was 1st
through 9th grade, and all the grades were seated in the same room. The school taught geography, history, arithmetic, spelling and English. The building was made of wood and had only one room. The students sat on desks and benches. There were about four windows, so they could get enough light to see. The school year began in September and ended around April or May. The school consisted of about thirty-five students, mostly girls. Ruby had a male principal. Her teachers were Annie Bruton, Ginnie Grinner, Molly Lewis and Minnie McKelvin, who all taught together. The teachers taught on the blackboard while the students would write on a folding book with a pencil. Students got their books new, but their parents had to buy them. After the school year was done, students would bring the books home for their siblings to use. Students received report cards every month. They had an hour-long lunch break and brought their own lunch, which usually consisted of fried chicken, a vegetable, a potato, and cake. Ruby usually walked about four miles to school, but if it rained her parents took her.

Her favorite teacher was Ginnie Grinner because she was strict, but respected everyone. The teachers walked a short distance to school. Classes began at 8:00 with the Lord’s Prayer and ended at 4:00. At recess they would play drop-the-handkerchief, tag, and hide-and-seek. The teacher would discipline a student in front of the whole class, and if another student laughed the teacher would discipline that student also. Ruby went to school through the 8th grade. Her best friends were Thelma Lane, Betsy Deloach, and Mary Anderson. She says that schools nowadays are not as strict as they used to be. Mrs. Lewis later went on to be a seamstress for thirty-five years.

LaRue Tyson Mallard
Tyson Grove School
Interviewed by: Amber Brown and Alicia Williams
September 26, 2000

LaRue Tyson Mallard was born on January 9, 1922, in Bulloch County. At the age of six she began attending a local one-room school called Tyson Grove School. It contained first and second grade. This school closed due to the lack of money from the community. Soon, though, New Westside School opened, which contained grades one through eleven. The building was made of brick, unlike the wooden structure of Tyson Grove. New Westside also had a blackboard on two sides of the room, but some classes had as little as three students. They had writing tablets and pencils that broke very easily and ripped the paper if students pressed down too hard.

The average school year consisted of four and one half months due to the farmers’ planting season. LaRue graduated after the eleventh grade, but she had very few teachers. Her favorites were Mr. Wilkerson and Mrs. Silma Brannen.

School during this time let out for very few holidays, and there were not many breaks within the day. Thanksgiving holidays were only two days while the Christmas break was only Christmas Eve and Christmas day. Students who had to walk to school, as Mrs. Mallard did, were sent out to school as early as sunrise and let out at about three or four o’clock. Lunch and recess were given at the same time during the day. All of the students at Tyson Grove brought their lunches, which consisted mostly of ham and biscuits, bananas, and possibly a cup of rice and...
gravy. The girls played London Bridge while the boys went across the street to play baseball with an old ball and a piece of wood.

Herman Marsh
Mill Creek and Middle Ground School
Interviewed by: T.J. Moore and Justin Tyson
October 12, 2000

Herman Marsh was born on July 6, 1919. He is the son of Bernie Marsh, a resident of Portal, and Herman Marsh, Sr. Herman first attended Mill Creek School at the age of six until he was nine years old, when he moved to Middle Ground School. Mill Creek School was located in between Middle Ground and Portal School. After leaving Middle Ground, he attended a local high school. Finally, to end out his education, Herman started to attend a college. However, he only stayed a month because World War II broke out, and he had to enlist. He survived the war but could not go back to college because he was too fatigued from all the fighting.

Mr. Marsh also described some of the things about his school. The wooden school had only two rooms and only had one restroom, which was for the girls. The boys had to use the branch. Mr. Marsh said that there was no electricity in his school and that students had to attend school only in the daytime. At Mill Creek School, he said that they taught primary to fifth or sixth grade. Then after leaving Mill Creek, Herman attended Middle Ground School, where the students were placed into primary through second, third, or fourth grades. Of course, seventh grade was the highest grade a student could go to back then before entering high school. This school was also a two-room school with a round wood heater. He stated that there was not a principal here and that they only had two teachers and fifteen or twenty students. Students sat in chairs and placed their books on something else. He said that in order to heat the schoolhouse, the fathers of the children had to bring wood. In order to give the daily lecture or assignment, the teacher wrote it on the board.

The students had to walk to the school some days, and on others, they rode with their parents in their cars. Mr. Marsh said his brother and he had to walk two miles to get to school. Sometimes, their older brother did pick them up. They had to get to school by eight or nine o'clock. They departed from school at three o'clock.

Students covered and had books for five subjects: writing, arithmetic, English, history, and science. They had no organized sports such as baseball or basketball. Instead, all they did was run, jump, and play around an old sycamore tree at recess for 30 minutes. They had no extra activities such as school dances except for one thing. Every once in a while, some students would climb the old sycamore tree for entertainment for the other students.

Mr. Marsh said that the students who attended these schools were very well behaved because they knew if they misbehaved, they would be paddled or sent to the corner by the teachers.

Only for certain reasons did the kids get out of the school. This included helping their dads out on the farm. Herman’s dad was a farmer. Herman went to school for five to six months. They also got out for Christmas holidays or any other holidays. He said that their typical
school day consisted of going to school in the morning, eating lunch, and returning home that afternoon.

James Hubert Miller
Rockhill School
Interviewed by: Crystal Mincey, Hope Bolton, and Missy Miller
October 12, 2000

James Hubert Miller is 90 years old and was born on December 12, 1910. He began attending Rockhill School in 1915, at the age of five. The school was made of wood, with oil lamps, a blackboard, benches to sit on, and a wood heater that was used during the winter. The school had about 40 or 50 students, grade first through fifth or sixth.

James would walk to school with his sister at around eight in the morning for about five miles. School ended at around three or four p.m. At the beginning of the day, the students would have a Bible reading. The subjects taught were geography, English, reading, and spelling. They used slates, pencils, and blank paper to write on, and once a month they would get a report card from their teachers.

The lunch break was about thirty minutes long, and the students had to bring lunch in a bucket. It usually consisted of a potato and some sort of meat. They had recess from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. and again from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. James' favorite game was rag ball, and all of the students were his friends. If a student disobeyed the teacher, he had to get in front of the class and receive a whipping where everyone could see.

Pearl Lee Harden Parrish
Bennett Grove, Johnson Grove, Gay's Hill, Williams James High School
Interviewed by: Thelma Tippins and Alicia Williams
November 15, 2000

Mrs. Pearl Lee Harden Parrish was born on July 5, 1919, as the daughter of Homer L. Harden and Susie Jerod Harden. Mrs. Pearl, now 81, began school in 1925 at the age of six. She began her education at Bennett Grove, followed by Johnson Grove, Gays Hill, and finishing her education at William James High School in Statesboro.

Bennett Grove was a one-room schoolhouse located five miles from her home, which was located on Ponderosa Road. School began in November and closed in April. The school was made from wood with a small porch connected to the front. The school consisted of grades first through seventh. The classroom had only one teacher with up to twenty-five students. The classroom was equal in the amount of boys and girls. The school had no principal. Each student sat on a wooden bench with no desks. They had pencils to write with, and the teacher had a blackboard. Parents had to buy second-hand books for students to use. A local bell was the signal for school to begin. School began at 8:00 a.m. and ended at 4:00 p.m. The major subjects were arithmetic, reading, spelling, and English. Students had a lunch break at noon. They all had to take
their own lunch to school. Most lunches consisted of syrup, a biscuit, and some kind of meat.

Bennett Grove didn’t have dances, but they had small parties to raise money for supplies needed at the school. They didn’t have nurses. In the winter time, the school were heated by a wooden heater. They didn’t have electricity, so they used lanterns. Before school started, they had a prayer and a PTA meeting for the parents. Every Friday, the school had a Christian program where the students would stand on the porch and give speeches in front of fellow classmates and their parents. Boys and girls played softball and tag games. “When we would walk to school, the white children on the buses would throw things and spit at us.” Mrs. Parrish remembers she had to walk five miles each day to get to her school. The nearest school to Bennett Grove was Gays Hill, which was three miles away. During the year, the majority of the students would stay out of school for sharecropping. The students were well disciplined or would receive whippings from the teachers. Mrs. Parrish had no favorite teachers, but her favorite subject was spelling. Her best friend was Alice Johnson. All of her teachers are now deceased. The memories of her school remain clear to her.

Susie Bell Polk
Summer Hill School
Interviewed by: Raul Jones & Jeremy Scott
September 26, 2000

Susie Bell Polk is 76 years old, born on March 12, 1924, in the small town of Clito. She is the daughter of Martha and Leroy Coop Young. Mrs. Polk is married to Lester Polk and has 11 children. Their names are Leroy (oldest), Willie Frank, Christine, Queenola, Ida Pearl, Lester, Jr., Joanne, Frank Junior, Ruth and Rufus (twins), and Irma Jean (youngest).

Susie went here and there, but started school around the age of seven. She attended Summer Hill School, but she did not go to high school. Summer Hill had no principal and only one teacher, Mrs. Bea Young, who taught reading, writing and arithmetic. The students learned their ABCs in a shoe box top.

The one-room school was made of wood and blocks and was lighted by kerosene lanterns. They had bolted windows and one door. Susie stayed out of school often because of family reasons. Summer Hill consisted of about 10 students. They had a few ragged benches, but most of the students laid a board across the blocks and sat on that. They also had a blackboard. During the winter, the boys would go in the woods and get some wood for the heater.

Susie walked about five miles to school in one hour. On rainy days, a wagon would come and get the students. The teacher had a horse and buggy and usually roomed with a student’s family.

School started at eight or nine in the morning and lasted until two or three in the afternoon. They had a bell to let students know when it was time to start, go to lunch, and leave. Students brought their own lunches, which usually consisted of a baked potato, biscuits, syrup, and ham.

Their supplies included paper, pencils, and a rough, reusable slate. Their parents paid for their books, and they got to keep them at the end of the year. The students were promoted to the next grade by their performance in their
work. They did not get a report card sent home like students do now.

Susie’s family sharecropped with others when she went to school. Some things that they planted were cotton, corn, peanuts, peas, okra, rice, and greens. She had to miss school to help out on the farm.

After school, Susie had typical chores for a farm child. Her school had no clubs, but students did have house parties. They were not allowed to sing or listen to blues music.

Bennett Grove and Jerusalem Church were made of wood. There was no electricity, so they had to use lamps. Both schools did have a blackboard. Mrs. Price said they had to sit on wooden benches. They had pencils, and a few older students had pens. The parents had to buy the books for the children.

Mrs. Price mentioned that her first teacher was a male. The subjects they were taught were math and science. “I do not remember studying history,” replied Mrs. Price when asked about any other subjects they had. The students had lunchtime, and they brought their own buckets of food.

Mrs. Price and other children who attended school had to walk there. They had to walk if it were sunny or if it rained. Mrs. Price walked three to four miles to school everyday. If it were very cold any time, they would not go to school. Mr. Bennett supplied the wood for the school heater. If it rained, students would have to eat lunch inside the school and would have to play on the inside as well.

Mrs. Price recalled a memorable moment that happened while she was in school. “We had a man teacher who drank. And one day he got drunk and had to leave the class. He went and lay down in the woods, and the boys covered him with lighterd knots and wood.”

Mrs. Beaulah Robinson Price was born on November 30, 1892. She is 108 years old and resides in Portal. She is the daughter of the late Anna Price. Her father died before she was born.

Mrs. Price was married to the late Eddie Price. She noted that her husband was born in North Carolina. She and her husband had two children, Wilbert and Mary Lee. Beaulah went to school at Bennett Grove School, Jerusalem Church School, and another school in Brooklet. She did not attend William James High School or any other high school. Mrs. Price said, “I did not graduate because of my bad eyes. My family had to lead me around places because I couldn’t see.”

Mrs. Daisy Pye was born in 1908 and is now 92 years old. She attended Pauline School, which had two
rooms. Oil lamps were used for light, and a wood stove helped them keep warm. Daisy was able to walk home for lunch because she lived close to the school. The teachers would usually teach fifteen to twenty students. Grades one through five were taught in one room, and six and seventh were taught in the other room. Once the students had completed the seventh grade, they moved to Leefield School. Daisy had to walk about five miles to that school. Mrs. Pye says that they played baseball and basketball during recess and other breaks throughout the day. They had a four-seater outhouse at her school, which means that four people could go into the bathroom at one time.

At Pauline School they believed in discipline. Misbehaving children were given whippings or had to stand in a corner for long periods of time.

Inez Ellis Rigdon
Bradwell School and Portal School
Interviewed By:
Josh and Mark Lanier
September 26, 2000

Inez Ellis Rigdon was born September 25, 1905. She was the daughter of Joseph Ellis and Julia Chester Ellis. Her husband was John Daniel Rigdon. Inez began going to school at age six. She attended Bradwell School until the third grade. Then after moving back to Bulloch County, Inez began attending Portal School because the smaller schools had merged with Portal. She was bused from Portal to Statesboro for the 10th and 12th grades for ten dollars a month. She graduated from Portal in 1926 at the top of her class as an honor graduate.

Some of the subjects taught at Portal were Latin, French, Georgia history, American history, physics, and English. Latin was her favorite subject. The students had midterm exams before Christmas and final exams at the end of the year. The principal was Yule Denmark. School began in September, and Inez always walked unless it was extremely cold, in which case she would get a ride. Most of the teachers she had lived in Portal and boarded with the students' families. Portal School was a two-story building with an auditorium upstairs and the classrooms downstairs. There were about one hundred students there, and the building was heated with pot-bellied stoves. The teachers presented information on a blackboard, and they would sometimes ask questions and make students write the answers on the blackboard. They had pencils, paper, and refillable ink pens with ink wells on the desks. The school day started at 8:30 a.m. and ended at 4:30 p.m. Every morning the students gathered in the auditorium for Bible reading and prayer. They had a recess at 10:00 in the morning that was about ten or fifteen minutes long. They had a lunch break at noon that lasted an hour. Most of the students brought their own lunches from home.

Portal School had box supper fundraisers in which students made boxes, put food in them, covered them with tissue paper, and auctioned them off. Oftentimes boys would stay out of school to pick or plant crops such as cotton, corn, and peanuts. They also worked with meat in the smokehouses. For these reasons, there were usually more girls than boys at school. During recess, students played basketball and baseball, but the baseball games were usually unorganized. Portal did have several organized athletic teams that were bussed to Statesboro for
The school had its own nurse who vaccinated the students for smallpox. Inez’s most embarrassing moment at school occurred during a spelling contest. Her hands were shaking so badly that she could not write the answers on the chalkboard.

Audrey Royals
Denmark School
Interviewed by: Ashlee Hooks and Mary Herrington
December 11, 2000

Audrey Royals was born January 14, 1920. She is the daughter of Minnie and Cleay Deloach. Her mother was the daughter of Isabel and Jack Waters. Mrs. Royals started school at the age of six. Denmark School was a wooden building that used daylight to light the classroom. Denmark school burned when Audrey was only in the fifth grade. While the school was being rebuilt, the students were transported to Emit Church to use as their school. There one of Audrey’s memorable moments in school happened. She remembers that one day, two boys went out to the school bus and started driving around and around the church, and when the principal went out to get them, they almost ran over him.

School began for the twenty-three students at eight o’clock and ended at two thirty. They had a lunch break at about eleven-thirty. After lunch they were always given a recess for thirty minutes.

The students who were involved with sharecropping didn’t start school along with the other students; they started after Christmas while the other students started in October. The nurses from the health department came out to the school and gave the students immunizations. Mrs. Royals remembers a tragic event at Denmark. She remembers one day when the boys were playing baseball and a boy’s eye got put out. He is still blind today. Another memory Mrs. Royals has is of her drying her shoes out in front of the stove, which also heated the classroom.

Purvis L. Royals
Willow Hill School
Interviewed By:
Thelma Tippins and Alicia Williams

Mr. Purvis Royals, who was born on November 19, 1916, is the son of Lue Royals and Louise Wilson Royals. He attended Willow Hill School in 1921 at the age of five. The school had the grades first through seventh, which was the last grade he completed. Mr. Royals did not go to high school. Students had to purchase their books. The subjects were math, English, geography, and art. Mr. Royals had to walk to school, which was a mile and half. Some students had to walk three to four miles to get to school.

The school was built of wood. The winters were cold and they had to use a wood heater. Many times they didn’t have wood, so the boys had to go out and gather wood. They didn’t have that much water, so sometimes students had to go to the neighbors for water. They used lamps to see by at school. They set on benches and the teacher used blackboards. Some teachers also walked to school.
School took in at 8:30 a.m. and ended at 3:00 p.m. School took in to a ringing bell. Students had a devotion service every morning. The teachers and students sang songs and said the Lord’s Prayer. They only had pencils and tablets. The class had 50 to 60 students. They were out of school for Thanksgiving and Christmas. They had recess at 10:00 when they would play catball and baseball. Reports cards were not issued.

Students brought whatever their parents made for them for lunch. There was no nurse. Purvis did not have to stay out of school to sharecrop, but others did. Purvis’ parents wanted him and his sisters and brothers to go to school. Willow Hill School had an equal number of boys and girls. They did have school dances at Willow Hill. Other teachers used to visit the school once a month. The teachers disciplined the students as they saw fit. Mr. Royals said that he loved his teacher and obeyed her with respect.

The parents visited the school on closing day. On the first day and last day, parents met and had a big dinner. Mr. Royal’s most memorable moment was going to school and getting his lesson. He said that made him very happy to be obedient to his teachers.

Mrs. Lessie Rushing was born in 1916 and is now 84 years old. She attended Westside.

On April Fools Day 1926, kids were yelling “fire” because she thought they were trying to play an April Fool’s Day joke on her. Then she realized that the fire was real. They had to evacuate quickly before anyone was hurt. Mrs. Rushing stated that a tent was put up to have school under until Westside could be rebuilt.

Mrs. Rushing also remembers having to walk about a mile to school; even when it rained or snowed, students had to walk. Most of the time if the weather were not bad, they would run, but other times they would have to be carried by a buggy or run from house to house. Students brought their own lunches, which usually consisted of a potato, fried chicken, and maybe a biscuit.
School let in at eight o’clock a.m. and let out at three o’clock p.m. Students knew when school was being let in and out because there was a bell that was rung. Every morning there was a devotion where someone got up and led everyone in prayer. Books were issued and turned in at the end of the year. Students had to buy their own pencils and paper. There was a big blackboard at the front of the school. The subjects that were taught were math, reading, and spelling. Eloise’s favorite subject was reading, and her favorite teacher was Mrs. Carta Bell Jones. Each student was promoted by a report card.

Mrs. Sapp said they had a lunch break and two recesses. Lunch was at noon and lasted for an hour. Her lunch usually consisted of biscuit, ham, jelly, and peanut butter. At recess she played with her best friend, Fay Wayne. The recesses were at ten in the morning and at one in the afternoon. They played Red Rover and ball. Not too many pranks were played because students knew better. There were more girls. Many of the boys stayed out due to sharecropping.

When discipline was required, the teachers gave whippings. Mrs. Sapp said she loved all of her teachers dearly. Everything was memorable. When Mrs. Sapp was asked to make a comparison between schools then and schools today she said: “Back then, students respected their seniors. We appreciated school more.”

Sara Mae Scott
Red Hill School
Interviewed by: Crystal Mincey, Erika Contreras, and Hope Bolton
December 08, 2000

Sara Mae Scott was born on October 25, 1945, and is now 55 years old. She began attending Red Hill Elementary in 1951 at the age of five. Her school was 1st through 7th grade, and all the grades were seated in the same room. The school taught reading and arithmetic. The building had only one room, and it was made of wood. The students sat on benches and used pencils, paper, and composition tablets. The school used a wooden heater and had a black board and one bulb for light. The school consisted of around 35 to 70 students, mostly girls.

Sara had two teachers; one would teach first through third, and the other one would teach fourth through seventh. They celebrated all major holidays and would have races on May Day. They had used books that were given to them that they had to turn in at the end of the year. Students were promoted to different grade levels by report cards and tests that they had to take. They had an hour break for lunch and brought their own meals, which usually consisted of a biscuit, meat, eggs, and a sausage. Sara usually walked about two miles to school with a bunch of her friends.

The teachers would drive to school in a black Chevrolet. A bell rang to begin the school at 8:00; then they followed with “The Pledge of Allegiance,” a prayer, the 23rd Psalm, a Bible verse, and an inspection. They had two recesses, one short and one long, and school ended at 3:00 p.m. Their parents came for special occasions or if there
were a major problem at the school. The students had designated jobs to do at school to keep up the maintenance. Sara's most memorable moment was when she was in a relay team and realized she could not run. After that she decided to learn. Mrs. Scott feels that it was a privilege back then to go to school. After she graduated she became an elevator operator, a secretary, a seamstress, and a church minister.

Dorothy Smith Simmons
Polk's Academy, Rose Hill, Noah's Ark
Interviewed By: Jeremy Scott & Mark Lanier
October 31, 2000

Dorothy Smith Simmons was born on September 11, 1940, and is 60 years old. She is the daughter of Mrs. Uni Smith and Mr. Tyson Smith. Mrs. Simmons is married to Mr. Donnell Simmons and has three children: Richard Donnell Simmons, Gletta Jones Simmons, and Startavia Williams. Dorothy started school at the age of five or six. She started off at Polk's Academy and then transferred to Rose Hill School, which is located where Second St. John Missionary Baptist Church is today. Later on Dorothy went to Noah's Ark, which was a church also, off of Westside Road. Mrs. Simmons graduated from William James High School. During that time, the principal was Julia P. Bryant.

Just a few students attended the "country" schools. None of the schools had principals, but they did have teachers. Dorothy's teachers at Polk's Academy were Geraldine Campbell and Gussie B. Oliver. The teacher at Noah's Ark was Ms. Miners. Each one of the schools was one big wood building. None of the schools had electricity, except for Noah's Ark. Each school had one big wooden heater. The boys would have to go in the woods and cut wood; the girls would help bring in the wood. The schools also had chalkboards. A bell rang to start class, and the students had devotion and said the pledge to the flag at the beginning of every school day. The subjects at the schools consisted of reading, spelling, and arithmetic. Dorothy liked all three. The students had a lunch break around 11:00, which was followed by recess. During recess the students played softball, "Sally Go Round the Sunshine," and hopscotch. The schools provided books for the students, but they could not take the books home because there were not enough books for everybody. The students had to do their homework at school.

The teacher disciplined the children by giving them paddlings. The students had to get them in front of the whole class. Then, they would have to get another when they got home.

The schools closed on some holidays. They closed for Christmas and Thanksgiving and Arbor Day, also known as Field Day, and May Day. The schools closed during the summer. Mrs. Simmons' father sharecropped, but she still had to go to school. Her father grew peanuts, corn, and tobacco.

Mrs. Simmons' most memorable moment was all the fun she had during May Day. She also sold candy to help raise money for the schools.

Mrs. Simmons is a retired employee of Henry's in downtown Statesboro. She worked there for 32 years and retired 8 years ago. She now resides in Statesboro.
Juanita Lee Washington
New Hope School
Interviewed by: Crystal Mincey, Hope Bolton, and Erika Contreras
October 30, 2000

Juanita Lee Washington was born on June 19, 1919, and is now 81 years old. She married James Washington Lee. She attended New Hope School, with grade levels from 1st through 8th. The school building was wood, used windows for light, and had a wood heater. All the grades were combined. The school consisted of about ten to fifteen students. School began at 8:00 a.m., opening with a prayer, and ended at 3:00 p.m.

Juanita rode a bus to school, but her teacher had to walk nine to ten miles to school. The principal’s name was Mr. Martin, who was very strict. Teachers would teach on a blackboard, while the students used paper and pencil. Students got their books from the state, and at the end of the year they got to keep them for their younger siblings. Juanita specifically remembers one subject, English. She got a report card when she was moved to another grade level. Her lunch break was an hour long and began at 12:00. She had to bring her own; it consisted of mashed potatoes, a biscuit, and syrup.

Juanita’s favorite teacher was Millie May Barber, and the nurse’s name was Betty Jean Joyce. Students participated in May and Arbor Day and had craft classes. Teachers would discipline students by hitting their hands with a ruler in front of the whole class. Juanita later went on to a fulfilling her career in hair styling.

Nina Ruth Williams
Harmonia School
Interviewed by: Leslie Hutchens
October 4, 2000

Mrs. Nina Ruth Williams was born in 1920. She attended Harmonia School. Harmonia School was in Emit Community on Highway 67 and was near a local church. Grades taught were first through seventh. There were a variety of subjects taught at Harmonia such as geography, spelling, art, science, arithmetic, grammar, and reading.

Nina walked four miles to get to her school as she had no other means of getting there. In 1935 the winter was very cold, but all of the students still made it to school. Back then most of the students carried their own lunches to school in buckets, but if they lived close enough to home, they would leave school and eat their lunch there.

The teachers at Harmonia School were Eva Jones and Pecola Campbell. For a while Mrs. Williams went to Love School, where she was a student under Mrs. Lillie Bluet, the primary teacher.

Daisy Wilson
Portal High School
Interviewed by: Crystal Mincey and Hope Bolton
September 26, 2000

Daisy Wilson was born on April 14, 1916, and is now 84 years old. She began attending Portal High School in 1922 at the age of six. Her school was segregated. The grade levels went from 1st to 12th grades. Many boys were
Portal High School was made of plank boards. The library was located in the auditorium. A wood stove was used for heat and pump lamps for light. The students sat in double benches and used paper and pencil to write with. The teachers used a chalkboard to teach the students English and arithmetic.

Daisy’s principal was Mr. Denmark, and her teacher’s names were Nita Mincey, her favorite, and Clara Scarboro. The parents never went to the school because the teachers would discipline by whipping the child in front of the class with a ruler. Daisy loved all of her teachers except for the ones who gave her a whipping. The teachers drove to school in a Model A car but were not allowed to pick up students. A town bus came to pick up the students who lived close by, but Daisy had to walk to school, rain or shine, for about two and a half miles.

School started at 8:00 a.m. and ended at 4:00 p.m. When the students got to school, they would go to the auditorium and recite the Pledge of Allegiance and sing the National Anthem. Recess was at 10:00 a.m., during which they would play tag and ring-around-the-rosie. Lunch was an hour long, and Daisy brought her own. It might contain an apple, a jelly sandwich, fried chicken, a baked potato, and a biscuit with butter. Daisy was promoted to different grade levels by a report card that her parents signed.

Daisy had to quit school in the 8th grade to help her father out on the farm. Daisy had to go home right after school to do her chores. Her most memorable moment was when she won the Charleston Tap Dancing contest.
Another interesting discovery about teachers in the early 1900s is the fact that they were expected to set an example for the whole community twenty-four hours a day. That meant that teachers were not allowed to drink in public or socially, nor could they be seen or connected to any event that might compromise their reputations. Furthermore, male teachers could not formally court ladies in the community. If any compromising ever did occur that the board of trustees did not approve of, the teacher would be relieved of his or her duties.

According to Mr. Woodrum, money was not the only thing that was scarce in those times; materials were also hard to find. Normally the parents of a community would donate wood toward a small one or two-room schoolhouse. These schoolhouses were usually about 20x20, some slightly larger or smaller. Each school typically had a small iron stove or fireplace on one side for heating during the winter months. Rarely was there electricity or plumbing, only outhouses. Paper was also very scarce, so students had to share slates or small chalkboards. The slates were used to work math problems or spell words, and then students would be able to wipe the slates clean and reuse them. Some schools had large blackboards, and some did not. There were no playgrounds like today's. Instead, students were allowed to go outside for recess where they made up their own games like red rover or tag. They were all simple games that did not require many materials. Sometimes, when the students were lucky, the teacher would make a string-ball for them to play baseball with until the ball came unraveled. Some schools had wells; others did not. The students who attended schools that did not have wells had to bring their own water to school to drink with lunch, which usually consisted of sweet potatoes and fried ham. Some students would bring a biscuit or whatever their parents had around the house.

The normal classes were usually from 8 to 12 students. Most students were boys since the general philosophy of the time was for the men to be the ones who acquired the education. The general consensus was for the women to stay home and learn from their mothers how to keep up the household. Still, oftentimes girls outnumbered boys in class due to many boys having to cut classes to help out on the farm.

Mr. Woodrum reported that the teacher took care of discipline and that parents were very rarely found taking the side of a child in a dispute. Usually after a disciplinary action at school, the student could expect an even more severe action at home. Rules for the students were very strict; however, rules regarding what a student could and could not bring to school were virtually nonexistent. Most boys brought slingshots to school and with practice, most were very accurate. Boys even brought guns to school, but there was never a problem. In the early 1900s, guns and slingshots were looked on as a manner of protection. With proper teaching, the children learned what was and what was not proper in regards to the weapons found at school.

Dances were not sponsored by the school in the early 1900s. The emphasis was on reading, writing, and arithmetic. The schools did sponsor and support debates that stared out in small classrooms between students and grew into activities that the whole community would come to see. Topics for these debates would be based on events surrounding the local area and ranged greatly depending on the students' interests and on what events were taking place nationwide. Even in the Bible belt of the southeast,
students and teachers generally avoided religious topics due to the heated arguments and physical battles that might have ensued.

Mr. Woodrum believes that debates like these are sorely missed in today's school systems.

Courtney Youngblood
Bird School
Interviewed by: Crystal Mincey, Hope Bolton, and Ashlee Hooks
October 5, 2000

Courtney Youngblood was born on May 6, 1922, and is now 78 years old. His wife’s name is Dot Youngblood, and their child is Gary Youngblood. Courtney began attending Bird School in 1928 at the age of 6 and continued until he was 17 years of age. Mrs. Fronita Roach was the only teacher at the time. Her desk was on a platform at the front of the classroom so she could see anything that was going on.

The school was brown and made of wood. It had about ten windows, which provided enough light for the students to do their work. There was a wooden stove at the front for the students. The students had to sit on wooden benches, which seated two. The school was from grades first through fifth. School started in August and ended in May, and there were about twenty students who came to school each day. Class started at 8:30 a.m. and ended at 4:00 p.m.

Courtney had a friend named Lamar Smith, who rode a pony to school with him everyday. There was a bully who tied a briar bush to Courtney’s pony’s tail, a prank which made the horse go crazy while it was tied up. When a student got into trouble, Mrs. Fronita, Roach, their teacher, would whip him in front of the whole class. The students had recess at about 11:00 everyday, and if a student were bad, he would have to sit down while his other friends played. Mr. Youngblood later went on to serve in the service at Ft. Stewart and for three or four years in the South Pacific. He also was a sales person at a grocery company, an automobile company, and insurance company.