
Grady County Historical Society – Schools

Pawnee School, Whigham School

Includes photographs, newspaper clippings, and a deed book regarding the school.

For this and additional works see: <https://vtext.valdosta.edu/xmlui/handle/10428/6878>

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DIXIE MEMORIES

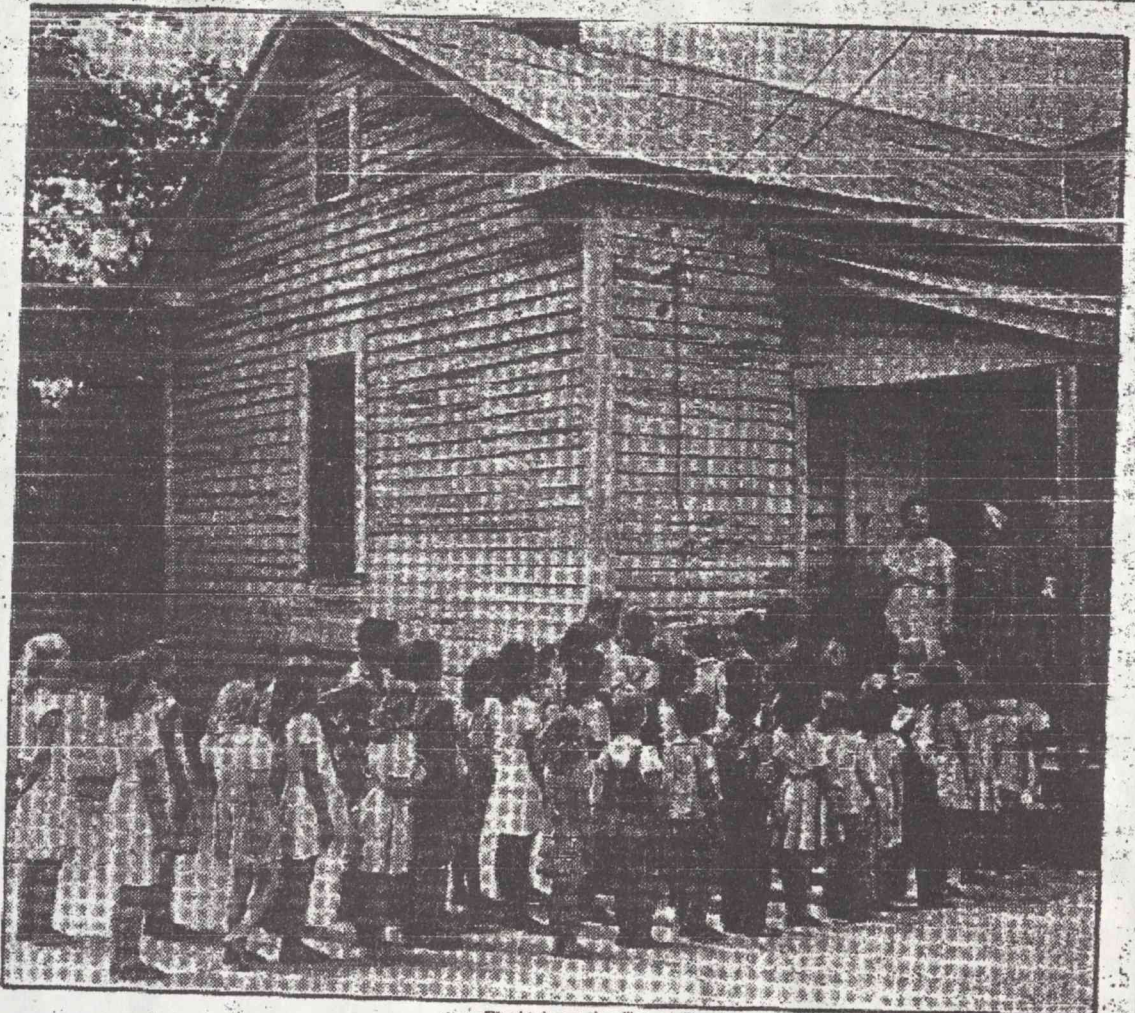


Photo from the files of The Atlanta Journal and The Atlanta Constitution

SCHOOL DAYS: The beginnings of public education in Georgia can probably be traced to the 1,000 spelling books that James Oglethorpe brought with him to be distributed among the settlers of the new colony. From there the road of public education in the state was slow and marked by political resistance to social change.

Public-school bells rang for Atlanta's children in 1853, when a generous citizen, Edmund W. Holland, donated a house at "the edge of the forest" at Forsyth and Garnett streets for the purpose of a "free school." Even with the availability of the school, many parents had to be encouraged to send their children because the idea of a public school was considered "rather common." Until then, only children from families who could afford to send them to private academies had any formal education.

Although the idea of "free schools" was discussed as early as 1783 and argued about for

many more years, it was not until 1870 that the Georgia Legislature passed an act that actually provided for a system of public instruction, making John Randolph the first school commissioner.

Public education in Georgia has come a long way from the time when the primary argument against government-funded schools was that "there was no justification in taking a man's money to pay for the 'schooling' of his neighbor's children than to take his plow and team to till another man's field." Today, more than one-half of the state's budget goes for education, from kindergarten through college. Pictured here in 1949 are students lining up to march into the Purdee School in Grady County. The last one-room schoolhouse in Georgia closed its doors in 1966.

— Betty Parham

and Seal this day & year above written
Signed Sealed & Delivered
in presence of:
John B. Crawford,
Harmon, Mock,
J. P. & G. H. G.

W. A. Boyett, S. J.

State of Georgia } Recorded Sept 27th 1881
Decatur County } This Indenture made this September the 15th
eighteen hundred and seventy nine (1879) between W A Chester of the
first part and Mrs J. A. Lassiter of the second part sheweth that
W A Chester has this day sold unto the said Mrs. J. A. Lassiter 18
eight acres of land in the north east corner of lot No Thirty 30
in the nineteenth district of Decatur County and bounded as
follows. on the north by lands owned by R. A. Blount on the
east by publick Road on the north of a rail on the south
by a branch road - the west & east corners and west by lands
owned by W A Chester the sites of said lands the said Chester
warrants and binds unto the said Lassiter her heirs executors
administrators or assigns in fee simple against the claims of
himself his heirs executors administrators or assigns and the
claims of all other persons whatsoever the said land is bargained
sold and conveyed for one hundred (100) dollars the receipt of
which is hereby acknowledged. In witness whereof I have
hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and date
above written

Test H L Meeley

W A Chester

J. T. Hanell
Mayor of Whigham

Georgia } Personally came H L Meeley who on oath
Decatur County } says that he signed the foregoing deed as a wit-
ness. That W A Chester signed sealed and delivered the same in
his presence & in the presence of J T Hanell and that he and
J. T. Hanell both signed the same as witnesses in the presence of
each other & of W A Chester
sworn to subscribed before me this
day of 1881
H L Meeley
Harmon Mock N. P. & G. H. G.

Georgia } Recorded Oct 4th 1881
Decatur County } Know all men - That for and in consideration
of five dollars in hand paid by M Ferst Joseph Ferst of Savannah
Ga & Joseph Strauss of New York composing the firm of M Ferst
& Co. the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged as well as for
the business note.

Local School Honored



WHIGHAM SCHOOL faculty and administrative staff proudly display a banner proclaiming the school a Silver Award Winner in the 2008 Single Statewide Accountability System awards presented by the Governor's Office of Student Achievement.

Story & Photo by Darrell Mudra

Whigham School Principal Demetrius Cox is not inclined to keep secrets from her faculty; but there are always exceptions.

When Cox learned that Whigham School was one of only 13 elementary schools in the state of Georgia to be named a 2008 Single Statewide Accountability System (SSAS) Silver award winner, she decided to wait until the banner arrived from the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GAOSA) before she broke the news to her faculty.

Cox made a surprise announcement at a faculty meeting last Wednesday afternoon by reading a letter of congratulations from Georgia Lt. Governor Casey Cagle, followed by a letter from Jennifer Rippner Buck, executive director of the GAOSA.

Cheers erupted from her audience of teachers as she and instructional coordinator Sherry Moncrief displayed the banner to the faculty for the first time.

"It is always nice for 'others' to recognize your hard work and efforts toward improving education," said Cox. "I like the fact that the state of Georgia has recognized, through the data alone, that this school is making a positive difference in the lives of students."

Cox says the commitment of teachers to improve the number of students exceeding the standards made a difference. "Our fourth grade students were targeted for 2007-08 in reading and math. It helped that the teachers and students were able to meet their school improvement goals by reducing level 1 scores and increasing levels 2 & 3," she says.

Schools must meet three criteria to become Silver award winners: make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for two consecutive years; demonstrate that at least 25 percent of students exceed standards in all test areas as measured by state assessments; and place in the 96th percentile or higher statewide

in greatest student achievement gains.

"Every year, we try to examine ourselves as a school and how we are serving our students academically," Principal Cox said. "We could not provide the students with what we decide is best instructionally unless we had the approval to make on site decisions. I think making decisions as a team, working with our parents and community, having everyone's heartfelt desire to make this school the best we can, is what makes the difference. We have made AYP and student gains due to the dedication to instruction, and parent and community support," she said.

"We make a conscious effort to discuss with students our desire for them to do their best in school and improve each year."

Superintendent Dr. Tommy Pharis said he applauds the school's efforts to raise its academic standards through a col-

► See AWARD, Page A2

Whigham School is tapped by state

►AWARD, from Page A1

lective effort by faculty, staff and parents. "I am extremely proud of the school improvement plan that was initiated by the teachers and administrators to develop instructional strategies that would raise the bar for our students at Whigham School," said the superintendent.

Cox summed up the school's prestigious accomplishment in a quote from Margaret Mead. "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful people can change the world. Indeed it's the only thing that ever has."

"I am happy to be a part of this county, school and community," added Cox.