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The Historical Development of the Public School System in  
Waxahachie, Texas: Exploring a Local Dialect in the Grammar of  
Schooling

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**The Historical Development of the Public School System in  
Waxahachie, Texas: Exploring a Local Dialect in the Grammar of  
Schooling**

by

**Mark Wesley Kylar, B.A., M.A.**

**Dissertation**

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*To The Educators*

## Acknowledgements

The artful phrase posted on my high school chemistry teacher's classroom window advertised: we are living in a world of permanent change. As an undergraduate at the University of Texas at Austin from 1985 to 1989, I am grateful, appreciative, and humbled to have returned as a graduate student some twenty years later to the same institution, but a different one. As I have carried out this project, I have felt impelled to sort out those aspects of the past that are yet present, and those which are not. Such, it seems to me now, is the proper role of the educational, and educator, historian. That this task was a co-construction of knowledge for me has indebted me to the following persons.

I am particularly indebted to Dr. Sherry Field for shepherding me through this process as an able and willing guide, but also as a teacher in the truest sense of the word. Emerson said that the secret of education lay in respecting the pupil, and Sherry has a wonderful gift for respecting those elements that her students bring to the table, and challenging them to greater achievement. Likewise, I thank Dr. O.L. Davis, for truly inspiring me throughout his coursework. I was privileged to have spent time under his tutelage and am fortunate to have arrived in time to share in his legacy. I highly esteem the manner in which Dr. Louis Harrison exemplified instructional techniques which translated contemporary theory into practice, as indeed did many of my professors during this graduate journey.

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# **The Historical Development of the Public School System in Waxahachie, Texas: Exploring a Local Dialect in the Grammar of Schooling**

Mark Wesley Kylar, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2010

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The history of the Waxahachie public schools from 1884 to 1970 reveals not only the development of the school system itself, and the local, regional, and national trends which influenced public education, but also serves as a case study of what David Tyack and Larry Cuban describe as the *grammar of schooling*, the inherent and implicit rules for bringing about a “real school” as perceived by its stakeholders. The study provides insights into the effects of local concerns vis a vis the larger movements and events in American history upon the development of this particular local school system.

The origins and the subsequent development of the public school system in Waxahachie, a small north-central Texas community located approximately thirty miles south of the Dallas, Texas, is the focus of this dissertation. The chronological history of the Waxahachie public school system, as an early independent school system is examined from its preceding influences, through its tumultuous inception, to its consequent periods of stability, professionalization, and growth. The study encompasses three major

superintendencies, equating them to regimes by virtue of their length of tenure, and as a touchstone for depicting the societal trends with which they contended or reflected. Influences of race and religion are examined as primary and secondary animating themes.

The manner in which educational philosophies as described by Watras, including Scholar Academic, Social Efficiency, and Learner-Centered, are examined in relation to the historical periods during which each superintendent held office. A detailed history is presented about each superintendent's term of office, exploring such topics as meeting the needs of a growing school district, accounting for curricular trends and forces at the local, regional, and national level, and navigating the societal terrain in the establishment and maintenance of a "real" school.



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## Introduction

*Fifty or one hundred years hence, when the deposit box in the corner-stone of the new Masonic Temple may perchance be opened by a generation yet unborn, many an eye will scan with eager interest the copies of the Enterprise and other papers of this date, in search of information regarding the lives and business of their ancestors. Some will find it, while others may never even know that their progenitors ever lived in Waxahachie. The back files of any good newspaper will furnish the fullest history that can be obtained of any particular place or period.*

--editor, the *Waxahachie Enterprise*, upon looking over the columns of the *Dallas Herald* of May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1861, taken from the corner-stone of the old Masonic Hall, June 7, 1889.

The formal history of the Waxahachie Independent School district began with a spring election in 1884 authorizing a local ad valorem tax for the maintenance and operation of a public school system. Residents had been exhorted to support the issue in several editorials published in the local newspaper, the *Waxahachie Enterprise*. These editorials emphasized the economic benefits reaped by those towns which had assumed control of their “public” schools, as had the county seat’s chief economic rival, Ennis, only two years before, a fact not left unknown to the readers of the *Enterprise*. Additionally, these editorials argued for the educational benefits of a “graded” school system which apportioned individual classes for each ability level of the collective of students within the school, a perceived improvement over the mixed levels of students

associated with the prevalent and familiar one-room schoolhouses. Within a short period, a mere matter of weeks, the election had been scheduled, and passed by a wide margin, but from only a small proportion of eligible voters. By the fall of 1884, Waxahachie City Schools began functioning with an elected board of three school trustees, an appointed Superintendent, and a small faculty. Within three years, the school system failed, with voters rescinding the local school tax amid disgruntlement and discord. It was resuscitated two years later, nursed to health amidst fierce competition from private and common schools of the area, and has been in continuous operation ever since.

Waxahachie lies in north-central Texas in the Blackland Prairie region of Texas typified by gently rolling, highly fertile land which lent itself to the early agricultural development of the area. Early settlers were assuredly drawn by the series of creeks that meander about the boundaries of the present commercial district of the town. The county courthouse, the fourth courthouse building to occupy the site, is the city's most commanding landmark, and perhaps the county's and the town's most notable structure. The hilly topography and the courthouse view are most evident when approach is made from the south. Commercial activity historically centered around the courthouse square, and the city's commercial center was fixed early between the Missouri-Kansas-Texas (MKT) rail lines on the south and those of the Houston and Texas Central (H&TC) on the north. The original townsite was organized by a grid-like street system; subsequent expansion in each area of town was much less regular.<sup>1</sup> Today, the town capitalizes upon

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<sup>1</sup> Texas Historical Commission, *Historic Resources of Waxahachie*, <http://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/shell-county.htm> (accessed November 16, 2009).

its historic past, with a plethora of period architectural dwellings surviving intact and offered for tours once per year as part of its Gingerbread Trail celebration, in addition to other town festivals and attractions.

This dissertation attempts to delineate in relative chronological order the genesis, growth and development of the public school system of Waxahachie, Texas—what started into existence as the City Public Schools, and evolved into the Waxahachie Independent School District. Beginning with an examination of the preceding school system of private institutions and common schools under county supervision, the historical narrative proceeds through early years of the public school system as marked by the tenures of its superintendents and faculties. Chapter sections proceed chronologically with particular emphasis placed upon the emergent themes of each period and as a continuous whole.

The narrative embraces as a working metaphor the concept of the “grammar of schooling” as expounded by Tyack and Cuban in their book *Tinkering Toward Utopia: a Century of Public School Reform*. Within the first several pages of their book, Tyack and Cuban define the “grammar of schooling” as “the organizational forms that govern instruction,” and the “familiar institutional practices of the school.” Noting that schools have remained basically similar in their core operation over long periods of time, the authors reason that the regularities expressed in the common “grammar of schooling” have imprinted themselves on students, educators, and the public as the essential features of a “real” school. That these essential features form a “cultural template” with which

schools are defined in the public mind as “real” to the extent that they are congruent with this template, “has helped maintain the legitimacy of the institution in the minds of the public.”<sup>2</sup>

Chapter One posits the purpose, significance, theoretical framework, and methodology of the study. It provides a rationale for the study as indicative of and comparative to the larger school history of Texas. In using the conceptual framework of the “grammar of schooling” as a lens through which to view the evolution of schooling in Waxahachie, the author seeks to demonstrate the manner in which Waxahachie’s history of schooling constitutes a working example of the way in which the greater public, within and without Waxahachie, conceived of public schooling.

Chapter Two features the three major precedents of schooling in Waxahachie. It examines the role the Masonic Academy, Marvin College, and Mrs. Nash’s School played in the expectation and understanding of local schooling, and the manner in which Marvin College came to function as a corollary of a contemporary high school. It draws upon early historical occurrences in the town to predicate its themes of race and religion as central to its pursuit of universal education.

Chapter Three delineates the official inception of the public school system following the failure of Marvin College. It chronicles the first three superintendents in their respective one year tenures, explores the tenuous and transitory nature of public

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<sup>2</sup> David Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering Toward Utopia: a Century of Public School Reform*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 9.

schooling within the town as it competed and coexisted with private institutions, and documents and explores the first failure of the district pending the outcome of a state supreme court case questioning the district's ability to assume public debt for the purchase of its school buildings. It explores this early reversal in light of the themes of race and religion, and in relation to the wider history of the struggle of public schooling to take hold among a populace accustomed to private institutions. Further, the chapter encompasses the town's second attempt at public schooling, the superintendency of Alex Hogg, and his successors, most notably C.M. Lyon and the nature of the slowly evolving transition to a progressive curriculum from the classical one preceding it. Particular attention is paid to the manner in which cotton farming and agricultural development spurred the town's economic and population growth, and hence its educational endeavors. The advent of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, the wide use of Literary Societies and debating clubs as mechanisms of implementation of curricular goals, and the lingering presence of nineteenth century curricular features such as military drill and elocution is explored.

Chapter Four documents the superintendency of William Acker, superintendent from 1898 to 1910. Inclusive of this period is the key transition from nineteenth century school district to twentieth century school district. Elements of progressivism are explored regarding curricular developments in job training, manual arts, and domestic science classes regarding the education of non-college bound students. The advent of the yearly Chautauqua Assembly is examined as a thematic point of cultural preoccupation and religious influence upon local education, as well as the extensive and growing work



of Walter Acker with the local Masonic lodge. The location of Trinity University to Waxahachie and its effect upon local educational thought and practice is explored. The growth of Oak Lawn Academy as the designated school for African Americans within the dual school system of the district is explored in light of the town's changing mood in race relations as exemplified in local media. The erection of a new, modern campus as a result of the continued growth of the district is detailed. The increasing influence of sports such as football and baseball as school-oriented endeavors is noted.

Chapter Five documents the superintendency of Gray B. Winn, superintendent from 1910 to 1936. Winn's efficient, effective, managerial demeanor is explored vis a vis his presence at board meetings over the course of his tenure, a twenty-six year period. Always agreeable, and seemingly predisposed to the changing vicissitudes of the board members, many of whom during this period seemed to seek the office for ulterior motives, Winn deftly carried out the slightest orders of the board members. Frequently rehiring the same staff year after year, Winn left little evidence of the hardnosed taskmaster. As superintendent of the Methodist State Sunday School Association, Winn led a local campaign to allow students to attend Sunday school at the church of their choice during the school week, arranging with local pastors to dismiss school for a period during which students were encouraged to attend a church Sunday school. Winn presided over the school district during the economic, and perhaps cultural zenith of the town.

Chapter Six documents the superintendency of Tirey C. Wilemon, superintendent from 1936 to 1970, the longest tenure in office of any superintendent in the history of the

Waxahachie Independent School District. Being born in 1899 in the small Ellis county town of Maypearl, Mr. Wilemon's age matched the years of the twentieth century, and thus his portrayal throughout the course of his biography matches the historical developments of that century. In a sense, he grew up with the century.

The early loss of his father at seven years of age, coupled with the later loss of his mother at 17, combined to shape his self-reliance, and his dedication to an estimable work ethic. His large family—he had four brothers—aided him in persevering through the trials and tribulations of his early life. His mental acumen, particularly regarding mathematics, served him well as a student within the Maypearl school system and later as a student at Trinity University in Waxahachie. His athletic prowess and lifelong interest in baseball informed his skill in managing a school district during periods of great increase in athletic programs.

Wilemon's hand guided the district through the second half of the Great Depression, a time when agricultural communities across the state suffered and when school districts, including that of Waxahachie's, faced the dim prospect of across the board pay cuts. His mathematical skill, translated into fiduciary skill, effected the efficient financial management of the district. His family life—he had five children who all attended Waxahachie schools—flowed over into his working life, as he came to be seen as a fatherly figure for the school district. His sons achieved honors as scholars and athletes, and his daughters each chose careers in teaching for portions of their lives.

The year 1949 marked a turning point for Wilemon when his name appeared, along with the members of the school board, on a summons to court to hear a constitutional case in the court of William Atwell. As the defendants, Wilemon and the Board of Trustees were “sued in their official capacities” for failing to provide equal courses and facilities to students attending Oak Lawn School. The summary judgment in favor of the plaintiffs and enjoining the school district from further failing to offer similar courses resulted in area-wide press coverage, and joined the cases, if only as a minor one, of civil rights history. Within two years, African-American school children in Waxahachie had a new, modern high school.

The 1950’s marked further growth for the district with Wilemon called again to increase the facilities district-wide, and the addition of North Elementary marked a welcome expansion as the new and thoroughly modern school opened in 1957. Although the Brown v. Board of Education decision was rendered during this decade, little changed in the district regarding the desegregation of students, as elsewhere across the South, school districts chose a wait-and-see stance, and pursued more deliberation than speed in implementing the order.

The defining struggle of the civil rights era occupied the final phase of the Wilemon regime. A new era was dawning, and despite the seeming attempt to carry on business as usual, as much of the historic records indicate was the prevailing norm, as small bits and pieces, single-line sentences in page-long board minutes, conspicuous by their scarcity, but portentous in their effect, appeared as harbingers of the full scale

assault on the dual school system. Throughout the ordeal, Wilemon led with the confidence of the school board members, his staff, and certainly that of the townspeople. His final years in office saw the completion of the district's new high school. He retired in 1970, the first year of full integration of the Waxahachie Independent School District.

## **Chapter One: Historical Overview: Beginnings of a Local Grammar of Schooling**

Educational researchers have long studied the organizational structures and processes of the public education system, usually with an eye toward refining or improving the system, and at other times with the goal of reforming it. To comprehend the “black box” of the educational system, education researchers and educationists alike have historically looked to the inputs and outputs of the school system. In Texas, the earlier portion of the twentieth century was marked by successive surveys which, according to Evans, had as one part of their goal the measurement of the “efficiency of school service and quality of output.”<sup>3</sup> The Conference for Education in Texas of 1909, the Educational Survey Committee of 1921, the Educational Survey Commission of 1923, the Efficiency and Economy Committee of 1932, the Works Progress Administration Project of 1934, the O’Daniel Commission of 1940, and the Gilmer-Aiken Survey of 1948 each sought to examine the components of the public school system in relation to its outcome.

Other research focused more precisely on the sociological aspects of schooling, and the degree to which the school experiences of the learner contributed to intended learning outcomes. As scientific methodologies arose in the field of educational research, studies were undertaken to illuminate teaching and curricular practices within the school.

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<sup>3</sup> C.E. Evans, *The Story of Texas Schools*, (Austin: Steck, 1955), 225.

These types of studies were typified by the Progressive Education Association's *Eight-Year Study*, which measured graduates' college-entrance performance from a group of students from 30 high schools employing progressive approaches to curriculum. Later studies, such as the Conant Report of 1959 and the Coleman Report of 1966, helped fuel debates about the effects of schooling within contemporary practice. When John Goodlad wrote his landmark *A Place Called School* from the data generated by *A Study of Schooling* conducted in the late 1970's, and TheodoreSizer wrote his influential *Horace's Compromise* from data stemming from *A Study of High Schools*, each was analyzing the "frameworks" by which public schooling and its practice was bound. Indeed, Sizer borrowed the term *framework* from David Tyack's earlier work, *The One Best System*, as a means of describing what Tyack later referred to as a "grammar of schooling." Each author/researcher engaged the idea of the tenacity with which certain school structures and processes are marked, despite attempts to reform the system for improved or modified outcomes. Goodlad's work is typified by such chapters as: *Can We Have Effective Schools*, *What Schools and Classrooms Teach*, and, *Improving the Schools We Have*. Sizer's *Horace* series, including the follow-ups to *Horace's Compromise—Horace's School* and *Horace's Hope*—expound at large upon the grammatical elements of schooling, with such chapter titles as *What High School Is*, *Teachers*, and *Hierarchical Bureaucracy*. These elements that define the public schooling experience, from the implementation of the graded school, to the issuance of credentials based on Carnegie units of study, to the multiplicity of commonalities in curriculum practice by which schools are defined, combine to form a "standard matrix of schooling"

that purportedly provides the functions by which a “real school” may be defined. Patrons, or what would probably be referred to today as stakeholders, could then be assured that the predictable standardization of the school as an institution was providing its students with a proper education.<sup>4</sup>

Tyack and Tobin assert that “the organizational patterns that shape instruction are not ahistorical creations etched in stone. They are the historical product of particular groups with particular interests and values at particular times—hence *political* in origin.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, the historical study of these groups and their interests and values within the times in which they were expressed, implicitly and explicitly, potentially leads to increased understandings of the “grammar of schooling” that was forged in the past, and yet prevails in the present. With this in mind, the study of a local school district is in order.

The earlier history of schooling in Waxahachie, particularly the establishment and evolutionary arc of Marvin College, prefigures Waxahachie’s troubled establishment of a public school system. The college preceded the establishment of public schooling in Waxahachie, offering the town its first example of education writ large, beyond the confines of the one-room schoolhouse. Marvin College served as the model of what and how a school of the modern era was supposed to be. In essence, it established the local “grammar of schooling” by offering itself in the minds of local citizens as a vaunted

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<sup>4</sup> David Tyack and William Tobin, “The ‘Grammar’ of Schooling: Why Has it Been so Hard to Change?” *American Educational Research Journal*, Fall, 31:3, 453-479. John Goodlad, *A Place Called School*, McGraw-Hill, 1984; Theodore Sizer, *Horace’s Compromise*, Houghton-Mifflin, 1984.

<sup>5</sup> Tyack and Tobin, *op. cit.*, 476.

example of a “real school.” Its attributes set the precedent for the public school endeavor which followed it, establishing the pattern for the public school which followed it.

Marvin College, a Methodist institution, was established by church conference in 1868, first as a district school for the church community. Local citizens had been elated at its location within the town’s environs by church elders, and, perhaps obsequiously, later named the school for the Bishop, Enoch Marvin, who led the conference which placed the school in Waxahachie. The school became a designated church college in 1870.<sup>6</sup> Many citizens later hoped to transition the school into the Methodist’s pre-eminent university when the Methodist Episcopal Church, South decided that each Methodist conference, a sub-divided geographical area, would contribute to the support of a conference-wide state university. Full scale efforts were raised to transform Marvin College into what ultimately became Southwestern University in Georgetown, once the conference ruled on Waxahachie as the location. Falling short in this effort by a single vote, Marvin College remained the focal point of Waxahachie’s educational endeavors.<sup>7</sup>

The college’s short existence of fifteen years was marked by high expectations, perhaps some extravagance, and a paucity of the financial support necessary to meet its aims. From its inception, the school acquired a building debt which plagued its owners throughout the school’s life. The Methodist Church lost, regained, and lost for a second

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<sup>6</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Marvin College"  
<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/MM/kbm7.html> (accessed January 9, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> J.M. Barcus, “History of Northwest Texas Conference.” *The Texas Methodist Historical Quarterly* 1: 2 (1909) : 166- 169.



time the ownership of the school, as tuition receipts were never adequate to meet expenses.<sup>8</sup> Perceived by many potential patrons as narrowly denominational, the college took pains throughout its existence to advertise itself as non-sectarian, but was lamented by one graduate many years later as a victim of “denominational prejudice.”<sup>9</sup>

Educational entrepreneurs seeking to offer a private educational institution not affiliated with a church denomination fared no better, indicating the diverse and complex reasons for the college’s struggle. Ironically, in its final few years it seemed to show the most promise as a successful enterprise, showing a steadily increasing enrollment and a capable and competent leadership. Financially, however, the college was never on firm ground.

The transitional period from “college” to public school system exposed the nature of educational endeavor of the times. While the college had been officially chartered by the state in 1873, and offered degrees in a few areas for those subscribing to the coursework, the greatest share of the enrollment stemmed from the primary, preparatory, and academic departments offered by the college. Thus, while a college in name, the institution essentially served as a semi-graded school, inclusive of “departments” of primary, intermediate, academic, and collegiate, for which many students were able to take advantage of the state’s contribution toward free education, amounting to about three months of a term at the usual tuition charges. Despite its aspirations as an institution of

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<sup>8</sup> Billy R. Hancock, “Marvin College, Waxahachie, Texas, 1869-1884” *Texas Historical Commission* ( June 16, 1976).

<sup>9</sup> Letter from Lizzie Reymuller to Mr. Winkler at University of Texas, January 10, 1929, (located in Marvin College Catalog at the Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin).

higher learning, Marvin College functioned ostensibly as a corollary of the “high school” of its day.

Thus when Clarence N. Ousley, a former faculty member of Marvin College, took the helm as the city’s first superintendent of schools in 1884, he presided over an institution identical in most respects to the school which had preceded it, only now the majority of its students were no longer obliged to pay tuition if they could show town residency. Essentially the forerunner of a modern high school, Marvin College—never much more than an academy with some advanced coursework—gave way to the city’s first public graded school as its primary campus in a system with other campuses of formerly private schools within the city boundaries, particularly the Oak Lawn campus which later served as the African-American school, and the West-End campus—the town’s first academy—serving as the equivalent of primary schools for alternate sections of the town.

Clarence Ousley served as the district’s inaugural superintendent for only the first year of the city’s public school system; he was followed by Joseph Callaway the next year, who in turn relinquished the job to B.M. Howard after one year—each man an area educator who continued his respective career in other districts.

These three years marked the shaky start of Waxahachie’s City Public Schools, whose quick succession of superintendents equated the dissolution and reconstitution of each year’s school term, as schooling was frequently realized in days when the continuity and perpetuity of a school system had no precedent in the experience of those who

attended or “patronized” the school. An early element of the grammar of schooling was that schools came and went, and that a school year was just that—gone at the end, and reconstituted in the fall. So it had always been.

This first realization of a local, public “free” school system in Waxahachie met with abject failure—an early test case for a community uncertain about universal education at public expense. Taxing authority proved its early undoing, and culminated in a landmark state supreme court ruling when a contest arose between town aldermen, school trustees, and the owners of the Marvin College buildings and grounds. After the election authorizing the town’s assumption of the city’s schools in 1884, the newly elected trustees contracted with the college owners for the sale of the college to the city to serve as the main building for the new graded school system. The purchase price was negotiated at \$15,000, inclusive of a \$6,000 mortgage held on the building. Such an expense would have incurred a municipal debt under the issuance of bonds beyond legal limits, for which the trustees believed the school tax should and would fund. Town aldermen differed, and, contending they had no legal authority to incur the increased bonded indebtedness for the purchase of a school building, refused to issue bonds for payment. The suit wound its way through the courts slowly, over the years 1885 and 1886, during which time the city public schools continued operation in the buildings formerly housing Marvin College. Initially losing, the town of Waxahachie appealed to the Texas Supreme Court, where it ultimately prevailed in March of 1887, with Justice Gaines finding no legal standing for the owners to receive payment according to the contract negotiated, save for rental fees for the building’s occupation over the previous

two years. With no new contract negotiated, ownership remained in the hands of the sellers, who placed the buildings comprising the former Marvin College on the market. Faced with the loss of their school building, frustrated and dismayed citizens reversed their earlier support for the school tax, ending the town's first foray into publicly funded schools, and returning the town to its comfortable familiarity with private institutions, of which there had never been a shortage in the town and its environs. Learning the "unfamiliar language" of modern schooling produced a "cognitive dissonance" which took several more years to reconcile.

An interim period of two years between 1887 and 1889 resulted in similar failure for Dr. John Collier who was convinced that he could build up a first class private institution on the old Marvin College campus. Dubbing his venture Waxahachie College, Collier hoped to fulfill the promise of the college by re-introducing it in a non-sectarian form. His enterprise lasted little more than a year, and by 1888 went entirely defunct. Ultimately, he sold the property to an interim buyer, who sold it to the city whose bonded indebtedness had returned to levels approved by law, and whose citizens were ready to take a second stab at organizing, funding, and overseeing the schools within the town's boundaries.

Trustees once again opted for an opulent beginning. The first superintendent hired for the district's second incarnation came in the person of Alexander Hogg, inaugural superintendent of the Fort Worth public school system, his terms of office there both preceding and succeeding his service in Waxahachie. Hogg's selection as superintendent

clearly indicated the trustees' desire to bring in someone of stature and substance to launch the district's second manifestation. As president of the Texas State Teachers Association, Hogg was well-known for his rhetorical ability on the educational topics of the day. His groundwork set in motion the unbroken continuity of the Waxahachie city school district.

Hogg's successors, C.M. Lyon, A.W. Kinnard, and J.C. Ryan, were a series of local educators whose terms failed to imprint upon the district any particular form of distinction. Their short tenures demonstrated the tenuous nature of the City Public School system, whose private competitors remained in the form of more trusted and familiar institutions. For example, Mrs. Lu Nash, whose private school—run from her house—had clearly been the popular choice for many Waxahachie parents prior to the availability of a public choice, would occasionally appear as a public school employee on district records, as if she were testing the waters of this new form of schooling. But intermittent references to her name as public school faculty were often followed by other news items and advertisements proclaiming the resumption of her private school. Board minutes and newspaper articles reflect the prevalent tendency to dissolve and reconstitute the schools upon a yearly basis, much like city government, as if inventing from whole cloth the business of the schools each year. Likewise, though, the plethora of opportunity for educational leaders, given the jobs to which each man succeeded after leaving his post as superintendent in Waxahachie, may have been the ultimate inducement to depart from the job at such frequent intervals. Clearly, there was opportunity for school-men as

municipalities across the state moved toward incorporating themselves as city school districts.

## **Historical Overview: The Modern Era and the Professional Grammar of Schooling**

By 1898 Waxahachie had found its first, true superintendent of the modern era. Walter Acker served the City Public Schools of Waxahachie for a period of twelve years, from 1898 to 1910, effectively transitioning the district from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. His tenure may be characterized as the district's first **regime**, as his twelve years of stability shaped the beginning course of the town's modern school district. Acker's role in the educational evolution of Waxahachie's public school system was pivotal. The addition of a major school building campaign would mark his tenure, with the completion of the Park School building (some maps refer to it as the Park College) serving as his crowning achievement in 1904.

Ultimately, Acker's work for and commitment to the Masonic fraternal order would take precedence over his commitment to local educational matters. Rising in the hierarchy of the organization he accepted the superintendency of the Masonic Home and School in Fort Worth in 1910. Within ten years, he would die by his own hand after his failure to recover fully to his satisfaction from wounds received in his service during the First World War.

Acker was superseded by a local inhabitant of Ellis County, G.B. Winn, whose tenure in office spanned three decades—effectively forming the second **regime** of the

Waxahachie City Public Schools. Born in 1868 to a farming family in the Ellis County community of Boyce, Winn served as Superintendent from 1910 to 1936, after service to the district as a teacher, principal, and then to the county as County Superintendent. Professor Winn would preside over the professionalization of the modern school system and its ranks, entering the system when all school men were accorded the title of “professor” and departing from its ranks when much of the “commonplace” of contemporary schooling had become commonplace. Ever the obedient servant to the Board, and always the efficient manager, Winn would also preside over the continuing growth of the district, ushering in the building that would serve as the town’s high school for the next fifty-two years and would in the minds of several generations become synonymous with the phrase “Waxahachie High School,” but whose capacity would be reached within several years of its construction. Winn’s service to the district would coincide with the town’s ostensible zenith in economic spheres as county seat of the state’s pre-eminent cotton-producing county, distilled in the phrase emblazoned on the daily paper, *The Daily Light*, as “the Queen City of the Cotton Belt.”

Winn was followed by one his own staff members, another local-boy-made-good from the surrounding cotton-rich Ellis County farming community of Maypearl, a graduate of the local university—Trinity—and by all accounts a whiz at math, not to mention a born leader whose early life experiences of family and loss shaped his leadership skills. Tirey Caswell Wilemon held the office of superintendent from 1936 to 1970, overseeing four decades of societal and curricular change through such historic periods as the Great Depression, the Second World War, the Cold War, and the Civil

Rights Movement, albeit through the lens of a small Texas town whose experiences after the Great Depression left it reeling from the unfulfilled promise of its agricultural heyday. Wilemon, himself, capped his own **regime** with the addition of a new high school for the town, whose growth had doubled, but whose real challenge lay in coming together as a “unitary” school district and in putting behind the dual school district that had been the norm since the district’s inception.

In tracing the social developments of the three quarters of a century marked by the school careers of these three men, broad themes can be constructed which serve as illustrative backdrops and explanatory frameworks for the manner in which the Waxahachie school system evolved. **Race**, as a distinction of first-class versus second-class citizenship clearly shaped the course and development of the district’s historical trajectory. Clearly, this was not unique to Waxahachie, as indeed the overwhelming majority if not the totality of schools and school districts in the state and across the entire South were officially segregated by race, by force of state law. A second theme, no less typical of the educational development in other localities, but certainly one of precedence and predominance in Waxahachie, was that of **religion**. As in many other Texas towns of the time, Masons and Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians, and others of Christian faith, worked diligently to establish schools and related institutions of learning soon after civil authority was established in their local communities. The first schools of Waxahachie of a higher order, like those of other Texas towns, usually had pastors as their teachers.



In the introduction to a book of essays entitled *Religion and Public Education*, Theodore Sizer, the book's editor writes: "Nineteenth century Americans, when they went to school, attended supposedly secular common schools, which can be more accurately described as liberal Protestant schools. Scuffle though educators and churchmen might, there was a vague consensus on the part of the majority of Americans of how doctrinaire the schools should be; and the Roman Catholic Baltimore decrees in the 1880's suggest the extent of Protestant domination. But nineteenth-century America was Protestant, and its Jeffersonian definition of church-state divisions was a Protestant definition. Further, most nineteenth-century Americans, the religious enthusiasms of the age notwithstanding, really didn't care."<sup>10</sup>

While race and religion were common themes to the development of schools across the wider region, the tenure of office of Waxahachie's first three superintendents of consequence—Acker, Winn, and Wilemon—served to create a third theme, more unique to the school district. **Regime**, as exemplified by the conditions, norms, and practices stemming from the power afforded to one individual to lead the district over a substantial period of time, emerges as a theme lending a perspective through which to view the micro-historical development of the district in relation to the macro-historical development of schools across the state and region. Each man's increasing length of superintendency tenure—12 years, 26 years, and 34 years, respectively—corresponds in close proximity to the modern evolution of schools in the larger society as they moved

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<sup>10</sup> Theodore Sizer, editor. *Religion and Public Education* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1967).

along a continuum separating traditionalism from progressivism. Each term corresponds roughly to historical curricular periods, typologized frequently as Scholar Academic, Social Efficiency, and Learner-Centered.<sup>11</sup> Figuratively, this three-quarter century span represents Acker overseeing the infancy and childhood of the district, Winn its adolescence and young adulthood, and Wilemon its journey into its full life as a modern school district. By the end of Wilemon's term, the district could be said to have reached full maturity as a contemporary, modern school district.

### **Historical Overview: Local Influences on Education**

As stated, Waxahachie's school district evolved along similar lines and within similar contextual themes as with other districts in the state. Indeed, striking similarities exist between the development of Waxahachie's school system and those of the central Texas communities of Georgetown and Round Rock, as recent histories of the Georgetown<sup>12</sup> and Kyle<sup>13</sup> school systems have made apparent. The same is perhaps true of the societal influences, both local and regional, which shaped the development of the district. Thus, the micro-historical data informs the macro-history and corroborates many of its conclusions. Community influence upon that evolution, however, was of a more unique nature, owing to singularities within the local context. Like most other Texas

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<sup>11</sup> Michael Schiro, *Curriculum Theory: Conflicting Visions and Enduring Concerns* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2008), 4-8.

<sup>12</sup> Marsha Farney, *Promoting the Progress of Education: The History of Georgetown Public Schools 1850-1966*, (Doctoral Dissertation, The University of Texas, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth Harrison, *The History of Kyle, Texas, Public Schools: 1911-1967*, (Doctoral Dissertation, The University of Texas, 2005).

communities, Waxahachie sustained itself upon an agricultural economy. While livestock production and farming of cereal grains certainly played a role, its chief cash crop was cotton. The black, fertile Ellis County soil produced the fibrous plant in abundance, ushering in a period of unrivaled wealth for landowners, and economic growth for the town. With that economic growth came a sense of high culture which found an outlet in the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle—an early correspondence “school” of culture and learning which evolved locally into a full-blown annual Chautauqua Assembly taking place over a two-week period and offering lectures, entertainments, demonstrations, and sermons befitting its summation of itself as “a great moral and educational force.”

Also unique to Waxahachie’s school development was its citizens’ unceasing search for a university to locate within its boundaries. Unsuccessful in 1872 at locating the state Methodist institution (what would become known as Southwestern University, but might have been named differently had Waxahachie succeeded in acquiring the school), local citizens pressed on, and in 1902, perhaps due in part to the growth and popularity of its Chautauqua Assembly encampments, the town acquired the location of Trinity University as its board of directors sought a removal from the remoteness of Tehuacana—a community in Limestone County several miles to the northwest of that county’s seat of government, Mexia, Texas. Liberal subscriptions from locals induced the university to locate in Waxahachie. Its forty year presence in the town contributed mightily to the town’s actual development and sense of itself as a regional player in educational endeavors. Not only did the university serve as an eminently visual presence

for local school children to aspire as future students, the university produced teachers for the local district and surrounding area, hosted a multitude of teacher institutes, and provided the town of Waxahachie a host of highly educated professionals whose direct and indirect influence infused its public schools.

Waxahachie citizens, and most notably, their children, benefitted early from a public library. Nicholas P. Sims, a local farmer, provided for the library in his will, and in 1905, a year after the town had added greatly to its public school accommodations with the erection of the Park School building, the impressive Greek-revival building known as Sims Library opened its doors. The library, complete with lyceum auditorium for lectures and other cultural engagements, has been in continuous operation since its opening, serving the townsfolk and their schoolchildren for generations.

The recombinant forces of **race**, **religion**, and **regime** under the unique influences of a cotton-centered economy, the moralist, culturally-minded, and educationally-motivated enterprises exemplified by Chautauqua, the progressive desire among citizens to center within its boundaries a first-class institution of higher learning, and the early establishment of a lending-library for the promotion of literacy among its citizens, shaped the evolutionary development of the public school system in Waxahachie, Texas. These influences shaped the Masonic connections were apparent in its first superintendent of note, Walter Acker, as he rose within the organization locally and pursued leadership opportunities within it. Methodism and its sense of educational promotion further represented itself in the tenure of G.B. Winn, who at one point in his career pioneered a

local program promoting Sunday school attendance during the regular school week. A Southern Baptist by practice, and a product not only of cotton culture but also a graduate of Trinity University, T. C. Wilemon wrote in his master's thesis of the importance of school buildings to provide to schoolchildren an "inspiration and an environment to grow not only mentally and physically but also socially and *spiritually* [emphasis added].

During the latter quarter of the nineteenth century, the turn to the twentieth, and the historical periods thereafter, wherein education in the state of Texas and elsewhere in the South and West was being pioneered, the town of Waxahachie aspired to an economic and concomitant cultural status to rival its neighbors. The historical record is replete with a palpable sense of the town's sense of itself as a contender, as a challenger, and as an opportunist. Its contention for economic power lay in its agricultural might. Its challenge lay in its grappling with changes from traditionalism to progressivism, its sense of equity toward those with whom it sought to include and exclude, and the contradictions of pursuing a progress that left others behind. Its opportunity, both realized and ignored, lay in its choices.

### **Purpose of the Study**

From our country's earliest history, educators and educational stakeholders have debated the best way that government should fulfill its responsibility to educate its citizens, or even whether the government had a role in doing so. Persistent questions have reflected on the purpose of education, the substance of it, whom is to receive it, and how it is to be delivered. In various forms, these questions have lain beneath all the educational changes and reform measures in American history. The purpose of this study

is to examine the history of the local school system of Waxahachie, Texas in relation to the wider history of the development of education in Texas as a means of comparing and contrasting the features of development. The study proposes to serve as a longitudinal, and relatively chronological, overview of the developmental events, issues, and processes of educational initiative within the locality of the city of Waxahachie from its inception until 1970. It aspires to bring a level of explanatory analysis to that development through its discussion of emergent themes within social contexts of historical eras.

In an age when educational news predominates with stories of reform and innovation, the question arises: what circumstances, conditions, or events preceded, precipitated, or demonstrated the need for reform or innovation? Educational historians David Tyack and Larry Cuban write in *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform* that “anyone who would improve schooling is a captive of history in two ways.” Firstly, they hold that people and institutions are the product of history. Rarely do events transpire spontaneously, or otherwise in a vacuum. Situational conditions almost always precede events, impacting the development of those events transpiring thereafter. Prevalent environments, not always apparent, exercise their influence upon events. Secondly, Tyack and Cuban find that “all people use history (defined as an interpretation of past events) when they make choices about the present and future.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> David Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering Toward Utopia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 6.

Primary and what later came to be called secondary education—schooling—has historically occurred at the local level, and despite technological advancements in the delivery of curriculum which portend potential changes in this fundamental system, contemporary primary and secondary educational practice remains largely a local enterprise. Although accounts of their experiences might be described as educational trends which play out at the national or regional level, students are not schooled nationally, or regionally, but locally, within the school buildings of their local environs, and at the hands of individuals within their local communities. The purpose of this study lay in the examination as a microcosmic entity the development of a local school district in relation to the macrocosmic historicity of the development of education in Texas. By studying the historical development of the educational system in Waxahachie, Texas from its early roots in the mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> century, through its evolution into a modern contemporary educational system, the study proposes explanatory insight into the processes in which curriculum trends at the larger level developed at the local level. What were the driving forces of educational progress at the local level, and how did they inform, express, or contradict those accounts offered by curricular historians documenting and interpreting trends at the national and regional levels?

The study seeks to find insight into the following questions:

- When and how did the local Waxahachie school district come into existence, and what were the factors influencing its inception?
- What were the chief influences on the local school district during its formative years?

- Who were the pertinent players in school system's development; what were their behaviors, challenges, beliefs, concerns, practices, philosophies; and what was their impact on the development of the system?
- How did the local development of schooling reflect or contrast that of the county, regional, and state development?

### **Significance of the Study**

The study finds its significance primarily in the examination of a period of history for a specific locality heretofore undocumented. Several histories have been compiled about the development of education within Ellis County, with the larger focus on the college level, perhaps due to the more ready availability of data. None, however, exist in specific reference to the local development of schooling within the geographical area of the town of Waxahachie. A key feature of the value in examining the history of a city schooling system vis a vis the study of a particular school system—in this case the one in Waxahachie, Texas—is the manner in which town and city schools maintained an advantage over rural, community schools by virtue of their taxing authority. Thus, even in relatively rural county settings, towns and municipalities which took advantage of the 1879 law authorizing the levy of school taxes moved ahead of the rural, unincorporated areas of the state, and thus advanced the state of educational opportunity for a portion of the state's school-age children, introducing the question of equity for all Texas school children guaranteed by the state constitution—an argument which thrives, and a malady which plagues the educational interest to this day.



This study is informed by, and draws inspiration from, several recent studies conducted in a similar vein. Rosa Maria Abreo’s doctoral dissertation of 2001, *A History of Rio Grande City Texas High School 1960-1969*, typifies a rationale for writing about school history. Her work illuminates the success of a highly monocultural school during a historic period, but also reflects and draws upon her personal connection to her subject of study, being herself a graduate of the high school. Likewise, Elizabeth Harrison’s 2005 dissertation entitled *The History of Kyle, Texas Public Schools: 1911-1967* expands upon the scope of school history, encompassing it as social history, which, by addressing the everyday activities of the schools and the institutional organization reflected in official documents, considers “the unequal distribution of power and resources [and] provides a glimpse of the hierarchical relationships within the Kyle community that produced the hegemonic school structure that dominated the era being studied.”<sup>15</sup> Marsha Farney’s encyclopedic dissertation, *Promoting the Progress of Education: The History of Georgetown Public Schools, 1850-1966* embraces the challenge of tracing the historical development of a city school system vis a vis the major historical eras impacting school development. Her comprehensive historical overview of the district distills in her conclusion that local individuals and groups of individuals, and their concomitant concerns, are crucial to a school district’s development. In the case of the local community of her study’s focus—Georgetown, Texas—Farney finds “leaders in the community appeared on the Georgetown educational horizon in each historic period

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<sup>15</sup> Harrison, *op. cit.*, vi.

represented in this study that were willing to carry the mantle of their forefathers and to take active steps to promote the progress of education.”<sup>16</sup>

Another study informing the course of the present one is Karon Nicol’s 2002 dissertation, *Establishment of Academic Standards for Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Texas High Schools: The University of Texas Affiliated Schools*. Most enlightening to the current study is Nicol’s overview of the development of the public high school and the manner in which curricular control was maintained, at least for a period, by university affiliation.<sup>17</sup>

These recent studies follow in the tradition of earlier researchers, whose own works also enlightened this study. Writing in 1929 and 1930, respectively, Florence Bryan and John Black documented the history of Ellis County schools, they being much closer to the history of which they wrote. Their proximity in time to the persons and events studied granted a fresher perspective to their work at the time, and grants the author a corroborative perspective to primary sources researched for the course of this study. Although these early studies are useful in triangulating or otherwise authenticating evidence from the primary sources, they do not reflect the conceptual framework of this dissertation.

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<sup>16</sup> Farney, *op. cit.*, 545.

<sup>17</sup> Karon Jean Nicol, *Establishment of Academic Standards for Early 20th Century Texas High Schools: The University of Texas Affiliated Schools Program* (Doctoral Dissertation, the University of Texas), 2002, 131.

## Interpretive Framework

The smallness of local histories in comparison to the larger histories into which they are woven can be problematic, and the question of writing these social histories causes no small controversy in historian/historiographer circles. On the surface, local histories run the risk of seeming inconsequential. Often, they are but the grist for the history-mill's larger work, whose miller is the teller of "great" tales. If the bookseller's shelves or the librarian's stacks, or more pertinently, the school's mandated history curriculum, are to be an indicator, readers of history prefer grand narratives of bygone eras, sweeping tales of great persons and magnificent or spectacular events. Stories told at the local level often seem minimal, obscure, or redundant, repeating the mundane particulars of accounts told on a grander scale. Else, they seem self-indulgent—so much navel-gazing by persons preoccupied with their own exploits and deeds. Indeed, the notion of an "historical" development or event connotes a grandiose scale, the stuff of power and consequence, presidents and politicians, movers and shakers—famous and infamous players upon the world stage.

One must assume that national, regional, and state histories which draw upon the similarities of municipal and community development relate the development of those areas more efficiently than would otherwise be realized by examining each locality individually. For instance, one studies the *Civil War*, not the thousands of *civil wars* fought among the nameless and the obscure during the Civil War. One studies the *Great*

*Depression*, not the thousands of depressions of every community across the land at the time. One studies the development of a state or region through its development of cities and towns, not the individual cities and towns in their own right. “History,” it would appear, springs from many sources, like streams flowing toward a river; indeed, it is the story of the river that is most often told, perhaps to the sacrifice of much of the contour of the terrain. The larger history, then, is an aggregation. Nevertheless, it is the streams which feed the river wherein the details of the larger picture lie.

This study proposes that through the study of locality, of *localness*, historical reality may be seen through the similarities and uniquenesses of their contribution to the larger history, subsuming the greater history, informing it and reflecting the greater history within it. It chooses to purposely examine the finer, perhaps miniscule, points, finding in them the evidence for extrapolating, refining, contrasting, informing, and reflecting the larger history. For withinin the study of local history, one is apt to find within the point, the stroke, or the shard, the grand design detailed in the larger story—the macrocosm in the microcosm. The study of local history often folds back on itself to reveal the larger dimension within the smaller one. The example becomes the exemplar. And the “truth” of a matter becomes further defined and refined, further delineated and detailed, and often, further complicated and compounded.

Joseph A. Amato, in his book entitled *Rethinking Home: A Case for Writing Local History*, discourses upon the concept of writing local history:

People of every place and time deserve a history. Only local and regional history satisfies the need to remember

the most intimate matters, the things of childhood. Local history carries with it the potential to reconstruct our ancestors' everyday lives: the goods, machines, and tools with which they worked, and the groups in which they were raised, in which they matured, celebrated, had ambitions, retired, and resigned themselves to their fates...Local history focuses on the laboratory of change. It provides facts, comparisons, and contexts—the very pilings and piers of certain human knowledge—for the abstract reaches of contemporary social sciences and history.<sup>18</sup>

The study of local history presents a means of addressing the question: *how?* and *who?* and what did it look like *here*, where we *live*, where we *are* in places that we still can *see*...?

Of course, locals are often enamored with the particulars of their own histories and communities, much as families enjoy sharing in the geneology of their own bloodline. Accounts of mass movements, of emigrations to new and foreign lands are made all the more real and exciting when personalized at the human level. Not a general story of nameless immigrants, but a particular account of *my* own Aunt Marie or Uncle Anton. Not an account of the development of the nameless railroad across the state, but the *Katy* roaring across the cotton-tufted countryside on its way to the State Fair of Texas on a cool October morning in 1898, its cars filled with a standing-room-only crowd of gleeful Waxahachie schoolchildren and their no-less gleeful teachers, all given the day off to enjoy the event. Not a mere overview of the Great Depression, or even the collapse

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<sup>18</sup> Joseph A. Amato, *Rethinking Home: A Case for Writing Local History*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002, 3.

of the cotton market, or the desperation of the agriculturally-bound inhabitants, but the local newspaper's publication of the current price per bale in 1934, coupled with the noticeable decrease in county population and school enrollment and a gripping account of the cold-blooded murder of a school superintendent's brother at the hands of a desperate delinquent in the gangster-ridden days of 1939. These are the details that lend texture and timbre to history.

Certainly local histories are social histories which, by virtue of the historical evidence upon which they draw, see developments through the lens of developing social trends, in that the focus of local histories often depends upon actors and events at some distance removed from the larger political, economic, or military histories familiar to previous generations of secondary school students and the curriculum writers who furnished the content of their studies. In this sense, then, social histories coincide with social sciences, and in so doing become grounds for theoretical comment and criticism.

The division in educational curricular history between purist historians and social scientists has been well-documented. At the turn of the nineteenth century this split was exemplified by the formation of the American Historical Association and the National Council for the Social Studies, symbolizing the two divergent "camps" which throughout the twentieth century would exercise counterbalancing influences upon the nature of school curriculums and illuminate the distinctions between traditional historians, mandarins (advocates of social studies as social science), social efficiency educators,

social meliorists, and social reconstructionists.<sup>19</sup> The dialectical discourse between and among these multiple perspectives has particular significance for studies which purport to extol the history of education, whether a macro or a micro history, due in part to the nature of the intended audience. In one sense the undertaking of this treatise parallels the question of curricular history: should this treatise be understood as a history in the traditional sense, or as a social study in a progressive sense? If it purports to the former, is it immune to theoretical criticism in its documentation of historical facts? Or should it rather embrace a particular theoretical viewpoint as a means of validating its analytical approach to bringing meaning to facts?

Educational historians are primarily concerned with understanding the significance of schooling and the place within it of such school related fields as administration, organization, and curriculum. Because these fields are contextualized by individual, social, cultural, and biocognitive processes, the historical development and temporal understandings of these processes are of eminent importance in explaining and understanding how the history of schooling manifests itself in contemporary settings. Curriculum historians and educational historiographers such as Cremin, Tyack, Cuban, Kliebard, and Watras,<sup>20</sup> among a host of others, have given the field the frameworks through which contemporary discussions of school and related issues may be examined.

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<sup>19</sup> Ronald Evans, *The Social Studies Wars: What Should We Teach the Children?* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2004). See also Herbert Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004).

<sup>20</sup> See Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School* (New York: Vintage, 1961); David B. Tyack, *The One Best System* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1974); David Tyack and Larry Cuban,

In particular, this study draws upon the work of Ronald Butchart, whose book *Local Schools: Exploring Their History* encourages the examination of local school history not only for the convenience afforded by the availability of accessible data, but also for its illumination of the broader historical currents of our society. Indeed, Butchart offers a multitude of research questions in exposition of the importance and relevance of local school study. Asks Butchart:

How was educational policy determined, for instance? Who set policy—the superintendents, presidents, other trained educators, or governing bodies, such as boards of trustees or elected boards of education? What was the nature of the educational leadership? Were the institution and its administrators bold or timid? Educational statesmen or followers? Propelled by educational principles or by fiscal considerations? When and how did the educational bureaucracy evolve? Why? With what consequences? What was the nature of change in educational leadership? For instance, where was control centered at various times in the history of the institution? When did the focus of control shift? How was it shared? <sup>21</sup>

Butchart extends the nature of the questioning to include the patterns of control and influence beyond the administrative structure of the institution to social institutions

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*Tinkering Toward Utopia: a Century of Public School Reform.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995);, Herbert M. Kliebard *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958* ( New York: Routledge, 1995); and, Joseph Watras,. *Philosophic conflicts in American education 1893-2000* (Pearson, 2003).

<sup>21</sup> Ronald Butchart, *Local Schools: Exploring Their History* (Nashville: The American Association for State and Local History, 1986).



and their representatives, such as alumni, businesspeople, benefactors, and political groups who exert power and influence over educational decision-making. Ultimately, and for the greatest analytical effect, Butchart advises the tying together of all research questions under the single question: why? At this point, Butchart acknowledges the interpretive role of the historian.<sup>22</sup>

## **Methodology**

This study, as a historical longitudinal study, proposes an empirical methodology wherein primary and secondary documents pertaining to the local development of education in Waxahachie, Texas, are researched and gleaned for pertinent information bearing on the development of the Waxahachie Independent School District, from its roots, to its inception, and then to its primary and secondary development in the modern era, spanning roughly the periods between 1870 and 1970. In its view of historical fact gathering, it relies upon the admonition of Arthur Marwick to “forget facts” and to “foreground sources.” Marwick finds in primary sources a greater value in locating the interconnections among facts, than in finding the facts themselves, much of which are already known to the researcher through secondary sources.<sup>23</sup> These interconnections are often of more use to the researcher than a mere recapitulation of facts readily available from secondary sources. The importance of integrating primary and secondary sources

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>23</sup> Arthur Marwick, *The New Nature of History: Knowledge, Evidence, Language* (Chicago: Lyceum Books), 2001, 153.

provides for the researcher a strategy. Says Marwick, “A strategy entails a mastery of the existing secondary sources, and identification of the questions that require answering and the problems that need solving (though, as often as not, as research progresses a whole set of new questions and problems will be thrown up), and at least a provisional inventory of the types of sources to be examined (one set of sources, as all historians know, will often throw up problems which then require the study of another set). The strategy is open, not predetermined; but it is not haphazard.”<sup>24</sup>

Marwick’s traditionalist approach toward historical research contrasts those whose view towards conducting historical research encompasses Critical and Postmodern concerns of social theory. Peter Burke, writing in *History and Social Theory*, summons a common ground between the two camps of purist, traditionalist historians like Marwick and social theorists who cast much historical writing in doubt. While Marwick casts postmodern approaches as “totalizing belief system[s] based on faith alone” finding them “distinguished by elaborate rhetoric and a specialized jargon which fails to conceal the essential naivety of [their] basic ideas, derived from a discredited Marxism”,<sup>25</sup> Burke more willingly accepts the tenets of critical, feminist, and postmodern theorists as essential components of the discussion to the question of the use of social theory to historians and the use of history to social theorists. He invites the consideration that historical writing, presumed by its authors to be dealing only in facts, are as much in the

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>25</sup> Marwick, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

business of fiction as novelists or poets, in that they produce literary artifacts which follow certain rules of genre and style. For Burke, the postmodern perspective has eroded the firm boundaries between fact and fiction.<sup>26</sup>

In the search for historical writing that encompasses theoretical perspective, Burke calls for a “braided” narrative, one that interweaves analysis with storytelling. Invoking Geertz’s notion of “thick description,” Burke offers a corollary thick narrative “on the grounds that the new forms need to be constructed to bear a heavier weight of explanation than the old (concerned as they were with the actions of prominent individuals). Most appropriate for this study, Burke calls for contemporary historical writing to “include stories which present the same events from multiple points of view...or deal with the experience of ordinary people at the local level in what might be called ‘micronarratives’.”<sup>27</sup> This study aspires to incorporate interpretive theoretical viewpoints by braiding its analytical narrative with data firmly, and positively, from primary and secondary sources.

Because the author of this study understands his own positionality within the context of the society wherein he conducts his research, and the manner in which his own understanding is filtered through the lens of his personality and personal experience, this study is readily presented as an interpretive undertaking. While no particular theory is hence applied *a priori* in a conscious manner, the author accepts that the very nature of

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<sup>26</sup> Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 127.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

meaning-making entails the presence of theoretical perspective, and predicates his work on the assumption that readers will bring to the work their own interpretive perspective, within the theoretical bounds of reader-response theory. Certainly this study aspires to a level of analysis of the subject greater than the mere chronological documentation of historical occurrences. While a positivist world-view informs the collection of data, an interpretive research paradigm of analysis is employed in the pursuit of meaning-making and transference of that meaning. The narrative account is contextualized through thematic analysis, and conclusions are drawn and findings are extrapolated through the use of inductive reasoning.

This study bases itself on substantial evidence from both primary and secondary sources relating directly and indirectly to the development of the public school system in Waxahachie, Texas between the years of 1870 to 1970. Methodical research revealed commonalities sufficient to educe themes through which consequent research has been contextualized. These themes include: 1) **religion**, as an impetus and philosophical driving force behind the organizational aspects of local schooling; 2) **race**, as the defining ethos promulgating the dual school district and informing notions of class, social purpose, status, and refinement, and, ultimately, equity and justice; and 3) **regime**, as expressed in the tenures of office of three of the district's early superintendents, their careers collectively spanning a 75 year period of the district's existence, essentially marking three-fifths of the district's existence to this day. From the teaching career, principalship, and superintendency of Walter Acker (1893 – 1910), to G. B. Winn (1890 - 1936), to T.C. Wilemon (1923 – 1970), each man served a period of years in leadership positions

with the district throughout eras of historic significance in the annals of public schooling. These terms of service, measured not only by their breadth, but also by the crucial nature of the historic periods in which they presided, impel the observer to regard each man as an architect of the school district for his own and, through his legacy, for future eras. Incontrovertibly, the careers of these gentlemen shaped the development of the modern local educational system in Waxahachie, Texas.

As the school system developed from its infancy and adolescence, the role of the superintendent grew in size and complexity to the position it has become today. At its inception, the job was much more akin to today's high school campus principal in the demands and responsibilities associated with it. Carl Candoli views the evolution of the superintendent's position in a manner which the historical development of the Waxahachie public schools closely approximates. According to Candoli, early expressions of modern school superintendents characterized their roles as that of "the master teacher and the leader of the students and teachers of a school system." While Walter Acker and his predecessors brought a good deal more to the equation than their mere teaching skills, certainly their leadership abilities were viewed as stemming from their academic expertise as opposed to their managerial.

In the next phase, though, the superintendent acts more completely, and somewhat more independently, as the manager of the school system, held accountable by the board for all of the activities of the system. Winn's tenure of service certainly exemplifies this notion. Indeed, by virtue of his longevity, board records over time bear witness to his

increasing managerial autonomy, as board members' names change throughout the years, while his, as superintendent, remains the same. Initially, Winn seems but the errand boy for the board's wishes, awaiting their instructions for the simplest of tasks. Over time, his expertise affords him greater autonomy, even deference, as issues with which he has previously dealt recur.

The progression then moves further toward the concept of the superintendent as the chief executive officer of the school organization and as the expert manager of the organization. Wilemon, through his longevity in the position, and the total trust of the board members in his managerial and executive skills, supersedes Winn's sphere of influence, and emerges as the true precedent for contemporary understanding of the superintendent.

The ultimate, or present stage, at which we currently find the profession, characterizes the superintendent as responsible for developing and implementing a variety of different models to respond to the many publics that make up the modern school system. These superintendents will perhaps be documented in future histories.<sup>28</sup>

This study drew largely upon newspaper articles from the period of study, although archival materials were used where available. These included board minutes, county and district records, court case decisions, maps, letters, and assorted ephemera

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<sup>28</sup> Carl Candoli, "The Superintendency: Its History and Role," *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education* 9 (1995): 335-350.

relevant to the study. Doubtless other sources exist, but were not located. (See Appendix A).

### **Limitations of the Study**

As with any historical study, the limitations of the extant, available historical record figure prominently in the ability of the study to accurately account for the events of the past and for the interpretation of meaning for those events upon the present. Certainly, the scarcity of primary sources and/or their availability to researchers figure(s) prominently in this study. Essentially, the picture delineated and account transcribed herein has been composed only of those elements which are extant, and which speak to the research questions identified.

Clearly, any historical study is limited by the nature of past events as existing only within those primary and secondary sources which survive into the future. Levels of analysis and interpretation are applied from perspectives of the present. Philosophers have speculated upon our ability to fully comprehend the past, and theorists have called into doubt previous accounts of past occurrences. Any account of history becomes in time its own history, and thus we contemplate the historicity of any later accounting for any moment in time. In his own recent work, the eminent historical theorist Dominick La Capra has elucidated upon the transitory nature of history, evoking the historicity of past and present times. Says LaCapra:

History in the sense of historiography cannot escape transit unless it negates itself by denying its own historicity and becomes identified with transcendence or fixation. This transitional condition affects the very meaning of historical

understanding; it requires a continual rethinking of what counts as history in the dual sense of historical processes and historiographical attempts to account for them.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 2.



## **Chapter Two: The Roots of a Local Grammar of Schooling: the Masonic Academy, Marvin College, and Mrs. Nash's School**

### **The Academy**

With the school law of 1854, when the town of Waxahachie was but four years old, the county of Ellis of which Waxahachie was the seat of government was divided into eighteen common school districts. These districts were laid off geographically, with the town of Waxahachie inclusive, most likely, of district number thirteen. Thus, the school located in this district became Waxahachie's first "public" school.

As the county seat, Waxahachie naturally became the residence of men of affairs, and thus was created the impulse for an institution of higher learning beyond the common school. Waxahachie's earliest school of any permanence became known, most frequently, as "the academy," although it bore several names in its existence. Founded by local members of the Masonic order in 1860, the school was housed in the same building as the Masonic lodge. The cornerstone for this building was laid on May 25, 1861, by John C. McCoy of Dallas; the address for the occasion was delivered by Roger Q. Mills of Corsicana. In the cornerstone were placed copies of the *Texas Freemason*, and the *Dallas Weekly Herald*. The contractors and builders of the edifice, which was finished in the latter part of the year at a cost of \$3,350, were Frank H. Keith and James P. Kennedy. The lower floor was divided into two large rooms for school purposes, while the second floor was reserved for the use of the local lodge.<sup>30</sup> Little survives of the record of this

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<sup>30</sup> Bryan, *op. cit.*, 25.

school, save for later references to it, although it would serve, off and on, as a private, and city school until 1897. When in 1863, the president of its board of trustees, N. Oldham, advertised in the *Houston Telegraph* for “a male and female teacher, of good qualifications, to take charge of Waxahachie Academy,” he felt compelled to advertise its location in “a healthy and desirable” community.<sup>31</sup> At the time, Waxahachie was populated by less than one thousand citizens, and though the state’s constitution provided a contribution to each county for the education of its scholastic age children, county records indicate that no state money was collected by the county after 1859. The Civil War and its aftermath in Texas set back the cause of public education for years to come, and Waxahachie wasn’t spared.

The academy did serve as a foundational experience in the minds of local Waxahachians as the equivalent of what would today be referred to as a *high school* education. While none of the ephemera associated with the school or schools which operated there seems to have survived the ages, numerous references to the educational experiences of persons who came of age in Waxahachie at the time are traceable to this institution.

### **Marvin College**

Of greater stature, though, by way of exemplifying a contemporary version of a high school, was Marvin College. The *Memorial and Biographical History of Ellis*

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<sup>31</sup> *Houston Telegraph*, July 29, 1863.

*County*, an early retrospective history of the county and its chief inhabitants, had little to say about the academy, but characterized Marvin College as “the first effort to build a high school, or college, as it was termed, was made by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, to fully understand the manner by which the grammar of schooling, a grammar which would account for the *lingua franca* or the local dialect of the experience of schooling, the history of Marvin College rises to the fore.

In the spring of 1883, Waxahachie had reason to be proud of her college. The total number of pupils enrolled for the year amounted to over 700 students. Local inhabitants were of the opinion that Marvin College had “no superior in the state as an educational institution.” The faculty then consisted of ten professors and teachers. Besides the chairs of Science, Literature, Mathematics, Languages, etc. there was a professor whose time was entirely devoted to elocution, and another one who had charge of the commercial department, including commercial law, book-keeping, penmanship and telegraphy. The hall set apart for this department reportedly contained a bank, “with the necessary books, checks, drafts, etc., a telegraph instrument, and other appliances for enabling the student to gain a thorough and practical knowledge of all kinds of business transactions.” The music department had two teachers, five pianos, and an organ. Pupils

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<sup>32</sup> *Memorial and biographical history of Ellis county, Texas ... Containing a history of this important section of the great state of Texas, from the earliest period of its occupancy to the present time, together with glimpses of its future prospects; with full-page portraits of the presidents of the United States, and also full-page portraits of some of the most eminent men of the county, and biographical mention of many of its pioneers, and also of prominent citizens of to-day ...*, Book, 1892; digital images, (<http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph33018> : accessed December 27, 2009), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <http://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas, 151

were “thoroughly instructed in the theory of music, with constant exercise in Harmony, Vocal Teaching, Voice Culture, Sight Singing and Chorus Drill, besides practical lessons on piano, organ, violin, guitar, and brass instruments.” The department of Natural Sciences was supplied with over \$1000 worth of chemical and philosophical apparatus, and all kinds of chemicals for practical experiments. There was also a fine microscope, and a magnificent telescope which alone cost more than \$1000. The number of students enrolled during the spring session totaled 375. There was a primary and an academic department in connection with the college, and 135 pupils within scholastic age “received the benefit of the school fund which paid their tuition for three months or less at \$2 per month.” Terms for “pay students” ranged from \$2 to \$5 per month. The Marvin College Catalogue advertised, boastingly, that a student’s tuition, room, and board could be had for an entire year for \$175. The college had two large buildings for lectures, recitations, and chapel exercises, which started each school day. There were two boarding houses, a primary school building and an observatory. The grounds were handsomely marked out and ornamented with shade trees and shrubbery.<sup>33</sup>

Most tellingly of the stature of Marvin College was its service as the state summer normal school for its district for the years 1881, 1882, and 1883. Marvin College produced teachers for the area private and common schools, priding itself upon its economy in comparison to the state normal at Huntsville. “All persons desiring to prepare

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<sup>33</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, April 27, 1883.

for teaching can find at Marvin College all needful preparation at much less cost than elsewhere.”<sup>34</sup>

Marvin College’s inception had begun the previous decade. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South gained an early following in Waxahachie when the town’s founder, Emory Rogers, at one time hosted George Tittle, a local Methodist preacher who had become lost and in his wandering about the county arrived at the Rogers homestead. Rogers’s home, a roughshod affair, but sheltering nonetheless, housed many a wayfarer in the early days of the formation and settlement of Waxahachie as the county seat of Ellis county. A Methodist himself, having formerly been a member of the church in Washington county, Mr. Rogers reportedly gave the preacher a hearty welcome and invited him to preach. By other accounts, Mrs. Rogers led the sermon. Thus began the early formation of the Methodist Church in Waxahachie. By 1854, a revival led to the accession of forty persons to church membership, allowing for enough money to be raised for building a church, the first denominational church in Waxahachie.<sup>35</sup>

As membership in the Methodist church grew, concern for the education of church members rose to the fore. Thus, locals were delighted when, at a session of the Waxahachie District Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, held at Springfield, Texas, in 1868, Waxahachie was chosen as the location for a conference school. Rev. W. G. Veal, an early influence in the doings of Methodism in northeast

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<sup>34</sup> *Catalogue*, Marvin College, 1880-1881. See also: *Dallas Weekly Herald*, July 14, 1881.

<sup>35</sup> Homer Thrall, *History of Methodism in Texas* (Houston: Cushing, 1872), 97.

Texas, presented a communication from the Waxahachie District Conference regarding the local interest in educational matters. Resolutions were passed locating the district school at Waxahachie, with the first resolution reading: “Resolved: That we accept the offer of the Waxahachie District Conference as presented by their committee, of ownership and supervision of the School and School property, to be located at Waxahachie”<sup>36</sup>

Competition for conference schools was fierce, as the *Denton Record* reported much “wrangling” among the cities of Sherman, Dallas, and Weatherford for the location of the school, and celebrated Waxahachie as the profitable victor in “carrying off the prize.”<sup>37</sup> But the ambitions of the Waxahachie delegation at the conference were yet greater, and locals intended to have not only a school, but a full-fledged college, as resolutions adopted at the session demonstrated the intent of the conference “to take such steps as may result in the establishment of a *bona fide* college.” Church sentiment had leaned toward the establishment of a college within each conference region. Waxahachie representatives called for location in Waxahachie of a district college. The Waxahachie Conference petitioned the Northwest Conference to accept this college under conference supervision, as they had for the district school. The Waxahachie group recommended appointment of an agent to solicit donations should the offer be accepted.

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<sup>36</sup> *Catalogue*, Marvin College, 1882.

<sup>37</sup> *Denton Record*, December 5, 1868.

But no decision was made at that time. Other contenders in the region wanted their own shot at the location of the college. With Confederate veteran Mordecai “Give-‘em-Hell” Yell presiding, the Springfield session recorded its final resolution thusly:

Resolved, That we will not select any place for the present as the site of our College, but recommend the appointment of a committee, to consist of the Presiding elders as the clerical, and one layman from each District, to consider the whole subject; and that they be authorized to locate as the interests of the whole conference may demand; that this committee have delegated to them, by this Conference, discretionary powers to act in conjunction with the Agent as their best judgment may dictate, and report their action to this body at its next session.<sup>38</sup>

Within a few weeks the district school was up and running, located in a large building on the corner of Jefferson and Monroe Streets. Consisting initially as solely a preparatory department, with the Rev. S.D. Akin serving as Principal, the school’s anticipated expansion into a college was primary in the minds of the organizers. Throughout 1869, local efforts were carried out to secure Waxahachie as the location of the district college. By July of that year, citizens of the Waxahachie area had subscribed approximately \$15,000 in cash, land, and services for the "purpose of erecting suitable school buildings and endowing a first class school, college or university, to be under the control of trustees for the M. E. Church, South, said school to be located at the town of Waxahachie, in Ellis County, Texas..."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *Catalogue*, Marvin College, 1882.

<sup>39</sup> Hancock , *op. cit.*, 6.

By October of 1869, the school was well established and entering its second year, and was already referred to as “the preparatory department of Marvin College” in area newspapers, prefiguring its official appellation, with the *Dallas Weekly Herald* reporting the commencement of exercises under the direction of Rev. Akin, “assisted by the accomplished Miss S.A. Kincheloe and others.”<sup>40</sup>

The chief benefactor of the college proved to be Emory Rogers, who, in August of 1870, deeded to the college trustees thirty acres of land for the price of \$750.00, with his expressed desire to “promote the educational interest of M.E. Church, South, Texas Conf.” He donated an additional ten acres to the trustees which, lying at the northern edge of the town, became the actual college campus. Residents of the town, from a population of about 1500, pledged amounts ranging from fifty to one thousand dollars, indicating the town’s interest in establishing a college. This level of support clearly influenced the location of the conference college in the city.

In November of 1869 the Northwest Texas Conference met again, this time at Weatherford, Texas, with at least one session meeting at Waxahachie, perhaps as a celebratory nod for the business to be conducted. Once again, W.G. Veal represented the Waxahachie delegation on the education committee, reporting college assets in cash and land to be at \$39, 723.50. Additionally, he proposed a charter for the college. Clerical members of the committee included Veal, Fountain P. Ray, Thomas Standford, J. Fred Cox, John S. McCarver, Guy C. McWilliams, John Powell, L.B. Whipple and James M.

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<sup>40</sup> *Dallas Weekly Herald*, Oct. 16, 1869.



Jones. Laymen members included a collection of Waxahachie's and Ellis County's chief pioneers—Benjamin F. Hawkins, J.W. Ferris, J.F. Reagor, H.H. Sneed, D.G. Ransom, James E. Smith, and, tellingly, J.F. Mulkey of the Mulkey school—an early community school. Whether upon the persuasion of the economic incentive, or else upon the influence of Waxahachie church members, the committee reported that the conference college would be located at Waxahachie.<sup>41</sup> Organizers decided to name the “college” after the Methodist Episcopal bishop who had presided over the larger church conference in 1866, Enoch Marvin. Whether as sincere homage, or fawning ploy in anticipation of further goals, the name would prove lasting.<sup>42</sup>

Construction on the college building began in 1870, with many materials supplied locally. Bricks were fashioned from the sands of Waxahachie Creek. These were laid upon a four-foot thick rock foundation, and composed eighteen- inch-thick walls measuring seventy by fifty feet. The building stood two stories tall, with the upper floor eighteen feet high and the first floor, ten feet. On the first floor were six recitation rooms and a forty foot square study hall for the preparatory department. This hall could seat 300 students. On the second floor was a large auditorium, known as the chapel, which could seat upwards of 800 persons. Other buildings, added at different times in the life of the college, included a three story dormitory building, an additional building of classrooms, an observatory, and a music conservatory.

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<sup>41</sup> *Catalogue*, Marvin College, 1882.

<sup>42</sup> J.M. Barcus, “History of Northwest Texas Conference,” *The Texas Methodist Historical Quarterly* v.1 no. 2, 1909 , 169.

The front façade of the main building contained a tower structure which housed a large bell, donated to the school trustees by New York City merchants. Reports of the day testified to the peals from the bell being heard as far as five miles distant. The finished building came in at a cost of \$22, 000, exceeding the amount subscribed, and incurring what was to be a troubling debt throughout the life of the college.<sup>43</sup>

But the thinking of the Waxahachie Methodists of the day was large, and their plans went according to their thinking. Their intent was for Marvin College to assume a pre-eminent role in the educational efforts not merely of the county or surrounding region, but in the state as well. Thus, by 1871, with the Marvin College buildings yet under construction, Waxahachie hosted a session of the Northwest Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, presided over by none other than Bishop Enoch Marvin, namesake for the college under construction. A centerpiece of business of this conference meeting was an Educational Convention involving all five Texas conferences, and with the express purpose of considering the location of a conference-wide “institution of learning, to be properly endowed, and affording all facilities for liberal education, under high moral and religious auspices.”<sup>44</sup>

Having met with success in their district school becoming the district college, Waxahachie Methodists eagerly anticipated the progression to university status. They heartily supported the first line of policy under consideration by representatives at the

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<sup>43</sup> Hancock, *op.cit.*, 11.

<sup>44</sup> *Galveston Daily News*, April 19, 1871.

convention, which was to locate the university in a town where a district school already existed, and then to build up the institution around it. The second point of consideration proved more troublesome for the Waxahachie delegation. Calls were made to locate the university upon land designated for one of the main trunk railroads, and to capitalize upon the enhanced value of the land for the purpose of endowing the university.

Waxahachie had no railroad connections in 1871, having refused to subsidize the Houston and Central Texas Railroad in 1870 when it solicited a bonus for laying track through the town.

Thus, when the main college building was finished and its collegiate department ready to admit students, trustees selected one of the most prominent Texas educators of the day to head the college—Rev. J.W. P. McKenzie.

McKenzie had helmed McKenzie Institute in Clarksville several decades before. As it grew to become McKenzie College, it demonstrated McKenzie as an early leader in the state's educational endeavors. McKenzie College, for several years the largest college in Texas, was always a Methodist institution, although it was actually controlled by the Methodist conference for only a fraction of its lifetime—a troublesome aspect that would be repeated with Marvin College. McKenzie deeded the school to the church in 1855 but on conditions that the conference could not fulfill. Again in 1860 he made a conditional deed of the property to the conference. With the majority of the student body joining the Confederate Army throughout the years of 1861-62, the church returned the property to McKenzie. In turn, McKenzie adapted the school to the times by offering military drill to

students. By 1863 enrollment dropped to thirty-three, and only increased by several students even at the conclusion of the war. McKenzie and his son-in-law, Smith Ragsdale, no longer able to keep the school independent financially, closed it on June 25, 1868.<sup>45</sup> Within three years, they would each call Waxahachie their home.

McKenzie's sojourn in Waxahachie was short, lasting little more than a year, and was anything but sweet. Having battled episodes of poor health as a younger man, at sixty-five, his condition was in further decline. Leaving his retirement at Itinerant's Retreat in Clarksville to assume the presidency of the new college proved taxing not only to his health, but to his finances. McKenzie gave his personal guarantee for some of the debts of the school. A creditor sued him and obtained a \$1000 judgment. Other disputes with trustees over debt and declining health made Itinerant's Retreat look better all the time.<sup>46</sup> He left after one year as president, soured on the experience and determined that Waxahachie would not benefit from any enhancement afforded by Marvin College.

McKenzie's replacement was found in the person of Rev. J.M. Pugh, who assumed the presidency of the college for its 1872-1873 school term. During the summer of 1873, the college was chartered by the state of Texas, endowing it with "powers as ample as any other Institution in the State," as its Catalogue for the 1872-73 term proudly proclaimed. By legal declaration of the legislature, the board of trustees of Marvin

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<sup>45</sup> B. E. Masters, *A History of Early Education in Northeast Texas*, M.A. thesis, University of Texas, 1929.

<sup>46</sup> Texas Methodist History "J.W.P. McKenzie," <http://txmethhistory.blogspot.com> (accessed December 27, 2009).

College, named individually in the statute, were incorporated into a legal body empowered to carry out all manner of business associated with the college and to otherwise “do and perform all acts needful and proper of the promotion of the objects of said institution.”<sup>47</sup>

One of those “needful and proper acts” having to do with the grammar of schooling was to set up a primary and intermediate department, whose number of students (or pupils, in the vernacular of the day) was greater than the number of collegiate students. Thus, Marvin College, in the minds of the community members whose sons and daughters attended, became the local expression of “school.” Pupils might attend Marvin College and never progress to the collegiate level. Moreover, as another element of the grammar of schooling, primary, intermediate, and preparatory departments were divided into two sections or forms: the first division, inclusive of all pupils up to par with curricular expectations for their age, and a second division, for pupils deficient in skills or otherwise deemed to be slower in learning. This “grammatical” element of school lasted through several decades, well into the twentieth century.

The Rev. J.M. Pugh served as president through the 1873-74 school year, but due to failure to meet its expenses, the Methodist church lost ownership of the college in December of 1874.

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<sup>47</sup> Hans Peter Mareus Neilsen Gammel, *The Laws of Texas, 1822-1897* Volume 7, Book, 1898; digital images, (<http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph6732> : accessed January 12, 2010), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <http://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting UNT Libraries, Denton, Texas.

Dr. M.B. Franklin administered a non-sectarian school under the name of Marvin College during the 1875-76 school year.<sup>48</sup> “The course of instruction is as extensive and will be as thorough as any school in the State,” advised the announcement in the *Enterprise*, declaring the fifth annual session of the college. Thorough or not, the opening day’s enrollment signified the troublesome aspects of linking a universal educational endeavor to one particular religious denomination’s local precedence. Said the *Enterprise*:

The attendance on the opening day was not quite as large as we expected, which we attribute to several causes, among which seems to be a prevalent impression in this community that the school is connected with and run in the interest of the Methodist Church. We take great pleasure in informing our readers that such is not the case. On the contrary the school stands on its own merits and belongs to and affiliates with no particular sect or creed. The principal, during his whole course as an educator, has ever conducted his schools independently and has never permitted the same to be run in the interest of any particular class... We assure our readers again and again that Marvin College is in no way sectarian, but is open to all denominations. Methodists, Baptists, Catholics, Jews, Episcopalians and all others are invited to send their children and are assured that nothing will be said or done calculated to influence the religious belief or feelings of one of them...<sup>49</sup>

Years later, graduates and matriculates would recall Franklin’s leadership of the college as exemplary, but he, too, failed to place the college on sound financial footing,

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<sup>48</sup> Hancock, *op.cit.*, 2.

<sup>49</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, September 10, 1875.

and departed the following year. Mrs. E.H. Horner, who served a foundational role in the establishment of a grammar of schooling in the local private, common, and public school endeavors, operated a school for young ladies at the college site that would lay the foundation for schools to come. Her effort also met with failure.

By 1877, under the leadership of a committee of Methodists composed of Charles E. Brown, W.G. Veal, and J.D. Shaw, and acting once again on behalf of the Northwest Texas Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Marvin College was re-introduced as a Methodist institution of higher learning. Its leadership under the Reverend John Allen, also fondly remembered years afterward, also failed to produce the economic success required for the college's continuance. A persistent mortgage debt, incurred at the inception of the building's construction, was foreclosed and the Methodist Church lost ownership of the college for a second time. Yet, Marvin College persisted for the 1878-1879 school year. It was located at the "old academy" building for this year.

J.H. Combs founded a Female Academy on the original Marvin College property in 1879, but it, too, failed to achieve any level of success. By March of 1880, Brown and James A. Walkup purchased the college with their own funds. Convinced that an educational need, and a corresponding market, existed locally, the men opened yet another version of Marvin College, this time under the leadership General L.M. Lewis, who also served as the pastor of the local Methodist church. Nominally non-sectarian, the college weathered a precarious four years, achieving a high level of academic success,

but failing to return either a profit, or indeed, a level of sustenance, that would secure the college's future.<sup>50</sup>

Despite its economic woes, the academic life of Marvin College thrived, due largely to the leadership of General Lewis, president of the college, and professor of English Language and Literature, and professor of Natural Science. Lewis assembled a highly capable corps of teachers, and seems to have exercised a largesse in supplying teaching materials and material comforts, which may have contributed to the college's economic demise. The college campus contained a unique feature for its time in the form of an observatory, "a curious-shaped affair, with a round globe like the top of a tree," which housed a nine-foot equatorial telescope.<sup>51</sup> "This instrument is competent not only for instruction, but for discovery," read the Marvin College Catalogue of 1880.

Faculty and subject areas for this year included General L.M. Lewis, President, and Professor of English Language and Literature; J.W. Henry, Professor of Pure and Applied Mathematics; Major W.A. Banks, Professor of Ancient and Modern Languages; the Rev. J. Fred Cox, Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy and Logic; A.L. Banks, assistant in mathematics and English; Thomas B. Criddle, Principal of the Academic Department; Mrs. E.H. Horner, Principal of the Primary Department; W.A. Gray, Musical director and Teacher of Piano, Organ, Vocalization, Thorough Bass, Band, and Guitar; Mrs. Annie D. Bradley, Teacher of Piano, Organ, Thorough bass, Harmony, Etc.;

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<sup>50</sup> Hancock, *op. cit.*, 2. See also: *Catalogue*, Marvin College, 1878-1879.

<sup>51</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, October 13, 1882.



General L.M. Lewis [2<sup>nd</sup> mention], Professor of Natural Science, and unnamed personnel as Professor of Book-Keeping, Commercial Law, Etc; and un-named personnel as Teacher of Painting, Drawing, Waxwork, Etc...<sup>52</sup>

The course of study embraced “four schools” subdivided into classes “so as to suit the capacity and advancement of any student.” They included a primary, grammar, academic, and collegiate school. These schools corresponded, roughly, to contemporary grades of 1 thru 4 for the primary, 5 thru 7 for the grammar, 8 thru 10 or 11 for the academic, and 11 and beyond for the collegiate schools, respectively.

The primary school included a curriculum of reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic, and geography. In reading, focus was placed upon understanding punctuation, and securing “natural tone and manner.” Arithmetic objectives covered writing numbers to 1000, and the completion of Robinson’s *Primary Arithmetic*.

The grammar school encompassed the study of reading, spelling, writing, grammar, arithmetic and geography at greater levels of complexity than the primary school. It added a course in the study of nature, and utilized Hooker’s *The Child’s Book of Nature*.

The academic school, overseen by T.B. Criddle, whose work at Marvin College marked the beginning in Waxhahachie of a life in education, consisted of reading, spelling, English grammar, arithmetic, geography, and writing. The school level added

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<sup>52</sup> *Catalogue*, Marvin College, 1880-1881.

the study of physiology, and continued the work on “nature” begun in the primary school, which corresponded to today’s health curriculum. Latin was also begun at this level, with special attention given to “pronunciation and quantity.” The book used was Harkness’ introductory book.

The collegiate school consisted of sub-schools, or what would today be referred to as departments. These consisted of English History, Mathematics, Latin, Greek, Modern Languages, natural Science, Moral Philosophy, a commercial school, a school of music, voice, organ, brass band, and a school of art.

Upon this course of study the catalogue made offered the following remarks:

The course here laid down is, with a few alterations and additions, the same as that pursued during the year just closed. The results have been so flattering that we are more than satisfied the public will heartily endorse the course of the college and give it a constantly increasing patronage. Much time had to be consumed this last year in finding out our precise whereabouts. Now the course is decidedly marked and well determined, hence the results of the next year must be greatly above those of the last. With our increased facilities for instruction, we can safely say that no school in Texas offers superior and but few equal advantages to Marvin College.<sup>53</sup>

That the “precise whereabouts” of the college had been in doubt indicates to some degree the frequent buying and selling of the college grounds, often among the same persons,

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<sup>53</sup> *Catalogue*, Marvin College, 1880-1881.

albeit acting in different capacities as individuals or representatives of the Methodist Church.

For instance, in 1878, as trustees for the Methodist Church, W.G. Veal, Charles E. Brown, and J. D. Shaw executed a deed of trust to Artemessia Meek and her husband, M. H. Meek for \$6,000 in partial payment for the purchase of ten acres and the buildings of Marvin College. The trustees then had use of this property for the purpose of running Marvin College. Not long after, trustees Veal, Brown, and Shaw defaulted on their promissory note, which led H.W. Graber, as alternate trustee, to sell the property of ten acres at public auction on March 18, 1879, once again to the Meeks, for \$7,000.

Consequently, Charles E. Brown and James E. Walkup purchased the ten acres and building from the Meeks on February 24, 1880 for the sum of \$7,000. They executed a deed of trust to the Meeks for two notes totaling \$1,000. Brown, Walkup and their respective spouses later sold the ten acres and building on which the college was located to the Board of Directors of Marvin College on August 12, 1882. This board of directors consisted of Brown, Walkup, J. Fred Cox, and General L. M. Lewis. The sum paid for the property at that time was \$22,000. Ostensibly, the Meeks, sympathetic to the Methodist cause of furthering education locally, were operating to keep the college afloat, even though they gained from each transaction.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Hancock, *op. cit.*, 20.

## **The Zenith of Marvin College**

The June Texas sun shone down upon the ten-acre Marvin College campus, casting sunbeams through newly matured saplings. The drought-enhanced heat shimmered in waves as one viewed the campus from the south of College Street, and caused the graduates, matriculates, family members, faculty members, and other notorieties to duck beneath their bonnets and wide-brimmed hats on this otherwise celebratory Wednesday afternoon. From his place of honor upon the dais, Professor Crane took a grateful sip of the ice water provided by his host for the day's proceedings—a luxury some decried as unhealthful—and winked appreciatively toward the general. General L.M. Lewis acknowledged the gesture with a tip of his head, touching the brim of his hat as he did. His own gratitude clearly showed upon his beaming expression, as the mere presence of Professor William Carey Crane, the President of Baylor University, as commencement speaker for the day's graduation ceremony was a pointed retort and a veritable coup to the General's critics, some of whom Lewis noted were present nonetheless at today's festivities. Let them continue to whisperingly accuse his administration of sectarianism, of promoting Methodist doctrine, of having as his chief aim the production of Methodist ministers. So much talk, thought the general. The Methodist Church no longer owned the college, and if the present private owners happened to be Methodists

that was their own business. The real story lay in the increasing enrollment numbers for the college, for which he minded not the least in claiming credit. Professor Crane's Baptist affiliation was indisputable proof of the ecumenical nature of the college, and despite Lewis's own pastorship of the local Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the general knew himself to be equally committed to the enlargement of the educational enterprise, across the state and across the South, and certainly the testament of his experience as the former president of the Arkansas Female College, as the president of the Texas State Teachers Association, and the completion of his third year as president of Marvin College, corroborated that view. True, his pastoral itinerancy had moved him about the South, locating him at times in Shreveport, Galveston, Little Rock, St. Louis, and now at Waxahachie, and thus interfered with his ability to make a lasting commitment to the institutions over which he directed, but, along with Crane, Lewis saw himself as doing the work of propagating educational interest, of planting the figurative seeds of the crop that would sustain him and his colleagues in their secondary livelihoods as educators, in perfect harmony with the tenets and goals of their respective denominations which sought the propagation of educational institutions, perhaps none so much as the Methodists. Indeed, Crane's presidency of Baylor

reminded those Baptists present that they had an institution of higher learning they might call their own, just as the Presbyterians could claim Trinity University at Tehuacana as their own. And while Marvin College narrowly missed becoming the state's pre-eminent Methodist institution, as indeed it had to sought to be prior to Mood's meddling, when the decision was made to locate Southwestern University at Georgetown, still it kept the town of Waxahachie in contention for the same corollary economic benefits as other college towns enjoyed. And while endless and tiresome it seemed to impress upon the public the importance of educational endeavor in the aftermath of the late war among those whose patronage of school institutions was a secondary consideration to the cultivation of crops (with the larger number of school students being the young daughters of the local landed or mercantile gentry), still Lewis in his fifty-first year felt up to the task of expanding the enrollment, the reach, and the prestige of Marvin College. He hadn't risen to the rank of Brigadier General in the Confederate army on the basis of his birth, but on the basis of his actions in the field. It was his "martial spirit" which impelled him to take on Governor Roberts in the discussion of educational policy in the state—one which, in Lewis's view, threatened to flood the state's schools with northern know-it-alls in place of solid southern men and

women whose methods were equally as sound, as his school was daily bearing witness. Lewis had insisted that the college catalogue contain a description of the current methods in use:

Marvin College again salutes its patrons and the public. The year just closed has been an exceedingly prosperous one. We have been able to redeem all our pledges made in the last catalogue. Our students have applied themselves better than ever, have felt the impulse of our new methods, and, finding such gratification in the acquirements of knowledge, have pressed on, constantly encouraged by the fact that their minds were expanding by drill, and being stored with useful and practical knowledge. The emancipation from the slavishness of books, and from the old, worn-out methods of question and answer, has been like the gift of new life under sunny skies. It has been discovered that a good education can be obtained in half the time usually required by those schools which pursue the old methods. Here, he is an investigator and searcher after truth, and, being properly directed in the path, does his own work, and acquires information in such a way that it becomes his own—his to enjoy, his to use. The results so far accomplished have deeply impressed those who are familiar with our methods, and the conviction is fast taking hold of the people in Texas that Marvin College leads in the educational interests of the State.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> *Catalogue, Marvin College, 1881-1882.*

Relative to its recent troubled past, the college was approaching solid ground and, if only precariously solvent, was at least sustaining itself year to year in anticipation of the inevitable growth of the town of Waxahachie, whereupon it would certainly join the ranks of successful established schools. Perhaps it might even rival the new state university in Austin. Indeed, much of Lewis' work lay in convincing such landed gentlemen who readily sent their daughters for the benefit of the primary, preparatory, and academic departments that educational institutions within the state such as Marvin College were of a sufficient caliber to accommodate the enrollment of their sons for a collegiate education, in place of sending them out of state, and often northward to the lands of the former adversary. Marvin's primary, preparatory, and academic departments were a necessity—essentially, the lifeblood of the school, but too often understood by the school's patrons as the finishing point, with few remaining on for the collegiate program and the conferral of degrees. Lewis was convinced that a town of 2000 in a county of 21,000 with 85 public schools throughout could support the continued growth of the college. Only now, in the summer of 1883, did it seem that the South was finally able to reclaim the promise of progress, and here in Waxahachie the promise of



the ready cash available for the cotton which grew so abundantly in the dark, waxy soil of Ellis County gleamed in the eye of many a merchant, lawyer, and banker, not to mention those of the growing professional class of educators.

Crane stood before the crowd, projecting his voice as he intermittently dabbed at the perspiration on his face with a handkerchief. "A glance over creation, looking up and down, and all around us, will speedily convince us of the superiority of mind as our grandest possession over all other objects," he intoned over the assorted patrons. "While the hum of industry and the toils of daily life are focalizing the powers of the mass of mankind, we have turned aside from the consuming duties of our wearied natures, and, gathered at this temple of knowledge to witness the efforts of youthful genius and pour out our own libation upon the altar of eternal mind. As the great business of all teachers is to teach immortal mind to think and how to think, what better theme can engross us at this hour than the Grandeur of Thought..."

Lewis liked the direction Crane's speech was taking. True it was that "grandeur of thought" would be a necessity not only for his plans for the college but for the development of education throughout the state. The future demanded that people would have to broaden their

horizons. They would have to think big. They would have to construct grand plans, and then follow up in earnest with the contingent funds such plans entailed. Indeed, that had been one of the chief problems in realizing the potential of the college, as Lewis saw it, in light of these Waxahachie locals and their tendency toward liberal plans wedded to fiscal conservancy. Thankfully some forward-thinking town solons had seen fit to tap the Houston and Texas Central Railway a few years earlier, but only after the town had previously refused offering the railroad a bonus when it was originally being constructed. The competing town of Ennis, essentially nothing more than a railroad construction, now rivaled Waxahachie for economic dominance within the county. Only a few years before, Professor Crane would have been obliged to take a hack from Ennis in order to reach Waxahachie, a fact Lewis believed contributed greatly to the college's earlier travails. How frequently had Lewis had discussions with the board of directors that if the town kept the purse strings drawn too tightly, the anticipated economic benefits of a first-class college would never materialize. In order to recruit and retain the faculty necessary for offering a collegiate curriculum, in order to create a first-class institution in facilities, and in order to ensure the comfort of the faculty and students, no expenses could be spared.

"And now Trustees," said Crane, turning his attention to those academics sharing the stage with him, "I beg you to give your noble young college room to expand. Let it have every accessory of thought, instruction, mental and moral work. Be liberal in supplying its every want. Be alive to its best interests."

Indeed, Lewis thought he couldn't have said it better.

Crane worked toward his conclusion: "Fellow-Citizens, one and all—to you a word. I come the representative of an old and honored seat of learning, founded near the cradle of the Republic of Texas. I come from the home of Houston and the grave of his heroic and devoted companion. I come from the county which was first organized on the soil of Texas by Anglo-Saxon population. I come from a town which bears the name—Independence—of the deed which severed Texas from Mexican tyranny. I come to greet you and cheer you, with my humble words of cordial esteem, in the great work of education. On the existing chartered colleges rests a grave responsibility. Officered by men who have borne the heat and burden of the day in giving form and fashion to thought, inducing a generous people to educate their children at home, create a home literature and reward home ability and scholarship with the patronage of liberal purses and genial smiles. We are leagued in a mighty work for God and humanity. Our work will not end until the

words, home and religion, shall in their claims be banished from the heart, and in their etymology be left out of the dictionaries. Our destiny is not uncertain. One hundred years from now our descendents will behold these colleges of the voluntary principle richly endowed with teachers for every important branch of learning, with graduates scattered all over this fair land, glorying in the *Alma mater* and as proud of that *Alma mater* as are the graduates of Paris or Salamanca, Oxford or Cambridge, Harvard or Yale, Cornell or Vanderbilt Universities. Let patience do her perfect work."

Lewis leaned over and whispered to Reverend Brown, the Chairman of the Board of Directors, "I think we've killed several birds with one stone this afternoon."

Brown smiled in response, but refrained from voicing his opinion that increased enrollment meant little if the patrons failed to settle their accounts at the end of the term. Patience, indeed, may be a virtue, but it couldn't pay the coal bill.

Gesturing dramatically toward the college's observatory, a narrow tower-like structure on the southwest corner of the campus which housed the school's single-most prized scientific apparatus in the form of a reflecting telescope (acquired at no small expense), Crane concluded

with a crescendo of oratorical flourish: "Thus the thinker, who is solving the problems of free genius, looks aloft for the spire of the great temple of liberty. And, as he gazes, he places his foot upon the first round of the ladder before him, climbing on and up, until

'He has ascended fame's ladder so high

From the round at the top, he has stepped to sky.'"<sup>56</sup>

### **Decline and Transition**

Despite, or perhaps due to, the "grandeur of thought" which its managers may have entertained, Marvin College was tottering on the brink of financial failure. From the standpoint of its owners, expenses were excessive; likewise, from the standpoint of the patrons. Talk began about town that General Lewis, who had been transferred to the Waco district of the Methodist conference, would soon be leaving. Other talk centered upon bringing a tax-supported public school endeavor to the town, as the neighboring town of Ennis had done. According to the *Waxahachie Enterprise*, the board of trustees of Marvin College felt inclined to allay the fears of their prospective patrons:

To the Citizens of Waxahachie: It seems necessary that some announcement should be made in order to correct wrong opinions and more fully explain the terms and policy of Marvin College to our people. As to the free school money, the college gets as much per head as any other

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<sup>56</sup> William Carey Crane, *Grandeur of thought; an address delivered on Commencement Day of Marvin College, Waxahachie, Texas, June 13th, 1883, before the faculty, students, and a large audience.* (Waxahachie, TX: McMillan's Job Office Print, 1883).

school, and this money is used as the law prescribes. Two dollars per month is allowed by law for those in free school studies only, and no more will be charged such scholars. As to the general rates, there has been no change; they are published in the catalogue same as last year. Board is \$12.50 per month.

As to the Faculty: Many have asked if the relation of General Lewis would be affected by his being on the Waco district. We are glad to state that the General is a part of Marvin College, and so fully identified and enlisted that he would not, for a moment, allow anything to conflict with his presidency of this institution. His present appointment is a temporary one. The places vacated by the Professors Banks will suffer no loss but will be filled with competent professors.

In General: We desire to urge our claims upon you for your support. The outlay has been large, the expense heavy, the investments are permanent, the advantage to the town great. Surely we have more claims than if we had made no improvements, and had cheap teachers and were simply transient; and no liberal minded person who will think for a moment and is at all acquainted with our efforts will hold against us that last winter a few times the rooms were not as comfortable as they might have been, or the sidewalk was muddy, and such like difficulties. We had a hard struggle last winter; it was impossible to get wood, we burnt about 30 tons of coal, but were not fitted up for coal. Then we could not hire a suitable man who would attend to the duties of janitor. Besides we were very much oppressed in our finances a great many failed to pay us, etc., etc. We expect different things for the future. We have a good employed for 12 months as janitor, and another to assist in such work. We have secured a good lot of wood, and have hauled a great deal of gravel, etc.; so that we can safely promise our town patrons comfort for their children. Specially will the little ones be looked after. You expect to educate your children, then why not put them in the school?

Let us prepare them for college, and then graduate them,  
and thereby help to build up an institution to bless the  
country and be an honor to your children.

If the pleading tone seemed an ill harbinger of things to come, the final paragraph sealed  
the bargain:

Finances: Now friends let us speak plainly; we have  
suffered greatly at this point; we are now suffering. The  
managers have failed to realize any salary at all for their  
services; not even a cent of interest on their investment. So  
they have been forced to change their policy, and ask  
everyone to make settlement for five months on entering.  
Not absolutely in cash, but make settlement as for any other  
transaction. This we hate to do, but it is either this or  
failure. There are many who pay us promptly; they will  
cheerfully settle at any time for the good of the college. We  
hope our friends will understand that this applies to every  
person who sends or comes to Marvin College. Now don't  
misunderstand us; this is not to cut anybody off or to shut  
anyone out because they may not have the money, but that  
we may know exactly, what we are doing and feel safe with  
all who do attend the college so that we may give the very  
best attention. We are now before you. For the sake of the  
future of our college and increased prosperity of  
Waxahachie, give us your cheerful support. The college  
will open next Monday week of Sept 17<sup>th</sup>. –Board of  
Managers<sup>57</sup>

Marvin College muddled through the fall semester, but the following spring, in  
March, General Lewis abruptly resigned his presidency of the college, attributed to a  
disagreement with the board (his business partners) over disciplinary policy regarding

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<sup>57</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, September 7, 1883.

students.<sup>58</sup> Given the state of the school's financial affairs, he may have merely concluded that further effort was futile. Perhaps, his resignation had something to do with a changing sense of the course of school options available to the town's citizens. At this same time, published calls for the consideration of a public school system began appearing in the local press:

Editor Enterprise: Why is it that every city of any importance in Texas has its graded schools, except Waxahachie? Those cities having these school in operation, claim for this system of schools, economy in management, thoroughness in teaching, and great success in its entire administration. Besides, after its adoption, these cities never abandon the system, but instead are improving upon it continually. It would take up too much of your space to enumerate the various advantages that would accrue to our city by its adoption of the t school system. Its advantages are known and recognized by every intelligent observer. The time has come for us as a community to be in line with other progressive cities in the cause of education. I believe this fall we are to elect a mayor and aldermen for our city, at which time the issue should be made, and a vote taken upon levying a direct tax to put in operation and support a system of graded schools in the city of Waxahachie.—  
Mac.<sup>59</sup>

Judging from the tenor of the reporting over the course of the next several weeks, the editor of the *Enterprise* was in complete agreement with the sentiment of “Mac,” if not wholly from an educational standpoint, at least from an economic one. Within that time, an election was scheduled, and the weekly endorsements for a positive outcome began echoing from the pages of the *Enterprise* along these lines:

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<sup>58</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, March 7, 1884.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*



Waxahachie will find that a good public free school carried on ten months each year will add wonderfully to the growth, business and prosperity of the town, and thereby return to property owners far more than they pay out in school taxes, which can never exceed 50 cents on each \$100 worth of property. The happy results of the Ennis graded public school fully attest the truth of our declaration. We trust that every citizen will cast his vote on the day of election, April 8<sup>th</sup>, and that Waxahachie will place herself on record as one of the few if not the only town in Texas that votes almost unanimously for establishing and controlling a full and efficient system of public schools.<sup>60</sup>

The final commencement of Marvin College took place in June of 1884. With it ended the town's first major foray into private education on a large scale, beyond the private and community schools which dotted the town and county. Marvin College, in name and in substance, provided to the townsfolk of Waxahachie and the surrounding area a sense of pride in her educational endeavor, and of the achievement of the high school, and corollary primary school, experience. It served as a focal point of the town's sense of sophistication and advancement. One of its oft-repeated remembrances in the years which followed it was the evening during which students and community members of all stripes packed the chapel to audibly witness Thomas Edison's latest marvel—the phonograph, its scratchy needle translating the cylindrical grooves into audible speech: Mary-Had- a-Little-Lamb.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, March 21, 1884. The editor of the *Enterprise*, E.F. Yeager, had been a former faculty member of Marvin College. Whether he, or managing editor J.S. Hardy, penned the exhortations to support the public education endeavor is not known; certainly Yeager was aware of the editorial viewpoint of his paper and approved accordingly.

<sup>61</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, September 27, 1939.

The utopia suggested by Marvin College was indeed grand, and summed up in the Catalogue of 1882, which offered forth not merely a veritable banquet of curricular offerings—music, art, elocution, oratory, calisthenics and physical training, natural science, analytical and agricultural chemistry, technical education “of the hand as well as the head,” parliamentary law, Greek, Latin, German, French, and Spanish—but the promise of “new methods” which “emancipated Marvin’s students from the slavishness of books, and from the old, worn-out methods of question and answer.” That Marvin College, in its later manifestation, was non-denominational was proclaimed in no uncertain terms; equally affirmed was its “purpose to do all we can to induce good morals, a belief in God’s word, and the ennobling of the student’s nature by the reception of the truths of redemption.”<sup>62</sup>

Years later, in a letter to Mr. Winkler at the University of Texas, who was collecting and preserving rare documents including the Marvin College catalogs then in the possession of Miss Lizzie Reymuller, a former graduate of the college, Ms. Reymuller wrote:

I had your letter of January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1929 read at the meeting of our alumni association by the President. At our annual meeting last October during the Fair at Dallas. All were so interested in hearing it. If I go again next fall I will take Mr. McDonald’s report in addition. As we need all interesting data as our ranks are fast thinning out. We had the pleasure to have with us Prof. A.L. Banks who taught in 1882, whose name is in the catalogue. He afterwards became a

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<sup>62</sup> Catalogue, Marvin College, 1882.

great teacher in Bryan and Denton where he died a few weeks ago.

At our last meeting I was appointed Chairman to write a history of Marvin College.

The Central Ward Public school is located on the campus, where the old building once stood. If it would not have been for so many denominational prejudices it would no doubt have been a great institution yet. As it is all is left is its good name as a memory—I hope to hear from you & that I have not added too much burden on you to correct those old time errors.

Thankfully,

Miss Lizzie Reymuller,

206 E. Marvin Ave. <sup>63</sup>

### **Mrs. Nash's School**

Even during the heyday of Marvin College, with its primary, grammar, and academic departments, the school of choice for many local white parents, entirely private but for the “free” portion paid by state funds, was Mrs. Nash’s School. The sister of a prominent lawyer and judge, Anson Rainey, and widow of his law partner and former mayor of Waxahachie, N.J. Nash, Lucille Nash opened her school in the late 1870’s and ran it periodically, usually from her home, until the turn of the century. From time to time, Mrs. Nash was employed as a public school teacher, but often returned to her own school, run by herself and an assistant or two, and often resumed her school for the summer, when the public school was dismissed.

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<sup>63</sup> Letter from Lizzie Reymuller, *op. cit.*

In 1883, an *Enterprise* reporter visited the school of Mrs. Lu Nash, finding she had 33 pupils ranging from 5-14 years old. Most of them were little boys and girls in the primary department, but she also gave lessons “in the higher branches, and in music, French, Latin, etc.” Like other private school teachers, particularly her closest rival, Mrs. C.W. Gibson, she rewarded “the studious and well-behaved with cards of merit,” and made out “monthly reports showing the scholarship, punctuality, deportment, etc. of each pupil.” The children were much attached to Mrs. Nash, and reportedly advanced rapidly under her skillful tutelage. Her tuition charge reflected the going rates of the time, from \$2 -\$5 per month for a session of 10 months. That the reporter found the patrons of Mrs. Nash’s school to be highly pleased with the progress of their children was born out over the years with which Mrs. Nash’s school flourished when those around her foundered.

Mrs. Nash was widowed in 1881 with the loss of her husband, John—a notable local lawyer. Reports of the day frequently mention her own doings with that of her children, and her frequent visits and travels with her brother, Anson. Either by her husband John’s success, or her brother Anson’s generosity, Mrs. Lu Nash, although holding school as a teacher, occupied a stately residence on College Street and appeared by most accounts to be a woman of some means. She bore an undetermined familial relationship with E.F. Yeager, the editor of the *Enterprise*, which may account somewhat for her frequent mention in the local paper. Her sizable home afforded her the space with which to hold school, and reports of her frequent travels out of town indicate her level of means. One such trip was documented as follows:

Mrs. Lu Nash having spent about two weeks at the Louisville expedition and in viewing the objects of interest around the city, has gone in St. Louis where she will spend several days in visiting the best schools, to become acquainted with their methods of teaching, etc., and in buying globes, maps, charts and other things necessary to assist her pupils in the prosecution of their studies. She will be at home before September 10<sup>th</sup>, at which time she will open school again at her residence on College Street. Many new pupils have applied for admission into her school, and it will be considerably larger the ensuing season.<sup>64</sup>

Upon that trip, Mrs. Nash located and purchased a sizable number of student desks to add to her growing list of students. Her school eventually outgrew her home, and she was impelled to build an additional structure on her property to serve as her school.

Mrs. Lu Nash, by her prominence and longevity, clearly marked for the town the paragon of primary education. The grammatical element she brought to the local “grammar of schooling” was centered in the individual attention to the school patron, both pupil and parent. In the turmoil of transitioning to later forms of schooling, her influence in the grammar was perhaps the hardest with which to part.

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<sup>64</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, August 31, 1883.

## **A Note on African-American Schooling**

In the days before the official advent of the public school system in Waxahachie, little evidence has been found regarding the education of its African-American children. More than likely, the schooling available was connected with African-American churches, particularly the African Methodist Episcopal church and the Samaria Baptist church, as these two churches provided classroom space even after the creation of the local public school system. As will be shown, when the Waxahachie City Public School system came into existence in 1884 it created a municipal district with its own board of trustees, and provided for local tax support of both the white and African-American schools. When the local newspaper reported the Superintendent's monthly report of the "city public schools," statistical data for the African-American school, denoted as "colored," was usually, but not always, included. Decidedly less coverage was given to special events, such as school programs, the type of which received plentiful coverage within the white schools. One must assume that the segregation among whites and blacks also held for culminating "levees," "entertainments," and various other celebrations held at periodic intervals marking special occasions. That an article may have noted that "everyone was invited" or referred otherwise to the "school children" one must assume that the students to whom the article referred to were white.

## Chapter Three: Creation of the Waxahachie Public Schools: The Formative Years, 1884-1898

On Tuesday, April 8, 1884, Waxahachie voters went to the polls and, fulfilling the prediction of the *Enterprise* editor, voted overwhelmingly for the town to assume control of its public schools. Those in favor numbered 191, with 18 voting against, representing about one-fifth of the town's population, and an even greater proportion of its eligible voters. Clearly, the majority of townsfolk favored a public school system. Citizens also favored electing trustees in place of having the schools run by the board of aldermen, and so a follow-up election was called to elect the six trustees. The town had yet to set the school tax rate, necessitating yet another election, but citizens were apprised of the ability of the town council to levy up to fifty cents on the dollar for school purposes, and so were exhorted to select good trustees.<sup>65</sup>

The school board election was held on April 29<sup>th</sup>, with the following citizens elected: W.H. Getzendaner, W.A. McMillan, R.M. Wyatt, H.W. Graber, A.M. Dechman, and C. A. Arnold.<sup>66</sup> The trustees began their work immediately, with every intention of having the new school district up and running by the fall term. To start, two trustees—Graber and Arnold—formed a fact-finding committee along with a trusted community member, Judge O.E. Dunlap, an ardent local supporter of popular education. The three men reported their findings to the readers of the *Enterprise* the following week. Their

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<sup>65</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, April 11, 1884.

<sup>66</sup> Minutes, Waxahachie City Council, May 6, 1884.

report entitled “Public School Facts and Figures” focused on the number of scholastic age children, white and black, currently attending private schools and the state portion of money available to them. It then calculated the additional revenue available to them with passage of the local school tax. Directly following was an anonymously penned article entitled “Our Public Schools” which further exhorted townsfolk to support the upcoming tax election:

It will be candidly admitted by our thoughtful and enterprising citizens that the educational advantages of Waxahachie have been of vast benefit to the town in the past, and that our continued prosperity depends, in no small measure, upon what those advantages shall be in the future... The action we have taken will manifestly be detrimental to, if not destructive of, the private educational enterprises in our town; and are we to deprive ourselves of these advantages, without securing something better? It is useless to expect that an efficient system of public free schools can be maintained from the funds we are to receive from the state and county. We will receive from the state and county not exceeding \$4000, which is manifestly insufficient to run the schools for eight months. This is the least time for which they should be run. In fact they should be run for ten months if that be possible. Good teachers will not be willing to contract for less time than this, or if they do, they would necessarily have to charge more per month for the short period than they would for a longer, thus making the cost to the people proportionally greater for a short than for a long term...<sup>67</sup>

The following month, on Friday, June 27, voters approved the school tax by a two-thirds majority, due perhaps in part to the continuing effort of Yeager and the *Enterprise* to frame the matter in the form of economics. “Have our citizens thought of

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<sup>67</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, June 6, 1884.



the cost of sending their children off to other more favored towns and cities to obtain school advantages denied them at home?" he inquired, perhaps in a veiled reference to the town's chief county rival, Ennis. While admitting that an additional tax might be burdensome, Yeager asked, "will it not pay back a good profit? Considerable expense is incurred in opening a farm, building a store house, a railroad or even a comfortable dwelling, but such expense is considered necessary and is undertaken with a view to personal interest, and the returns are expected in time."<sup>68</sup>

At the town council meeting on July 1, aldermen "declared that such a tax, not to exceed one half of one per cent, shall be levied on all the taxable property within the corporate limits of said Town of Waxahachie." At the August meeting, council members officially levied the tax, and instructed the assessor to officially record the tax on the rolls for the year 1884.<sup>69</sup> After three elections in monthly succession, the city public school system in Waxahachie was born. From its inception, it was a dual school system, with separate facilities envisioned for blacks and whites.

Trustees had to have been elated at the passage of the tax, as certainly their plans for the public schools were of a grand scale. They had every intention of carrying on the "regular college classes" of the previous institution of Marvin College.

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<sup>68</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, June 27, 1884.

<sup>69</sup> Minutes, Waxahachie City Council, August 5, 1884.

Lest the town's citizens fail to fully understand the nature of the tax and for whom it was to benefit, Mr. Dechman, the school trustee secretary, had published in the *Enterprise* an explanation that, while free tuition would be made available to all town residents, those children of school age from without the town limits could attend school on a tuition basis to consist of the following rates: primary school, \$1 per month; intermediate school, \$2 per month; grammar school, \$3 per month; collegiate school, \$4 per month. He reminded readers that all tuitions were to be paid "strictly in advance" but that all transferees would also be entitled to the state per capita apportionment available to all school children.<sup>70</sup>

The task before the board of trustees was then twofold: acquire the school buildings for the town's white and African-American scholastic populations, and hire the faculty to fill them. The second point proved easier than the first. The school trustees set about staffing the "new" school with every intention of retaining the "regular college classes" offered by Marvin College, in addition to the primary, intermediate, and academic departments. By the middle of July, trustees had hired the district's first superintendent, Clarence N. Ousley, at a salary of twelve hundred dollars per year. His teaching staff was reported as follows: Rev. T.B. Criddle, salary \$75 per month; Prof. Joseph Callaway, of Alabama, \$75; Mrs. M.W. Gibson, \$50; Mrs. Lu Nash, \$50; Mrs. Fannie B Clapham, \$50; Miss Rosa McMillan, \$45; Miss Ma[t]tie Young, \$45. The school for African-American children was staffed by A.J. Criner for principal, at \$50; and

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<sup>70</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, September 12, 1884.

D.M. Morrow, his assistant, at \$40.<sup>71</sup> By August 1, trustees had filled out the “collegiate” department with the addition of Professor J.T. Yonley and Professor Baker M. Smith; Mrs. S.E. Buchanan as teacher of French and art; and W.A. Gray, as professor of music, indicating an early predisposition to offer music as part of the public school curriculum. These additional teachers reflected the commitment of the trustees to continue the collegiate curriculum of the former Marvin College as it began its new life as the city public school.<sup>72</sup> Thus was born the first faculty of Waxahachie’s public schools, segregated by race, with some new and some familiar names to local denizens.

Clarence Ousley had been a faculty member of Marvin College during its final years. He earned an A.B. degree from the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Alabama in Auburn in 1881. His short stint at Marvin had him teaching “natural science” shortly before the college’s demise. Born in December of 1863, his assumption as city school superintendent was achieved at the early age of twenty, an indication, perhaps, of his mental prowess. Ousley helmed the district only for its inaugural year, before moving on to an illustrious career incorporating many of his renaissance-man talents and skills. He dealt in farm and ranch equipment locally, before marrying Miss Mattie Young and moving away to become editor of the *Dallas Weekly News* in 1889. He subsequently became managing editor of the *Galveston News* and then owner and editor of the *Galveston Tribune* where he witnessed and documented the devastating Galveston

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<sup>71</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, July 18, 1884.

<sup>72</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, August 1, 1884.

hurricane of 1900.<sup>73</sup>

Rev. T.B. Criddle, himself possessing an A.B. degree, had also been associated with Marvin College, heading its academic department during its last years.

Mrs. Lu Nash had only recently closed the spring term of her private “subscription” school—a private school “subscribed” by patrons who paid full tuition. As head of her school, she employed one assistant, and oversaw, in the most recent term, sixty students. By the close of her school, she had not announced her plans for the next

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<sup>73</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. " ", <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/OO/fou2.html> (accessed December 2, 2009). Ousley became managing editor of the *Houston Post* in 1901. In 1903, with several associates, he purchased the Fort Worth *Gazette* and renamed it the Fort Worth *Record*. He was editor until 1913. From 1917 to 1919 he served as United States assistant secretary of agriculture. In 1919 Ousley returned to Fort Worth and soon became associated with Globe Laboratories, which he served as chairman of the board from September 21, 1921, until his death. In the 1920s he was also a director of the Texas Safe Farming Association. In 1929 Ousley was manager of the East Texas Chamber of Commerce. He also remained an active commentator on local, national, and international affairs, in columns contributed to the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*.

Ousley was long involved in Democratic party politics. In 1904 he served as a delegate-at-large to the Democratic national convention. He made a brief run for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination in 1914, offering himself as an opponent of prohibition. In 1922 Ousley ran for the Democratic nomination for the United States Senate and placed fifth out of seven. As a supporter of both agricultural science and public education, Ousley played a leading role in establishing two state-supported institutions of higher learning: Grubbs Vocational College (now the University of Texas at Arlington), which opened in 1917 as a branch of A&M, and the Girls' Industrial College (now Texas Woman's University), which opened in 1903. Ousley was a member of the latter school's board of regents from 1904 to 1910 and served as first chairman of the board. In 1910 Governor O. B. Colquitt appointed Ousley a regent at the University of Texas, a position he led until 1914, part of the time as chairman. Beginning in 1907 he was also chairman of the Conference for Education in Texas, which campaigned for several years to improve rural schools in the state.

Ousley pursued other writing interests in addition to journalism. With Ben C. Mason he published "*Fra Paola*": *A Play in Four Acts* in 1896. Ousley's *Rings O' Smoke*, a collection of poetry, came out in 1902. He also published *History of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas* (1935) and several textbooks: *The Student's History of Our Country, for Grammar Grades* (1912), coauthored with Robert Green Hall and Harriet W. Smither and rereleased as *A History of the United States, for Grammar Grades* (1920); and *Background of American Government* (1924).

term. There may have been suspicion that she would join the public school faculty as an *Enterprise* article on the close of her school ended thusly: “Many have urged her to continue, preferring her private teaching to public school.”<sup>74</sup>

Like Mrs. Nash, Mrs. M.W.Gibson served as a city public school teacher for several years before resuming her own private school enterprise. She rivaled Mrs. Nash as one of the pre-eminent local teachers of primary-school aged children.

Miss Rosa McMillan was the nineteen year old daughter of board trustee W.H. McMillan, illustrating an early practice of nepotism in the hiring of faculty, or perhaps merely a scarcity of teachers, as her assignment was teacher of German and Spanish. That her skills as a speaker of German or Spanish were called into service indicates one strand of curricular interest among the local community.

Professor Joseph Callaway, of Alabama, reportedly declined the position, but served the district during the next year as superintendent. Later newspaper reports referred to his study of law with a local attorney.

A.J. Criner served only the first year as principal of the African-American school. Within the first few months, his assistant changed from D.M. Morrow to W.J. Trulove. Little other was reported of Criner, but Trulove became an early influence within the school and as a local activist in the Republican Party.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, June 13, 1884.

<sup>75</sup> See *Dallas Morning News*, September 16, 1888.

As for the location of school buildings, work got underway not long thereafter. Meeting on August 11, trustees drafted a resolution to present to the town council outlining their actions.

Resolved: That the Finance committee be instructed to inform the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the town of Waxahachie, that the Board of School Trustees for said town have purchased the Marvin college property in Waxahachie for the use of the public schools of said town, that the purchase was consummated about August 1, 1884 for the sum of fifteen thousand dollars and payment to be made by said town assuming the mortgage debt on said property of six thousand dollars and interest thereon from Aug. 1 / 84 and for the remainder the town to issue nine thousand dollars in its ten per cent interest bearing bonds payable in ten years and redeemable after 12 months from date at the option of said town. That the Mayor and Board of Aldermen be requested to issue Bonds to comply with terms of said purchase.<sup>76</sup>

That the purchase had already been “consummated” certainly implied a finality. The purchase made, in essence, a *fait accompli* presented to the town council. School trustees clearly felt the jurisdiction of their position granted them such leeway and that their notification to the town council merely necessitated the request for payment. Board members acquiesced with little deliberation noted in the council minutes, and ordered the bonds prepared, as the news had been reported in the local paper on the very day of the transaction.

On August 1, 1884, preceding the council meeting by several days, the *Enterprise* proudly proclaimed under a headline of “The Public School” that the ten-acre Marvin

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<sup>76</sup> Minutes, Waxahachie City Council, August 14, 1884.

College grounds and the buildings upon it had been purchased for the use of the public school. “Thus a question upon which our citizens have been somewhat divided has been settled in the interest of the city we believe, and there is nothing in the way now to prevent us having one of the best schools in the state.” Announcing the purchase price of \$15,000, the article explained the \$6,000 mortgage on the property “will be paid by the board as soon as the funds can be obtained, and on the balance, bonds bearing ten per cent interest per annum, maturing in ten years will be issued.” The article implied the continuance of the glory days of Marvin College, if now different in name. “Not only a graded school complete in all its appointments, but regular college classes will be organized and the institution will go on in the future as it has done in the past, and will still be the glory and ornament of Waxahachie and Ellis county.”<sup>77</sup>

A “spacious” two-story wooden schoolhouse was reportedly erected for use by African-American students,<sup>78</sup> although council minutes make no comment on the subject. Photographic evidence of Marvin College depicts a two-story house on the grounds of Marvin College of similar description. Maps of the Marvin College grounds from the period of the inception of the public school do not correlate with earlier photographic evidence—the building is missing. That this structure was moved to serve as the African-American school is entirely possible, as buildings would be moved from

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<sup>77</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, August 1, 1884.

<sup>78</sup> *Galveston Daily News*, December 30, 1884.

the lot periodically to serve the school needs about various geographic locations in the district.

Two months later, school trustees amended their first request, asking for additional bonds “to represent the amount of thirteen (\$13,000) instead of the amount of nine thousand dollars (\$9,000) and that they will cause to have issued so many thereof as may be considered necessary by the said board of trustees so as to meet any deficiency that may occur...” After brief consideration, city aldermen voted to grant the request. They then resumed the town’s other pressing business of addressing a pump request for the fire station and a review of those persons reportedly in violation of the town’s new stray cattle ordinance.<sup>79</sup>

Throughout the months during which the city council moved through the process of registering bonds with the state comptroller, the school buildings and grounds which once were Marvin College began serving as the city public school. Whether penned by Yeager, school board members or other interested parties, the *Enterprise* missed few opportunities to trumpet the success of the school. Within the first month of the school’s operation, its value was already being adjudged as worthy:

There is no enterprise of which the people of Waxahachie have more reason to be proud than their graded public school which has opened with flattering prospects, and is progressing favorably under the superintendency of Prof. Ousley, with an able corps of teachers. Its success is no longer problematical, but is an assured fact, as anyone can

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<sup>79</sup> Minutes, Waxahachie City Council, October 7, 1884.



learn by visiting the school and witnessing its management. Three hundred and fifty-seven pupils have been enrolled already and about 100 more are expected to enter in a short time. The work of instruction is carried on by ten teachers of experience and ability, all of whom are known to our people, and had a large share of their confidence and regard before the school was established...<sup>80</sup>

Unmentioned were the approximately 150 African-American children for whom schooling was also provided under the new city public school venture. Apart from an occasional mention in periodic school reports showing enrollment numbers, they continued to be overlooked in the local press, throughout the larger portion of the school district's early history. What is certain was the high quality of the early African-American leadership, as evidenced by two early principals, W.J. Trulove and J.W. Tildon. Trulove demonstrated adroitness not merely as a teacher, but as a stalwart of local Republican party politics, holding office in local county organization of the party. Tildon rose to assume the presidency of the Colored Teachers State Association in 1897, and after leaving Waxahachie in 1905, became a medical doctor with a practice in Fort Worth.

### **The Bond Question**

All seemed to be in order until the January meeting of the city council, wherein the mayor presented to the board members two letters from the state comptroller

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<sup>80</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, October 3, 1884.

regarding the bonds that had recently been issued by the town and sent to the comptroller for registration. Board minutes do not reflect the contents of the letters, but something was clearly amiss, for after the reading of the letters, “the Mayor was directed to have said bonds returned to him and to hold the same subject to the further action of the Board.” Evidently, the comptroller questioned the bond registration as submitted by the council. Undoubtedly, there arose a legal ambiguity for which there was no clear course of action. The council then took up a discussion of the matter of issuing bonds for school purposes and voted to employ the local law firm of Rainey and Groce to offer an opinion “on the issuance of bonds, the levy and assessment of school tax.”<sup>81</sup>

By February, fault lines between the sellers of the Marvin College property and the city council began to appear. Charles Brown petitioned the council for an extension of time for payment of taxes, ostensibly those owed on the Marvin College property. The council refused any extension, and once again read the letter from the comptroller, the contents of which evidently created the sticking point upon the issuance of bonds.

Other rumblings appeared about town. Local citizens who had vigorously supported the school tax in 1884 began experiencing its collection from them in January of 1885, with several petitioning for review from the city council. The local tax rate totaled \$1.40 on the \$100 property valuation. This sum consisted of \$.25 ad valorem [city

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<sup>81</sup> Minutes, Waxahachie City Council, January 6, 1885. Later reports in the *Waxahachie Daily Light* indicated that the comptroller declared that the bonds “were not issued in accordance with law.”

tax], \$.65 railroad tax<sup>82</sup>, and \$.50 “special school tax,” required “so as to run the free schools ten months, the state apportionment being sufficient only for three.”<sup>83</sup> City Marshall Fleming had been at work all the month of January in collecting the city tax. He had only recently replaced the former tax collector, E. L. Partain, who had resigned abruptly just before the newly passed school tax was to be collected.

Parents of white children enrolled in the city public school began to experience the differences entailed by a graded school as opposed to the single-teacher schools with which they were accustomed, as accounts of their complaints began to surface. No reports of black parental displeasure were found. Many of the complainants were unhappy with the grade to which their children had been assigned and had called upon the superintendent to change their student’s identified grade level. Ousley insisted that he was unable to do so without “causing confusion.” He exhorted the parents and other interested parties to visit the school in order to “witness its working for themselves” and announced plans for an open house to be held “for their benefit in the course of the present month.”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Waxahachie Tap Railroad" <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/WW/eqw7.html> (accessed December 10, 2009). The citizens of Waxahachie decided to build a railroad to connect with the Houston and Texas Central and chartered the Waxahachie Tap Railroad Company on January 25, 1875. The City of Waxahachie contributed \$13,600 in bonds, and thirteen miles of track from Waxahachie to Garrett, three miles north of Ennis, were completed by September 1879.

<sup>83</sup> *Dallas Weekly Herald*, January 22, 1885.

<sup>84</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, October 3, 1884.

In keeping with the precedent set by Marvin College, Prof. Ousley arranged and hosted an “entertainment” designed to showcase the talents of the students and the progress of the school’s first term. The college department demonstrated its elocutionary exercise at the college “chapel” on a Friday evening. Consisting of speeches, recitations, etc., the performances culminated in Professor Ousley’s own rendition of “a humorous composition on *The Elephant*.” The audience was reportedly highly entertained due to Ousley’s comical performance.

The following evening, the grammar school, which included the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades, held its own public exercise of a similar character.

By the end of the first term, the school had enrolled 458 pupils with an average daily attendance of about 400, but whether this figure represents both white and African-American students is undetermined. There were ten teachers in the literary department, including the superintendent. As far as was told in the press, everything was moving on “harmoniously and successfully.”<sup>85</sup>

Upon the issue of the bond registration, the council seemed to be dragging their feet. Already a full term into the school year, the owners of the former Marvin College had yet to receive payment. Once again, school trustees petitioned the board of aldermen for the issuance of \$13,000 in bonds, this time with an amended redemption schedule:

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<sup>85</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, December 19, 1884.

For the purpose of paying for property purchased by this Board for the use of the public schools of the City of Waxahachie—notice of which has heretofore been given to your Hon. Body—we would respectfully ask that you issue for said purpose bonds of the City of Waxahachie to the amount of Thirteen thousand dollars \$13,000 payable on 20 years from date with interest on 10% per annum reserving to the said city the rights to redeem and pay off said bonds after 5 years from Aug. 1, 1884. The above to be in lieu of the request for bonds heretofore made.<sup>86</sup>

Seemingly, the matter of bond term maturity lay at the matter of issuance, and such an amendment in the request was perceived by the school trustees as the remedy. But other divisions among the members of the city council began to become evident. At the February meeting, the city aldermen concluded the school business with the constitution of a committee to consist of two school trustees and two town aldermen “for the purpose of preparing a form of bond to be issued by the town in regard to the school buildings—said bond to be submitted to the state comptroller.” G.L. Adkisson and H.H. Dunn were to serve as town aldermen on the committee.<sup>87</sup>

Other evidence appeared that townfolk were less than pleased at the unfolding of the new school if only by virtue of the tone of reportage in the local paper. On February, 27, 1885, well into the second term of the school’s first year, the *Enterprise* editorialized:

A good school is of priceless value in any town or city, and Waxahachie can justly boast of having one of the best public schools in the state. Having gone into operation only

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<sup>86</sup> Minutes, Waxahachie City Council, Feb. 3, 1885.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

last fall, the grading of the scholars may not have satisfied all parties, for then it was a very difficult thing to do, but after once in successful operation the difficulty diminishes and the management will become more effective. If the citizens of Waxahachie will consult their own interests and those of the city and county they will unite their energies to make this school what it ought to be and can be. Whatever prejudice may exist against it on account of the tax levied or other causes, should be laid aside and a united effort be made to build it up and make it strong and permanent. The trustees have done the best they could do and the faculty of teachers seem to be working earnestly and faithfully for the people.

If the matter of taxation and the payment for the school had become a source of vexation among local citizens, it perhaps was not helpful to remind readers in the same article of the “improvements that have been made on both the grounds and buildings since they came into the hands of the present board of trustees.” Characterizing the school as new and elegant, and relating these improvements—a plank fence, a fresh coat of plaster—to the school’s “very prosperous condition” may have done more to further disgruntlement among those feeling the tax bite than assuage it. Later evidence would indicate historic prejudices against Marvin College were contributing to the town talk against the public school.

Superintendent Ousley seemed to be getting his fill of disgruntlement leveled in his direction, and in his monthly school report of facts and figures unleashed his own pent up invective, duly printed by Yeager in the *Enterprise*:

In this connection I will take the liberty of saying that during nearly six months we have not had exceeding twelve visitors, and yet the persons who can relate by the hour the

doings and sayings of teachers, the shortcomings of the Superintendent, and the inefficiency of the public school system are numbered by the hundreds. We have borne all patiently and resignedly, feeling that the future will demonstrate the propriety and expediency of our plans as well as the success of our methods. No man has a right to judge in a cause in which he is uninformed, and no man, and no woman either, can stand on the public square and see through the college walls down into the hearts and minds of teachers. We cordially and earnestly invite the public at large to lay aside what prejudices may possess them and come to see us. If, after a careful examination of the details and general policy and management of the schools, you see fit to condemn, we submit without a struggle. I take the liberty to state further that our progress has been highly satisfactory. Within the walls of the school room, harmony and earnestness reign. Important factors in developing these results are the kindness and cooperation of friends and parents, as well as the hearty and liberal support of the board of trustees, who have been untiring in their efforts. To them be accorded great praise. Very Truly,  
C.N. Ousley, Supt.<sup>88</sup>

By March, the special school committee had proposed an ordinance “providing for the issuance of bonds by the town of Waxahachie for the purpose of raising money to pay for Public Free School Buildings,” but the board took no action upon it, deferring until the next meeting any consideration. The question at issue continued to foment discord, and the consternation within the town was growing.

Superintendent Ousley, having vented his spleen, did his best to demonstrate the positive effect of the public school enterprise, hosting yet another “levee” at which

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<sup>88</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, February 27, 1885.

students showcased their curricular endeavors. Inviting “the public and friends of the institution” to the school on a Friday evening to witness the “recitations, declamations, music, and other exercises” of the students, Ousley felt “confident that all who attend will be pleased and profited.”<sup>89</sup>

At the April city council meeting, alderman Adkisson moved that the council surrender Waxahachie’s current town charter, and instead adopt Title XVII of the Revised Statutes of Texas as the town’s legal grounds for corporation as a city. The town’s original charter was granted by an act of the state legislature in 1871, the population then being fewer than 1000 inhabitants. It was proposed that organizing a city government under the new and expanded provisions of the Revised Statutes would allow for the issuance of bonds for the acquisition of school houses, perhaps addressing the point at issue in the letter from the comptroller. Alderman J.D. Templeton questioned such action, holding that the ordinance proposed at the previous council meeting was sufficient to achieve the same end, ostensibly to allow for the issuance of the bonds. After retaining the county judge, J.W. Ferris, to issue an opinion on the matter, and finding in his opinion approval for same, the council elected, at their next meeting, to adopt as their legal charter Title XVII of the Revised Statutes, with Alderman Dunn in sole opposition.<sup>90</sup> Certainly the *city* of Waxahachie could fulfill the debt obligations of bond

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<sup>89</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, March 6, 1885.

<sup>90</sup> Minutes, Waxahachie City Council, May 6, 1885.

See also: Memorial and Biographical History of Ellis County, Texas, *op. cit.*



issuance, whereas the *town* of Waxahachie was hindered in so doing, or so the thinking seemed to be.

By the near end of the first school year of public schooling in Waxahachie, not only the matter of the payment for the Marvin College property was proving vexatious. Maintenance and operations costs were testing the nascent budgetary legerdemain of school trustees. The *Enterprise* had reported in August of the previous year that trustees had ordered a series of repairs upon the Marvin College grounds and buildings and the hiring of a janitor “to take charge and watch over the property.” Money had been spent in the procurement of eight teacher desks, one hundred student desks, and “charts, maps, globes” and other teaching “apparatus”.<sup>91</sup> Evidence that new monies were becoming available appeared in the form of administrative requests, with one of them coming from the principal of the African-American school. “The petition of A.J. Criner and others with reference to improvement of street leading to Colored Free school building, was read and considered whereupon the board decided to meet and examine said street as well as Kaufman street on Saturday next at 11 o’clock a.m.”<sup>92</sup> Upon totaling the costs of such improvements, along with meeting the payroll established at the beginning of the school year, expenses appeared to be outpacing revenues, such that “at a meeting held on the 25<sup>th</sup> May 1885 by the...Board of Trustees the subject of the length of the school term being under consideration the decision of the Board was that in view of providing for a

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<sup>91</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, September 19, 1884.

<sup>92</sup> Minutes, Waxahachie City Council, February 3, 1885.

deficiency arising for improvements made on public schools that the school term be fixed at six or seven months...” The much vaunted and heralded ambition of a ten-month school calendar was proving elusive within the closing months of the first year of the district’s life. Moreover, the board continued to wrestle with the manner of payment for the school buildings, now in use for the larger part of the inaugural school year, declaring that “the amount of bonds to be issued by the city would be for the purchase only of the Marvin College property, not to exceed the sum of Fifteen thousand dollars in optional bonds, the two thousand dollars in bonds formerly asked for would not be required.” The board members elected for a formal resolution to this effect at the next meeting.<sup>93</sup>

Opposition to the issuance of the bonds had by this time manifested itself in the form of citizen petitions and spokesmen for each side exchanging their viewpoints. Capt A.A. Kemble, a respected community leader, addressed the council representing those who opposed the issuing of bonds on at least two occasions in July, with G. C. Groce presenting the arguments in favor of issuing the school bonds at one meeting and alderman Adkisson representing the favorability of issuance at another.<sup>94</sup>

Citizens were in an uproar. In many minds, the bond issue became entangled with the school tax issue. As Mr. Getzendaner was a local banker, he perceptibly stood to gain from the bond issue and the prospect of financing bonds with what was taken by many to be an excessive tax was more than many townsfolk could stand. Swirling amidst this

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<sup>93</sup> Minutes, Waxahachie City Council, June 2, 1885.

<sup>94</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, June 5, 1885.

controversy was the dissatisfaction with some of the administration of a public school system whose operations seemed somehow less personal than what school “patrons” had previously been accustomed to. Also, inhabitants of outlying neighborhoods, particularly those in the moneyed “suburb” of West End, were expressing dissatisfaction with the location of the city public school to which their children had to travel. They preferred their own neighborhood school, to be housed in the former academy in the western portion of town.<sup>95</sup>

At the July meeting of the city council, aldermen finally dispensed with the vexing problem of how to issue the bonds for the fulfillment of the sales contract. With Alderman Adkisson concluding his argument that the contract for purchase of Marvin College was made in good faith by the board of trustees and that the council should vote to issue the bonds, the board voted, the minutes declaring the outcome: “The ordinance heretofore introduced entitled ‘An Ordinance providing for the issuance of bonds by the City of Waxahachie for the purpose of raising money to pay for Public Free School Buildings in said city and levying a tax to provide for the payment of interest on and redemption of said bonds’ was considered...and the question being upon the adoption of said Ordinance, the same was resolved in the negation.”<sup>96</sup> The vote was split two to three, indicating some support for continuing the search for a solution: Aldermen Adkisson and Wilson supported the issuance of the bonds and Aldermen H. H. Dunn, J.

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<sup>95</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, September 18, 1885.

<sup>96</sup> Minutes, Waxahachie City Council, July 15, 1885.

W. Manning, and J. D. Templeton voted in the negative. With no ordinance passed to issue the bonds, no bonds were to be issued. With no bonds to be issued, the former owners of the Marvin College property—Brown, Cox, and Walkup—were yet the current owners of the property, almost a year after the sales transaction had been conducted.

The remainder of the business conducted at the meeting shed some light on the factors potentially influencing the direction of the city aldermen in failing to follow through on the bond issuance. Aldermen lowered the tax rate for the railroad subsidy from \$.65 to \$.55 per \$100 valuation. Without changing the rate of the overall school tax, they then specified that \$.25 per \$100 valuation would be designated “for the purpose of maintaining the Public Free schools” and that \$.25 per \$100 valuation would be levied “for the purpose of purchase, erection and repairs of the Public Free school buildings of the town of Waxahachie.” Thus, by their actions, board aldermen seemed to indicate that while a cash sale for school buildings met with their approval, they could not agree to bonded indebtedness. Whether this course of action was of their own choosing, or that suggested or mandated by the state comptroller isn’t known. Clearly, their own legal counsel, Mr. Groce, had advised the issuance of the bonds. Nevertheless, without sufficient cash yet available in the school fund, the “previous” owners of the Marvin College property were yet left unpaid.

At this same meeting, and after conducting the business above, the mayor, E.A. Dubose, Alderman G.L. Adkisson, and city attorney G.L. Groce tendered their resignations, as an indication of their solidarity with the electorate. Council minutes

reflect there was no action taken at that time on these three resignations, but that the resignation of Alderman J.W. Manning was “read, considered, and not accepted.”<sup>97</sup>

When those proponents of the Marvin College purchase learned of the vote, many were livid. Several of the town aldermen had been elected as friends of the public school and those voters believed that the aldermen would represent their interest. News of the failure of the council to enact the ordinance for registering the bonds precipitated "intense excitement on the streets and...crowds of men were seen warmly discussing the vote and denouncing certain members of the city council." Some spoke "severe epithets" while some of the younger citizens called for a "burning in effigy". The division came to be seen as those in favor of public schooling versus those opposed. Within a short time, competing petitions began circulating, urging the entire city council to resign and to submit the question of issuing bonds to the people in a special election.<sup>98</sup>

When the school trustees learned of the decision of the town council to negate the ordinance specifying the issuance of bonds, they vowed to nevertheless meet the payments out of the school fund “as provided by law.”<sup>99</sup> Amidst the continuing clamor, and feeling betrayed by the actions of the board holdouts, three of the trustees resigned—W.H. Getzendaner, N.A. McMillan, and W.H. Graber. The instant loss of half the board of trustees left the body powerless to act. Capt. Getzendaner stood for re-election to

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, July 17, 1885.

<sup>99</sup> *Dallas Weekly Herald*, August 18, 1885.

demonstrate the public support for his position. He was joined on the ballot by two other like-minded “pros”—I.C. West and A.S. Farley.

At the *Enterprise*, Yeager went into full swing in defense of the threatened school interests. The July 17<sup>th</sup> issue contained a summary of the previous city council meeting, along with the “pro-school” petition circulating about town. The petition recapitulated the previous year’s landslide election in authorizing the city public schools. It reminded citizens that the “Board of Aldermen of said town led said Board of Trustees to believe that the act of purchase was approved and ratified, and said board of Aldermen did in fact endeavor to carry out said purchase by issuing bonds on the 10th day of November, 1884 by unanimous vote, for the purchase price of said property in accordance with the terms of the contract made by said Board of Trustees.” Further, the petition invoked the example of several neighboring cities and towns—“Ennis, Cleburne, Hillsboro, and numerous other cities”—as having paid for school buildings with bonds duly registered by the state comptroller:

And whereas at a meeting of the city council of Waxahachie held July 15, 1885, a majority of the board of aldermen in total disregard of the petition and expressed wishes of the Board of trustees, and against the will of a great majority of our property tax paying voters, did vote against and defeat a proposal ordinance providing for the issuance of bonds to pay the price of the school property (as contracted by the Board of Trustees) to the great detriment of our school interests as well as to the injury of our credit at home and abroad. Therefore, "Resolved, that we the undersigned citizens of Waxahachie, do hereby request said Board of Aldermen of the city of Waxahachie to tender their resignation as such immediately, and relegate the question of issuing bonds as

aforesaid, to the decision of the people at the ballot box.

The following week's issue of the *Enterprise* contained a lengthy letter of resignation of Capt. Getzendaner from the school board in which he reviewed the work of the trustees from their inception the previous year. Yeager also editorialized that the aldermen who refused to implement the wishes of the school trustees, as themselves representatives of the electorate, were thus thwarting the electorate, and that the question of the issuance of the bonds should be submitted to the people in a special election.<sup>100</sup>

By the next month, August, after three aborted attempts to meet—failing for lack of a quorum, but amidst much petition signing on either side—the city council met on the 11<sup>th</sup>, whereupon Mayor DuBose, Alderman Adkisson, and Alderman Manning withdrew their resignations. Groce's resignation as city attorney was accepted. Competing petitions—one in favor of the aldermen to resign and the other in favor of them to remain were read, considered, and consequently tabled. An election was called to fill the three seats vacated by the school trustee resignations. The question before the roiled electorate was characterized in the press as “shall we or shall we not take \$15,000 out of the school fund to pay for the buildings?”

Clearly, a primary point at issue in the argument was the fidelity of the elected officials to carry out the will of the voters, as evidenced in the three landslide elections authorizing the town to assume control of its public schools. It is doubtful that many citizens fully understood the nature of legal issues surrounding municipality bonded

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<sup>100</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, July 24, 1885.

indebtedness. Neither did Yeager and the *Enterprise* fully articulate the arguments of those opposed to proceeding with the bond issue, especially in light of the comptroller's refusal to register the bonds. Essentially, the legal question would have to be tested in court. What many pro-public-school voters seemed to focus upon was the simple language of the city charter which seemed to indicate both the ability of a town to assume a bonded indebtedness and to purchase school buildings. Within their petitions, they invoked neighboring communities—Ennis, Cleburne, Hillsboro—which had issued bonds for the purchase of school buildings and had such bonds registered.<sup>101</sup>

By early September, the election was held and the outcome bespoke not only the growing frustration of the electorate with the situation, but the overconfidence of the pro-public-school interests. The outcome spelled doom for the more vocal supporters of public schooling, and served as a harbinger for future developments, but not before opponents overcame a last-ditch effort on the part of the bond proponents. As proprietor of Enterprise Publishing, E.F. Yeager, a transparent supporter of the graded public schools (and Marvin College graduate) provided the printed ballots, which contained only the names of the candidates who were running in favor of dispensing the funds! Not appearing on the “tickets” were the names of the “antis”: J.H. Husbands, H. E. Pickett, and T. F. Thompson. Whether by accident or by design, practical joke or vain attempt to confound the electorate, the omission of the candidates' names failed to forestall the angry will of the voters. The final tally, ostensibly written in or chosen from ballots other

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<sup>101</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, July 17, 1885.



than those provided, showed a vigorous majority for the “antis” Husbands, Pickett, and Thompson —each opposed to bond issuance for the payment of the school buildings and grounds.<sup>102</sup>

These new trustees intended to negotiate with the college owners a new plan for the purchase of the Marvin College property, with the aim of paying cash from funds on hand.<sup>103</sup>

With the matter yet unsettled, and in the midst of the storm of controversy, the public schools opened for the second year on September 14<sup>th</sup> with a new superintendent, Joseph Callaway, of Montgomery, Alabama. Callaway had been associated with the schools of Mobile and Montgomery, Alabama, and had the previous school year been selected as a teacher in the public schools.

Superintendent Ousley, who quite clearly had had enough of the controversy swirling about the public school question, had resigned in August with the stated intention of pursuing business ventures in “farm, gin, and mill machinery.”<sup>104</sup> His father had recently joined him from Georgia, and purchased an interest in the company of H.W.Grabber, the former school board member.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> *Ft. Worth Daily Gazette*, Sept. 7, 1885.

<sup>103</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, Sept. 18, 1885.

<sup>104</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, August 28, 1885.

<sup>105</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, February 20, 1885.

Superintendent Callaway announced the examinations and classification schedule of students for the first week of September. All children ages 8-16 who were on the census list would have free tuition and for those not on the list, tuition was the same as the past year.<sup>106</sup>

By the first week of school he reported an enrollment of 325 pupils in the white school. In addition to Callaway, public school faculty for the year were announced as follows: J. T. Yonley, and T. B. Criddle; Mrs M.W. Gibson, Mrs. Lu Nash, Mrs. Fannie Clapham, Miss. Matie Young, and Miss Laura Whipple, as teacher of music.<sup>107</sup>

W. J. Trulove was named principal of the African-American school, replacing Professor Criner. He was joined by an assistant, Professor Williams, and then A. H. Reagor, who was not listed as a teacher when school began.<sup>108</sup> During Trulove's administration, the African-American school came to be known as Oak Lawn School, appropriating the name from a school which earlier newspaper reports described as a private school for white children which predated the public school system.<sup>109</sup>

With the beginning of school Miss Young enrolled 68 pupils in the first and second grades; Mrs. Nash, 71 pupils in grade three; Mrs. Gibson, 57 pupils in grade

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise, April 27, 1883.*

four; Mrs. Clapham, 57 pupils in grade five; Professor Criddle, 26 pupils in grade six and 30 pupils in grade seven.<sup>110</sup>

The high school enrolled 18 pupils in the first “grade” and twenty eight pupils in the second “grade” under Professors Callaway and Yonley. At Oak Lawn School, Professor Williams enrolled 65 pupils in the first and second grades and Professor Trulove enrolled 26 pupils in the intermediate grades and four in grammar school.<sup>111</sup>

After the school year started, a petition was presented to the trustees to divide the white school and to open another school in the old academy building in the west end of the town, which petition was referred to committee.<sup>112</sup> Here was an indication of some source of displeasure among certain school patrons, which would figure in to later developments.

By early October, 278 pupils were attending the white public school. Of the 31 pupils enrolled at Oak Lawn school only a few were attending, an early indication of the number of African-American school age children who were at work in the cotton fields when school started each fall. Trustees felt such a small number could easily be handled by one teacher until cotton picking closed.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, October 2, 1885.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

During the week before Christmas, the white school held an entertainment in the chapel consisting of songs, calisthenics, recitations, dialogues and other activities.<sup>114</sup> These entertainments typically signaled the close of the term and the beginning of the Christmas vacation.

The autumn months dragged on with no resolution to the payment issue, but by December, a joint committee of the city council and trustees proposed a new arrangement with the college owners. The committee offered to pay the owners \$15,000 in annual installments of \$3,000 each, without interest.<sup>115</sup> Weighing the offer in light of the persistent \$6,000 mortgage that had so long troubled the various owners of the campus, the current owners refused the proposal and subsequently filed suit against the city in early 1886 for the amount due to them as contracted by the school trustees in the original contract. Seeking not only the agreed upon sum of \$15,000, but also adding the sum of \$30,000 in damages, the owners were clearly in a state of high dudgeon regarding the breach of contract. The city council employed Judge M. B. Templeton to represent the city in the Marvin College purchase suit.<sup>116</sup> It would be up to the courts to settle the legal question of whether the town could or couldn't issue bonds to fulfill the contract.

The fall term concluded for the town's schoolchildren with a planned holiday entertainment at the "college" campus. Judge O.E. Dunlap, always a force for public

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<sup>114</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, December 25, 1885.

<sup>115</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, December 18, 1885.

<sup>116</sup> Minutes, Waxahachie City Council, February 25, 1886.

education within the town, but seemingly able to rise above the fray, was scheduled to make an address to those assembled, which doubtlessly promoted the educational interest of the community in its public school.<sup>117</sup>

By the spring of 1886 the division among the townspeople regarding the school issue was yet evident, expressing itself in factions amongst contenders for public office. A pro-“College Party” emerged on the scene, consisting of Mayor Dubose, aldermen G.L. Adkisson, S.P. Wilson, and A. Trippet. Each of these men were elected or re-elected, indicating the level of support that the pro-school faction had regained. The opponents of the “College Party” were aldermen Dunn and Pickett, also each re-elected.<sup>118</sup>

“Shall Our Public Schools Continue?” asked “Enquirer,” the pseudonymous columnist of the *Enterprise*:

Suit has been instituted against the town of Waxahachie to test the validity of the contract for the purchase of the Marvin College property. If the town wins, we have no school building for the white pupils. If it loses we will pay the contract price with the addition of court costs and attorneys fees. I take it, the vote of the town to assume control of its public schools, (191 votes for to 18 against) expressed the will of the people. If they are of the same mind, should we gain this suit, we must either repurchase the college property or must take steps at once to purchase lots and erect thereon suitable buildings for four hundred pupils. New buildings, even of wood, sufficient to receive

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<sup>117</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, December 8, 1885.

<sup>118</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, April 9, 1886.

four hundred pupils will cost, it is believed, equally as much as the contract price of the college property. Ward school houses would not cost less, and would make tuition nearly double in price, or in other words would shorten the scholastic term nearly one-half. Then, whichever alternative is taken we see no diminution of cost, and certainly no chance of getting a more eligible location, better grounds, or more suitable buildings; and the money to buy or build must still be raised by issuing debt obligations of the town. In any event the same opposition as now will be found to exist; and to resist successfully the issuance of debt obligations for the purchase or erection of proper school buildings, is to annul the vote to assume control of the public schools. There are tax-payers among us who have heartily responded to the call for efficient public schools believing the good to flow from them would more than compensate for the cost. Yet they do not wish to expend their money for a mongrel concern that will not allay the hostility of the opponents or realize the hopes of the friends of public free schools. What shall it be, 'Fish or Fowl,' Public school or no Public School? <sup>119</sup>

In mid-April, Judge Williams of the District Court rendered judgment in favor of Brown, Cox, and Walkup, ruling that the school trustees had power to contract for the college property and the aldermen had authority to issue the bonds to pay for the property. Making no mention of the damages, he ordered the city to “issue the bonds and pay all interests accruing.” <sup>120</sup> Feeling vindicated, the plaintiffs looked forward to receiving the payment for which they had so long waited, and local public school interests breathed a sigh of relief.

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<sup>119</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, March 12, 1886.

<sup>120</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, April 11, 1886.

The city hence gave notice of their intent to appeal the judgment to the Supreme Court of Texas. Judge Templeton however, advised the council to make the interest payment on the Marvin College mortgage.<sup>121</sup>

By the end of the month, the second year of the Waxahachie free public schools were drawing to a close, with the prospect of “three or four pay schools” opening for the summer. The Oak Lawn school for African-American children ran for another month, perhaps due to its later start.<sup>122</sup> The prospects for the district began to look brighter. Several new board members were elected. R.P. Sweatt, P.T. Crisler, and N. Givens lent to the board’s complexion a decidedly pro-public-school majority. Trustee H.E. Pickett, who had been elected on a ticket of bond refusal, resigned in May and an election was ordered to fill the vacancy.

On April 30, 1886, several school trustees attended the closing ceremonies of the public school’s second year. Professor Callaway was congratulated for his service for the year, as were the faculty members, for “the harmony that has prevailed, for their close patient attention for their successful management and for the evident advancement of the pupils of the school committed to their charge.” A program of music, calisthenics, reading the grade and general average of students, and awarding of medals followed. A gold medal was presented by Prof. Yonley to young J.W. Butcher, a transferee from the community of Red Oak, for his essay on Geology, a topic assigned by Yonley and judged

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<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, April 25, 1886.

by a committee composed of former Superintendent Ousley, Judge O.E. Dunlap, and Prof. (Editor) E.F. Yeager. Favorable mention went to Miss Willia Getzendaner for an essay she had written.<sup>123</sup>

A bronze “Peabody” medal was awarded to Miss Nannie Rogers for having the best grade average, although another student, Miss Mittie Armstrong had a higher grade average. Miss Armstrong was not eligible for the award, being over age—an indication of the attendance to the public school of students beyond scholastic age.<sup>124</sup>

Superintendent Callaway’s closing remarks illustrated the struggle of the pro-school interests to persevere amidst the town strife caused by the building and bond issue:

The system here in Waxahachie is only two years old. Born amid prejudice it has been nursed amid contention, but it will mature and be strong... The world has adopted public schools. They are the favorites of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The age may well be called the age of universal education... Light must come from education, and only education can dispel prejudice; an education that educates body, mind and soul, and girls as well as boys; an education that trains the hand as well as the brain, that ignores neither the physical nor metaphysical; neither the tangible nor intangible; neither truth, honesty, and virtue, nor Sabbath-keeping, church going and public praying. Many problems in life are yet to be solved; problems in social economy and in political economy; problems in temperance, in labor and suffrage. They are too deep for legislation... Legislation may relieve these troubles, but education cures them. The school room must solve these problems... The mind must unlearn some human laws in order to learn natural laws... For instance,

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<sup>123</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, May 7, 1886.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*



the animosity between capital and labor must be unlearned and then it will learn that the law of supply and demand is greater than any human laws, whether enacted by legislatures, Knights of Labor, Farmers Alliance, Masons, or any other organization...<sup>125</sup>

Superintendent Callaway resigned in June after one year in the school and in December he returned to his home state of Alabama to practice law. Whether he was prompted to leave in reaction to the town strife over the public school question, or whether he had intended such different plans all along isn't known. However, over the course of the spring semester, in addition to his superintendent duties he had studied for the legal profession in the office of G. C. Groce, the former city council attorney, in Waxahachie.<sup>126</sup>

As for the conclusion of the African-American school, no news appeared. Such was the testament to the regard of the readership of the *Enterprise*, and such absence of coverage persisted through the decades.

By midsummer, teachers were being "elected" for the next school year, estimated to last "about eight months." A new superintendent, the third in as many years, was hired to replace Professor Callaway. B.M. Howard came to Waxahachie from the nearby town of Hillsboro. Professor T. B. Criddle was hired to teach the sixth and seventh grades. Mrs. W.M. Gibson was re-hired to teach the fifth grade, as was Mrs. Lou Nash and Miss

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<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, April 30, 1886.

Mattie Young to teach the fourth and third, respectively. Miss Laura Billups was hired to teach the “primary department.” Miss Minnie Taylor was elected as instructor of music. For the African-American school, Professor W.J. Trulove was renewed as principal, with Miss Catharine Wallace his assistant in charge of the higher classes. Mrs. Helen Bennett was placed in charge of the primary grades.<sup>127</sup>

The lawsuit of the owners of the college versus the city was patiently awaited by all involved, but word came from Judge Templeton upon his return from Austin that the case would not be heard for at least another week. As it turned out, the case was not deliberated at all during the Austin term of the Supreme Court. It had been transferred to the Tyler term which was to open in October, 1886, continuing the delay in resolving the question of school ownership.<sup>128</sup> Thus, the third school year in the history of the free public schools of Waxahachie began with no final resolution to the building issue. The fall semester began on September 16<sup>th</sup> with examinations and classifications held both in the mornings and afternoons. Classes began on Monday September 20<sup>th</sup> with all teachers present except Miss Young and Professor Yonley who were ill, as the “dengue” —the name to which a general viral illness was referred—was running rampant that fall.

During the first week 246 pupils enrolled at the white school, 212 in the grade school and 34 in the college department. Apart from the illness sweeping the area, cotton picking caused quite a number not to attend the beginning of school, as it had the

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<sup>127</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, July 3, 1886.

<sup>128</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, July 2, 1886.

previous year and would for many years to come. Enrollments always rose as the year progressed, particularly in the African-American school. By the end of October enrollment in the white school reached 261 pupils and average daily attendance was 185, indicating a drop in over attendance compared to the district's previous years.<sup>129</sup>

Little news emanated from the public schools, white or African-American, during the first term of the district's third year. Amidst the seething discontent of those on either side of the school issue, Superintendent Howard conducted the city public school with little variation from that of his two predecessors.

On November 26 the white pupils presented a program at the college hall, much like the others wherein students sang, recited, or otherwise offered forth their "elocutionary" talents and skills. Interestingly, a portion of the program was presented by Mrs. Allie L. Speer, daughter of Rev. John Collier of Mansfield College, who would figure prominently into the local educational endeavor within the coming months. Mrs. Speer received a favorable reception in the local paper which announced her as the daughter of the Rev. John Collier of Mansfield College. The paper noted that she had been studying elocution in the Boston College of Oratory for the past two years, from which she had recently graduated with the "highest honors."<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, October 22, 1886.

<sup>130</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, November 12, 1886.

The spring term of the public schools' third year showed troubling signs for the public schools' continuance. Many parents of school age children were evidently opting for private schools. Mrs. Allie Speer received such a warm reception in November, that in December she announced plans to offer a "class in elocution" the following spring.<sup>131</sup> In February, the public school lost one of its favorite teachers. Mrs. Lu Nash resigned abruptly, purportedly for health reasons. And Mrs. J.R. Wheatley opened the "West End school" for the service of students living in that section.

Nevertheless, the public school system soldiered on. During the second term of its third year, in observance of George Washington's birthday, the younger students of the white school gave an entertainment consisting of recitations, dialogues, and a program with girls in costumes. These costumed girls sat on stage in a long row. Each girl wore a crown on which were golden numbers bearing a date of an event in Washington's career. Each of the girls rose and repeated a verse or paragraph depicting an important event corresponding with the date on her crown. Afterwards, as part of the usual "levee" following school programs, the ladies of the Episcopal Church served refreshments on the school grounds and provided a "candy and bag fair" wherein people purchased a bag of candy into which had been added a ticket entitling the purchaser to a chance for one of several prizes.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, December 24, 1886.

<sup>132</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, February 18, 1887.

Finally, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March, 1887, Justice Reuben Reid Gaines of the Texas Supreme Court rendered his judgment in the long-standing lawsuit. Almost three years since the date of the contract, and more than a year since the owners filed suit, Justice Gaines found in favor of the appellant—the city of Waxahachie, reversing the decision of the lower court, and remanding the case to them for settlement. Justice Gaines framed his decision in terms of the question of whether the “town of Waxahachie, at the time the contract...was entered into, have the power to create an indebtedness for the purchase of a school-house, and to issue bonds therefor?” The particulars of his decision illuminated, in retrospect, many of the previous actions of the city council aldermen. Likewise, the ruling spoke to many of the arguments of the appellees, who had prevailed at the lower court. Specifically, in his judgment, he found:

- The power to borrow money or to create a debt is not a necessary incident of the power to buy grounds and build schoolhouses;
- If the towns organized under the general laws did not have this authority, then it cannot be claimed for this the town of Waxahachie, because its special charter contains no greater powers than those conferred upon the former towns by the Revised Statutes; [and]
- The contract sued upon cannot be enforced against the city, either according to its terms, or by a judgment against the city for the purchase money agreed upon for the property.<sup>133</sup>

Based upon Gaines’ written judgment, and in absence of a written transcript, one must speculate upon the avenues of argumentation that Seth Shepherd, attorney for

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<sup>133</sup> City of Waxahachie v. Brown and others, Supreme Court of Texas, March 22, 1887.

appellees Brown, Cox, and Walkup, pursued in court. Quoting from the Revised Statutes, article 3783, Shepherd averred that towns were permitted by law to “establish and maintain free schools, purchase building sites, construct school-houses, and generally to promote free public education within the limits of their respective cities or towns.”

Regarding the legal mandate to keep bond issues within proportional limits to the amount of taxable property on hand, which the town exceeded due to its obligation for railroad subsidy bonds, Shepherd argued that railroad bonds were not to be converted, and quoted two recent judgments in support of his argument.<sup>134</sup> Gaines found the special provisions of those cases to be yet subservient to the points of law “limiting the amount of bonds to be issued to 6 per cent of the value of the taxable property of the cities...” and “does not except those issued to railroad companies.”<sup>135</sup>

The emphasis of the Gaines ruling hinged on Gaines’ insistence that “the policy of our laws seems to be to restrict municipal corporations as to the creation of debts, and not merely as to the issue of bonds...no debt can be created, when bonds could not issue, except such as could reasonably be met by current taxation within a reasonable period of time.” Specifically, Gaines found that at the time the bonds were issued, Waxahachie already had an outstanding bonded indebtedness of \$48,100, secured under a special act of the legislature. An additional \$9,000 of indebtedness (the sum required in bonds with the city taking on the existing \$6,000 mortgage) would put the city in excess of legal

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<sup>134</sup> See *Hitchcock v. Galveston*, 96 U.S. 341, and *Galveston v. Loonie*, 54 Tex. 517.

<sup>135</sup> *City of Waxahachie v. Brown and others*, Supreme Court of Texas, March 22, 1887.

limits, as it had only a total of \$939,808 in taxable property. In remarking upon the argument that the validity of the sales contract was demonstrated by the lawfulness of the bonds to be chargeable upon the school tax, Gaines intoned, “The question presents itself whether this could be deemed adequate provision for the payment of the bonds since the power to levy this tax was subject to be withdrawn by a vote of the tax-payers of the city.”<sup>136</sup>

Gaines’s words proved prophetic. When the news of the judgment reached the town, the pro-school interests became demoralized at the prospect of losing the school building in which the public school was housed. Certainly the original owners would sell the buildings and grounds to the highest bidder, leaving the school district without the schoolhouse to which they felt was the only option for housing the public school. Those opposed to the public schools, or those in doubt, whether motivated by revulsion to the tax or to one or another particular prejudice, seized upon the development to marshal their forces. Within a month a petition was circulating calling for an election to repeal the school tax. The petition was presented to the city council, which then scheduled the election for June 4<sup>th</sup>.<sup>137</sup>

In the interim, the original owners of the Marvin College property set about marketing the property to new potential buyers. Within a month the *Enterprise* announced the sale—under the headline “Marvin College Sold”—to the Rev. John

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<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, May 13, 1887.

Collier, a Presbyterian minister and former president of Mansfield College, which he had recently closed. Collier intended to make a success of the former Marvin College as a private institution. His daughter, Miss Allie Speer, had already made a splash in town, having displayed her musical talent the previous fall at a school event, and had that spring arranged a music recital featuring her talents as the main attraction. The sale was coordinated between the owners of the college property, Collier, and town officials. Brown, Cox, and Walkup received a settlement from the city to account for the rental of the building during its use, minus the amount invested in its repairs. After three years, two spent in litigation, the owners received from the city they sum of \$900, having asked for \$1500. The settlement included the use of the building through the end of the term, with Collier taking possession over the summer.<sup>138</sup>

The final months of the Waxahachie city public schools played out amidst anxiety and disappointment among those who had struggled to bring the district to fruition. The *Enterprise* documented its close thusly:

The written examination of pupils in the Waxahachie Public School has been in progress for the past ten days. The reports have not yet been made out, but Superintendent Howard says at least 90 percent of the students will pass to the next higher grade. Several pupils stopped during the spring on account of sickness and other causes. Last night an entertainment was given by the pupils of the 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade inclusive. The exercises consisted of music, recitations, calisthenics, etc. There will be a similar entertainment tonight by the students in the 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grades. At the close of the programme tonight, Prof. A.

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<sup>138</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, May 13, 1887.



Hogg, of Ft. Worth, will deliver an address, after which the annual levee will take place. Everybody is invited.<sup>139</sup>

As the featured speaker, Alexander Hogg's presence both overshadowed the current superintendent's function as master of ceremonies, and foreshadowed a future involvement in the affairs of the town's public school endeavor. Evidently acquainted with Howard through their mutual association in the Texas Public Schools Superintendents Association—the two men would share the stage in Dallas at the upcoming summer annual meeting of the group—it was Hogg who basked in the limelight. Hogg, the superintendent of the Fort Worth public schools, was indulging every opportunity to speak favorably on the Blair bill, then before Congress. Whether at his own solicitation, or that of interested parties within the Waxahachie school district, Hogg's address became the focus of the occasion. Perhaps it was felt that the address of a noted educator might sway the outcome of the next day's election regarding the repeal of the school tax. Hogg's skill as an orator was well-noted, and the gist of his message, and of his acuity in delivering it, left no doubt as to his intention.

After the usual assortment of “declamations, recitations and calisthenics” performed by the white students of the various grades, punctuated by a series of musical selections provided by the music teachers and several guests, and the presentation of gifts by students “of the XYZ Club of the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade” to the Superintendent and a favored

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<sup>139</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, June 3, 1887.

teacher, Professor Hogg rose to make his address. The presence of the city marshal assured that Hogg would be unmolested by “any hissing, whistling, or other disturbances from the young hoodlums, who generally flock[ed] to such entertainments.”<sup>140</sup> Adept at winning over his audience from his opening line, Hogg began by saying that when Cornelia was asked to show her jewels, she pointed to her children. The many bright jewels before him needed the motherly care of the public school. Invoking the law as an authority, he spoke of the state constitution providing for an efficient system of public schools. Such schools “give double the benefit of private schools at half the expense. The problem for Texas to solve,” said Hogg, “is how we shall educate our million of children.”<sup>141</sup>

Perhaps understanding the local discord of the public versus private school debate, Hogg said, “When public schools succeed the private schools, colleges, and universities also flourish.” Midway through his speech, he invoked Thomas Jefferson, quoting him thusly: “if the press is free and everyone able to read all is safe. If a nation expects to be ignorant and free at the same time, it expects what never has been and never

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<sup>140</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, June 10, 1887. Professor Parsons, Superintendent of the Ennis Public Schools, upon concluding its own closing ceremony, had recently been “assaulted by some party or parties who lay in wait in the darkness, and threw at him a shower of eggs and other missiles. It is understood that an enforcement of the rules and regulations of the school by Mr. Parsons on one or more of these boys, furnished them the motive for the assault.”

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

will be. As the founder of the University of Virginia Mr. Jefferson wanted schools alike for rich and poor, and believed in building from the bottom up.”<sup>142</sup>

Hogg then referred to his own large experience in dealing with a public city school district, particularly emphasizing the importance of schooling for young children. “Of 1,610 children in the Fort Worth public schools, four hundred were in the first grade, between seven and eight years of age, the most important period in childhood’s morning. Educate the children and the higher institutions of learning will take care of themselves.” Citing school statistics, and perhaps speaking directly to those hopeful of regaining the glory days of Marvin College, Hogg related that “out of 47,000 students in the public schools only 1,000 attended the Colleges and but 40 of this number graduated.”<sup>143</sup>

Lest he alienate his audience, he then cajoled that Waxahachie was a thriving little city of beautiful churches, \$1,000,000 taxable, property, and store houses that rent for \$180 per month. “Labor produced capital,” he said. Why not have efficient public schools which would educate the laborer’s children, add good citizens to the population and thus increase the value of property?<sup>144</sup>

Returning to his own example, he described how “Fort Worth began a few years ago with 600 children and a school house furnished by the generosity of Peter Smith,” and that now they had school property worth \$57,000, with over 1500 pupils and 42

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<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

teachers. “Fort Worth would consider herself almost ruined if the school tax were repealed.”<sup>145</sup>

A short question and answer session followed, and whether by true skeptics or cleverly placed devil’s advocates, several “objections sometimes urged against public schools” were leveled at Hogg, who responded from his own experience and expertise. He closed with an appeal to the audience to continue these schools for the benefit of the little children. If they could “do nothing more than rent a house and put a woman in it as teacher,” well that they should do so. With a final appeal to the town’s economic interests, Hogg concluded by noting that, “the [public education] system had proved to be a grand immigration scheme for Fort Worth, adding immensely to her capital and population while her taxable values have increased from three to six millions of dollars.”<sup>146</sup>

After the ceremonies, the periodic “levee” was held upon the college lawn. Students and their parents enjoyed various refreshments, including ice cream, a rare treat.<sup>147</sup> No reports documented celebrations among or for the African-American schoolchildren.

Area school interests were as watchful of the outcome of Waxahachie’s school controversy as were local citizens. The following day, area press reports speculated on

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<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

the outcome, unable to print the final tally until the polls had closed, but predicting the repeal of the tax due to “the failure of the people in uniting heretofore in building up a first-class school” which in turn “induced many to remain away from the polls or to vote against the tax”.<sup>148</sup>

The following week, in the second column of the daily news items, the *Enterprise* devoted one line to the outcome: “The special tax vote stood 60 for continuing the tax and 110 against.” With no editorial comment, Waxahachie’s first attempt at a local tax-supported free public school system came to an end.<sup>149</sup>

Magnanimous in defeat, Yeager at the *Enterprise* chose to put the best face on the outcome of town’s struggle for public schooling. While he clearly was a promoter of the pro-public school faction, his chief aim lay in promoting the town’s economic interests. Not one to bemoan the outcome, and ever the chief enthusiast of the town’s initiatives, he ran a column celebrating what were, in his eyes, positive developments in the town:

Boom, Boom, Boom: The Enterprise fires a salute this week,

Because, the Missouri Pacific railroad is secured and the Santa Fe is within our grasp,

Because, our ice factory is nearly ready for business, and nearly enough money subscribed to secure a cotton compress,

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<sup>148</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, June 5, 1887.

<sup>149</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, June 10, 1887.

Because, Waxahachie is one of the liveliest little business cities in the State, and full of enterprising, intelligent citizens...

Because, Marvin College will soon be opened again for the education of Texas youth...<sup>150</sup>

If there were to be no local-tax-supported public schools in Waxahachie, at least Yeager's beloved Marvin College was to continue its tenuous and troubled existence.

### **No Man's Land**

While the town renounced any local public tax support of its "public schools", it yet retained the provision for their "exclusive control" by a board of elected trustees. There would yet remain "city public schools" as the town had not rescinded its election for city control or for city trustees. Thus, some confusion continued in the minds of the local citizens as to where the town stood regarding the public or private nature of its schools. The new owner of the school property sensed the nature of the environment to which he was entering and offered the following to soothe the discord and/or to stem the speculation:

As there is some anxiety among those directly interested, about the public school interest of Waxahachie, permit the undersigned to state through your columns that he proposes to act in concert with your school trustees and the city council in promoting that interest. He has been in counsel with the board of trustees and finds a disposition to do all in their power to devise a satisfactory and efficient plan of operation. Pending their deliberations, we hope the citizens of Waxahachie will encourage their efforts to harmonize public sentiment. Permit me to congratulate the city of the outlook for the college. With the encouragement of a united

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<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

public sentiment and the aid and cooperation of the citizens individually, we may inaugurate one of the grandest educational enterprises of the South, in Waxahachie, once famous for facilities for high education. The college will be run purely in the interest of that high education, uncontrolled by any ecclesiastical courts, or organized moral institutions. No church or order, as such, will control the management or polity. We promise you the best faculty we can command, and all the facilities in our power...  
--John Collier.<sup>151</sup>

Board members responded to much of the “anxiety” regarding the public schools by acceding to the wishes of petitioners to establish a second public school in the western portion of town, presumably to serve those citizens in West End, an unincorporated neighborhood predominated by wealthy merchants and professionals. At this point, however, in light of the repeal of the school tax, the provision of a public school under the auspices of town trustees meant little in the area of support, amounting only to supervision. They announced in August that the two schools for white children would be held, one at the college and the other at the academy, adding that “no transfers will be allowed from one of these schools to the other after enrollment.”<sup>152</sup> The previous month, Mrs. Henrie Willison had announced that she “had secured the academy building west of the square, and will open school therein Sept. 5<sup>th</sup>”. She had defined additional portions of the curriculum, stating that “a fine music teacher has been engaged to teach vocal and

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<sup>151</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, June 24, 1887.

<sup>152</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, August 26, 1887.

instrumental music; also drilling in gymnastics.”<sup>153</sup> Thereafter, however, news emanating from the academy listed Miss Kate Burrough as the teacher, possibly an indication that it had been taken under town control after Mrs. Willison’s announcement.

Meanwhile, the Rev. John Collier was gearing up for the opening of his institution deemed Waxahachie College. Appearing at the opera house on a Thursday evening to deliver an address on education, he certainly apportioned some time to describe his venture, which appeared in the *Enterprise* thusly:

Waxahachie College will open its first annual term of ten months on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September, 1887. The term will be divided into two sessions. The first will continue four months; the second will continue six months. A month consists of twenty school days. Students enrolled on the public school list of the city and those properly transferred from other communities will receive the benefit of the public money, which will pay for three months. The Faculty will consist of Rev. John Collier, Pres.; Prof. N.J Foster, Mrs. Lu Nash, Mrs. Horner, Mrs. M.W.Gibson, Mrs. Speer, Mrs. H.A. McMillan, and Mr. J.B. Ryburn. The Faculty will organize for work in a few days and will arrange the text books, etc. The rates for tuition will be: Primary, \$3 per month; Preparatory, \$3 to \$4; Collegiate, \$5 to \$6. Matriculation fee, first session \$1; second session \$1.50. Tuition invariably in advance.<sup>154</sup>

Waxahachie College was launched auspiciously on Monday, September 5, 1887 amid much hope for a settlement of the strife which had rent the town and for the

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<sup>153</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, July 22, 1887.

<sup>154</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, August 26, 1887.



resumption of its educational progress. The newspaper reported that nearly 300 pupils were present in the forenoon, and 310 were enrolled during the day, as the “college” was more accurately what would be described today as a primary, intermediate, and secondary school. At 8:30 that evening, a large audience was on hand to hear the inaugural address of the President, Rev. John Collier. He spoke for an hour and five minutes, forcibly presenting the importance of correct educational processes in order that the student be developed into the highest type of true manhood—mentally, morally, socially, physically and politically. Not one to misjudge the tenor of his audience or of their past squabbles, he pointed out the evils of a sectarian, or partisan education. Conversely, in a nod to the glory days of Marvin College, Collier referred “in touching language to his predecessors, Dr. McKenzie and Gen. Lewis, whose character and labors he eulogized as worthy of the highest praise and veneration.”<sup>155</sup>

Whether speaking from his history as a private educator, or from knowledge gleaned in anticipation of local sentiment, Collier closed with “some strong language with reference to those who though blessed with plenty would raise a growl when asked to contribute a small matriculation fee, to promote the comfort of their children, or a few dollars more tuition than was charged by some old field school teacher.” Collier expressed great gratification at the successful opening which he pronounced, perhaps

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<sup>155</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, September 9, 1887.

with a touch of hyperbole, “the largest yet heard from in the State, or even in the South.”<sup>156</sup>

Waxahachie College lasted little more than a year, despite the addition of a teacher of penmanship—a Mr. Patterson—and a “commercial department” of three more adjunct teachers.<sup>157</sup> The turning point in the success of the enterprise remains shrouded in mystery due to a gap in the documentary record of the *Enterprise*, for which there are no issues extant between the dates of February 1888 and February 1889. Its initial term was evidently quite successful. But by the spring of 1889, reports indicate that Collier had withdrawn from the academic and collegiate departments and the school that had started as Waxahachie College had become known, largely, as the Waxahachie Female Institute, due perhaps to its thriving elocutionary department. The primary department came to be referred to as the Central Institute. Ostensibly, Collier experienced the same sort of troubles which had plagued Marvin College—too large an overhead for too unreliable a stream of revenue. Possibly, in keeping with the previous history of the institutions located within the Marvin College buildings, expenses outpaced revenues as students failed to make tuition payments, or else Collier fell prey to the same “local prejudices” that had plagued the previous institutions, and suffered a withdrawal of students.

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

The “public” school for African-Americans continued operation during the period of Waxahachie College, but little to no mention of it occurred in the local newspaper. Only in later reports was it ascertained that it functioned through this period, when at the close of the 1888-1889 school year its “fifth annual commencement” reportedly took place with a celebration at the court house.<sup>158</sup>

Never in doubt of success, though, was his daughter’s elocutionary department. In the first several months of Waxahachie College, it was her endeavors that received the preponderance of the press coverage, and clearly had won over the sentiment of the local townsfolk. In quick monthly succession during the school’s first term, her department held the limelight in its presentation of a series of “entertainments” designed to showcase the talents of her students and, feasibly, the progress of her curriculum. The October affair was practically a Collier family pageant, illustrative of the manner in which racist attitudes permeated the “grammar” of the school endeavor as then carried out.

Elocutionary Exercise: Last Friday night Mrs. A.L. Speer, teacher of elocution at Waxahachie College, and a few of her well drilled pupils, rendered some interesting pieces in the college. Mrs. Speer first delighted her audience with a beautiful rendition of *Lara*. Miss Fay Collier, the youngest pupil of the class then recited *Socrates Snooks* in a manner most creditable to herself and her teacher. Mrs. Speer next demonstrated her talent as a cultured elocutionist by a happy rendition of *How the Gospel Came to Jim Oaks*. The piece is written in the negro dialect which is very difficult

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<sup>158</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, May 10, 1889.

to attain, but she proved herself quite familiar with the peculiar accents of Sambo's tongue.<sup>159</sup>

A later portion of the program consisted of graceful and artistic poses and tableaux of different emotions, such as joy, sorrow, jealousy, love, and hatred from the assorted young lady students who were dressed in Greek costumes. They also exhibited the manner in which they were trained in hand and arm movements, and then gave counterpoint poses, followed by "division movements." Reportedly, "the facial expressions were splendid and the movements free, natural, and graceful." By such "entertainments" Mrs. Speer demonstrated the progress of her curriculum: "Thus to cultivate and train the voice, and give silent but forcible indications of mental states by facial expressions and graceful attitudes, are accomplishments that few possess, but under the careful instruction of Mrs. Speer, pupils of only average ability sometimes develop elocutionary powers that astonish their parents and friends."<sup>160</sup>

The November "entertainment" performed by the Junior Class in Elocution reportedly "brought down the house with their excellent rendition of the pieces allotted them." Public response to Mrs. Speer's coursework was so favorable that she had reportedly added several students since the last entertainment had been staged.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, October 21, 1887.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, November 11, 1887.

By the end of the first term, the outlook for Waxahachie College appeared bright, indeed. The Enterprise devoted two entire columns of its December 30<sup>th</sup> issue to the examinations of each department and to the evening's "entertainment" that capped the semester. These columns shed light on the specific nature of the schools' curriculum and the manner in which it was pursued. Mrs. Speer's classes once again commanded the limelight with the following "programme":

1. Gypsy children
2. Doll Drill
3. Dumb Bell and wand Drills
4. Fan Brigade
5. Broom Brigade
6. Tambourine Drill
7. Aesthetic Girls
8. "Too Utterly Utter"
9. Spanish May-day Dance
10. "Three Little Maids from School"
11. Counterpoint, Plastic Action, and Tableaux d'Art.<sup>162</sup>

In light of the seeming glorious success of the elocutionary entertainments, some items surfaced as ill harbingers for the future. In yet another column devoted to news of the college, this to prefigure the next term, there appeared several items indicating some continuing discord. According to Collier, Mrs. Horner and Mrs. Gibson were "retiring" from the faculty, and that he, himself, would fill their positions. These two teachers had long been connected with the schools of Waxahachie in all their various forms, and in a separate item located at the bottom of the page, the two announced that they would "open school at Mrs. Gibson's residence on Dallas street" the following January. Collier

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<sup>162</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, December 23, 1887.

also went to some length to describe the manner in which classes were graded “that patrons may understand our rates better.” He noted that extra charges were made for modern languages, elocution, painting, the commercial course and special lessons in penmanship and music, but that no extra charge was made for “Hebrew, Greek, or Latin,” and that all matriculation fees were applied “for the purpose of meeting incidental expenses.”<sup>163</sup>

Waxahachie College started its second term in the second week of January, 1888 with lofty ambitions, reminding potential patrons of the addition of its commercial department for those who might be interested in preparing “themselves for paying positions in a short time, in this line, and for a trifling expense.”<sup>164</sup> It is likely that few applied, as the spring term showed somewhat fewer students returning. At the start of the term the number of enrollees was reported at “200 or more, with others...coming in daily.” This indicated a sizable decrease in enrollment from the fall, at a time when enrollments usually rose. Understandably, some of the students had enrolled with Mrs. Gibson and Mrs. Horner, who “opened with about twenty-five on Dallas street.” A newcomer on the scene, Rev. E. Brantley, was reported as having “about fifteen boys at his residence on College street,” adding yet another private school to compete with the “public” schools offered as departments of Waxahachie college. The numbers of

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<sup>163</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, December 30, 1887; The short announcement from Gibson and Horner concluded with what may have been a tongue-in-cheek editorial comment: “This makes three schools and a college for Waxahachie. ‘You pays your money and can take your choice.’ “

<sup>164</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, February 10, 1888.

students across town at the Academy, Waxahachie's second "public" school remained relatively stable, as it "opened with something near its original number of 75 in attendance before the holidays."<sup>165</sup>

By the spring of 1889, Collier was clearly out of the college business. The March 8<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Enterprise* listed him as "in Waxahachie for a few weeks," having "just returned from a trip to Boston, New York and other northern cities." The circumstances prompting his departure from Waxahachie College are unknown. The students in his charge seemingly were dispersed among the various other schools of the city. The Waxahachie Female Institute, as Miss Speer's department came to be known (aka Waxahachie Female College and Waxahachie Female Academy), however, was doing exceedingly well. In March and April there had been the usual "entertainments" offered, showcasing the elocutionary talents and progress of the young ladies enrolled in the school. At times, the occasions seemed more socially than educationally oriented, as evidenced by the following:

A number of friends and patrons of Waxahachie Female College enjoyed a delightful musical in the parlor of the boarding house Monday night. The Misses Mason, music teachers, Miss Effie Collier and Miss Nannie Rogers entertained the crowd with a variety of interesting music, vocal, and instrumental, and Mrs. Speer, upon earnest solicitation, recited one of her humorous pieces in a manner that provoked much laughter. All present were delighted, not only with the music and recitation, but with the lively and intelligent conversation that occurred 'between acts,'

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<sup>165</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, January 6, 1888.

and the cordial and friendly reception accorded to each invited guest.<sup>166</sup>

Indeed, the unbridled success of the elocutionary school may have been the primary cause of its departure from the city, as there is persuasive evidence that Mrs. Speer's school had outgrown the town and bore the capacity for a greater enrollment in a larger city. In June, the Reverend Collier announced his plans to sell the buildings which then composed the Waxahachie Female Institute, the former building and grounds of Waxahachie College and, prior to that, Marvin College. "I purchased this property specially for my daughter, Mrs. A.L. Speer. She prefers to locate and teach in the city of Dallas," Collier explained. "I will therefore sell the property on favorable terms."<sup>167</sup>

The close of the term culminated on a Thursday night, June 13<sup>th</sup>, with the usual program of music, songs, recitations, and elocutionary performances. The college chapel was crowded with spectators and in the eyes of the *Enterprise* reporter, "all seemed highly pleased with the entertainment." Nearly one hundred examples of painting by Miss Mason's art class decorated the walls, a testament to the productivity of herself and her students. These paintings were much admired and elicited many compliments from the audience. Summing up her effect, the *Enterprise* stated: "Mrs. Speer certainly made a success of her school both financially and otherwise, and a card from her will be found in another column returning thanks to the public for their liberal patronage," and then

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<sup>166</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, April 22, 1889.

<sup>167</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, June 7, 1889.



announced that she “will open school in Dallas next fall, where she will no doubt again achieve the success her energy and perseverance so justly merit.” Within that card of thanks, Mrs. Speer gave little clue as to her purposes for relocating, stating: "My reasons for leaving are purely personal as the financial success of the school would warrant my making Waxahachie a permanent home. Thanking you therefore for your encouragement and patronage. --Respectfully, Mrs. A.L. Speer."<sup>168</sup>

With the closure of the Waxahachie Female Academy and the pending sale of the college buildings and grounds, likely to the highest bidder, the citizens of Waxahachie once again found themselves in a state of anxiety and confusion regarding the public schooling endeavor in Waxahachie. Earlier in the spring, Professor T.B. Criddle had joined Miss Burrough at the academy, Waxahachie’s second public school for white children. Presumably there came to be students beyond the intermediate level, as Professor Criddle had historically worked with the “academic” students—heading up the academic department—in the days of Marvin College. Criddle, along with Professor E. Brantley, who had opened his own intermediate level school prior to the close of Waxahachie College, jointly announced they had agreed to teach “a school for advanced pupils (white, male and female) to begin the first Monday of September 1889.”<sup>169</sup> They named their endeavor Waxahachie High School, and advertisements soliciting patrons began appearing that summer.

News items of the African-American school, Oak Lawn Academy, came few and

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<sup>168</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, June 21, 1889.

<sup>169</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, March 8, 1889.

far between during the Collier years. In May, there appeared an announcement of “the fifth annual commencement of Oak Lawn Graded school, colored” which took place on Thursday morning, May 9, 1889, with an “exhibition at the court house” to take place the following evening. While little news of its endeavors had been published, clearly the school continued its operation through the period of confusion between the schools public and/or private status from 1887-1889.<sup>170</sup> Its leadership, however, changed thereafter, with the replacement of W.J. Trulove as principal.<sup>171</sup>

## **A Second Attempt**

The resultant chaos of the impermanency and unpredictability of the town’s public school situation was most discouraging for residents of Waxahachie. Events had now come full circle, though, and local supporters of public education felt the time was right to once again petition for a local tax election to supplement the regular school fund with a local tax. Proponents of the tax declaimed that Waxahachie’s chief county economic rival, Ennis, had carried on a city public school system for several years, and by most accounts reaped the benefits of growth and economic development for having done so. The much smaller town of Italy, just to the south of Waxahachie, boasted two

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<sup>170</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, May 10, 1889.

<sup>171</sup> Trulove’s appearance as school principal in the southern Ellis county town of Milford occurred not long after a published divorce notice in the *Enterprise*. Of particular note was his extensive work as Republican Party official for county Republicans. The *Dallas Morning News* of January 24, 1894 contains a report on Trulove, calling him “one of the most active colored men of this [Ellis] county and [a] teacher for fifteen years.” The article details Trulove’s spoken opposition to the Graves plan, a scheme to relocate African-Americans outside of the country. Cemetery records for the Waxahachie city cemetery list a “W.J. Trulove 1857-7/15/1895.”

thriving public schools. Frequent advertisements for other private institutions for white students in the area began to appear in the local paper, doubtlessly taking advantage of the chaotic situation in Waxahachie and soliciting patrons from those who would otherwise attend Waxahachie's public schools.<sup>172</sup>

On Saturday, August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1889, with 51 voters opposed, 144 eligible voters elected to have a fifty-cent tax on the \$100 valuation. Achieving the necessary two-thirds majority, the measure passed, and once again, Waxahachie had a full-fledged public school system.<sup>173</sup> The lateness of the election, however, occurring in late summer rather than early spring, complicated efforts to have "free" public schools open for the fall term, nevertheless, board members were anxious to put the projected revenue to work at once. Board members approached Collier regarding the purchase of the college campus, but Collier remained uncommitted. This time around, there appeared to be no problem with the issuance of the same amount of bonds as was attempted in 1883, indicating the improved financial footing upon which the town found itself. Others suggested the erection of new schoolhouses, and a town debate ensued regarding the matter, with many seeking to avoid the errors of the past.

That the city could not have public schools ready by the commencement of the fall term became readily apparent. The newly elected trustees met at the end of August and decided to postpone opening of the public school for white children until the first Monday of January, 1890. The inability of the board to locate suitable buildings for the

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<sup>172</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, June 28, 1889.

<sup>173</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, August 9, 1889.

number of students in Waxahachie, combined with the small amount of “start-up” cash available presented major obstacles. Tax collections would not begin to amass until the end of the year, and so the fall was spent in preparing for a spring term opening.

Ever the optimist and economic promoter, the editor of the *Enterprise*, in his zeal to rally the citizenry to the cause of public education, summed up the local confusion regarding the public and private nature of schooling in Waxahachie:

As has already been published, the public school will not open until Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>, consequently those who were not willing to lose so much precious time put their children in the private schools, until the opening of the public school... The public school, if properly established, and we are confident it will be, will be the pride of the city, and the hope of her future prosperity. We hope to see the whole people rally round the schools, and give them that moral and financial support that will place the school question in Waxahachie beyond the reach of petty quibbling. In every town in Texas where the public school has thrived we have noticed a united public sentiment in favor of the schools. Without this unity, the prosperity could not have been, and now let every citizen of Waxahachie espouse the cause of popular education, and the enlightenment of our citizenship, the increased value of property, the honor of Waxahachie and Ellis county, and the general tone of society, will amply repay all the time, money and energy expended in their support.<sup>174</sup>

Thus, even though they were conducted under the auspices of a city board of trustees, the schools essentially operated as the private institutions of past years, and while public money may have been made available to their administration as it trickled into the public coffers, during the fall of 1889, they were experienced by the public yet as

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<sup>174</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, September 6, 1889.

private schools.

By that fall, these schools consisted of: 1) the Central Institute, located in the Gibson home on Dallas street, by which name the school containing the intermediate department had been known during and after the short life of Waxahachie College; its faculty consisted of Mrs. Gibson, Miss Kate Burrough, and Mrs. Horner; 2) Mrs. Nash's school, the reliable and favored teacher of primary students, once again conducted at her own residence on College Street; her school's faculty consisted of herself, Miss Mary Carter, and Miss Zephie Trippett; and, 3) Waxahachie High School, located at the academy building in the western portion of town, with a faculty consisting of Professor Criddle, Brantley, and newcomer, Professor C.M. Lyon, each man an ordained minister.<sup>175</sup>

Apparently, from later reports, the African-American school continued to function, ostensibly under the supervision of city trustees, but no mention of it was made in the local newspaper during the Collier/Speer years.

In October, Rev. John Collier announced the sale of the college campus to the Eagle Cotton Gin Company, who did not make immediately known their intentions for the property. Of course, the public school interests that had always hoped for a continuation of the school, from the days of Marvin College, were immediately demoralized, as were those who felt the existing school buildings and grounds made a more economical choice for housing the town's public schools than paying for new

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<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

construction. Trustees announced that \$20,000 in bonds had been registered in Austin providing ready cash for the purchase or erection of school buildings. Opponents of another purchase of the Marvin College campus argued the decrepit nature of one of the buildings, asserting that it was no longer safe. Trustees, who seemed favorably disposed towards its purchase, responded by having an architectural engineer render a professional opinion.<sup>176</sup>

By November, trustees announced they had “closed a contract with Eagle Cotton Gin Company and other interested parties for the Marvin College property.” The property was purchased for \$12,500, leaving a sufficient amount for renovations and improvements upon the buildings. “It would have outraged the feelings of many to see the old college converted to secular purposes,” proclaimed the *Enterprise*, in perhaps Yeager’s own words, “but now they will be gratified to know that the rising generation, and generations unborn will receive mental training inside the Walls of Marvin College.” Of course, the “many” to which the *Enterprise* referred included only the town’s white children.

Trustees also announced that they were negotiating with Professor Alexander Hogg, former superintendent of the Fort Worth public schools, for the superintendency of the Waxahachie city public schools. Hogg was an illustrious character, a former faculty member of the Texas A&M University, well-known within and without educational circles as an energetic promoter of the public school interest. Having spent the previous

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<sup>176</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, October 4, 1889.

seven years as superintendent of Fort Worth's public schools, Hogg became a casualty of a wholesale change in the Ft. Worth city government in 1889, losing his position as a new slate of councilmen were voted into office. Trustees from Waxahachie seized on the development. By the end of the year, Hogg was hired on as Waxahachie's new superintendent. Within the month he was supervising the renovations and repairs to the college campus buildings, and bringing his full expertise to bear in "organizing the schools in Waxahachie," along with a host of other enterprises in which he was engaged, not the least of which included his presidency of the Texas State Teachers Association. Wisely, and perhaps growing out of his own experience, he advertised for teachers in the local paper "to fill the positions of teachers and principal of the city public schools of Waxahachie" through an examination "to cover the subjects usually embraced in the courses of instruction of our best city school system[s]". These exams were scheduled to be held on Monday, December 23, 1889, indicating the short period by which those teachers selected would be examined and notified of their hiring for the spring term.<sup>177</sup>

Within the next several days, and the changeover to the new year, Hogg announced his faculty, a mix of familiar and new names. On Friday, January 3, 1890, trustees held an open house for the public to tour the newly renovated public school buildings. Through the work of local contractor E. H. Griffin, extensive repairs and renovations had been carried out so "that it would not be recognized as the same building." The old winding stairs in the main entrance had been removed and been

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<sup>177</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, December 20, 1889; See also Minutes of the Texas State Teachers Association 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Session, Galveston, June 25, 26, 27, 1890.

replaced by a broad open stairway. The old tower had changed in appearance, with a new forestructure, or breezeway, erected. An “engine house” had been built in the rear of the main building and a “large boiler placed underneath, from which steam pipes are to run through and heat all the rooms.” A great deal of work had been done on the sidewalks, and plans were made to continue the improvements upon the remainder of the grounds. Reports, perhaps hyperbolic, described the improvements as making the building “the finest school building in the state.”<sup>178</sup> Speakers of the evening included an assortment of local professionals and politicians: Mayor Rhodus, Judge Oscar Dunlap, Judge M.B. Templeton, Judge J.W. Ferris, County Superintendent of Instruction S.P. Skinner, Mr. B. F. Hawkins, Mr. F. M. Maxwell, Colonel McKnight and Superintendent Hogg.<sup>179</sup>

The following Monday, January 13, 1890, to the peals of the old bell of Marvin College, loud enough to be heard throughout the city, the second true opening of the Waxahachie Public Schools took place. Streetcars now ran throughout the city to the public school grounds, carrying students on their way to and from school. The buildings, following their substantial makeovers and repairs, began, inexplicably, to be referred to as the Park Public School. For whom the building was named, or to whom it referred was never explained in the newspaper. A prominent business owner, a grocer in town, bore the name Park, but no evidence has been found linking his name to the school as benefactor or otherwise. The *Dallas Morning News* reported that the name had been changed “from the Marion [sic] College to Park school building,” adding a modicum of

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<sup>178</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, January 24, 1890.

<sup>179</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, January 10, 1890.



mystery to the building's function during the 1888-89 school year, as no reports appear locally referring to Marion college, barring the obvious—a newspaper misprint or misspelling of *Marvin*. “With the change in name and many great improvements made in the building there can certainly no longer exist the strong prejudice against the property that has heretofore existed with some of the people,” said the *Morning News*.<sup>180</sup>

Following the standard procedure of the time, the first day was devoted to classifying students into grades and assigning them to classrooms. The number of pupils approached 350 white students, with approximately 150 African-American children reporting to the Oak Lawn campus. Classes at the new white school were arranged according the following:

1st Grade, Mrs Lu Nash, 34 pupils;

2nd grade, Miss May Siddons, 44 pupils;

3rd grade, Miss Belle Wilson, 44 pupils;

4th grade, Mrs. E H Horner, 46 pupils;

5th grade, Miss Kate Burrough, 41 pupils;

6th grade, Mrs. M.W. Gibson, 26 pupils;

7th grade, Prof. A. P. Vaughan, 25 pupils;

8th and other grades, Prof. H. M. Ives, 50 pupils.<sup>181</sup>

Mrs. McMillan and Miss Laura Whipple had charge of the music department.

Newcomers included Miss Wilson and Professors Vaughn, from Dallas, and Ives, from

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<sup>180</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, January 24, 1890.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

Bonham, as assistant principal and principal, respectively.

Hogg initiated the publication of a weekly school report detailing each week's attendance by grade, reported by "room". He also seems to have been instrumental in gaining the full backing of the *Enterprise*, whose coverage of school matters, for a weekly paper, had always been supportive of the public school endeavor, but under Hogg increased, as if to solidify the town's commitment to public schooling. These articles, whether penned by Yeager, his subordinates, previous board members interested in the economic development of the town, or Hogg himself, kept up the steady drumbeat of the benefits of the public school, exemplified by the following:

#### Taxes and Education

Waxahachie has a public school ten months in the year at which the children of poor parents as well as rich may receive their education. This school is exclusively for the children of the city. Certainly the wealthier people are able to pay for the tuition of their children, but would it not be an act of wisdom on the part of parents of limited means to seek citizenship on the inside of the corporation and avail themselves of the benefits of the free school? A man whose property is valued at \$1,000 could better afford to pay five or six dollars more and get the benefit of 10 months free school than to pay \$25 a year for such tuition, or deprive his child of education.

The free schools as supported by the State, average in length about four months. After this the children must leave off study and relapse into that careless, thoughtless state so well known to all parents, and start to school the next year no further advanced than the previous year, or the parents must pay tuition for six months more. Now let us examine the figures, six months tuition at \$2.50 would be \$15. A man to send three children would pay \$45. Now suppose this man's property be valued at \$1,000 and his city tax is  $1\frac{1}{4}$  percent, he pays for the privilege of living in the city

\$12.50 and gets back \$45 in tuition alone, to say nothing of the other advantages derived from the city.<sup>182</sup>

Hogg rarely missed an opportunity to remind his various listeners of the economic progress brought to Fort Worth by the various efforts of its local citizenry, with schooling chief among their concerns. And a good many listeners he had at his disposal. In March, he had returned to Fort Worth to be a featured speaker at the laying of the cornerstone of the new Fort Worth high school building, sharing the stage with the Fort Worth mayor, State Superintendent Oscar Cooper, and his successor as Fort Worth city superintendent, P.M. White. Whether he spoke in his capacity as president of the Texas State Teachers Association, or as the former and inaugural city superintendent is not known.<sup>183</sup> But certainly, his duties with the teachers association kept him busy, as June found him presiding over the annual conference in Galveston, where the conference was frequently held.

Presumably, the Waxahachie High School, begun under the supervision of Criddle, Brantley, and Lyon, continued to function, but whether as the high school department of the city public schools is unclear. As the high school was housed in the old academy building in the western section of town, which had previously been announced as the second white school for the city public schools, it quite possibly served as a city school. Other evidence seems to indicate that the city's white "public school" accounted only for grades 1-8 during the spring term of 1890.

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<sup>182</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, April 25, 1890.

<sup>183</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, March 30, 1890.

Whether by circumstance or design, Hogg served the fledgling Waxahachie city district for but the spring term, announcing his departure thusly in his final weekly school report: “In thus closing this report of my real work, viz: the organization and management of your schools for five months only, I beg particularly to thank you, gentlemen of the Board, whose constant confidence and support I have enjoyed, and to hope to expect that my successor will be even more successful in the management and in the final results than I have been.”<sup>184</sup> It may have been understood that his tenure would be but to launch the district. Waxahachie may have merely afforded Hogg a way station as other prospects matured. Else, he and/or his methods may have met with the disagreement of his employers or his patrons toward him, or he with them. Regardless of the circumstances of his departure, and despite the fact that he seemed to be yet another casualty of the tenuous school district, the fifth (or the fourth, depending upon whether one counts Collier as a city superintendent) in almost as many years; Hogg’s tenure seemed to establish the district on the solid ground that it had lacked in previous years, if only by the force of his stature and personality.

With Hogg went several of the newcomers hired under his brief tenure. When the board announced the slate of teachers for the coming school year, Vaughn and Ives were not mentioned. Neither was Miss Belle Wilson, who had announced her return to Sherman some days before, leaving only the familiar teachers to which Waxahachie citizens had become comfortable: Mrs. M.W. Gibson, Mrs. Lu Nash, Misses May

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<sup>184</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, June 13, 1890.

Siddons, Kate Burrough, Myrtle Middleton, Zephie Trippet and May Smith.<sup>185</sup> Prof. C.M. Lyon and Prof. T.B. Criddle of the Waxahachie High School were made Superintendent and principal, respectively, providing evidence that the high school, previously “private” had been made part of the Park Public School. The Enterprise reported on August 22<sup>nd</sup> of 1890 that "a city high school will be conducted in connection with the public schools” and that “thorough instruction will be given in all the departments.”

This second attempt at establishing tax-supported public schooling for the citizens of the town proved successful. Indeed, later retrospectives on the beginnings of public schooling in Waxahachie would mark this attempt as the first, naming Alexander Hogg the city’s first superintendent.

### **Establishing a City Public School System: The 1890’s**

In light of its troubled history, one might reasonably conclude that the unbroken continuity of the Waxahachie city public school system truly began during the fall term of 1890. Thereafter, it has remained in continuous operation to the present day.

Throughout the decade of the 1890’s, the nascent district seemingly looked more to its past than to the innovations of its present as it refined the grammar of its schooling. The racial segregation of its schools, mandated by state law, cemented itself into the local consciousness as the ideology of white superiority exercised an ever-tightening grip. The

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<sup>185</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, June 13, 1890.

Protestant ethic which infused schooling despite the public schools' secular status and the town's own contention with denominational connections to the local schooling effort, continued in various form.

The decade saw the appearance of another four superintendents, each taking their turn at establishing and developing the city's public schools. Two of them remained long enough to provide a reasonable semblance of stability to guide the district toward a more permanent development.

Professor C.M. Lyon, previously associated with the Waxahachie High School which had occupied the academy building, guided the district during the academic year 1890-91. At the time of his hiring he was "heartily endorsed by his patrons as a teacher and disciplinarian." Trustees felt he possessed "in a high degree the elements of a commander"<sup>186</sup> perhaps not unlike those of Gen. Lewis who had guided Marvin College through its last years. Lyon brought the high school department to the Park campus with he and Professor Criddle serving as faculty for the upper grades. They initiated the school's attempt to become affiliated with the state university, succeeding the following spring with the announcement from James Clark, the Secretary of the Faculty at the University of Texas, whose letter was published in the *Enterprise*:

It is my pleasant duty to inform you that upon the report of Dr. Halsted, the High school at Waxahachie was this day enrolled as an auxiliary school of the University of Texas. Trusting that the connection thus formed will be beneficial to both institutions.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, April 17, 1891.

Lyon left the following year to pursue other interests in the neighboring town of Lancaster, just across the northern Ellis county line in the southern portion of Dallas County, serving as the general manager of the *Lancaster Herald*, the local newspaper there. Thus, yet another superintendent either fell into disfavor with trustees, or otherwise used the office as a stepping-stone in the pursuit of other professional interests. He'd achieved, however, the unification of primary, intermediate, and secondary grades upon the same campus, restoring to some degree memory and experience of schooling which had been absent since the days of Marvin College.

Lyon's successor was A.W. Kinnard, who had served as principal during the academic year 1890-91. Coming from the central Texas community of Calvert, he returned to the city of Bryan after his brief service in Waxahachie. The faculty for his administration was quite familiar: Mrs. Lu Nash, Mrs. M.W. Gibson, and Mrs. Horner, the perennial favorites; Miss Kate Burrough, establishing her own veteran status; Miss Myrtle Middleton and Miss Jennie Ward, two recent additions; Mrs. J.C. Smith, a newcomer; and newcomers Professors P.J. Herndon and Robert Wimbish, both of Ellis County, teaching the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades, respectively. Another new teacher, Prof. J.H. Phillips, who had recently taught in the Ellis county communities of Boyce and Garrett, joined Criddle and Kinnard in staffing the high school department.<sup>188</sup>

Serving but a single school year, Kinnard's tenure with the school district continued the frequent turnover in the city school superintendents; nevertheless, his term

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<sup>188</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, September 11, 1891.

seemed to mark a turning point in the district's tenuous grounding. If Hogg had successfully launched the district, and Lyon had found for it a foothold, Kinnard may be said to have cemented the district in place in the minds of the public.

Kinnard's administration saw the first graduates from the high school program—Fred Newton, Earl Connor, and Ernest Criddle, the son of longtime local educator T. B. Criddle.<sup>189</sup> Kinnard's tenure brought a new level of pride and confidence in the local public educational endeavor. Always a vocal supporter of the public school endeavor, and obviously pleased at the high school's inclusion on the list of affiliated schools, the *Enterprise* proudly proclaimed in January 1892 that the school district was “one of the best in the state, so decided by the managers of the University at Austin.”<sup>190</sup>

Kinnard's departure marked the loss of the district's seventh superintendent in as many years, if one counts Collier's term as president of Waxahachie College during his first year and excludes the year of 1888 when the high school department of Waxahachie College seemed to be defunct. Kinnard chaired the summer normal institute over the summer and then went on to a long and illustrious career as a superintendent in the east Texas city of Longview, and at one time contended for the position of state superintendent.<sup>191</sup> Echoing their tendency to hire familiar teachers, trustees turned to a familiar face for Kinnard's replacement, re-hiring Professor C.M. Lyon from Lancaster,

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<sup>189</sup> Course of Study and Rules and Regulations of the Waxahachie Public Schools 1910-1911, (Waxahachie: Southern Publishing Co.), 6.

<sup>190</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, January 8, 1892.

<sup>191</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, June 6, 1898.



who had served as superintendent in the school year preceding Kinnard's term.

Lyon served the district for the next three years, providing a continuity in leadership that had been lacking since the district's inception. Over the course of these three years, the high school captured most of the attention of the local press, graduating classes of 12, 8, and 11 in 1893, 1894 and 1895, respectively. While the primary and intermediate grades gained mention from time to time, with the familiar announcements of their "entertainments" showcasing their classroom endeavors, the focus of public schooling shifted more toward the upper grades, as the new phenomenon of a public high school graduation was inaugurated and refined.

Lyon's faculty over the next several years included Professor J.H. Phillips, who became principal of the high school and teacher of the 10th and 11th grades; Professor H.W. Ward, ninth grade and Professor Edgar McKnight, ninth and eighth grades, respectively; T.B. Criddle, whose failing health may have prompted his move to seventh grade and principal of the public school; and P.J. Herndon, sixth grade; Jennie Ward, fifth grade; Kate Burrough, fourth grade; Minnie Kershaw, third grade; Hattie Smith, second grade; and the ever-present Mrs. Lu Nash, as teacher of first grade. Criddle's daughter, Miss Kate Criddle, following in the family footsteps, and Miss Eva Campbell were listed as "supernumeraries".<sup>192</sup>

Indeed, some familiar teachers of the elementary grades faded from the public school scene. Mrs. Gibson, her name no longer appearing in announcements of the

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<sup>192</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, June 10, 1892.

coming school year's roster of teachers, re-opened her private school, offering it to patrons throughout the remainder of the decade. Likewise, Mrs. Lu Nash, vacillating through the years between employment with the public school and running her own private enterprise, returned to running her own school in 1894, with a faculty of three assistants:

On Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup>, Mrs. Lu Nash will open a select school for primary and intermediate grades. Music, Elocution and every branch required to make a first-class school will be taught. There will be some Kindergarten work for the little folks. Terms reasonable. <sup>193</sup>

By November, Mrs. Nash's enrollment had grown so large, that she "had a school house built on her place on College Street."<sup>194</sup> While the public school enterprise in Waxahachie no longer seemed in danger of repeal from the taxpayers, it clearly had to contend with competition from those whose private institutions were yet favored for various reasons.

Lyon's record-breaking consecutive three year hitch with the district was followed by that of Professor J.C. Ryan, who also served for three consecutive years, providing further stability to the district which had seen so much turnover in its top position during its earlier years. Ryan arrived in town with his family in October of 1895, just in time to assume his duties at the opening of the public schools. A family man and father of a nine year old son, Heber, Professor Ryan guided the school district through the

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<sup>193</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, August 17, 1894.

<sup>194</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, November 2, 1894.

latter half of the decade, but did little to distinguish himself otherwise. He contended with a growing city district, as the boundaries of the Waxahachie city limits began to expand into the neighborhoods and sections around it.

In the spring of 1898, Ryan supervised the largest graduating class of white students to that time, conferring diplomas upon fifteen students, five young men and ten young women. At the closing exercises held over two nights on May 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> at the college chapel, the respectful attention and hearty applause of those gathered “evidenced a deep appreciation of the effort of both teachers and pupils.” The first night’s entertainment consisted of a series of contrasts between the different grades for five beautiful gold medals. Recitations and original speeches interspersed with songs by the primary grades made up the program of the first evening. Notable participants included Gladys Tingle, Eugenia Lomax, Jessie Gray McGill, and Lizzie Mai Connor. A small admission fee was charged for the benefit of the school library amounting to over thirty dollars, an indication of either the size of the crowd or the depth of their pockets. .

Friday night was the annual commencement exercises. The Waxahachie orchestra furnished music for the occasion. The graduating class, numbering fifteen, ten girls and five boys, entertained the large and appreciative audience with original work. A new feature was introduced into the graduating exercises—a change highly pleasing to all present. Besides the regular honors, salutatory, class poem, class prophecy and valedictory, the class presented a series of character sketches “calculated to interest and hold the attention of any audience,” giving each graduate a role in the commencement program. On an easel to the right of each speaker was a picture of the character sketched,

and as no names were to be used in the papers, the audience was to decide from what was said and from the picture the character being described. According to the reporter, “everyone on the program acquitted himself or herself creditably, reflecting much honor upon themselves and teachers.” The graduating class members were listed as follows: Nettie Wise, Paul Miller, Georgia Grimes, Cecil Fearis, Wynna Wimbish, Irma Hawkins, Myrtle Green, Zelma Beachum, Maud McClellen, Irene Brasel, Edna McQuatters, Geroge Griffin, Rembert Watson, James Griffin, and Minnie Sims.<sup>195</sup>

After three years, Ryan made a change in location, but not a change in career. Following his stint in Waxahachie with a superintendency of the public schools in McKinney, Texas, he joined the growing list of predecessors for whom the job in Waxahachie was but a way-station in their educational careers. Nevertheless, during his three years of service to the Waxahachie district, the public school graduated classes of 11, 4, and 15 students during the years 1896, 1897 and 1898, respectively.<sup>196</sup> By the end of his career with the district, the white high school had turned out seven graduating classes. While other schools arose within and without the district to compete, the Park Public School could be said to be firmly established.

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<sup>195</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, May 20, 1898.

<sup>196</sup> Course of Study and Rules and Regulations of the Waxahachie Public Schools 1910-1911, *op.cit.*

## Texas College and The West End School: Complement or Competition?

The decade of the 1890s witnessed a steady growth in the commerce and population of Waxahachie. In July, 1890, correspondents from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, including its publisher, the son of President Harrison, visited the city for inclusion of a feature in a special edition showcasing Texas towns and commerce. Featuring Waxahachie along with other up and coming Texas towns, the article bore the heading: Waxahachie: A Premium Agricultural City, and bore illustrations of the Masonic Hall, the downtown square surrounded by incoming wagons loaded with cotton, and as a centerpiece of newfound pride, the Park Public School. Singing the praises of the local black waxy soil and the abundance of products which it produced, the article described the town as having “a large brick public school building for the white, and a commodious two-story building for colored pupils, and an enrolment of 700 scholars; several excellent private schools, street railways, electric light system, an active fire department, 12 two and three-story business houses in course of construction, and a new water works system.”<sup>197</sup> Local publication of school enrollments had never been as large, but the mood of the era was certainly one of optimism and ebullience.

In October, 1890 the *Enterprise* heralded: “West End Addition is looming up, so is Bullard Addition, so is Williams Addition, so is College Hill, so is all Waxahachie.” As this growth occurred throughout the decade, reportage of the city’s public school endeavor became somewhat less distinct, at times even contradictory. As school trustee

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<sup>197</sup> *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, October 18, 1890, p. 15.

minutes from this period do not exist, these reports serve as the primary record of the city school district's evolution. A case in point: in August of 1894, the *Enterprise* related the following:

Waxahachie is equipped with three ward buildings. The Park school building is situated in a beautiful campus of ten acres. The High School department has excellent physical apparatus. These, together with a good collection of mathematical apparatus, physiological charts, maps, globes, etc. furnish teachers with adequate means for full instruction in the course prescribed.<sup>198</sup>

The “ward buildings” in question are somewhat erroneous, for Waxahachie did not subscribe to the ward system at that time, the introduction of which was credited to a later superintendent. They could refer to the “neighborhood” schools within the city limits: the old academy building, the African-American school (by now referred to consistently as Oak Lawn School), the plurality of the buildings on the Park school campus, or others not named in any consistent manner. For instance, in October of 1890, as school was starting up for the fall term, the following appeared:

School Matters: At a regular meeting of the board of Directors of the public school held Tuesday night, a matter out of the usual line was brought up for consideration. Prof. J.P. Ryburn has been employed to teach in the district north of the city, a large part of which is embraced in the recently annexed territory. Most of those have transferred to the city school, leaving the district school small. Of late it has been found that another teacher will probably be needed in the city school and a proposition was laid before the board to bring the remnant of said district into the public school and employ Prof. Ryburn as teacher. The matter was referred to

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<sup>198</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, August 17, 1894.

the committee on teachers.<sup>199</sup>

Throughout the latter portion of the 1880's and through the 1890's the western portion of Waxahachie came to be populated by the more affluent members of the town. Leading businessmen and local politicians predominated, erecting stately homes on large lots in a westerly direction from the city center, moving out along two major streets—Jefferson and Main. Prior to its annexation by the town, the area existed as an early “suburb” to the west, developing its own distinction as a neighborhood, and contrasting itself to other sections of town. Indeed, the West End, as the area came to be called, appeared for several years as a featured newspaper column of the same title. At the time of the Collier purchase of the former City Public Schools/ Marvin College property and the extraordinary plans for Waxahachie College, the following appeared in the column:

West End looks over at College Hill and remarks sympathetically, “so sorry you are to have a great college in your midst to disturb your dreams,” and College Hill looks back at West end and replies haughtily, “the way you do eat sour grapes is admirable.” But we console ourselves with the grand lines of that noble old poem, “There never was a goose so gray, But soon, or late, some honest gander came that way” and made us a college same as anybody.<sup>200</sup>

Its desire for its own “college” reflected both its desire to have a neighborhood school located within its bounds (and presumably populated by its own inhabitants) and the continuing quest of town citizenry to locate a permanent institution of higher learning.

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<sup>199</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, October 10, 1890.

<sup>200</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, May 6, 1887.

Indeed, the western section of Waxahachie had a prior claim to educational endeavor, predating that of “College Hill” which grew around Marvin College in the 1870’s. The first school of any note for the town’s citizens was erected there in the early days of 1861—when the Masonic Academy, later referred to as the Waxahachie Academy, and ultimately as “the old academy”—came into existence. This building was located on the site now occupied by the Sims Library. It served as a school throughout the early days of the town’s settlement prior to the days of Marvin College, and during the on again-off again constitution of the city’s public school system. It will be recalled that the school which was operated in this building was assumed by the city schools as the town’s second white school, if only insofar as to be under supervision of city trustees.

By the latter half of the 1890’s, another school in the western portion of town, this one further out, appeared under several names, including The Waxahachie Institute (alternatively as the West End Institute) during its first year of existence, and subsequently as Texas College, with most references to it as The West End School.

We learn from Professors Phillips and Ernest Criddle that West End Institute is to become Texas College, and that they will have the same chartered. These wide awake and able young men propose establishing a college of high order where those who desire to obtain a collegiate education can do it without going abroad.<sup>201</sup>

J.H. Phillips, who had been principal of the high school department of the white public school under Kinnard and Lyon, served for two years as the county

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<sup>201</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, August 22, 1896.



superintendent, 1894-1896. In 1896, at the encouragement of others, he established the West End Institute, later changing its name to Texas College. This institution was staffed by none other than the Rev. T.B. Criddle, Lyon's colleague at the Waxahachie High School. Criddle served as principal during the inaugural year of 1896, having left the employ of the white public school when Ryan assumed the superintendency in 1895. Phillips and Criddle, veteran educators, with Criddle a onetime faculty member of Marvin College, were convinced that Waxahachie needed an institution of higher learning, or otherwise felt the public endeavor was not sufficient. Given the timing of their endeavor, it is entirely possible that they did not see eye to eye with Superintendent Ryan. Else, they were encouraged by those citizens who had historically wished their own "ward" school in the western suburb of town.

By the following year, Criddle's health began to fail. He sold his interest in the West End School to his son, Ernest, who had recently graduated from The University of Texas. In her history of education of Ellis county—a thesis written in 1929 drawing upon first-hand accounts of the period from the actual persons involved—Florence Bryan delineated the outgrowth of the Waxahachie Institute as a private endeavor carried forward by Criddle and Phillips. Writes Bryan:

This was Texas College—an outgrowth of the Waxahachie Institute founded in 1896-1897 to meet the demand for an institution of higher learning in that section of the county. The first year of the school was most successful, over 170 pupils being enrolled, the majority in the high school and college departments. This fact induced the management to make the institution in name what it had become from the classification of the students—a college; and to that end the

name of the school was changed to Texas College.<sup>202</sup>

It was the plan of the school to do both preparatory and college work, which put it into direct competition with the public schooling endeavor. The faculty consisted in 1898-1899 of J. Henry Phillips, president, E. D. Criddle, W. H. Smith, and Miss Julia Hillyer, who taught music. By one account, Miss Kate Burrough, of the public school faculty, but associated with the “old academy” when used as a ward/neighborhood school, was also on the faculty. The school was purported an entirely a private institution, receiving no state funds.<sup>203</sup> The instruction offered ranged from the first through the tenth grade in addition to the college courses. In the collegiate department, the coursework was divided into subject areas or schools: School of English, Professor Criddle; School of Mathematics, Professor Phillips; School of Modern Languages (teacher not named); School of History, Professor Criddle; School of Philosophy, Professor Phillips; School of Latin, Professor Criddle; School of Natural and Physical Science, Professor Smith; School of Music, Miss Hillyer, etc...<sup>204</sup>

Texas College went the way of its predecessor, Marvin College, in the space of a few short years. Despite the sense of enthusiasm with which local educators expressed their offering of collegiate level coursework to meet a seeming need, ultimately there

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<sup>202</sup> Florence Bryan, *The History of Education in Ellis County* (Master’s Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1929), 42.

<sup>203</sup> Lewis Black, *A History of Education in Ellis County* (Master’s Thesis, Southern Methodist University, 1930).

<sup>204</sup> Bryan, *op cit.*, 44.

proved too few patrons for such an undertaking. Some evidence exists that the managers chose to discontinue the college as a means of furthering the prospects for attracting the larger and more prestigious Trinity University, which was rumored to soon be relocating from Tehuacana.

The departure of Professor Ryan for the town of McKinney after the close of the public school in 1898 marked an end to the first major chapter of the public schooling endeavor in Waxahachie, which one might refer to as its formative years. As a new century lay just beyond the horizon, Ryan's administration saw the finality of the period of quick turnover in its superintendent leadership. His successors served terms of 12, 25, and 35 years, respectively.

## **Curriculum Practice: Finding a Working Grammar of Schooling**

### **The Graded School**

The impetus behind the public school effort in Waxahachie in 1884 may have been largely economic, but it was cloaked in the language of the progressive era, which in turn lent to it an assumed aura of progressivism. The trumpeted desire for a "graded" system of public schools promised an efficiency heretofore found lacking in dealing with schoolchildren that the private and public/community schools (i.e. the one-room schoolhouse) could not. Graded schools were conceived in the minds of the local public as superior if only by their ability to concentrate "grade-level" content upon the students primed for such instruction by their mastery of the previous grade's content. Certainly

these schools weren't new on the scene in 1884, having been popularized many years before in the larger metropolitan school districts. In 1862, W.H. Wells, the superintendent of the Chicago public schools, published *The Graded School: A Graded Course of Instruction For Public Schools* in which he combined the "best elements of the different systems adopted in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and other cities." A graded school, as defined by Wells, was one in which the pupils "are divided into classes according to their attainments, and in which all the pupils of each class attend to the same branches of study at the same time." This organizational plan was, according to H. C. Hickok, the former superintendent of Public Instruction of Pennsylvania, "but the application to the educational cause of the same division of labor that prevails in all well-regulated business establishments, whether mechanical, commercial, or otherwise." Further, Hickok stated, "it is not only the most economical, but without it there can be little progress or prosperity."<sup>205</sup> Small wonder then, that the editor and publisher of the *Enterprise*, along with other interested local parties, subscribed to the notion as the selling point in persuading voters in 1884 to approve the city supervision and local tax support of its schools, illustrated by an appeal just prior to the election:

Editor Enterprise: Why is it that every city of any importance in Texas has its graded schools, except Waxahachie? Those cities having these school in operation, claim for this system of schools, economy in management, thoroughness in teaching, and great success in its entire

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<sup>205</sup> W.H. Wells, *The Graded School: A Graded Course of Instruction for Public Schools*, (New York: Barnes & Burr, 1862), 7.

administration. Besides, after its adoption, these cities never abandon the system, but instead are improving upon it continually. It would take up too much of your space to enumerate the various advantages that would accrue to our city by its adoption of the t school system. Its advantages are known and recognized by every intelligent observer. The time has come for us as a community to be in line with other progressive cities in the cause of education.<sup>206</sup>

And yet, the graded school, in its operation, failed to immediately impress the local population with its superiority, as evidenced by the first several superintendents' struggles with parents displeased at the grade level identified for their son or daughter. With the graded school came the question of promotion through the grades, and with this was born yet another grammatical element, new at the time, of the grammar of public schooling: the promotion card. Promotion cards were handed out at the end of the school year as markers of advancement for successful students. The acquisition of a promotion card surely was a celebrated affair for students. Failure to achieve one meant facing a battery of exams at the beginning of the next school year. Inasmuch as the private schools offered prior to the advent of the public school endeavor returned to thrive and compete directly with it provides evidence that many patrons were not as concerned with the efficiency of the public schools as much as they were with the educational experience of their children. For them, the "grammar of schooling" was entwined with elements of individualized attention, the type of which was more inclined to occur within a private school.

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<sup>206</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, March 7, 1884.

## Literary Societies: Elocution and Entertainments

Undoubtedly, the grammar of the public school during its formative years was shaped by those institutions which preceded and competed with it. How frequently had the *Enterprise* proclaimed, “There will be a public entertainment in the college chapel...” whether in reference to Marvin College, Waxahachie College, the Waxahachie Female Institute, or the various private schools carried on by Nash, Gibson, Willison, Criddle, Brantly, et. al. Of course, these types of performances never disappeared from the public school; indeed, they are as much a part of the contemporary grammar of schooling as ever they might have been in the past, as today’s elementary and secondary campuses continue to host choir, music, and dramatic performances showcasing the talents of the students, usually to appreciative audiences of parents and relatives. But the “entertainments” so often referred to in the early period of Waxahachie’s schools clearly referred to much more than the singing and skits of the younger children. More precisely, they were an outgrowth of one of the major curricular organs of the period—the Literary Society, a club-like organization devoted not only to the study of literature, but to the art, and particularly the culture, of a number of the liberal arts.

The waning days of Marvin College, which would see its final semester in the spring of 1884, saw the presence of three distinct literary societies: the Lone Star, the Clionian, and the Ciceronian—the very names of which show the evolution from the classical curriculum with connections to Clio and Cicero, to one more closely aligned with local concerns. From the *Enterprise*:

### Lone Star Literary Society

Last Friday night we had an opportunity of witnessing the exercises of the Lone Star Literary Society. The programme consisted of essays, recitations, declamations, and a debate on the question, 'Resolved, that military men have done more toward enlightening the human race than literary men.' All the exercise was interesting and reflected much credit upon the members of the society, but the debate was especially entertaining. Most of the speeches were extemporaneous and abounded in wit and humor as well as solid argument. The committee of young ladies and gentlemen who sat as a tribunal, decided in favor of the negative. The Clonian and the Ciceronian societies of the College and several visitors were present by special invitation, and many of them made short speeches in response to calls from the house, all congratulating the young men of the Lone Star Society upon the success of their public exercise. The knowledge and practical experience obtained by the proper conduct of such literary societies are of almost incalculable importance to the young, and we are glad to see them carried on with such interest and success by the young ladies and gentlemen of Marvin College.<sup>207</sup>

Central to the literary society for young men was the practice of debating and public speaking. Of the two, the latter seemed more highly esteemed than even the former, although both were valued for their relationship to the fields of law and politics. The ability *to speak*, that is, to be adept at oratorical skills, was highly prized as a marker of educational refinement, indeed, of Southern gentility, not only for women, but for men as well. Later scholars lamented the loss of the prominence of these elements of the literary society and their expression at "entertainments," which served the dual purpose

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<sup>207</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, February 22, 1884.

of entertaining, and demonstrating the attainment of the curriculum. “Gesture, feeling, voice, these made the basis of the consummate product of literary society work in the Southern college both before and immediately following the war,” wrote Henry Snyder in 1904 in wistful lament, as the literary society was superseded or subsumed by more discrete elements of the modern curriculum. “At their best, these elements brought a charm of stately attitudinizing, graceful action, moving and winning appeal to the emotions, and range and power of vocal expression.”

Of course, none of this was more evident than as exemplified in the curriculum of Mrs. Allie Speer’s coursework during the time of Waxahachie College and the Waxahachie Female Institute. There, on a Thursday night in December of 1887, during the first glorious term of Waxahachie College, the Clionian Literary Society, numbering forty or so young women, presented their “Longfellow Evening.” Miss Myrtle Middleton, President of the society, introduced the exercise with a few appropriate remarks. The program was described as “an intellectual treat to the appreciative audience, and evinced much culture and research on the part of the fair members of the society.” Music followed, and then a recitation of the biography of Longfellow, and then various sketches, and in conclusion, general questions on his life and works in choral recitation. Each rendition proved “most creditable to the society and elicited much applause from the audience.” The following program as reported, in full:

Instrumental Solo. Miss Lula Davis.

Biography of Longfellow: Miss Beatrice Jones.



Wreck of Hesperus: Elocution class.

Sketch of the “Spanish Student”: Miss Boyce.

General Questions: (President) Miss Myrtle Middleton.

Sketch of blind Girl of Castel-Cuille: Miss Sallie Hayter.

Sketch of Children of Lord’s Supper: Miss Elsie Trippet.

Song, “The Bridge”: Miss Nannie Rogers.

Sketch of Evangeline: Miss Mollie Langsford.

Instrumental solo: Miss Belle Wimbish.

Sketch of “Golden Legend”: Miss Mary Watson.

General Questions: Miss Myrtle Middleton.

“the Famine”: Elocution class.

Sketch of Hiawatha: Miss Daisy Jones

Instrumental Solo: Miss Sadie West.

Recitation “Poet’s Funeral”: Miss Myrtle Rogers.

Chant: “There is a Reaper”: Society.<sup>208</sup>

The program for the following night, Friday, drew an equally immense crowd of people who braved snow and muddy roads leading to the college chapel, and was documented in detailed fashion in the pages of the *Enterprise* the following week. The presentation for this night consisted of an “entertainment” of the younger children, not

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<sup>208</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, December 30, 1887.

yet associated with a literary society, and yet so similar in performance that the correlation and continuity of the lower curriculum to the upper became apparent. The young ladies clearly prepared for their debut into literary society by virtue of the similarity of their performances.

Promptly at 7 o'clock the music began, and eighteen little girls in gypsy costume, red dresses with white sleeves and trimmings, came marching down the center aisle to the stage where their songs and measured steps caused much interest and laughter. As the children withdrew a dozen "Misses" in long white dresses and ruffled caps appeared and treated the audience to a doll drill. Their pantomime representation of matrons with their infant charges was splendidly received, and elicited much applause. A dumb bell and wand drill was then artistically executed by a class of ten young women. The reporter noted that this "exercise imparts grace of movement and physical development and adds much to the health of the students," and explains the frequent mention of "calisthenics" within the advertised "entertainments. Next came the fan brigade of thirteen young females in black dresses, each bespangled with golden stars, each wearing crowns, or tiaras, of the same material. Here, the reporter found that "their graceful and diversified flourishes of the fan accompanied by facial expressions indicating different mental states, showed that they were thoroughly trained in this department of feminine tactics." The broom brigade consisting of eleven young females in white uniform trimmed with red, then joined the fan brigade on the stage and gracefully went through the manual of arms, or rather of brooms. Both brigades then began to drill, march and countermarch as if preparing for battle, but fortunately no

collision occurred. The two brigades took their final position at parade rest on opposite ends of the stage to make room for the tambourine drill which was next adroitly executed by five festively uniformed young women with tambourines. Afterwards came the “Aesthetic Girl” in a dress of blue, bright yellow trimmings, and hat” a la Oscar Wilde, of sunflower notoriety.” Perambulating the stage, she treated the audience to an aesthetic song, when suddenly the deafening cheers and applause announced the approach of “Too Utterly Utter.” Down the aisle came a lady in gorgeously colored curtain calico, with hat and trimmings to match. She was apparently suffering with a most excruciating attack of the late malady known as the “Grecian bend.” Her head moved from side to side, keeping time with the coquettish, flourishes of her fan, and her lovely, sentimental smile was simply “too utterly utter” for anything. The climax was reached, and at the conclusion of her stage performance she retired with the drill brigades to make room for the Spanish May-day dance, which was artistically executed by fourteen “Misses” in corresponding costume. The three little maids from school then came simpering upon the stage in gaudily colored attire, and created much amusement by their shy and sentimental glances from behind their fans. The entertainment closed with counterpoint, plastic action and tableaux d’art by a class of ten young ladies in appropriate white costume. The reporter found, “their graceful poses, gesticulations, facial movements and expressions, illustrated most admirably the various emotions and mental states, such as love, hatred, confidence, jealousy, curiosity, wonder, etc.; and the facility with which they formed one tableaux after another by change of positions on the stage evince thorough skill and training in the grace and beauties of plastic action.” La Republique, the Assassination of Caesar, and

Rock of Ages were some of the tableaux presented. The whole program was declared a decided success from the opening to the close. The different classes occupied the second story in the central building, and as one brigade withdrew from the stage another marched down the aisle to take its place. After the close of the regular program all the young ladies, misses and little girls, nearly 100 in number, who had participated in the evening's exercise, marched around the room two or three times.<sup>209</sup>

In the struggling early years of the Waxahachie High School, or rather, the high school department of the Park Public School, the literary society took the name Lyon Literary Coterie, in deference to Superintendent Lyon. After their inagugural year Lyon Literary Coterie announced in 1893 that it was to begin semi-monthly meetings to replace its former weekly meetings, and that new officers were Charlie Barton, president; Fannie Lee Ross, vice-president; Mary Summerton, secretary and Minnie Stone, critic. At a meeting later in the month, the Coterie chose Anson Yeager as librarian, Maude Middleton as secretary, for the resigned Summerton and Miss Quincy Browning, the assistant. Each officer was later listed as a graduate of the high school.

Their own entertainment, a program of March 1894, consisted of:

1. Select Reading—Miss Bettie Nash
2. Discussion—"The love of money the root of all evil." Misses Quincy Browning and Bessie Ray.
3. Recitation, Miss Minnie Erwin.

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<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

4. "Still waters run deep," Miss Gertrude Hardy.
5. Discussion—"Epicurus, his doctrine: his mistakes, "Misses Vera Gibson and Nena Florer.
6. Declamation, W.P. Hancock.
7. Essay—"Fallacies of democracy". Miss Fannie L. Ross.
8. Debate—"Canada will be annexed to the United States within twenty years." Affirmative. Charley Barton; Negative, Herbert Peters.<sup>210</sup>

## **The Military Company and Marching Drill**

The days of Marvin College also bequeathed to the fledgling public schools a curricular concern for military drill. In the years previous, Marvin College had boasted its own Military Company, complete with uniforms of "Confederate gray, with three rows of brass buttons, and made cutaway, after the West Point style."<sup>211</sup> Lyon reinstated the practice, and in their second year the Park Military Cadets reorganized with about 25 members, and hoped to grow. As in the days of Marvin College, the cadets hoped to receive uniforms, guns, and equipment during the school year.

Cadets chose the following officers from the upper classmen and faculty: J.T. Boozer, captain; P.J. Herndon, 1st Lt; H.W. Peters, 2nd Lt.; Charlie Barton, 1st Sgt.; W.E. McKnight, 3rd Sgt; Guy Summerton, 2nd Sgt; Anson Yeager, 4th Sgt.; Jas. Coleman, 5th Sgt.; Pickens Anderson, 1st Corporal; Charlie Butcher, 2nd Corporal; Cary

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<sup>210</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, March 30, 1894.

<sup>211</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, January 4, 1884.

Joiner, 3rd Corporal; and Sam White, 4th Corporal. The uniforms and other equipment ultimately arrived, for the cadets were reported in 1893 as making “a splendid appearance in their nobby new uniform.”<sup>212</sup>

Military companies as a feature of the high school curriculum were not unknown in the state of Texas, as frequent references to them were made by those various private educators soliciting patrons for their schools. Like music departments, or commercial departments, they were often listed as potential offerings should enrollments prove adequate and certainly as inducements for patronage.

For Lyon, however, the military drill took on took on multiple purposes, and was infused throughout the grade levels from lowest to highest. Lyon implemented the military marching drill as a grade level competition, whereby monthly contests were held to identify which class would “carry the banner” for best marching. Orderliness and precision were practiced in advance of each month’s competition, with the winning class announced in the newspaper. Lyon applied the spirit of grade level competition in other areas as well, including attendance and tardiness. From the Enterprise:

Park School Notes: The January marching contest of the primary and intermediate grades came off last Friday. In the primary section, Miss Kate Burrough’s pupils held the banner. Miss Leonora Bisland’s pupils hold the second place. In the intermediate section there was a close contest for the banner, there being only a fractional difference between the winning grade and two other grades. Prof. Herndon’s pupils were declared victors. Capt. Keenan, Jas.

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<sup>212</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, March 17, 1893.

Coleman, and Dennis Newton were the judges. Carroll Todd was the drummer boy. Prof. Criddle's pupils won the attendance flag last week, their percent of attendance being 100. The primary and intermediate grade pupils worked hard last week in their examination and it is hoped with satisfactory results. Washington's birthday will be observed in all the grades with appropriate exercises. Not a case of tardiness last week in any of the twelve rooms.<sup>213</sup>

Neither was the Oak Lawn School overlooked in the monthly contests, if only for the purposes of good public relations. In March of 1891, Lyon invited the Enterprise reporter to accompany the city mayor and a school trustee to be present at the "colored school" to witness the several departments there engaged in the military drill exercises. "Their movements were well planned, showing that the teachers have the children well under control," wrote the reporter. Marching in the "open air" amidst the gale March wind, the intermediate department was decided by the committee as the superior, and thus entitled to the banner.<sup>214</sup>

That the reporter would note the degree of control under which the African-American school children were maintained during their marching contest may have betrayed the prevailing sense of white superiority of the day, or may merely have been to comment on the precision of the exercise. In either case, the elements of control and precision may perhaps be viewed as grammatical elements of school practice.

## **Local Lessons in the Grammar of Schooling**

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<sup>213</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, January 25, 1895.

<sup>214</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, March 27, 1891.

During the first period of the public schooling endeavor, the local newspaper weighed in from time to time through a series of articles on educational philosophy and the practical matters of running an efficient school. These items ran the gamut from editorial musings to reprints from state and national journals. They served the purpose not only of promoting the public school interest, but also in educating the public about prevailing educational philosophy and the manner in which it was changing. As the town of Waxahachie struggled to establish its system of public schools, provided at taxpayer expense in an agricultural economy where many of the potential students were engaged as agricultural laborers, the shift from a scholar academic centered education to one of social efficiency was a persuasive argument in gaining the support of the population. Bearing the byline “St. Nicholas” the following was reprinted in the Enterprise in February of 1887:

**New Kind of School: To Use the Hands as Well as Eyes an  
Idea in Education.**

There is a new kind of school, and there are new lessons and new teachers coming. Books we must have. To learn we must read. But we may read all about boats, and yet we can never learn to sail a boat till we take the tiller in hand and trim the sail before the breeze. The book will help wonderfully in telling us the names of things in the boat, and, if we have read about sailing, we shall more quickly learn to sail; but we certainly never shall learn till we are in a real boat. We can read in a book how to turn a heel in knitting, and may commit to memory whole rules about ‘throwing off two and purl four,’ and all the rest; yet where is the girl who can learn to knit without having the needles in her hands.

This then is the idea of the new school—to use the hands as well as the head. Boys and girls who go to the ordinary schools, where only books are used, will graduate knowing



a great deal; but a boy who goes to one of these new schools, where, besides the books, there are pencils and tools, work benches as well as writing books, will know more. The other boys and girls may forget more than half they read, but he will remember everything he learned at the drawing-table or at the work bench as long as he lives. He will also remember more of what he reads, because his work with his hands helps him to understand what he reads.

I remember long ago a tear-stained book of fables of weights and measures and a teacher's impatience with a stupid child who could not master the 'tables.' And I have seen a school where the tables were written on the blackboard—thus: 'Two pints are equal to one quart,' and on a stand in the schoolroom were a tin pint measure and a tin quart measure and a box of dry sand. Every happy youngster had a chance to fill that pint measure with sand and pour the sand in the quart measure. Two pints filled it. He knew it. Did he not see it, did not every boy try it? Ah! Now they knew what it meant. It was as plain as day that two pints of sand were equal to one quart of sand; and with merry smiles these 6-year-old philosophers learned the tables of measures; and they will never forget them. This is, in brief, what is meant by industrial education. To learn by using the hands, to study from things as well as from books. This is the new school, these are the new lessons. The children who can sew and design, or draw, or carve wood, or do joinering work, or cast metals, or work in clay and brass, are the best educated children, because they use their hands as well as their eyes and their brains. You may say that in such schools all the boys will become mechanics and all the girls dressmakers. Some may; many will not; and yet whatever they do, be it preaching, keeping a store or singing in concerts, they will do their work better than those who only read in books.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, February 11, 1887.

At times, these instructional articles seemed more pointed toward teachers than at parents, and may have been a means of soothing the upset of parents ill at ease with the newfound organizational bureaucracies and rigidities of a graded, modern school system. Indeed, issues of discipline and control, always a part of schooling, rose to the fore in several instances documented in the local historic record, with others hinted at in the subtext. It will be recalled that General L.M. Lewis ended his association with the board of directors of Marvin College over a disagreement regarding school discipline. Professor Lyon, on his accession to the superintendency was praised for his skills as a disciplinarian and a commander. Regarding an incident in which a teacher was assaulted, the *Enterprise* felt inclined to advise, “It is the bounden duty of a teacher to administer needed punishment, and is not optional with her whose children shall be punished. The regulations of a school are made to bear equally upon every one and if there are those who are not willing to have their children treated as others are they have but to keep them at home.”<sup>216</sup>

Perhaps because of this incident or others, the *Enterprise* felt inclined to mediate the situation. One series in particular, reaching a height in their appearance around the time of Hogg’s administration, was a series bearing the title “Educational Dots.” These “dots” included aphorisms, truisms, and assorted “best practices” then espoused by the educational journals of the day, or otherwise, perhaps, by the editor of the newspaper when no reference was given. Single line items might appear, along the lines of the

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<sup>216</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, November 28, 1890.

following: “If any member of a class fails to get a clear idea of the lesson from the first demonstration, will you scold him and call him dull, or will you ransack your own brain for a more simple explanation?” The tone and substance of many of the “dots” suggested the child-study movement as typified by G. Stanley Hall and others. For instance, the following composed a typical entry of Educational Dots, this one reprinted in the *Enterprise* from the *National Educator* entitled:

### Little Mistakes In Teaching

- To be a slave of a text book. Confining oneself to one grammar, one arithmetic, the particular language or method of one book.
- To follow the forms of a text book. Pupils go over a form as one and two are three. Two plus one are three. No necessity for such stereo type forms if the principle is understood.
- To teach the small pupils only. We assist those that are bright, carry them on our arms, while the poor, dull, backward pupils are neglected.
- Failure to use the blackboard. In some schools the blackboard is used only for ornamentation and never for work. Use it daily and hourly.
- Detracting errors is not correcting them. It is not enough to call attention to an error or criticize it. When errors are criticized they should be properly corrected.
- Overly severe criticism. Teach pupils that making a mistake is not criminal. Do not frighten them when they make a mistake. We all make mistakes, and should treat those that make them tenderly.
- In assigning lessons, the lessons should not be assigned in an indefinite way, as by saying, “get so far, so many problems, and if you can, get more.”
- Teachers talk too much. Talking in a high key demoralizes a school. Give the pupil an opportunity to talk, do not use up his time.
- Repeating answers of pupils. Very frequently the teacher does all the reciting by repeating every answer of the pupil.
- Scolding, grumbling, threatening, startling a school into quiet have a bad effect. These things soon demoralize a school.
- Riding hobbies. Oral teaching becomes lecturing, picking up everything that is new, too much time devoted to mental arithmetic or mental philosophy discarded

entirely, too much oral spelling, running object lessons to extremes, etc. often becomes hobbies of teachers.

Other “dots” appeared from time to time remarking upon the child-centered and behavioristic approach to conducting a classroom, for the sake not only of efficiency, but of humaneness. These “dots” serve as exemplars in the grammar of schooling, at least as indications of collective, community expectations if not as actual practices of the teachers, themselves.

### **An Administrative Viewpoint**

Some degree of insight into the last superintendent’s administrative philosophy and practice can be gleaned from an item appearing in an issue of the *Texas School Journal* in 1898, during the final year of Superintendent J.C. Ryan’s tenure with the school district. In the March issue, editor Narnie Harrison posed ten questions of interest relating to instructional practice and pedagogical aptitude to area superintendents. Ryan’s responses followed those of John Hopkins, superintendent in Galveston, in the “News and Notes” section. Harrison’s questions, prescient perhaps, for the time period, were as follows:

1. What have you observed to be the most prevailing defect in the method of class recitation?
2. Have you observed any general difference between men and women as disciplinarian in the school room?
3. Is there any one trait of character above others that you desire your teachers should have? If so, what?
4. Name three characteristics of one whom you would consider “a born teacher.”

5. Do you believe that our city teachers generally have too much school work outside school hours?
6. Can you state a definite limit to the official control you wish to exert over your teachers?
7. What is your opinion of the value of written grades and reports?
8. Do you prohibit, or do you merely discourage, corporal punishment in your schools?
9. What do you consider the most striking defect in our rural schools?
10. What do you consider the most striking defect in our city schools?

Ryan's responses reveal a somewhat conservative bent, particularly regarding the conventional approach to "recitation" as a standard classroom practice of instruction/assessment. Other responses indicate a distinct and warm concern for children, the propensity either to dodge a response or to be coy (or both), and a desire to stabilize the system through the increased administrative power. Ryan's responses:

1. Allowing pupils to talk, instead of having them recite. Holding them to time and topic or theme.
2. Yes. Women, as a rule, are much superior to men as disciplinarians.
3. Yes. A positive moral purpose, a persistent tending toward a high ideal.
4. (a) A sympathetic love for children, (b) a large share of common sense, (c) a warm religious nature, and great faith in humanity.
5. As a rule, yes.
6. I can.
7. As a rule, I think there is much required of teachers that is worthless, especially in the way of reports.
8. I discourage corporal punishment, and really prohibit it conditionally.
9. A want of professionally trained teachers.

10. Limited powers of superintendents, and frequent changes made in the teaching force.<sup>217</sup>

## Teacher Institutes

Today referred to as staff development (or continuing professional development), and for many years previously referred to as teacher in-service days, the teacher institutes of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries formed the nucleus of organizational frameworks ensuring the continuing professional development of the school faculty. The legal mandate for holding county institutes for teachers in the common schools was longstanding. As city districts formed, they too shared in the occasion of offering continuing professional development of their faculties. Described as “a school of instruction, of which the county superintendent is the Principal,” the purpose of the institutes was multi-pronged:

1. The teacher is to be assisted to increase the scope and accuracy of his scholarship.
2. The teacher is to be encouraged to adopt the true attitude of the profession.
3. The teacher is to be taught to recognize his duties and his rights.
4. Knowledge is to be gained of the educational problems before the country, work is to be done upon these questions, and the teacher is to receive inspiration to share in this work.
5. And especially concerning his own county, every teacher is to be made a component part of a great

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<sup>217</sup> Narnie Harrison, ed., *The Texas School Journal*, v. XVI n. 2, (March 1898), 38.

unified force working for the gradual but sure  
advancement of every school interest.<sup>218</sup>

Although the Texas Legislature considered laws regarding teacher attendance and institute content, legislators were slower to pass regulations that would provide financial support for the professional development of teachers. Although policymakers appropriated funds to support the system of summer normal institutes for their first three years in operation, the summer normals did not receive financial support from the state after 1886. Likewise, county and city institutes never received monies from the state.<sup>219</sup>

In addition to county institutes, many Texas independent/city school districts held local institutes that were sponsored by their city superintendents. Administrators often integrated these local institutes into that of county institute work, scheduled regularly and often on a more frequent basis. These smaller institutes allowed for increased opportunities for group work among the teachers attending, fostered teacher leadership and promoted more readily the active participation of those involved.<sup>220</sup>

To some degree, the county and city institutes operated as a normal school of short duration. Called upon to offer instruction to teachers in the best methods of pedagogy, they were especially encouraged to focus on the practicalities of running a classroom. “There is a place in the Institute for the lecture, the essay, and the oration, but

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<sup>218</sup> R.B. Cousins, *Fifteenth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Years Ending August 31, 1905 and August 31, 1906* (Austin, Tx. State Board of Education), 22.

<sup>219</sup> Melinda Jo Spearman, “The Peripatetic Normal School: Teacher Institutes in five Southwestern Cities (1880-1920)”, (Doctoral Dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 2006), 40.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

there is a much larger place for class work,” exhorted State Superintendent R.B. Cousins in his Biennial Report of 1906, finding newfound pleasure in the recent legislation to require the attendance of teachers which for so many years prior had been voluntary, but also to incentivize their attendance by including the days in their employment contracts. From the frequently printed programs for upcoming teachers’ institutes, one might argue that Cousins rarely got his way, as they were often marked by topics indicating greater attendance among them was needed. Nevertheless, the announced programs which often seemed heavy on lectures, essays, and orations, demonstrated the curricular concerns of the day, and shed important light on the local grammar of schooling.

Being the county seat, and in possession of the excellent instructional facilities afforded by the (former) Marvin College campus, Waxahachie frequently hosted the county teachers institutes, and its own city teachers institutes. Often held at the courthouse, and at other times at the Park Public School campus, these institutes allowed for well-documented informational sessions among county and city educators. Indeed, doing so afforded an economic boon to the host city when teachers and administrators from throughout the county attended. At many of the county and city institutes, plans were made for hosting the larger, but related, summer normal institute, wherein Waxahachie frequently prevailed, once again because of its school facilities. While the requirement for holding county institutes had been legally mandated for years, the law lacked teeth in enforcing attendance, and thus, while many were held, attendees often consisted of those most interested in advancing their careers. Newspaper reports of the occasions frequently mention the top administrators and most highly-certificated teachers



as presenters, but as often as not comment upon the institute's poor attendance, which sometimes resulted in their outright cancellation.<sup>221</sup>

Serving as the instructional component of the Ellis County Teachers Association, the county institute held in Waxahachie in January of 1886 listed city superintendent B.M. Howard as secretary, and presenter. His topic, whether as lecture, essay, oration, or otherwise, was altogether fitting: "The Importance of Teachers Conventions and their Co-operation." Others from throughout the pre-eminent institutions in the county presented on: "Child Nature and the Teacher's Preparation," "How to Secure Cooperation of Parents," "To What Extent are Teachers Responsible for the Moral Training of Their Pupils?" "Methods of Teaching Higher Mathematics," and "Needed School Legislation."<sup>222</sup>

Neither were the African-American teachers left without their own institutes. J. W. Tildon, who replaced W.J. Trulove as principal of the African-American school, was a frequent presenter at a variety of institutes, held on a wider-ranging basis in regions covered, ostensibly due to the fewer numbers of African-American teachers. In 1893, Tildon presented the topic "Difficulties Incidental to the Teacher's Profession" to the "colored teachers midwinter association," inclusive of the counties of McLennan, Hill,

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<sup>221</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, May 11, 1894.

<sup>222</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, January 11, 1887.

Ellis, Dallas, Freestone, Limestone, Henderson, Kaufman, Falls, and Navarro counties, meeting that year in Corsicana, located about 30 miles to the southeast of Waxahachie.<sup>223</sup>

Widely active in the Colored Teachers State Association, Tildon rose to become its president in 1896, serving for one year, as was its custom.<sup>224</sup> His address to the organization in July of 1897 is illustrative of his curricular concerns, and provides some few clues of his character. Recognizing that he presided at a time of change in schooling aims, and largely supportive of the efforts of Booker T. Washington upon whom he heaped much praise, Tildon nevertheless held that industrial education should not supplant a classical one:

But in our haste to receive the advantages which flow from skilled labor and the privileges of wealth we must not supplant the work now done for the development of the mind with that to be done for the development of the hand. A hand, however skilled, is powerless or dangerous without a mind and heart to know the right and a will to choose it. To permit industrial education to supplant our higher education as some advocate would be to give up an agency which has proven efficient in the elevation of other people and to try in its stead an experiment without any history. It would be a repetition on a grand scale of the trade Esau made, and here lies the parting of the ways of the friends of industrial education.<sup>225</sup> (For the entire address, see Appendix B).

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<sup>223</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, December 28, 1893.

<sup>224</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, July 25, 1896.

<sup>225</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, July 2, 1897.

Although their press coverage was meager in comparison to those announcements for the white teacher institutes, from the items available one detects that the African-American gatherings took on a distinct flavor all their own. One in particular seemed to suggest a more churchlike, celebratory affair, if only by the frequency with which music interspersed the topics of discussion, and the participatory, call and response-like activity which marked the commencement of the program:

Colored Teachers Institute: To be held at colored Baptist Church, March 1 and 2.

- Invocation—Rev. J.W. Rankin
- Song, “I need thee every hour.”
- Institute. Roll call, Responded to by quotations from Pestalozzi.
- Music.
- Our City Schools, J.W. Tildon.
- Music.
- The New Teacher versus the Old, Rev. Balay and Miss I.V. Jones.
- Music.
- How parents and teacher can help each other, E.W. Kelley and Mrs. L.B. Franklin.
- Music.
- The chief aim of Education, Rev. G. W. Hill and Rev. J.W. Rankin.

Saturday 10:00 a.m.

- Invocation, Rev. W.B Butler.
- Song “What a friend we have in Jesus.”
- Qualifications of a primary teacher, S.A. Coffin and Mrs. S.A. Trulove.
- Music.
- When and How should Texas History be taught, Rev. J.W. Williams and Miss Lena Bates.
- Music.
- Should vocal music form a part of the public school curriculum?, G. W. Locust and Lena B. Thomas.
- Music.

- The attractive incentives to study, J.W. Barron and Miss G.A Richardson.
- Music.
- Adjournment 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Afternoon Session.

- Song, “Columbia,”
- Institute.
- Address, by Prof. E.D. Criddle, County Supt.
- Music.
- Character, the greatest possession, Miss A.L.C. Taylor.
- Music.
- Suggestive daily program, C.A. Buford and Mrs. A. Daniels.
- Music.
- Benefits derived from Summer Normals, Profs. T.H. Lone, A. Renyan, C.C. Cade and W.H. Burnett.
- Music.
- Unfinished Business.<sup>226</sup>

## The Basic Grammar of Schooling

Tyack and Cuban quote John Dewey—“the manner in which the machinery of instruction bears upon the child...really controls the whole system”—as a means of illustrating educational outcomes as a product of the organizational structures of the school. These structures—manifested in habits, procedures, customs, expectations, etc.—were stamped, molded, and shaped, at least insofar as the public school endeavor, during the period 1884 to 1898. Examples ranged from the school bell which called students to

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<sup>226</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, March 1, 1901.

school, to the subject-oriented textbooks which organized content, to the evolution of the local curriculum and extra-curriculum. They were informed, if not inherited, from those which preceded them from the “old academy,” Marvin College, and schools along the fashion of Mrs. Nash’s School. Say Tyack and Cuban: “Practices such as age-graded classrooms structure schools in a manner analogous to the way grammar organizes meaning in verbal communication. Neither the grammar of schooling nor the grammar of speech needs to be consciously understood to operate smoothly.”<sup>227</sup> Thus, in the public schools of Waxahachie, age-graded classrooms with subject-specific areas of study, and Carnegie units of credit for time spent in the study of particular subjects, as supervised by an affiliated status with the State University, became at once the prevailing norm. The fluidity and elasticity of that moment in which the grammatical rules of schooling were being established, never to be repeated, combined with the societal influences of race and religion, marked the manner in which the public school endeavor was to be carried out and experienced by its stakeholders for the years to come.

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<sup>227</sup> Tyack and Cuban, *op. cit.*, 85.

## **Chapter Four: The Acker Regime, 1898-1910**

On Sunday evening, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1900, the last graduating class of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (or, given one's preference, the first graduating class of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) from the high school department of Waxahachie's Park School gathered at the Main Street Christian Church to hear a special commencement sermon delivered by the Rev. George E. Clothier. Filling the front pews, the 7 female and 5 male graduates from the class of 1900 augmented the capacity crowd, no doubt inclusive of their friends and relatives. The members of this class marked not only the turning point of one century to the next, but the final farewell to the infancy of the public school district in Waxahachie.

The graduating class occupied the seats immediately in front of the speaker and "presented a splendid array of intelligence and brightness." Among them was Jeannette McDuffie, socialite daughter of Ellis county pioneers, a short teaching career not far on her horizon. Present also was Brevard Templeton, of the large family of local Templetons, several of whom had thriving legal careers as lawyers and judges. The teachers and trustees sat directly behind the class. The Rev. J.C. Smith, noted for his energetic promotion of the local Chautauqua, offered an "able and eloquent" invocation. He was followed by the Rev. Mr. Ewell, who made a few remarks apropos of the occasion, during the course of which he said that "the work of the teacher was equal and almost superior in importance to that of the preacher and that education was the handmaid of the church of the living God," as heads nodded in agreement.

As the featured speaker, Rev. Clothier's discourse was plain, practical and understood by his listeners to be thoroughly progressive. They were, after all, at a turning point of a new century. He deemed it unwise, he said, for one of his age "to fall into a rut," so he repeated the points of his homily in an "original manner" which kept the audience in "rapt attention" throughout the entire service. No doubt his speaking style was highly entertaining.

In preliminary remarks, Clothier said that the public school system of Texas, in the manner of its organization and method of its administration, was "superior to any other branch of our government and ahead of church organizations, and that the personnel of its teachers was very high." While no plan of religion or manner of doctrine was allowed to be taught, he said, yet most of the teachers were members of some church and held to more strict moral account than most any church or its members. He said that no favoritism was shown between "an humble child of the poor and the proud scion of wealth; that the pocket book of our citizenry was interested in the integrity of the system," and that "there could be no more powerful ally than self interests backed up by family affections."

For the better part of his sermon, Clothier took his text from Proverbs, chapters One through Five. Admonishing the graduates to seek wisdom and all its advantages, to practice virtue and flee from vice, Rev. Clothier concluded with a flourish, exhorting "all who could afford it to continue in their studies and not stop at the high school degree." Rev. Clothier's sermon was followed by a musical rendition from Prof. Hemphill, delivered most beautifully and "most effectively."

Prof. W.L. Acker then in behalf of the pupils and teachers of the school, thanked the congregation for their complimentary attendance and urged that every parent see to it that each pupil attended school Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of the week in order that they undergo final examination preparatory to receiving promotion cards.<sup>228</sup>

Acker had arrived in Waxahachie in 1894 at the early age of twenty to assume the principalship of the high school department of Park school. A graduate of Austin College in Sherman, Acker succeeded J.H. Phillips as principal, who had assumed the county superintendency. In appearance, Acker cut the figure of the erudite pedant, his dark hair worn in the style of the day, parted down the middle and flipped back, forming hornlike curls at the brim of his forehead. His thin lips, upright stance, and penetrating stare marked the seriousness of the studious, well-schooled pedagogue.

Acker had so impressed the trustees that they chose him for the district's top job in the early spring of 1898, perhaps capitalizing upon his youthful vigor. The *Enterprise* described Acker as a "scholarly gentleman" who had only the year before married his fiancée, Pearl, bringing her to Waxahachie from her hometown of Commerce.

Acker immediately set about imprinting his brand of school leadership upon the district, which focused upon academic scholarship and adherence to high standards. Reports bearing news of his school leadership activities demonstrated the familiar positive relationship cultivation typical of his predecessors in his celebratory and cordial comments regarding school patrons and students. But, in equal part, his sense of

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<sup>228</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, May 11, 1900.



academic rigor can be gleaned from accompanying comments, such as, “ It is understood that no pupil who failed in as many as three subjects will be given a second examination,” declaimed prior to registration for the 1901 school year. “Our pupils must be thorough and the standard of the schools must be maintained.”<sup>229</sup> Acker intended for the reputation of the school district to grow in the esteem of its auditors and observers.

Acker’s association with the school district spanned sixteen years, longer than the school district had been in existence, up to that time; his tenure as principal covered the years 1894 to 1898, as superintendent from 1898 to 1910. This span of years marked the entrance of the school district into the modern age, distinguishing its evolution from the vacillations and inconsistencies of its formative years. Acker’s steady presence allowed for the district to take on its own unique personality, to establish itself in the minds of the public as a “real school” which held a consistent and predictable grammar of schooling. During his fifteen years of service to the district, he oversaw the graduation of 215 matriculates in the city public schools, sixty-nine of them young men, and one hundred and forty-six of them young women.<sup>230</sup> More importantly, he oversaw the first transformation in curriculum from classical to modern, as the local expectation for educational outcomes became entwined with the industrial development of the town, and local forces of conservatism and progressivism exercised competing influence.

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<sup>229</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, September 6, 1901.

<sup>230</sup> Course of Study and Rules and Regulations of the Waxahachie Public Schools 1910-1911, *op. cit.*, 10-17.

Acker presided over major events which would influence the school district and the education carried out within it for years to come. During his tenure, the local Chautauqua movement rose to the fore as a community-wide cultural and educational phenomenon, becoming the pre-eminent Chautauqua gathering in the state. The arrival of Trinity University to the town in 1902 resulted in the demise of Texas College (aka West End School), its primary and secondary departments no longer competing with those of Park Public School. It also began its service to the community as educational centerpiece around which the town defined and exemplified its goals of education. It served not only as a contact point for drawing to the town an education elite in the form of faculty, it produced teachers of high quality for the town's schools, and served as a beacon to the town's young as a post-secondary educational destination. More than at any time before, Park High School would be called upon to be a preparatory institution for university entrance. Finally, the establishment of Sims Library, bequeathed to the town by Nicholas P. Sims in 1905, complete with Lyceum, added to the cultural and literary wealth of the community, serving to promote an elite form of literacy. Indeed, these institutions often overshadowed the local public school endeavor, eclipsing it in esteemed value, and claiming the limelight as paragons of progress for the town's educational undertakings.

Acker paralleled his career in the Waxahachie schools with a rise through the ranks of the Masonic Order, ascending from the office of grand principal sojourner in 1902<sup>231</sup> to worshipful grand master in 1910,<sup>232</sup> his final year as superintendent. His

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<sup>231</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, December 5, 1902

tireless work with the organization demonstrated both a commitment to public service and a perhaps not uncalculated rise in esteem and prestige among his colleagues. Work in the organization allowed Acker to capitalize upon his own astute talents of composition, rhetoric, and oratory. Several of his speeches connected with the Masonic Order at their various conferences survive in published form and through their content and style, much of it in flowery prose with a highly sentimental tone, shed light on his personality and thinking.

## **The School District Grows Up With the Town: Cotton, Culture, and Trinity University**

### **Cotton**

By the mid 1880's Waxahachie serviced four different railroads—the H&TC; the Fort Worth and New Orleans (later absorbed into the Missouri Kansas Texas Railroad system); the Gulf, Colorado, and Santa Fe; and the Texas Central. Waxahachie's dramatic population increase - from 1,354 in 1870 to 3,076 in 1880 - provides evidence of that industry's contribution to the local economy.<sup>233</sup> In 1887, Waxahachie was the largest town in the county with a population of 4,500, and the community was growing rapidly, although the neighboring community of Ennis was equally large, and often reported a

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<sup>232</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, December 8, 1910

<sup>233</sup> Texas Historical Commission. "Historic Resources of Waxahachie", (Texas Historical Commission, 2009) <http://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/shell-county.htm> (accessed November 16, 2009).

larger scholastic population. Throughout most of the 1880's, agricultural production of cereal grains predominated within the county, but by the 1890's, cotton—prized as a cash crop—began to supersede all other crops. Its production soon made Ellis County the “Banner Cotton County of the World.”<sup>234</sup> This shift in emphasis contributed to labor shortages, to which the town responded by forming a Board of Trade which laid out an advertising plan designed to attract new residents to move to the county and work in the cotton fields. The African-American population increased considerably during this time, creating a noticeable strain in race relations as evidenced in the tone of press coverage, and, somewhat ironically, contributing to the even greater production of cotton as planters found a ready source of cheap labor among a group of persons denied full participation in the political system. As in so many areas regarding its schooling, Waxahachie's history, insofar as the reliance upon sharecropping and tenant farming, was a microcosm of the larger history of the South.<sup>235</sup>

Landowners, tenant farmers, and sharecroppers of both races, on small plots, medium-sized farms, or large plantations invested in the cotton industry. Cotton gins sprang up across the countryside. Later, cotton-compresses appeared so that farmers could have their cotton baled into compact units for easier shipping and sales directly to out of state buyers. Also appearing were cotton-seed oil mills which extracted the oil

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<sup>234</sup> Waxahachie, Texas. Citizens National Bank. *Your History and Ours: A Tribute to Waxahachie and Ellis County*. (Waxahachie, 1968), 26. Over the years, other Texas counties would also claim the title “Banner Cotton County of the World,” particularly Collin county and Williamson county, depending upon the amount produced each year.

<sup>235</sup> Kelly McMichael Stott, *Waxahachie: Where Cotton Reigned King*, Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia, 2002.

from the seeds, the seed hulls thereafter added to animal feed, milking yet more value out of the crop.

Certainly, the wealth of this great agricultural boon to the town and county tended to aggregate at the top, among the professional elite of the upper and mercantile class. A case in point was encapsulated in a local reprint of an article appearing in a Michigan newspaper regarding an interview with a local Waxahachie merchant who was visiting his former residence:

#### Feels Safer in Texas

When Mr. Israel Mincer, (our Jake) was at his old home in Detroit, Michigan, recently, he got to talking with a crowd in which there was a newspaper reporter. Jake was surprised next morning to find himself in print. The following was published in the Detroit Journal, and is copied by the Enterprise from the Sherman Herald: "It is fourteen years since I left Detroit, and in search of a position as a telegraph operator found myself in Texas," said Israel Mincer, at the Griswold. "Being unable to find the position I sought, I took a place as a clerk in a Dallas dry goods store. Being voted a good salesman I received a generous salary. I saved a few dollars and went into business for myself at Waxahachie, forty miles south of Dallas, where I have a trade in dry goods, clothing and boots and shoes that aggregates from \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year. Trade in Waxahachie is entirely dependent upon the cotton crop, and goods are sold on a credit from January to the middle of September. The Texans are good pay when they have money, but if the cotton crop fails, the merchant must carry them over for another year. The stories of wild, wild westernism in Texas are gross exaggerations of the truth, and I should feel safer with \$10,000 on my person in any part of Texas than with \$100 in my pocket at night on the streets of Detroit. Here the thug and the thief are provided with weapons in defiance of law and the reputable citizen goes unarmed, while in Texas it is thoroughly understood that everybody is prepared for any emergency.

So it is that a man who is peaceably disposed in Texas can easily avoid trouble, and is less in danger than in Michigan.”<sup>236</sup>

When Walter Acker arrived in town in 1894 to assume his duties as principal of the Park Public School, the *Fort Worth Daily Gazette* noted that Waxahachie boasted “fifteen grocery stores, seven dry goods and clothing establishments, one exclusive clothing house, three hardware stores, four drug stores, three national banks, four implement houses, two general mercantile establishments, two racket stores, two shoe stores, three livery stables, three hotels, and a large number of smaller institutions such as bakeries, restaurants, etc.” The same article stated that there were “four public schools with good buildings,” but only mentioned the Park school building by name. The article congratulated Superintendent Lyon upon the high school’s affiliation with the State University, and reported a seemingly inflated enrollment of 625 white and 226 “colored” scholastics.<sup>237</sup> Not mentioned was the city’s new public water works, pumped from artesian wells and distributed throughout the developed portions of the city, or the telephone system which had been one of the first to provide home service in the north Texas area, or the electrical power plant which had electrified the city for past several years.<sup>238</sup>

By the turn of the century, E.A. DuBose, the former mayor who had tried so earnestly and diligently to bring the public school endeavor to fruition in the mid-1880’s,

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<sup>236</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, March 22, 1889.

<sup>237</sup> *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, May 14, 1894.

<sup>238</sup> Stott, *op.cit.*, 65.

had now turned his energies to other areas of furthering the economic expansion of the town. Believing that Waxahachie yet had more to gain from its cotton production and the industry it generated, he proposed that local citizens fund a textile mill where local cotton could be finished into cloth. Finished cloth commanded higher market prices than did the raw bales of cotton, and Dubose's first-hand research in Alabama and South Carolina convinced him that a textile mill in Waxahachie would be ideal. Interested citizens formed a board of directors in January 1900 and set about raising the \$150,000 capital needed for construction. Within a year the factory, equipped with 5000 spindles and 150 looms, and supervised by a superintendent imported from Scotland, went into production. The two hundred mill workers augmented Waxahachie's already growing population. Their housing—twenty-four small, frame tenant houses springing up over the course of several years—formed a self-contained village apart from the larger community, and perhaps contributed to some degree of prejudice toward them, as references to the “lint-heads” of the cotton textile mill were reported. The mill village reportedly contained a school, presumably for the education of the children of the workers, but historical documents regarding it are scarce.<sup>239</sup>

With the growing interest in a cotton textile mill came a corollary concern with the education necessary to staffing the factories associated with a manufacturing economy. Over the course of the previous decade, sentiment had built around the nature of the curriculum of the public school system, especially one operated within an

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<sup>239</sup> Stott, *op. cit.*, 63.

agriculturally oriented community. Manual training and domestic science appeared as concepts appropriate to the curriculum of a public school. As early as 1889, the newspaper had voiced the opinion that “education” required a broader definition than that of the “Academic Scholar” as it sketched in layman’s terms the parameters of a “Social Efficiency” approach:

### Education

We frequently take occasion to discuss education, and our only excuse for referring to it so frequently is its importance and the erroneous notions that are connected with it. We desire to see our boys and girls educated. So does everybody. What is education? Knowledge. Whom do you call a highly educated man? The one who has a wide range of knowledge. As it is often expressed, ‘he can discuss any subject intelligently.’ But that is extravagant. Many of our ‘most highly educated’ men are utterly ignorant of the most common affairs of life. If the man who could talk fluently and understandingly of literature, astronomy, philosophy and theology, could sit down with a farmer and talk intelligently with him upon the process of agriculture; with the mechanic upon the modus operandi of building a house, shoeing a horse, etc., would not that man be voted as a man of more knowledge than he who could talk glibly of the stars and literature, Greek, Latin, and English, but who was ignorant of agriculture and mechanics? Would the former not be the better educated man of the two? Would he not be more self-reliant and better satisfied with himself? Practically the idea is prevalent that if we teach a boy agriculture or mechanics, he must be a farmer or a mechanic. That does not necessarily follow. We should teach him these things as a part of a liberal education. The boy’s education is not complete unless he is taught such things, though he may be stuffed with the dead languages and made master of all the modern ones.

The manual training schools are not for the purpose of turning boys into the mechanical trades. The boy may go



into them if he desires, but the manual training school is simply engaged in giving him an education. If he chooses to be a lawyer, or doctor, or minister, or loafer, after he leaves the school, what he has learned in it will not make him a worse lawyer, doctor, minister, or loafer. It may not do him any good as a loafer, but it will do him good in anything else he may go at. The farmer who learns the principles of mechanics will be a better farmer. Our systems of education are practically founded upon the belief that a man can make one thing of himself just as well as another. No recognition whatever is made of the differences of natural abilities in different directions. We educate just about as the doctors give medicine. All patients are dosed with the same decoction. Take it or die, or take it and die. The decoction is standard, and if your system does not happen to harmonize with the decoction as much the worse for you. So with our education. We arrange a course of study, and every boy and girl must take the dose. It leads more directly into the over-crowded profession than anywhere else, but if the student has not the ability of tact to make a success in one of them, like the patient with whom the decoction does not agree, he is left.

Now the manual training school leads everywhere. It teaches the principles of mechanics. If the boy is better fitted for a carpenter than anything else, he can be a carpenter; if fitted for a stone-mason, he can be one; if his natural ability leads him to be a machinist, all right; if he prefers to be a farmer, doctor, minister or anything else, manual training fits him the better for his occupation. It is practical education; it is a broad education; it is an upward education.<sup>240</sup>

Over the course of the next decade, as the public school took firm hold and the prospect of a free high school education entered the public consciousness, the definition of education began to be interpreted from a broader perspective. By the turn of the century, within the thriving agriculture (and agro-industrial) market of Waxahachie, this

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<sup>240</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, September 6, 1889.

concern registered in the form of yet another call for the location of an institution of higher learning within the boundaries of the town or its vicinity. Once again, an economic motive figured prominently in the sentiment.

Certainly Acker was considering local sentiment regarding technical/industrial education, as it appeared in regular intervals in the local press. Herein lay the seeds of events to transpire in the next decade, forever changing the high school curriculum from what it had been only two generations earlier. The mission of the high school that Acker had taken charge of in 1898 was changing, even as he oversaw it. It evolved from primarily preparing students for college to the additional or alternative task of preparing students for life and non-academic jobs. Electives were made available by the high schools and student choice was encouraged, as long as they chose from a basic curriculum of Latin, scientific programs, modern languages and English, which remained the first courses in which a school could attain affiliation. High school diplomas suddenly became permits into universities, and students began to see the real value of higher education and the impact it could have on their lives.<sup>241</sup> To some extent, local movement in this area may have been prompted by local citizenry responding to a letter to the

*Enterprise* editor:

Mr. Editor,

It is now time for us to agitate the question of a textile school for Texas. The necessity for, and the benefits to be derived from such an institution are patent to everyone who

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<sup>241</sup> Karen Jean Nicol, *Establishment of Academic Standards for Early 20th Century Texas High Schools: The University of Texas Affiliated Schools Program*, (Dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 2005).

will do a little thinking. In a few years there will be cotton mills in every cotton-producing county in the state, and we should be able to secure all of our superintendents, bosses and other practical help from among our own citizens, and not be forced to import them as is now the case. North and South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, and perhaps other southern states, have already established these schools and they are not only able to supply their own mills with experienced manufacturers, but they are, of soon will be, able to furnish other states with them. Our legislature will soon meet and it is now a very opportune time to petition our governor to embody a recommendation in his message favorable to an appropriation for such a school for Texas. The cotton manufacturing industry promises more in the way of profitable employment for our young men, boys and girls than any other industry in the state, and if our state authorities would take the matter in hand at once and make the necessary appropriations to establish a textile school in Texas, it would be one of the wisest and most beneficent acts they could possibly do, in my opinion.

I am for a textile school for Texas, and for its location in Waxahachie, and I trust some of our leading citizens will take the matter in hand immediately so that we can get it before our governor in time for his consideration at the approaching session of the legislature. I would suggest that a petition first be circulated here and the delegates be sent to Dallas, Ft. Worth, Waco and other cities and towns for signatures, and then send a strong delegation to Austin to lay the matter before the governor. If we take the lead in the matter we would have a strong pull on the location. Then if we secure Trinity University (which I believe we will) we could possibly make the Textile School an adjunct to It or at least one would be an inducement for the location of the other.—L.C. Todd.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, December 14, 1900.

Todd's talk of an industrial school struck a popular chord among Waxahachians, who found within the proposal "practicability" and "utility in the highest degree." Citizens had felt that "all the best jobs in our mills go abroad, because we have not the experience and skill at home to fill the places," and thus felt deprived of the "cream of the material wealth manufactories bring" because of their limitations in technical education. Other states, not named, but most likely the neighboring states of Oklahoma or Louisiana were envied for their technical schools, "while Ellis County alone can furnish half the agricultural wealth of that entire state." At times, the argument took on a competitive tone, as it was proffered that , "It is all right for a state to support its eleemosynary institutions, its insane asylums for instance, but how infinitely better to train the latent genius to deftly and skillfully manipulate our home grown material into fabrics of untold wealth rather than ship them around the world, pay the freight and thousand and profits, while this intellect goes to waste and becomes insane under the onerous burdens of creating and never enjoying the basis of the world's wealth." Better to invest in an education that returns positive financial returns than to invest in those which create little or no economic value, or so the argument seemed to go. "By all means we ought to have an industrial school in Texas and we can furnish the best location of it on top side of earth." Leading citizens of the town, including such local educational boosters as E.A. DuBose and Judge O.E. Dunlap, were in favor of the plan.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*

The *Enterprise*, never at a loss to call for both the educational and economic improvement of the town offered the following editorial in response to the initiative:

The Enterprise fully indorses the suggestion of Mr. L.C. Todd relative to a textile school, established by the state. Such an institution is one of the great needs of the state. Entering upon a manufacturing career, sound public policy demands that the coming citizenship of the state be educated to the world. We have long been giving agricultural instruction to our young men who would accept it, and at Austin the state has established and is maintaining a university of high standard for the benefit of our young men and young women. A textile school, where the boys and girls of Texas can be instructed in manufacturing and other industrial pursuits, would be a stride forward that would add to our greatness. And rapidly place us in the forefront as a progressive, active and substantial commonwealth, capable of developing our own resources and furnishing the brain and skill necessary to make our industrial institutions a success. We trust Gov. Sayers may see fit to recommend the appropriation suggested by Mr. Todd.<sup>244</sup>

Within a few years, and under Acker's leadership, Waxahachie pioneered in the area of manual training and domestic science curriculum, becoming one of sixteen school districts which established a manual training department in its high school at the turn of the century, joining such larger districts as Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, and Waco, among others. The twenty-eighth legislature had provided a financial inducement for the districts which chose to create such departments, contributing \$500 in matching

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<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*

funds, a nominal sum in consideration of the amount expended.<sup>245</sup> Nevertheless, the acceptance of the funds and the creation of the department demonstrated the commitment of the district to follow the lead of the state in educational matters and to pioneer new territory in curriculum offerings.

Features of this curriculum manifested themselves in the advent of courses involving “Venetian Ironworking” and the more familiar woodworking. Over the years, this curriculum would trickle down through the curriculum to the lower grades: paperfolding for third graders, cardboard construction for fourth graders, and “knife-work”, basic and advanced, for fifth and sixth graders.<sup>246</sup>

Acker’s tenure would account for and respond to other influences pressing upon the nature in which the grammar of local schooling would be spoken. For not only the economic impulse beat through the community, but as well one tied to that increasing economic prosperity, but also predating it, hearkening to a grammar of schooling that encompassed the classical and the cultured.

## **Culture**

As cotton generated wealth, those fortunate enough to share in it aspired to bring a higher level of culture to the town. During the heyday of Marvin College, the local elite

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<sup>245</sup> Cousins, *op.cit.*, 32.

<sup>246</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, October 9, 1903. See Also: *Waxahachie Enterprise*, September 9, 1904.

had from time to time formed literary societies, as a means of elevating the local culture. An early one from 1880 included such town notables as General L.M. Lewis, E.F. Yeager, Mrs. C.D. Pickett, J.H. Husbands, Mrs. Laura Parks, Miss Laura Trippet, C.A. Arnold, H.A. McMillan, A.M. Dechman, and others. In 1889, the Waxahachie Shakespeare club was formed. Two years later, the White Rose Club was organized for young ladies with musical ability.<sup>247</sup> But the major catalyst for the edification and cultural elevation of its participants, and one which would prove a lasting and forceful influence upon the town's educational endeavor, was found in the form of Chautauqua.

The Chautauqua movement was a dominant force in the religious, political, and cultural life of the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Founded by John Heyl Vincent and Lewis Miller in 1874 in Chautauqua Lake, New York, the organization became known as the Chautauqua Institution. Christian instruction, preaching and worship were a strong part of the Chautauqua experience, as were demonstrations, lectures, music, and other entertainments. As the movement spread throughout the country, independent and circuit Chautauquas appeared on the scene, taking the form of the familiar religious camp meeting.

In his penetrative and evocative study entitled *The Chautauqua Moment: Protestants, Progressives, and the Culture of Modern Liberalism*, Andrew Rieser expounds at length on the essence of Chautauqua, noting that "hundreds of towns across the country experienced a Chautauqua moment in the late nineteenth century."

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<sup>247</sup> Waxahachie, Texas. Citizens National Bank, *op.cit.*, 24.

Waxahachie, along with several other communities in Texas, located the Chautauqua movement locally, and cultivated it into one of the predominant Chautauqua assemblies in the state in terms of size and longevity.

For Waxahachians, Chautauqua began as a recourse for post-secondary education for the wives and daughters of the local bourgeoisie. Chautauqua enabled cultural and educational aspirations to be realized locally, without sending daughters abroad to special schools, colleges, or universities. It allowed the self-culture impulse to be nurtured from the safety and convenience of one's own environs. With the departure of Allie Speer's Waxahachie Female Institute, local women and young women of means were left to their own devices for their educational and cultural improvement. Chautauqua, particularly the self-study aspect of the organization, fit the bill in more ways than one.

The self-culture impulse embodied by Chautauquans was bound up in middle-class efforts to exert cultural authority. Closer inspection reveals self-culture to be a hotly contested practice with political implications, a seemingly stable concept given new meanings as it buffeted the winds of industrialization, urbanization, immigration, and state formation.<sup>248</sup>

In 1889, the Sappho Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle was formed, in homage to the ancient Greek poet, and enlisted young ladies to pursue the three-year course of "system-reading" study. The membership, while changing from time to time, included a who's who of the daughters of local notables, some participating out of a

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<sup>248</sup> Andrew Chamberlain Rieser. *The Chautauqua Moment: Protestants, Progressives, and the Culture of Modern Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).



desire to earn the certificate of course completion in its own right, others merely to augment their university educations with the imprimatur of Chautauquan culture. Other motivations may have been to advertise one's membership in the dominant racial culture, as much within Chautauquan culture reflected, somewhat ironically, given its progressive pretensions, a veiled racism. Says Rieser:

While Chautauquans were no more racist than their contemporaries, they unwittingly used their racial status to preserve social privileges denied to black Americans. Chautauqua also depended on the support given to it by a racially privileged group of politically active clubwomen, for whom whiteness served as a vehicle for heightened public visibility. Chautauqua's tolerant ethos built bridges across ethnic and gender differences that once separated Americans. But it subsumed those differences under a racialized definition of middle-class citizenship that—in a society growing more segregated and imperialistic by the day—did not strike [one] as very democratic.<sup>249</sup>

One typical meeting of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle took place in 1891 at the Getzendaner home, Miss Willia Getzendaner presiding over the attendees: Miss \_\_\_ McMillan, Miss Flora McMillan, Miss May Siddons, and Miss Zephie Trippet. After responding to a roll call with a literary quote, the young ladies assembled covered the topics of the business and “participated in the program which made the afternoon rather memorable.” Their focus for the afternoon included several new ideas in the study of French literature.

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<sup>249</sup> Rieser, *op. cit.*, 6.

The popularity of the local Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, the C.L. S.C., rose to such a degree throughout the 1890's that its announcements, meetings, and curriculum become regular items in the local press:

The books for the Chautauqua course have arrived and are now lying in the express office awaiting the C.O.D. payment. As tardiness in our number will necessarily delay the entire class in receiving their books, we request each one to make a prompt payment of the requisite amount to treasurer, Mrs. J. Lee Penn.

--Marie Watson, Secretary C.L. & S. C.<sup>250</sup>

The contents of the books used in the coursework became evident throughout the course of the next several months as the lessons for upcoming meetings were posted. These lessons demonstrated the Euro-centric, and particularly Anglo-centric, focus of the curriculum. A case in point from the October meeting of the group:

#### C.L.S.C.

Lesson for Oct 13.

- "The Growth of the English Nation," chapter 2<sup>nd</sup> in page 32; teacher, Miss Vida Bisland.
- "Europe in the Nineteenth Century," chapter 2<sup>nd</sup>; teacher, Miss Alma Browning.'
- "Magazine Articles," teacher, Miss Mary Browning.
- Paper—"The English Nation in King Alfred's Time," Miss Kate Burrough.
- Paper—"Life and Character of King Alfred," Miss Fay Adkisson.

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<sup>250</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, September 28, 1894.

- Paper—"A Sketch of the Danes," Miss Nodie Bisland.
- Roll call.
- Facts learned from preceding lesson.

–Marie Watson, Sec’y.<sup>251</sup>

The propensity for Chautauqua to entwine itself with local public school endeavors was evidenced by the participation of such notable early Texas educators as J.H. Long, superintendent of the Dallas schools; H. Carr Pritchett, of the Sam Houston Normal Institute; C.D. Rice, superintendent of the Belton schools; and Superintendents Flake and Hopkins of the Navasota and Galveston schools, respectively. These men served as a board of directors and outlined a course curriculum for the Texas-Colorado Chautauqua in 1898 intended to approximate, in “scope and variety,” the curriculum offered at the original Chautauqua Institution in New York. Teachers from across the state were encouraged to attend this Chautauqua “summer school” in the summer of 1898. Indeed, many had pressed for the foundation of a Chautauqua closer to Texas and found the summer climate and locale of Colorado to be a perfect fit for vacationing seekers of culture and wisdom.

The Texas-Colorado Chautauqua summer school will have about the same number of departments, the lecture courses will be as extensive, and the special schools of music, art, oratory, etc., with the special amusement features, will be

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<sup>251</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, October 12, 1894.

established on a basis equal to that in the institution referred to [ *i.e.* the New York Chautauqua].<sup>252</sup>

Interest in the Chautauqua eventually grew beyond the assortment of club women of privilege who were pursuing self-enrichment through a correspondence course. Independent chautauquas were favored destinations for those Waxahachie families of means who traveled at leisure for their summer vacations. While a few visited the original Chautauqua Institution of Chautauqua Lake, New York, a much more frequent destination was Boulder, Colorado, as the location of the Texas-Colorado Chautauqua. As they returned with posted press announcements of their travels, they created greater interest in bringing the benefits of Chautauqua to Waxahachie for all to share. Waxahachians, heady with their growing agricultural wealth, bent upon bringing the luxuries of the modern era to their town, desired not only a cotton textile mill to capitalize upon their agricultural bounty, they now wanted their own Chautauqua.

While the Chautauqua movement flowered under the auspices of the Texas Synod of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, its local proponents included persons from all denominations. Area churches joined together with town businessmen and supported the initiative to locate the Chautauqua in West End Park. Rev. J.C. Smith, pastor of the Cumberland Presbyterian church in Waxahachie played an instrumental role in the initiative to locate the Chautauqua in Waxahachie.

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<sup>252</sup> *Texas School Journal*, *op. cit.*, 45.

In the fall of 1899, the Cumberland Presbyterian Chautauqua commission, composed of the Rev. W.B. Preston of Texarkana, Sheriff W.A. Stewart of Cleburne, the Rev. Eli Smith of Whitewright, and the Rev. Clay Collier of Midlothian, set about scouting a new location for the larger Chautauqua assembly in north Texas. Chautauqua camp meetings had taken place at Glen Rose only the summer before, but sentiment had coalesced on the opinion that the location was too remote, and that a livelier and more vibrant location needed to be found. Waxahachie moved to the top of the list, and in October, the delegation toured the town and its proposed site of West End Park. They were favorably impressed, but delayed making any immediate announcement until other points had been previewed.<sup>253</sup> Those sites paled in comparison, and Waxahachie was ultimately selected by the Texas Synod of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church as the new location for Chautauqua.

By the following summer, Waxahachie hosted its first annual Chautauqua encampment, transforming West End Park into a veritable tent city for two weeks in late July and early August. Thereafter, over the next several years, the Waxahachie Chautauqua grew in size and prestige, attracting guest speakers from across the country for the two-week summer encampments. Wrote the *Dallas Morning News*:

Situated in the suburbs of the city, upon the banks of the beautiful, winding Waxahachie Creek, the Chautauqua grounds occupy a perfect natural park, shadowed by wide-spreading oaks, elms, and pecans. While established by the synod of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church of Texas,

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<sup>253</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, October 18, 1899.

the Chautauqua is conducted upon interdenominational lines, and is devoted to the development of church and Sunday school work generally. The great success of last year's session and encouraging words from the thousands who attended have stimulated the directors to put forth greater efforts than before to entertain and care for the people.<sup>254</sup>

While certainly the preponderance of the sessions dealt with moral and religious themes, the educational and entertainment aspects of Chautauqua cannot be overlooked. Chautauqua was no revival meeting intended for the salvation of souls. More precisely, it was intended as a “great moral and educational force” from its founders. The same article quoted above noted that Waxahachie’s Chautauqua was “an ideal place for a summer convocation of busy, brain-tired men and women from business and professional life in search of spiritual enjoyment and temporal recreation.” Certainly that explained the featured speaker from the 1901 season as General John B. Gordon, who lectured on “The Last Days of the Confederacy” to a packed house. Other speakers more oriented toward the educational aspect of Chautauqua included: Judge O.E. Dunlap, who marveled audiences with slide projections of his travels about the globe to his accompanying lecture; Professor S.L. Hornbeak of Trinity University, who amazed audience members with “startling” demonstrations of physical phenomena when speaking on “the air we breathe;”<sup>255</sup> Professor James Carlisle, former State Superintendent of Public Instruction who gave the lecture “As a nation Educates, So It Shall Be,”; and even Alexander Hogg, former Waxahachie public school superintendent, who figured prominently as a guest

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<sup>254</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, July 21, 1901.

<sup>255</sup> Stott, *op. cit.*, 105.

speaker on Education Day with his lecture on “The Three chief Allies of American Organization—The Printing Press, the Public School, and the Railroads.”<sup>256</sup>

## **Trinity**

In the spring of 1901, amidst the Waxahachie buzz of Chautauqua planners, textile mill enthusiasts, and textile school planners, was 27 year-old Walter Acker, facing a growing town, a growing school district, and a growing family. Walter L., Jr. had recently celebrated his second birthday, and William (Will) Acker was not far behind him. Allie would soon follow, arriving on the scene in 1902, and little Mylie, sharing the name of Acker’s sister, would balance out the family in 1907. Acker reflected on the growth of the town since his arrival seven years ago. Then, his house on Dallas street seemed perfectly adequate. In the next few years, his family would need a larger place, and the homes going up along Marvin avenue looked very attractive to him, many decked out in fashionable “gingerbread” trim.

As the class of 1901 moved toward graduation, the third over which Acker had presided as superintendent, and the seventh in his career with the high school, Acker contemplated the growing needs and demands of the public school system. Not only was the enrollment growing, but calls for the purpose and intent of public education seemed

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<sup>256</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, July 27, 1901. Hogg was perhaps borrowing liberally from material penned by William Torey Harris, Commissioner of Education, who had briefly described “the railroad, the daily newspaper, and the common school [as] the three characteristic instruments of modern civilization” in the introduction to his *Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year 1889-90*, United States Dept. of Education, v. 1, 1893.

to be coming from all sides from a community that only several years before had been uncertain about funding a public school. Now that the school had been firmly established, it seemed that everyone had an opinion as to the educational outcomes for students in the public schools. Those inclined to view the nature of public education as a stimulus toward economic prosperity seemed to argue for a practically oriented curriculum, while those promoting the cultural and educational progress of the town seemed content to refine the public schools toward a level of “perfection” that could be measured in numbers of graduates acquiring either a university entrance, or a genteel status of grace and refinement. True, the high school department still reflected but a fraction of the overall enrollment. Most public school students stopped attending after the intermediate grades. Matriculates at the high school more often than not included only the sons and daughters, mostly the daughters, of the local professional class—merchants, bankers, lawyers, etc. But even it was growing. This year’s graduating class would be the largest since the district began graduating students—eighteen students, six young men and twelve young women.

In 1901, Acker oversaw the largest graduating class yet from the city public school. Eighteen graduates, twelve young women and six young men, “a splendid representation of the beauty and chivalry of the town,” accepted diplomas for meeting the standards of graduation.

This occasion was marked by the presence of the Wise orchestra, inclusive of Professor Wise and several music teachers from Texas College, at whose commencement



exercises the ensemble also played. At the appointed hour, the orchestra rendered in “a most pleasing manner a potpourri of beautiful airs,” while the curtain was raised, revealing a scene to the standing room only crowd in the old college chapel “that was entrancing in [its] loveliness.” The stage was beautifully decorated with palms and green foliage, with an intermingling of white and yellow, the class colors. The young women on the stage were clad in pure white, in stark contrast to the dark-suited young men.

Acker used the occasion to not only eulogize the pupils and the graduating students, but to praise the patrons and teachers alike for their united efforts in shaping a successful school year. His optimism was bountiful, and reflective of the spirit of the era. He found that, despite the growth of the school over the previous few years, it continued to reach for “perfection,” which he felt surely was in its grasp.

Each graduating senior had a role in the commencement exercises, and the affair approximated the familiar and ubiquitous “entertainments” in form, if somewhat more solemnized in function. There were poetic recitations from the female students, speeches and orations from the young males, and various musical renditions interspersed throughout.

For one of the graduates, the salutatorian, the evening marked the commencement of a lifetime of service to the public school system from which she had just graduated. Mabel Grizzard, daughter of the local sheriff’s deputy, “acquitted herself quite creditably in her role as a salutatorian.” Her short speech, articulated in a manner that presaged her

future skills as an English teacher, and much beloved primary school teacher and principal, was greeted with warm affection and generous applause.

The valedictorian, this year a young man, Isidor Miller, rendered a valedictory oration “with a force of eloquence that proved him a speaker of no meager ability.”<sup>257</sup>

Later that summer, Isidor went to Dallas to enroll in a business school, while several other Park High School graduates added considerably to Ellis County’s contribution to the freshmen class of the state university, The University of Texas. These recent and former graduates included: Albert Singleton, Tommie Cole, Rembert Watson, Osco McQuatters, Horace Trippett, Herman Coleman, John Criddle, and Cyral Erwin.<sup>258</sup>

Because of the great success of Chautauqua, Waxahachie was drawing vacationing Presbyterians from around the north Texas counties and beyond for the ten-day summer encampment, providing a major networking opportunity for the movers and shakers within the denomination to share ideas and make plans. With two successful Chautauqua seasons under its belt, Waxahachie and its promise of growth and industry caught the attention of those seeking to relocate the denomination’s flagship university from Tehuacana to a region less remote. Indeed, talk of relocation had been bandied about since last summer’s inaugural Chautauqua meeting, as Trinity faculty hobnobbed about with the Cumberland Presbyterian hoi polloi.

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<sup>257</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, June 14, 1901.

<sup>258</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, October 4, 1901.

Waxahachie's continuing quest for an institution of higher learning found a new impetus in the prospect of relocating Trinity University from Tehauacana. The following editorial ran in the *Waxahachie Enterprise* a few months after the Chautuqua's inaugural season.

### Trinity University

We have believed for some time that the University at Tehuacana would be removed from its present location. The Synod in session at Sherman last week said the school must be removed. We wish to call attention of the citizens of Waxahachie and Ellis county to the fact that this is the opportunity of a generation for our people. The Baptist and Christian churches have their universities at Waco, the Methodists have settled at Georgetown with their educational interests, the Presbyterians have located at Sherman. Trinity University is the only great university in sight for us and the probability is that when it locates again it will be settled for all time to come. The material advantages of such an institution to our town are worthy of consideration. The university will carry with it the educational prestige and influence of its constituency over the state of Texas, Indian Territory and Oklahoma. The educational system of the Cumberland denomination provides for but one university in all this territory, so there can be no competition. The school will bring with it an endowment of at least \$100,000. It has been estimated that the students in Waco universities spend an average of \$20 per month each. Trinity University has had as high as 100 pupils in attendance. If we can bring 200 students with the institution to this place it means an annual expenditure of \$40,000 by the students, besides the interest on the endowment which goes to pay the teachers and will enter the channels of trade around us. In addition to this, the class of people attracted to our city by reason of its educational facilities are a law abiding people, a substantial citizenship and a class of people that will readily assimilate with our

best elements of society and identify themselves with our local institutions and interests.<sup>259</sup>

The cultural and educational motive for locating an institution of higher learning within the town notwithstanding, clearly a primary motive was the economic benefit in doing so.

As talk of the relocation plans circulated through the press, The Rev. Grafton from Sherman, Texas felt obliged to correct an alleged misperception from a speech he made at the inaugural Waxahachie Chautauqua in 1900. Then speaking on “The History of Education in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church,” the Rev. Grafton commented on the wise choice of having located Trinity University in Tehuacana. Later, his comments were construed as validating the current location of the university. Grafton felt compelled to correct this misconception, taking pains to explain that he “was not talking of the conditions now prevailing, nor of the school at present, but of the school in 1864.” He elaborated further:

Some of the pastors in the bounds of Texas synod have believed for some time that Trinity University was unfortunately located at Tehuacana, and owing to this location could not do the work intended, as it could when first located at Tehuacana. It was thought that sooner or later this question would have to be opened by [the] Texas synod. When the general assembly at Denver, Colo., instituted the twentieth century endowment movement a resolution was introduced and passed by Rev. J. Frank Smith, pastor of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church at Dallas, obliging the commission to secure the endowment so that any school in the church could be moved to another place at any time the church courts might decide...Of course the Chautauqua at Waxahachie could not decide the

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<sup>259</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, November 23, 1900.

question, but the great majority of the church men there with whom I discussed the matter expressed themselves in favor of changing the location and you can state that I am now of the opinion the school will be moved from Tehuacana.<sup>260</sup>

As talk about relocating Trinity University continued, Waxahachians wasted little effort in chatting up their town and displaying its economic promise and genteel charm to various power elites within the Presbyterian Church. In time, as it became clear that Waxahachie may be a clear contender for the site of relocation of the university, the town once again marshaled a committee of businessmen and interested parties to spearhead the effort. Doubtlessly, the synod members who attended the 1901 Chautauqua were even then making up their minds. Captain W.H. Getzendaner served as chairman of the local committee and spearheaded efforts to raise funds in the town's bid for the university. Other committee members included county Judge O.E. Dunlap, local newspaper publisher W.J. Buie, and school board president T.J. Cole. His expertise as a banker and capitalist notwithstanding, Getzendaner's avowed interest in acquiring the university had considerably to do with his sense of the local educational endeavor. Said Getzendaner:

We are in a section that is thickly populated with a prosperous, thrifty, well-to-do people who are eminently capable of appreciating the University and who would give it their hearty encouragement. While its establishment here would be of great value from a pecuniary standpoint yet above and beyond this is the greater fact that our own children could be educated at home and it would bring a

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<sup>260</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, August 19, 1900.

class of people in our midst that would do us credit and of which we would be proud.<sup>261</sup>

By June 1, 1901, the date which the Synod's locating committee had set to terminate bidding, three towns had submitted sealed bids: Itasca, Corsicana, and Waxahachie. The bid for Waxahachie amounted to the sum of \$80,000. After comparing the three bids "in regard to available values, size and characteristics of the towns, strength and resources of our church in the state, healthfulness, prestige, and the prevailing sentiment of the Church," the committee reached a unanimous decision in favor of Waxahachie.<sup>262</sup>

The celebration in Waxahachie began immediately with a "jollification meeting" held in the district courtroom, the Fireman's Band furnishing the music. Committee members took turns in delivering congratulatory speeches, and the *Enterprise* characterized the affair thusly:

With her usual pluck Waxahachie gets whatever she goes after. She wanted Trinity University, and after a hard struggle in which every effort was put forth to that end, she is successful... The location of this institution here means increased population, and that of the best character of citizenship; it means that Waxahachie will become the headquarters of Cumberland Presbyterianism in Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Indian Territory, and Louisiana; it means the expenditure annually of more than one hundred

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<sup>261</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, July 7, 1901.

<sup>262</sup> Donald Everett, *Trinity University: a Record of One Hundred Years* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1968).

thousand dollars by the pupils of the institution to say nothing of the great influx of money that will come by reason of the new buildings and the numerous new homes that will be built because of the University.<sup>263</sup>

On the following month, September, the Synod of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church met and took official action regarding the relocation of the university. Everything went as suspected and the decision became final with a vote of “84 for removal to Waxahachie and 28 against removal.”<sup>264</sup>

Construction on the Trinity University building began with the laying of a cornerstone on March 13, 1902. The board of trustees had declared the day a holiday, so Acker released the students to attend the festive ceremony. The Rev. J.C. Smith, who envisioned Waxahachie becoming the leading educational and commercial center of north Texas, gave the invocation. Thereafter, local dignitaries and representatives of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church took turns laying documents into the cornerstone.<sup>265</sup>

Upon the arrival of Trinity University, the school known alternatively as Texas College and the West End School ceased its existence as a private institution. In 1902, the city had annexed the remaining portion of the West End suburb, bringing the area of the West End School into the corporate limits. In 1903, the board announced that the old Texas College building in West End had been leased by the board of trustees and that a ward school would be maintained there during the next term. Once again, patrons in the

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<sup>263</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, July 17, 1901.

<sup>264</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, September 16, 1901.

<sup>265</sup> *Fort Worth Morning Register*, March 14, 1902.

western portion of the city had pressed for a neighborhood school, and trustees had acquiesced, designating the school a “ward” school although the ward system had not truly been implemented. According to the board of trustees, “All children in the sixth grade and under living west of the line will be expected to attend this school.”<sup>266</sup>

Trustees voted to allow transfers from the Park School to the West End School and from the West End School to the Park School, applying only to pupils in the first through sixth grades, with those in the 7th grade and high school attending the Park school, exclusively.

By 1905, Triinity was well-established in Waxahachie, and in April of that year, at the inauguration of the university’s new president, A.E. Turner, Mrs. Percy V. Pennybacker delivered the keynote address. Entitled “Two Pleas,” her address made a rhetorical request of the university on behalf of Texas mothers to provide an ideal college education for women. “Our best men and women are agreed that every girl should be trained for the richest, broadest life, which means that she must be trained for wifeness, motherhood, homemaking, and home-keeping,” spoke Mrs. Pennybacker. Were colleges to tailor a curriculum to the expected outcomes for the young women attending them, instead of merely giving them “the courses our boys had taken,” the vocation of home-making would be ennobled in the eyes of the young people, as Mrs. Pennybacker advised. And though she was speaking to a college audience, Pennybacker generalized her sentiment to a larger audience: “We need specific high school and college instruction

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<sup>266</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, September 3, 1903.



in the art and science of home-making,” she said. Her other plea, romanticized in its Hellenic depiction of male youth’s rite of passage into full citizenship, was a sincere desire for a civic patriotism to be inculcated among not just Trinity matriculates, but all young men.

Give us these two things, noble Trinity, help to make our daughters ideal wives, mothers, home-makers and home-keepers; place ever before our boys the highest standard of Christian citizenship, and we, the women of Texas, shall rise and call you blessed.<sup>267</sup>

### **A New Campus Building**

In the spring of 1903, at the close of the school year, Superintendent Acker reported “the best year in the history of our schools.” His report to the state superintendent included the following:

**ENROLLMENT:**

white males 353	white female 413
colored male 83	colored female 95

**ENROLLED IN HIGH SCHOOL:**

white male 37	white female 86
colored male 4	colored female 3

**EXPENDITURE:**

Amount total paid to teachers \$8,388	amount paid to supt. \$1,300
expended other purpose \$1540	<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES \$11,328</b>

**ASSETS/ RECEIPTS:**

Value of bldg & grounds owned by city	value school furniture \$2, 150
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<sup>267</sup> *Texas School Journal*, volume 23, 1905, 518-520.

\$27, 200	
value libraries and apparatus \$2, 375	TOT VALUE ALL SCHOOL PROPERTY \$31, 725
# volumes in school library 2450	apportioned to the independent district from state funds \$5,390
apportioned to independent dist from county funds \$922.60	local taxes collected \$5172.95
tuition collected \$503.80	TOTAL RECEIPTS 1902-03 \$12,352.02
14 teachers in the Park school	3 teachers in colored school

Waxahachie’s public school was outgrowing the Park School building that had been fashioned from the previous Marvin College. Town citizens were concerned that Waxahachie’s public school was falling behind those in Ennis, Hillsboro, and Ft. Worth, while at the same time hailing the faculty—“the best in the city’s history”—that Acker had put together. The center building of the old Marvin College series of buildings, plagued from its inception with problems requiring constant repair, was once again showing signs of unsafe conditions. Its necessary demolition may have contributed to trustees decision to lease the property known as the West End School for use as a “ward” school for the sake making up for lost space. Trustees called for a bond issue, to which the city council deferred any action. When the ladies Shakespeare Club was enlisted to support the bond, and their comments to the effect that “the horses of the city are better housed than are our school children during school hours,”<sup>268</sup> the city council called for

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<sup>268</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, March 7, 1903.

the bond election, which was scheduled, and easily passed.

By the next year, construction was underway on a new school building which, when completed in 1905, stood in front of the old Marvin College/ Park School building, eclipsing it in size and stature if not in spirit. The additional space spelled the doom of the West End “ward” school, its discontinuance announced prior to the new building’s completion, purportedly based on its attendance failing to justify its expense.<sup>269</sup> Keeping the current name of Park Public School, the new school building presented an impressive edifice, three stories in height, the front façade adorned with six classical columns with ionic capitals. Constructed of red pressed brick, the building contained 15 recitation rooms, a main auditorium with a seating capacity of 700, an office for the superintendent, and cloak rooms for every recitation room except two. The floors were covered with innovative linoleum, and the building contained the most modern, up-to-date conveniences regarding electric lights throughout and steam heated radiators in each room.<sup>270</sup>

For Acker, the building couldn’t be completed fast enough. Despite the closure of the West End School as a city public school for attendance reasons, the enrollment for the public school continued to grow throughout the year 1904. His report to the state superintendent showed a total enrollment of 1, 377 students, an increase of 433 students

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<sup>269</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, November 2, 1904.

<sup>270</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, June 24, 1904.

from the previous year.<sup>271</sup> As the growth continued year after year, the new Park Public School building, which dwarfed the old Marvin College behind it, began to feel crowded almost immediately.

In addition to the new school building, construction was proceeding on the new town library bequeathed to the citizens of Waxahachie by a wealthy landowner, Nicholas B. Sims. Born in Hanover County, Virginia, in 1806, Sims had arrived in Ellis County in 1850. In his will executed September 1, 1898, four years before his death, Sims donated over \$60,000 to found the library:

I am without descendants, and have passed the best years of my life in Ellis County, Texas where I have accumulated the bulk of my fortune, and am desirous of promoting the mental, moral and physical advancement of the people of said county, and of the city of Waxahachie, its county seat, and especially of the youth of said county and city, and think this can be best done by the disposition of the residue of my estate which I make by this will.<sup>272</sup>

The library building was located in Getzendaner Park, the portion of land in the western section of town where the “old academy” building had stood up to 1897. The building, constructed of Tiffany brick, glazed, enameled, and imported from Chicago, presented a stately appearance, complemented by impressive Greek columns forming a portico in classical revival style. The upper floor contained a Lyceum lecture hall with a “handsome gilded arch” over the proscenium of the stage, along with a “club room” and a “director’s

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<sup>271</sup> *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, May 30, 1904.

<sup>272</sup> Texas Library Association, *Handbook of Texas Libraries*, no. 2, 1908, 29.

room.” The building was lighted by electricity, and equipped with the best library furniture of the day. Its collection of 4,400 volumes was available to patrons for a deposit of \$2.00 (\$3.00 for families) for issuance of a library card.

Within the library’s earliest years, it began augmenting the school’s curriculum with features and events targeted toward young people:

In the spring of 1906, a “Bird Day” celebration drew many children to the library; and on the Fourth of July the boys and girls were invited to “An Hour With the Patriots of the Revolution.” During this year a regular children’s story hour has been held, under the auspices of the Shakespeare Club, with Mrs. S.H. Watson as story teller.<sup>273</sup>

The library also served the Trinity University community of professors and students, with Professor Howell T. Livingston declaring, “I have made use of the Sims Library almost without intermission from its very beginning. I find it especially helpful to me in my work as teacher of English literature.”<sup>274</sup>

The building boom which took place in Waxahachie over the course of 1901 to 1905 was unprecedented and unparalleled. Matching the growth in public buildings was a corollary growth in residences. That each of these buildings, whether the cotton textile mill, the Chautauqua Park Auditorium, Trinity University, the new Park Public School building, or the Sims Library, added to the educational milieu from which Acker would draw the support for his instructional program was readily apparent. As civic, economic,

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<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>274</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, February 10, 1911.

educational, and cultural, institutions, each bore a degree of influence upon the grammar of public schooling that would be realized locally.

The African-American school population shared in little to none of the cultural largesse or economic improvement of the period, save for what second-hand items may have found their way to the Oak Lawn School. The first graduates of Oak Lawn School, namely Prince Goldthwaite and Robert Davis, entered college successfully and returned to Waxahachie, each to assume the principalship of Oak Lawn in their respective turns. Goldthwaite took control of the school from J.W. Tildon in 1905 and served for twenty years as principal. He was followed by Davis, who served an equally lengthy term.<sup>275</sup> That Oak Lawn School was also marked by substantial terms of leadership at the campus level from 1905 forward suggests that it, too, may be said to have formulated its own “grammar of schooling” under the regime of its long-serving principals.

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<sup>275</sup> See Pointer, *op. cit.*

## Curriculum During the Acker Regime

### Debating the Two-Teacher System

An instance arose in 1904 which allows for some degree of understanding of Acker's disposition toward innovations in the teaching profession. By it, one gleans his conservative attitude toward the traditional form of education, and perhaps his unwillingness to consider progressive approaches. It occurred as a debate between himself and the superintendent of the public schools of Batavia, New York, regarding a progressive innovation designed to address the needs of struggling learners within a single age-group or graded classroom, by adding an additional teacher to the classroom whose purpose was to look after the "slow and duller pupils" and give them "individual aid." This "Two-Teacher System" as outlined by Superintendent John Kennedy in the pages of the *Dallas Morning News* offered a future promise of ending the "day of organizing little troops of pupils under special taskmasters and of working them like machines..." Since its implementation in the schools of Batavia, Kennedy declared, "we have started a bigger slum in sanitarium stock than the bulls and bears on the New York Exchange have ever witnessed." Spared from the sanitarium was the single classroom teacher, "saved from nervous prostration, which the trials under the old system must bring her to, sooner or later." Additionally, the pupil was spared "from the nagging and scolding of the irritated teacher, from the nervous fevers brought on by study at night and vain efforts to keep up with the more able pupils..." Moreover, the parents of pupils were

liberated from “illness and nervousness brought on by the worry of aid[ing] the child who brings home his lessons and seeks, in a disheartened and discouraged mood, their help.”

According to Kennedy, the old, traditional form of schooling had to go, as it was injurious to pupil, parent, and teacher alike. “Under the old system the teacher in her efforts to force through whole classes must exert a pressure upon the children which soon wears down her nerves and develops into a nagging and violence which is injurious to the child and against which medical men are raising an outcry for reform today.” For Kennedy, the solution lay not in putting the pupil out of the classroom, but in implementing the “two-teacher plan.”

With a second teacher to help these slower ones, they are not sent home crushed with misery and broken-hearted. Instead, the child leaves the school room without a school book under his arm. He is through for the day when school is over and has time to enjoy the pleasures which should belong to the life of every child. As the child does not have to take home any studies, the parents are saved from the worry caused in their efforts to aid their children, and the evenings at home are happier. The children take more interest in their school work and our high school is filled to overflowing with pupils.

What was more, the Batavia Two-Teacher System was, according to Kennedy, a money-saving system, as one large room with two teachers was cheaper to operate than two smaller rooms. As for the two teachers, they coordinated in rank—one was not the superior to the other. The work of the “individual” teacher was to see to it that “the [slow] pupil attends to and does his work and does it faithfully.” Her job was to “lighten



and make pleasant his work by helping him over the hard places which the class teacher has no time to stop and help him over.” Indeed, the primary purpose and good for the program was to see to the needs of the struggling learner. Said Kennedy in conclusion, “the slow boy or girl must be looked after, and the only way to do it is to adopt a system which benefits both the slow and quick pupil.”<sup>276</sup>

Acker’s response appeared two weeks later along with his portrait, under the headline: Criticises the Two Teacher System. Finding the system “indeed beautiful in theory,” Acker put forth the argument that its actual practice was not so beautiful. Acker’s main objections were that the plan was impractical and extravagant. Tactfully noting that any new “system” with such vaunted results should be “entitled to careful consideration,” Acker proceeded to dismantle the argument that the two-teacher system was an innovation worth pursuing. His primary concern stemmed from his view of the consequences of placing two teachers in the same room:

It is both impractical and undesirable to have two teachers in one room, no matter how large the room. There would always be a confusion that would not only be a source of great annoyance, but a serious hindrance to the teacher in her work. Think for a moment of two teachers hearing classes in the same room, or, if you please, one giving individual instruction and the other hearing recitations, as is contemplated in Superintendent Kennedy’s system. Would it not, under such conditions, be impossible to have that close attention from the pupils which every successful teacher knows is a *sine qua non*, if interest is to be maintained, and progress is to be made? Again, where is the parent who would want his child humiliated by constant

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<sup>276</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, January 24, 1904.

attention being directed to the fact that he was slow, and where is the pupil every element of whose nature would not rebel against such treatment?

Whether in his thirty years Acker bespoke wisdom born of experience, having worked for several years with the teachers of Waxahachie, or whether he merely lacked the ability or desire to envision the classroom beyond its precedent nature cannot be known. His stated regard for the struggling pupil lay in his assertion that such a two-teacher system would serve only to stigmatize, and thus worsen, the case of the struggling learner. Acker was content to leave in place the division of an upper and lower class of the same grade, an A group and a B group. “The system of A and B divisions, had in some of our schools, while not free from objections, is helpful in solving the problem of the quick and the slow pupil. At any rate, we do not have two teachers trying to teach in the same room at the same time.”<sup>277</sup>

### **Acker’s Course of Study**

At the inception of his superintendency, the curricular experience of students enrolled in the city schools was documented in an overview published in the Waxahachie Daily Light, the author quite possibly Acker, himself:

The second week of the public schools closes with all the pupils deeply interested in their work. There seems to be a disposition of or inclination among the pupils of every room to faithfully perform all duties required of them.

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<sup>277</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, February 7, 1904.

Kindness and courtesy to classmates and associates, obedience to teachers, faithfulness and conscientiousness seem to characterize the work throughout the school. Teachers and pupils are determined to make this one of the best and consequently one of the most pleasant years of their lives.

Quite a number of new pupils have been enrolled during the week. More contemplate entering Monday.

Vocal music will be taught in our schools this year from the primary grades up through the High School. The rudiments of the study will be given in each grade and the good results will be seen in better singing in the Sunday schools of the city. S.P. Skinner, H.D. Timmons, J.J. McQuatters and Tom Chancellor have been among the visitors to the schools this week. Chapel exercises are being held only once a week for the present—Monday mornings. The teachers have decided upon their work for the year. For professional training McMurry's "Method of Recitation" will be used. The literary course will be that prescribed by the Bay View Reading Circle. The teachers are all expecting pleasant and profitably work in their monthly meetings. Watch for programs.

In addition to the courses of study mentioned above, the teachers have each subscribed for a monthly magazine. These will be kept in the Superintendent's office and each teacher, for the price of one, will have the privilege of reading all. The following is the list of magazines: Harpers, 'Century, Cosmopolitan, Scribner's, Arena, North American Review, Munsey, McClure, Review of Reviews, Overland Monthly, Atlantic Monthly, Current Literature.

The High School misses Robert Timmins very much. It is hoped he will be in school again soon.

The English Literature class was organized Wednesday. As a basis for their work they will use Pointer's Introduction to English Literature. They are not going to study what someone else has said about the masterpieces, but the masterpieces themselves. Good interest is manifested in the class.

The little folks are all very enthusiastic in their games on the grounds. The teachers are always glad to see

this—for after having taken the proper exercise, they are better prepared for their work.

This is report week. Cards will be made out for all pupils showing how they have taken hold of their work. Parents and guardians are urged to examine report cards carefully and to heartily co-operate with teachers to the end that the reports may be improved from month to month.

The library, recently removed to the superintendent's office, is going to be a great help to the pupils in each and every grade. A regular librarian has been appointed by the sup't and he will be at his post Monday morning.

Parents and guardians are most cordially invited to visit the school and see for themselves the work that is being done. Teachers and pupils will be delighted to have you with them at any time it is convenient for you.

Literary societies were organized in all grades Friday afternoon.

The first regular teacher's meeting will be held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday in October. Watch for the program.

The schools are anxiously inquiring whether the schools will have a day for the Dallas Fair.

High School: Thus far the work in the high school department has gone off very nicely, and as a whole has been very satisfactory to those who are in charge. We feel that we have all started on a very interesting mental crusade and one which we are sure will prove successful. The High School this afternoon organized a literary society for the term. The following officers were elected: Tom Cole, president, Jennie Bisland, vice-president; Rubie Cooper, secretary; Effie Arnold, assistant secretary.

The 8<sup>th</sup> grade will entertain at opening exercises Monday morning.

There have been enrolled in the high school already more than one hundred, others are expected in a few days.

The 11<sup>th</sup> grade will finish plane geometry in three days more and will at once begin solid geometry. This

grade is also doing splendid work in mental scycology [sic] and chemistry.

The 9<sup>th</sup> grade has had this sentence under discussion for two days: "He differs with me from you." Sam Egger grew very eloquent in discussing it.

Some of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade pupils are having a hard time in arithmetic.

The 10<sup>th</sup> grade is spending its spare moments in solving its original problem in plane geometry.

The 9<sup>th</sup> grade has made a very good beginning in general history and geography.<sup>278</sup>

A particular treat of the city's school children throughout the entire history of the city's public schooling endeavor was the annual trip to the State Fair of Texas held in Dallas each October. These yearly trips corresponded to contemporary field trips of today. The day's initial outing from 1898, pertinent for its detail in communicating not only the transportation of the day, but the behavior of yesteryear's schoolchildren, transpired thusly:

#### The Children in Dallas

School children to the number of two hundred or more, accompanied by a few grown people, Profs. Acker, Herndon, Winn, and Taylor went to Dallas on a Katy special this morning. The train was due at 7:35 but was forty minutes late. From the time the window was opened there was a rush for tickets, and but for the fact that the train was behind time, many would have failed to get them. When the train pulled in the conductor announced that

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<sup>278</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, October 1, 1898.

there was only one vacant coach and it was the rear one, and was below the crossing on Washington street. Then there was a rush for the rear coach. There was no punching of tickets, and the conductor and breakman [sic] had hard work helping the ladies and children on as the embankment is steep at the point where the rear coach came to a standstill. But all hands finally got on, many taking standing positions in other coaches and packing the rear one like sardines in a box. But the boys and girls were as happy as larks, and were waving their hats and handkerchiefs out at the windows as they pulled out from the depot.<sup>279</sup>

Perhaps the most telling document by which to gauge the curriculum of the public school system during the Acker regime is the *Course of Study and Rules and Regulations of the Waxahachie Public Schools of 1910-1911*, which served as board and faculty directory, curriculum overview, student-parent-faculty handbook, and, curiously, historical digest of the public school system from its inception to the period designated. The booklet, now housed at the Ellis County Museum, is one of, if not the only, surviving courses of study from the earliest years of the school district. Newspaper articles of the day are rife with references to each year's publication of the course of study, and perhaps others exist in the personal possession of past school attendees. An indication of its rarity can be gleaned from newspaper articles appearing much later in the century, in 1960, in which the document is referred to as a quizzical relic shedding light on the district's then much more recent past.

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<sup>279</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, October 7, 1898.

The historical documentary portion of the document, appearing within its first several pages, consists of an overview of the graduates of the high school, beginning with a listing of the class of 1892, listing the three graduates from that year. Each year in succession lists the graduates, from 1892 through 1910, followed either by an occupation or a married name, and finally a city or town of their current residence. For instance, from the class of 1892, Ernest Criddle is listed, followed by “Teacher, Denton Normal” and then, “Denton, TX.” From the class of 1893 appears the name Fay Adkisson, followed by, in parentheses, “Mrs. J.H. Phillips” residing at the time of the booklet’s publication in “Denton, TX.” It will be recalled that G.L. Adkisson, Fay’s father, was an alderman on the city council who had called for the purchase of Marvin College at the inception of the public school endeavor. J.H. Phillips, Ms. Adkisson’s husband, served as high school principal and county superintendent, before moving on to a principalship in Mansfield, Texas.

Of particular interest are the number of graduates, particularly those females, who, in 1910 were continuing to serve, or had recently begun to serve, as teachers in the city’s public schools or elsewhere. They include, in the order of their graduation year: Lu Allie Patterson, Lina Quaite, Mary Caldwell, Bessie Holley, Irene Brasel, Maybelle [Mabel] Grizzard, Ethel Fuston, Gladys Tingle, Emma McQuatters, Hattie May Smith, Annie Lee Musgraves, Katie Bradshaw, Dalton Cantrell, Maude Parker, Eva Grizzard, Mary Juanita Ray, Gladys Briggs, Lottie Howlett Curlin, Eula McQuatters, Sadie Blanche Ralston, Moreene Reagor, May Vernon White, John Ferdinande Olsen, Henry Alderman, Grace Satterfield, Leona Cantrell, Essie McQuatters, Gertrude Beachum,

Pauline Erwin, Ethel Hamilton, Annie May Winn, Addie Lee Smith, Benjamin Oscar Herring, Beulah Erwin, Frances Howard McCue, and Corinne Trippet. Other names listed which do not bear a designation of “Teacher” or “Teacher, City Schools” were otherwise listed in other documents as school teachers, but perhaps had left the profession by 1910. They include: Nora Gray, Charles Q. Barton, Fannie Lee Ross (whom the booklet noted as “deceased”), Maude Middleton, and Wynna Wimbish. The plethora of teachers produced from the high school indicates the degree to which it functioned as a teacher production process for the benefit of the local town.

Several of the graduates listed who entered the teaching profession—the Grizzard sisters, Mabel and Eva, Annie Lee Musgraves, and Sadie Blanche Ralston, were remembered as classroom teachers of several of the later graduates interviewed in the course of this study.

A curiosity of the historical retrospective is the inclusion of John Collier as the fourth in the list of “Superintendents of Waxahachie City Schools.” The list commences appropriately with C.N. Ousley for the years 1884-1885, and then accurately shows Joseph Callaway and B.M. Howard as his successors. Appearing next is John Collier, for the years 1887-1889, followed by Hogg, Lyon, Kinnard, Lyon, Ryan, and Acker. This would seem to indicate an unbroken sequence of city superintendents, and glosses over the year of 1889 when the only city schools were essentially common schools, and the Rev. Collier no longer had anything to do with the schools, save for his daughter Allie’s coursework offered as the Waxahachie Female Institute.



Immediately following the historical retrospective were three sections illuminating the pride, the practice, and the progress of the school district's youthful years. Under the heading "Affiliation" was the announcement that the Waxahachie High School was "affiliated with the State University in English, History, Mathematics, Latin, Chemistry, Physics, Physiography, civics and Solid Geometry." Accordingly, it was also affiliated "with the State Agricultural and Mechanical college in Class A, Baylor University, Southwestern University, Austin College, and Trinity University." Under a heading of "Literary Societies," there appeared information that these were organized in all departments, and that students were required to perform "such duties as are assigned them." A continuing curriculum feature from the earliest days of the school district, and the institutions which preceded the public schooling endeavor, literary societies encompassed the study "for general culture in debating, declaiming, music, reciting, literary criticism, rhetorical, and special attention...to parliamentary usage." Finally, under a section entitled "The Library" was a description of the school library, containing more than 2600 volumes. The library was "at the disposal of the pupils in their research work and in securing information that [was] not to be found in ordinary text books."<sup>280</sup>

The "Assignment of Teachers" for the school year 1910-1911 listed 29 names; five in the high school department, followed by subject taught; seven in the intermediate department, followed by subject taught; and thirteen in the primary department, followed by grade level first through fourth. Six names were listed under the heading "Colored

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<sup>280</sup> Course of Study and Rules and Regulations of the Waxahachie Public Schools of 1910-1911, *op.cit.*, 19.

Teachers,” indicating the growth of the primary and intermediate grade levels and the African-American scholastic population during Acker’s tenure of office from the time he took over from J.C. Ryan. For this group, grade levels were not listed—only the notation of “First Assistant, Second Assistant,” etc...

The rear section of the booklet contains rules and regulations of the “government of the public schools of the city of Waxahachie,” and is of particular aid in identifying areas of concern and priority in the running of the school district. Of the several rules listed, the first two identify the scope of the school system, outlining the public schools as composed of a primary department consisting of the first four grades, an intermediate department consisting of the next three, and a high school department consisting of the last four—indicating a sequence of 11 grades. The annual session consisted of nine months, commencing on the third Monday of September, and divided into two terms of eighteen weeks. Promotion was granted by examination at the end of each school year, with “special promotions” made “upon recommendation of the teacher in charge, at the discretion of Superintendent.”

Some particular rules enlighten prevalent procedures and concerns of the day. For instance, a common practice at the end of a school year, after final exams were completed, was to issue to students who had demonstrated mastery of the grade’s content a promotion card, entitling the student to advance to the next grade upon the card’s presentation at the beginning of the next school year. This practice, somewhat alien to today’s procedures, was in place for decades:

18. ADMISSION.—Pupils without promotion cards shall be examined and classified by the superintendent or teachers. All pupils should present themselves for admission at the beginning of each term. Children who cannot be classified will not be received in the first grades after the first month of each term. No pupil will be admitted until he returns to the teacher registration slip, showing age, residence, etc., and until he provides himself with books and school material necessary for the proper prosecution of his studies.

21. TELEPHONE.—The telephone shall be used by teachers and pupils in case of emergency. During school hours, any message intended for a teacher or pupil must be communicated through the Superintendent. Messages involving social or business engagements will not be delivered.<sup>281</sup>

Rules for the conduct of teachers were printed as well, which, by way of comparison to contemporary practices illustrate a high degree of similarity in practice. A sampling included:

14. Teachers shall keep in their class rooms, in a conspicuous place, a schedule of their daily work, and be required to confine their recitation to schedule time. No change shall be made in periods of recitation without the consent of the Superintendent.

15. Teachers may (1) reprove, (2) task, (3) detain after school, (4) send to the Superintendent for punishment, (5) corporally punish. Before inflicting corporal punishment the Superintendent should be consulted. No pupil shall be suspended without the knowledge of the Superintendent.

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<sup>281</sup> Course of study Course of Study and Rules and Regulations of the Waxahachie Public Schools of 1910-1911, *op. cit.*, 67.

18. All teachers in the Waxahachie Public School shall be required to hold a First Grade Certificate, or its equivalent.<sup>282</sup>

Aside from enlightening tidbits concerning school rules, regulations, processes and expectations, the booklet's major contribution to the understanding of the curriculum of the first decade of the twentieth century is the "course of study" sections for each grade level and department. Listed here are textbooks, teaching and learning objectives, and short summaries of scope and sequence.

Primary students in the first grade read from Cyr's Primer, and Our Country's First Reader. Second grade students, like those in first, learned the rudiments of composition from Berry's Writing Book. Third graders used Meyers-Brooks' Elementary Arithmetic, Buchler and Hotchkiss's Modern English Lessons, and The New Century Spelling Book. For writing, they used Berry's Writing Book No. 3, as fourth graders used No 4.

Arithmetic for fourth graders consisted of reviewing the work of third grade, reviewing tables, learning long division, daily oral drill, learning Roman numerals to 1000, and ten minutes daily of mental arithmetic. "Teach analysis," stated the course of study, "remembering at all times that it is a matter of *understanding*, and not of *memory*."<sup>283</sup> But for the inclusion of instruction of Roman numerals, one might regard the

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<sup>282</sup> *Ibid*, 71.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid*, 31.

primary curriculum as in keeping with the “common school” curriculum typical of the era.

Intermediate grades of fifth, sixth, and seventh were subject to the following courses of study:

FIFTH GRADE	SIXTH GRADE	SEVENTH GRADE
Reading	Reading	Reading, 1 <sup>st</sup> term
Spelling	Spelling	Spelling, 2 <sup>nd</sup> term
Geography	Geography	Geography
U.S. History, 1 <sup>st</sup> term	Texas History	U.S. History
Arithmetic	Arithmetic	Arithmetic
Grammar	Grammar	Grammar
Physiology, 2 <sup>nd</sup> term	Writing and Drawing	Physiology
Writing and Drawing	Vocal Music	Writing and Drawing
Vocal Music		Vocal Music

Reading instruction for the Intermediate grade levels was predicated on the following expected outcomes:

1. That the pupil may get the writer's thought.
2. That he may increase his interest and vocabulary.
3. That he may develop a taste for good reading.<sup>284</sup>

Special attention was to be paid to “beauties of expression and meaning of words.”

Students were expected to be able to trace historical and other references, and that supplementary reading would augment the required reading. Students were expected to read at least five books from the supplementary list “to inspire the pupil to his best endeavor through interest, and to give him a sense of conquest and mastery of thought...”<sup>285</sup>

Perhaps the greatest insight offered by the Course of Study from a historical perspective is the high school department's curriculum. Acker's regime encompassed the transitional period between the classically-oriented, Latin intensive program, and the contemporary high school Modern Language curriculum. Both courses of study were available to students for the 1910-1911 school year, and presumably beyond, at least for the next several years. The Course of Study explained thusly:

The work in the High School will consist of two (2) General Courses—Classical course and Modern Language Course. These two General Courses will be made up of the following Special Courses: course in English; Course in Mathematics, Course in History; Course in Science; Course in Latin; course in German; Course in Spanish. In the First Year the two General courses are the same, except that in the Modern Language course Commercial Geography may be taken instead of Latin. In the Second Year the Modern

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<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*

Language course substitutes German or Spanish for Latin. The same is true in the Junior Year. In the Senior Year the Modern Language course offers a review of Grammar in lieu of the Latin.<sup>286</sup>

In simple terms, the elective nature of the two courses of study prefigured other elective choices to arise as the curriculum evolved. Of continuing importance to Acker was the fact that Latin as a course offering was a major component of school affiliation with the state university. As principal under Superintendents Lyon and Ryan, Acker had been keenly aware of the importance of the Latin program to the high school's affiliated status. In 1901, Dr. E.B. Fay, professor of Latin in the State university, spent a day in Waxahachie visiting the public schools. His objective was to observe the work being done, as he sat in on the Latin classes. As high schools were visited and approved for affiliation, their academic standards for affiliation were partly determined by how well their curricula were aligned with college entrance examinations written by university faculty.<sup>287</sup> Fay's words of praise were music to Acker's ears: "I am pleased, well pleased," said Dr. Fay, "with all the work and particularly with the Latin. The pupils are getting the right kind of Latin, sure."<sup>288</sup>

Curiously, the course of study of the Acker years contains no mention of the manual training or domestic science classes that were known to be offered; neither is there any reference to the formation of military companies, calisthenics, club sports, or

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<sup>286</sup> *Ibid*, 53.

<sup>287</sup> Nicol, *op. cit.*, 16.

<sup>288</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, March 8, 1901.

any other type of physical education type of coursework. Beyond the mention of literary societies, there is no mention of elocution as a course. There is, however, mention of the play-grounds, indicating recess periods were part of the school day. The handbook duly noted that “upon these grounds, the sexes shall not be allowed in any manner to communicate with each other without special permission.”

The *Course of Study* serves today as an overt articulation of the “grammar of schooling” then prevailing within the city school district. That is to say that it sets forth the “organizational forms that govern instruction” in no uncertain terms. This is not to say that the *Course of Study* sums up comprehensively the “grammar of schooling,” only that it points to the visible boundaries of the identified curriculum. What has since been referred to as the “hidden curriculum” was left to the actual practices and culture of those carrying out, and those receiving, the curriculum.

### **Athletics Arrive on Campus**

Of course, there was more to the school experience among the students and faculty than the curriculum outlined in the course of study. The booklet contains scant reference to any type of physical education carried out in the public schools, save for fleeting references to the play-ground areas. Acker seemed to de-emphasize the marching drills and military organizations popular during Lyon’s administration, although some reports of military companies of boys organizing appears here and there. City baseball teams had been around since the mid to late 1880’s, but the advent of football in particular seems to have eclipsed interest in the formation of military companies of cadets



and their corresponding drills. References to physical recreation of students (and non-students) increasingly involved football and baseball.

The earliest reference to an organized football game in Waxahachie is found in a newspaper article from 1897, detailing a contest between “the schools” of Waxahachie and Fort Worth. That the match took place in West End Park provides evidence that the Waxahachie school in question was the private West End School, more specifically, Texas College. Certainly the college boys of Texas College would have had an interest in football.

Appearing in an article in 1900, with an allusion to the season from the previous year, for which there is no record, was the following:

Football: The First Game of the Season to be Played October 15<sup>th</sup>

The Waxahachie football team has been organized and is now practicing daily preparing to uphold, during the coming season, the honors won in the last.

Among last year’s players on the team are: Anderson, Capt.; McQuatters, Miller, Minnick, Dunaway, Stroud, Parks, Watson, H. Simmons, Cole, Watson, R. The new men are: Warner, Lambert, Burlson and Frame. With such material, if properly drilled into shape by hard and systematic practice, Waxahachie should have a team, and will have one, worthy the best efforts of any team in the state.

On October 15 they will meet for the first time a team of the first class. Arrangements have been completed for a game with the State University on that date. The game will be played in Waxahachie. A large guarantee was necessary to secure the date and the team will appreciate the liberal patronage of the public. This is the first time many of our people have had the opportunity to see the ‘Varsity play.

But on the 15<sup>th</sup> they will come from Dallas after their game with Vanderbilt and, as they hope and expect, flushed with success, with victory perched upon their banners, to punish Waxahachie for daring to consider themselves worthy to meet the hitherto undisputed champions of Texas. But we have confidence enough in the home team to think that the ‘Varsity people will leave a sadder and wiser crowd.

A game will be secured if possible with another team for some time prior to the 15<sup>th</sup> in order to practice the new players.

Let the people unite on the 15<sup>th</sup>, close their stores for an hour or two, and come to the East end and encourage the home team by their presence and patronage, and we are confident that they will see the best game of football ever played in Texas, a battle royal for the championship of the Texas Gridiron.<sup>289</sup>

Ostensibly a Texas College team, surnames of the players match recent graduates of the public high school (McQuatters, Miller, Watson) and at least one (Cole) who was yet attending the Park High School.

One particular note of interest appeared in the form of a featured article entitled The Colored Football Team, penned by Ed Barnett. This curious piece sheds some light, and some greater mystery, on the manner in which football as a sport was unfolding as a community and/or school pastime.

The Colored Football Team by Ed Barnett.

To the Waxahachie high school football club I must say, the game football we must play; run fast and don't stay

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<sup>289</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, October 5, 1900.

behine, but play the game right up to time, Nathaniel Penn, our center rush, he's always first in a crush; if he fumbles with ball and let it tutch the ground, don't be oneasy, Barnett and Penn around. To make a tackle, I'll tell you best, put knee to knee and brest to brest, then straighten up and give a shake right over your head on his neck, and his men will rush to him ten in a breast and the Waxahachie Light will tell the rest. K.C. Sweatt, our quarter, he is another little noted crack; he pitches the ball to number four and makes the play we call the zero. Barnett and Penn, our right and left half, to see them tackle a man it would make a mule laugh; Barnett grabs the man and slings him around, Penn gets the ball and makes a touth down. Perry Armstrong is our full back—he is another little noted crack, of course. He is not very old but kicks the ball between the gold. Our Waxahachie heigh school foot ball team is [anon? known? now?] at the end of a stream, but I'll improve in several days and then we will make our rugby plays.<sup>290</sup>

That a “colored” football team in 1900 played, or was scheduled to play, a contest with the team then associated with the local college is indeed fascinating. Of even greater interest is the fact that the “Colored” football team was composed largely of young men serving as house servants for those affluent households located in Waxahachie’s West End suburb. Census records from the 1900 census show one Ed Barnett, 18 years old, listed as “B” for black in the box designating race, as a member of the household of S.P. Skinner, a prominent Waxahachie lawyer, and husband of Capt. W.H. Getzendaner’s daughter, Willia. Barnett’s occupation was listed as “servant.” The same is true for a George Penn, 19, in the household of T.A. Ferris, a local lawyer and judge. The same is true for one Bud Sweatt, 20, listed as a servant in the household of Anna George, the

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<sup>290</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, September 28, 1900.

Skinner, Ferris, and George addresses all located in the West End. One Dennis Armstrong appears as a 21 year-old black male, his occupation listed as “servant,” but this in the Anderson household in the neighboring town of Ennis. Could it have been a club, organized by their employers, or by similar circumstance, which brought them together. Several of the households had college-attending sons at this particular time. Could football have arrived in Waxahachie via their college travels, and shared with those members of their household, familial and employed?

After the demise of the Texas College/West End School, reports of football games between teams associated, loosely, with Waxahachie’s public school and other area schools continued, in no consistent pattern, throughout the early part of the decade. Often identified as or associated with the public school, the names of many of the players, when provided, often bore no relationship to identified students, and seemingly included a mix of students and non-students. Only in 1904 did there appear a definite link between the football teams to which the press often referred and the public high school, proclaiming in November of 1904 that “the high school football team has been practicing for a week or more for several games in the near future.”<sup>291</sup>

That football associated with the high school came about in fits and starts is attributable to the lack of worthy opponents when a team was formed. By 1905, football was more firmly entrenched at the high school, if yet extra-curricular in the strictest sense. Reports from the fall term indicate a Waxhachie/Park High School team bested the

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<sup>291</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, November 4, 1904.

Hillsboro school (whom they played several times that season), with Superintendent Acker accompanying the boys to Hillsboro. Later contests that semester included the high school team against the Trinity University team, and against the Waxahachie Light Weights, presumably a team of younger boys.<sup>292</sup>

Tennis also made its appearance at the high school at this time. A court had been laid out on the campus and high school girls, particularly, were mentioned as enthusiastic about the sport.

Baseball, for which Waxahachie's school team became fairly well-known during the decade of the 1920's, is equally mysterious in its early associations, altogether loose, with the public school. Early city teams with names of the Brownies and the QuickSteps received some scant coverage of their events, but rarely were there allusions to the school. Denotations of "our boys" possibly, but not necessarily, indicated school-age players. From the *Enterprise* of August 1, 1890: "The Quicksteps went to Groesbeck last week to play a match game of baseball with the boys of that place. As usual our boys carried off the honors of the day."

Nevertheless, the narrow period of overlap between the physical activity associated with military companies and drills and the formation of organized sports teams, drawn partially if not wholly from students, demonstrates a cultural transition in the conception of the relationship of the school toward the type of physical educational

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<sup>292</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, October 20, 1905.

undertakings the school would assume under its auspices.

## **The Race Question**

In 1884, with the inception of the public school system in Waxahachie, so was born locally the dual school system by which the races were to be separately educated, according to the provisions of the state constitution. With this began the tradition of two threads of schools resulting in two distinctly proud, but nonetheless discriminatory, traditions.

### The Race Question

The race question is just now the main question to be considered in working for our country's welfare. This has for years been a problem seeking solution. The negro has been in the South all the while, and the southern people have studied the best plans for a peaceful living with him. They have been accorded all the privileges and immunities granted them by the later constitutional amendments. They have been treated by their white neighbors as citizens on an equal political footing; but the whites have never, and we trust will never, receive them as social equals. The colored people have had every assurance that so long as they deport themselves as becomes their relations to us, they shall be, not only not molested, but actually assisted in their efforts to better their condition. The most intelligent and the better disposed colored people know that social equality is out of the question. Our political machinery is already arranged to meet the demands of government on separate bases, and why now undertake to break down the natural line of difference existing between the races. Northern Republicans have used negroes as instruments ever since their enfranchisement. They have held out to them inducements, and reminded them of their debt of gratitude, ever since their freedom, but where in have they been benefited, except in the gaining to them a few offices. No doubt, a majority of the negroes realize the fact that they have received more real benefit from the whites in the south, than from those in the north. There are, however, some colored men who are ready at any moment to incite

an insurrection among them, and some white men who hope by fomenting strife, to either work out for themselves a heavy weight of glory, or strengthen the Republican party. They impose on the ignorance of the colored people, and stuff them with all sorts of bosh, in order to hold them in array against the Democratic party...

If the negro must remain in the South, let him still occupy his position separate from the whites and no trouble is likely to arise. The move now on foot to colonize the negroes in Mexico should not be discouraged. True, it would take laborers from the South, but there are thousands of white people to take their places, and why keep the negro for a laborer, if to do so is to keep our social and political matters in a continual broil.<sup>293</sup>

Such was the prevalent attitude expressed in 1889, reflected and reinforced in the local media, which contextualized the education of upwards of one fifth of the town's school-age population at the beginning of the public school endeavor in Waxahachie. It was an attitude traceable to the town's earliest history as it navigated an uneasy, indeed suspicious, relationship with its African-American populace, many of whom had previously been in forced servitude only twenty years before.

Waxahachie's Black-White relationship was marked from its earliest days with deep levels of fear, distrust, and brooding malevolence. The town figured prominently in the era of the "Texas Troubles" of 1860 when conspiracy theories abounded of slave insurrections. Waxahachie's chief citizens joined with others across the state in fanning speculation upon purported plots among abolitionist and anti-secessionist whites to arm slaves and overthrow the planter class. When a series of fires broke out in several north-

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<sup>293</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, October 4, 1889.



central Texas communities, suspicion immediately settled upon the slave population.

District Judge Nat Burford, of Dallas, was in Waxahachie holding court when news of the fires reached him. His subsequent letter to the *Waco Democrat* implicated Waxahachie's African-American population as one source of culprits:

Since you left this place the investigations of the vigilance committee of Dallas has led to very important discoveries, implicating nearly all the negroes of Ellis and adjoining counties. Today a committee was organized in this county, who have ascertained the existence of a most perfect and thorough organization, having for its object an indiscriminate massacre of the white population. Under the lash the negroes have admitted that they had in their possession deadly poisons, to be administered to their master's families in food; and when demanded of them, they have gone to the kitchen and produced the poison.<sup>294</sup>

Throughout the summer, enslaved African-Americans were rounded up, interrogated, and many summarily executed. The Austin state Gazette ran a letter by a Waxahachie gentleman who said that his town's vigilance committee had arrested more than 100 blacks and whites. Over 30 verifiable hangings occurred in northern Texas between July 8 and August 31, though second-hand reports suggest that the actual number may have exceeded more than 100.<sup>295</sup>

Much of the sentiment regarding Waxahachie's race relations is gleaned through the tone and mood of the local journalism of the period. Despite the horrific precedent set by the town's participation in the "Texas Troubles" episode, race relations during the

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<sup>294</sup> *Houston Telegraph*, July, 31, 1860. See also: Michael Phillips, *White Metropolis: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion in Dallas 1841-2001* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).

<sup>295</sup> Stott, *op. cit.*, 36.

1870's and early to mid 1880's seemed comparatively mild to the more virulent, ominous tone which marked the later period. Scant reference is to be found regarding the African-American presence from 1875 (the year in which press coverage started locally) to the mid 1880's. The reason for the change is uncertain, but may lie in the increasing population of African-Americans to the town and the county with the rise in the production of cotton. Tellingly, the increase seemed to correspond to the increase in the perceived cultured gentility aspired to by the money class through such catalysts as social clubs, literary societies, and Chautauqua. To be sure, many prominent citizens, the overwhelming majority, laid claim to a Confederate past. Chief among these were W.H. Getzendaner, the first school board president and pillar of the community, and E.F. Yeager, editor of the Enterprise. Yet, only by the late 1880's, and throughout the 1890's, with the peak occurring during the period of Acker's regime from 1898-1910, did the mood and tone of journalistic articles so vociferously, so persistently, and so ominously take on a pall of dark suspicion and seething distrust.

This is not to say that all the coverage of African-American affairs was uniquely of a bitter or rancorous tenor. It was certainly sparse, and the few articles which appeared somewhat bare-boned. Very often, the periodic school reports outlining attendance, tardiness, and other statistics included only the white school. But some coverage of some events may be viewed as neutral, or even quotidian, regarding the mundane accounts of social life, such as the perennial articles on Juneteenth "Emancipation" celebrations:

The colored people of Ellis county celebrated their freedom as usual on the 19<sup>th</sup> by a large gathering and dinner in the

park at Ennis. They first marched in procession through the streets, preceded by the colored cornet band of Corsicana. The exercises at the park opened with the song, "The Year of Jubilee." After this, prayer. Then followed the address of welcome by a representative of the city mayor, who was absent. Then came, appropriately, the reading of the emancipation proclamation. Addresses were made by the following named colored orators, viz: Rev. Wade Templeton, Prof. Truelove of Waxahachie and Prof. Johnson of Ennis. The younger ones had a base ball game. At night they had several entertainments, some of a sacred character and some warming up in the dance. An abundance of good dinner was spread and all were invited to partake. Dr. LaRose was also one of the speakers. A large number attended from Waxahachie.<sup>296</sup>

But accounts which cast the African-American community in a positive light were indeed few in number when compared with the frequency with which articles appeared proclaiming the "negro" criminal element, and just as often, the capital punishment meted out to them, in striking disproportion to accounts of crime and punishment within and among the white community.

More than the preponderance of articles, however, which by their steady drum-beat evoked a sense of impending malevolence, the equivocal tone of the press coverage added to the prevalent sense of white superiority, seemingly having it both ways regarding concepts of progressivism and conservatism. Often, the headlines proclaiming the public execution of convicted criminals took on a sinister tone of carnival-like retribution, documenting not merely the event but the personal, even prurient details.

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<sup>296</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, June 21, 1889.

“Smith Will Hang: Negro Wife Murderer to be Executed at Waxahachie” from 1904<sup>297</sup>; “Negro Executed at Waxahachie: John Henry Young Pays the Penalty for Murder...” from 1905<sup>298</sup>; and “Albert Johnson Executed: Negro Hanged at Waxahachie...Several Thousand Are Present”<sup>299</sup> were but a few examples. Clearly sensationalistic, the feigned outrage of reports of lynchings was often betrayed by a mocking, tongue-in-cheek tone inherent in other articles. A case in point:

#### Cotton Choppers Must Be Protected

Over in Mississippi a white man was on trial for killing a negro, the colored brother having been cut down, so to speak, right in the midst of the cotton chopping season. It happened that he was working on a farm belonging to the state’s attorney, and this official was justly indignant at the summary removal of one of his best hoehands. He was unusually severe, therefore, in his denunciation of the prisoner, and in a final appeal to the jury to rebuke the crime by returning a verdict of guilty, he delivered himself as follows: ‘Why, may it please your honor, and you, gentlemen of the jury, there are certain seasons of the year when the pretty little quail can fly over the fields and man dare not molest them; and then there is the season when the deer can run and romp over the hills and dales and you cannot shoot them; and now, may it please the court, and you, gentlemen of the jury, I am in favor of a law in Mississippi providing that you cannot kill a negro during cotton-chopping time.’ There was a grim determination on the faces of the jury that boded no good to the culprit, and after deliberating about two minutes a verdict was rendered

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<sup>297</sup> *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, February 23, 1904.

<sup>298</sup> *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, March 31, 1905.

<sup>299</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, March 31, 1906.

declaring him guilty of murder in the first degree. The announcement was greeted with applause.<sup>300</sup>

That a life was to be valued only insofar as it enhanced the economy was the inherent message of the article, whether printed for its perceived humor or purported humanitarian concern. Such was the prevalent attitude, at least as reflected in the press, regarding the African-American populace in the heyday of the local cotton economy. For all the talk in the few, sparing articles which congratulated the African-American populace on their “good work” (“These teachers are doing a splendid work for the education and moral advancement of their race in Ellis county”),<sup>301</sup> the predominant view toward the African-American population was one of second-class citizenship and continued servitude:

#### Idlers Must Go To Work

Waxahachie negroes who refuse to work will be prosecuted: Now that the cotton picking season has fairly opened there is no longer any reasonable excuse for idleness on the part of any one. The cotton fields are white unto harvest and pickers are in demand, and the man who refuses to work will be sent to the county farm unless he has the necessary means for paying a fine. For some time this town has been overrun with idle negroes who have not earned an honest dollar since the farmers ceased paying \$1.40 a day for cotton choppers. Farmers are in every day after pickers, but these burly descendants of Ham absolutely refuse to work unless they are paid an exorbitant price for their labor. Marshall Watt says the idlers must take their choice between the cotton fields and the county farm. He says he proposed to rid the town of this element and that no one will be spared. He is backed in this action by Mayor Pickett and County Attorney Farrar. The best

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<sup>300</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, July 5, 1901.

<sup>301</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, April 5, 1901.

way to prevent crime, says Mr. Watt, is to put a stop to idleness, and unless this is done we may expect to hear of house-breaking, hold-ups on the public highways and burglary on all sides, this winter.<sup>302</sup>

Against such a backdrop, Professors Criner, and then Trulove, and during Acker's tenure, Tildon and then Goldthwaite, struggled to establish a viable educational institution for the African-American scholastic population of Waxahachie, as they led the Oak Lawn School through its own journey of growth and development as the school's respective principals. Their successes were measured in the success of their own personal as well as professional lives. Little is known of Criner, from the earliest days of the city school district. But Trulove, as earlier noted, became active in county Republican politics, demonstrating his overt activist spirit when at the county convention of 1888 his was one of a minority of five votes to field a slate of statewide Republican candidates; the prevailing sentiment, echoed across other counties, was that doing so in the face of potential Democratic violence was not advised.<sup>303</sup> Tildon took what was perhaps a less confrontational path toward furthering the African-American agenda by rising in his academic profession, leading the cause and work of the Colored Teachers State Association, and achieving a medical degree. Ultimately, their work was measured locally in their service toward achieving Oak Lawn's first graduates, two of whom—

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<sup>302</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, August 30, 1901.

<sup>303</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, September 16, 1888.

Prince Goldthwaite and Robert Davis—became principals themselves of the school which had educated them.

Certainly these men clung to the thin strands of progressive thought which occasionally tempered the virulence of the era's racism. To be sure, there were elements of goodwill from members of the white community toward the black, however sparse or infrequent. T.B. Criddle, Marvin College faculty member and pioneer Waxahachie educator was credited with having organized the “first colored school in the city.”<sup>304</sup> His son, E.D. Criddle, during his service as county superintendent, was noted as a frequent visitor to the Oak Lawn school, liberally attending its various entertainments.

The details of Walter Acker's relationship with the African-American teachers and students under his supervision are little known. Beyond the occasional, even rare, appearance at Oak Lawn school functions, his involvement with the African-American community appeared minimal. He was content to leave them to their own devices, duly reporting the statistics of the school to the board in monthly reports publicized by the newspaper. Yet it must be said that Acker, for all of his distance, came across almost as distant to the local white community, in that his professional academic, pedagogic, perhaps pedantic, demeanor was contrasted by his much more effusive, even flowery personality as evidenced in speeches he crafted for his work in the Masonic order.

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<sup>304</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, February 10, 1893.

## Close of the Acker Regime

The Course of Study detailed earlier provides the best documentary source for the coda of the Acker years. Within it one may grasp the sense of the school district that Acker shaped as its primary pedagogue, if not its chief executive officer. For Acker occupied a time when the board of trustees of any given school district exercised a tremendous amount of oversight and management—what contemporaneously would be viewed as micromanagement—of issues which had yet to devolve to the superintendent. And yet, one senses in terms of such policies as the district’s hiring of teachers solely who possessed first grade certificates (a teaching credential just short of a permanent one gained with normal school or university graduation) that Acker had a hand in influencing such an early hallmark of establishing a standard of excellence.

Midway through his term of service with the district, Acker’s report to the state superintendent of instruction showed the district in continuance of a healthy state of growth. The total enrollment of pupils of all ages was 1,377, of which 331 belonged to the “colored school.”

Of the total number of students enrolled in school, 315 were recorded as unable to read and write prior to their enrollment. The district employed 21 teachers, paying them a total of \$9,210. School houses and grounds belonging to the city were valued at \$27,000, with their libraries and apparatus valued at \$2,075.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Fort Worth Star Telegram, May 30, 1904.



Increasingly, Walter Acker's work with the Masonic Order consumed his time, seemingly distracting his focus upon the public school, although he doubtless saw the work as one and the same with the school district. In August of 1905 he led a "school of instruction" for the Waxahachie lodge, having conducted several already that summer at Marshall, Temple, and several other places.<sup>306</sup>

Additionally, as Trinity University gained a foothold and began its local ascendancy, the spotlight of local educational interest and concern was cast increasingly toward it, and away from what had been up to that time the town's pre-eminent educational undertaking—its public high school. Correspondingly, Trinity personnel became the frequent feature of the local press; likewise Trinity students and their concerns assumed precedence over those features of the high school that had previously commanded public attention. Coverage devoted to academic affairs of the day—chiefly debates and oratorical contests—was preponderated by Trinity, as was the growing number of athletic contests.

In April of 1906, the first meeting of the Central Texas Teachers' Association was held in Waxahachie, at the Sims Library, with a plethora of area educators, including Acker, in attendance. The first order of business was the election of officers, and Dr. S.L. Hornbeak, dean of the faculty of Trinity University was unanimously elected President, with Acker elected First Vice President. Miss Edna Zuber of Hillsboro was elected secretary. Welcoming remarks were made by Dr. A.E. Turner, the president of Trinity,

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<sup>306</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, August 1, 1905.

County Superintendent James T. Brooks of Waxahachie, and city Superintendent J.D. Coghlan of Midlothian. State Superintendent Cousins had been invited and expected, but in his place, Chief Clerk F.M. Bralley attended. Others in attendance included Superintendent J.L. Long, of Dallas; Superintendent W.W. Daffan, of Venus; Principal W.H. Adamson of Oak Cliff; Principal T.D. Brooks of the Hillsboro High School; Principal A.C. Speer, of Ferris; Principal J.H. Phillips of Mansfield High School; Principal B. E. Looney of the Corsicana High School; Principal T.E. Peters of Dallas, and a host of others.

The meeting transpired much like a Teacher's Institute meeting, with Acker inviting the delegation to tour the new school building of which the town was very proud. Entertainment was provided by the Trinity University Quartette.

Papers read included such topics as "The Feasibility of Employing None but Normal Trained Teachers in Our Public Schools," and "Latin in the High School: Its Purposes and Its Substitutes; also, and of particular note given contemporary notions of the "crowded curriculum," "Is the Constant Addition to the High School Curriculum an Addition to the Usefulness of Schools?"<sup>307</sup>

In December of 1909, as he rose to within the highest ranks of the Masonic Order, quite possibly on the strength of his purple-prosed oratory, Walter Acker delivered the following words in a speech to the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Texas:

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<sup>307</sup> Texas School Journal, v. 23, Sept. 1905, 25.

In the cold soil of our modern commercial, social and professional life, where greed for gold and personal popularity grows rank, there is little preparation for the growth and culture of those finer flowers of friendship and sympathy, for which the human heart so longs—the fragrance of whose perennial bloom in the life of the altruist gives a solace and a satisfaction, indescribable and undefinable. The joy that comes to him whose cheeks are fanned by aroma-laden zephyrs from off love’s flowerbeds, is ‘unspeakable and full of glory,’ and to share in that ecstatic joy is your privilege and mine. ‘Tis within our grasp. Shall we reach forth and take it? Contemplation of those tender sentiments, growing out of friendship and sympathy and love, transports us, as it were, to mountain tops of delight, and with the very thought there is born, unconsciously it may be, a noble resolve to spend our lives more unselfishly in the service of our fellow-men—to think more about our brother’s need, less about our own.<sup>308</sup>

The degree to which Walter Acker extended friendship and sympathy to all stakeholders in the educational community cannot be known for certain. His years of service to the Waxahachie city public schools demonstrated a high level of capable, professional, even erudite, commitment. The remainder of Acker’s career equally indicated a high commitment to a level of service to the educational endeavor, as he returned to a superintendency of the Fort Worth Masonic Home School after leaving Waxahachie for a short private career in the insurance industry.

Acker’s service in the First World War in France as a secretary of the Young Men’s Christian Association resulted in a weakened state of health, complicating his return to the Masonic Home and the resumption of his duties as superintendent.

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<sup>308</sup> *Address of Grand Orator Walter Acker Delivered Before the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Texas, December 6, A.D. 1909, A.I. 2439.* (Houston, Gray, and Dillaye & Co., publishers, 1909).

Physically depleted with illnesses of influenza, pneumonia, and then appendicitis, Acker submitted his resignation to the board on April 14, 1920, and called a special meeting of the 250 students that evening to tell them of his actions, explaining that he believed that his work should be carried on by someone in good health. The following morning he shot himself to death with .38 caliber pistol.<sup>309</sup>

### Well Known Educator Quits Public Schools

After a Service of Fifteen Years: The many friends of the Waxahachie Public Schools will learn with severe regret that with the ending of the present term Superintendent Walter L. Acker will sever his connections with the schools. The commencement exercises will be held on May 25<sup>th</sup> and on June 1<sup>st</sup> Mr. Acker will quit school work to enter another line of endeavor.

At the meeting of the board of trustees the first Tuesday in this month Mr. Acker was unanimously selected to the position of superintendent, but he advised the board that he would be unable to accept the proffered place, at the same time assuring the members of this body that he deeply appreciated their kindness in again tendering him the superintendency of the schools. Friday morning he formally filed his resignation with the board to take effect June 1st.

Mr. Acker has been connected with the public schools of the city for fifteen years and in that time the growth of the schools has kept pace with the best school in the state. During the first four years Mr. Acker [illegible] with the schools he served as principal of the high school and for eleven years in succession he has been at the head of the city's educational system as superintendent. Each successive election to the superintendency was by a unanimous vote of the board. The present high condition of the school system is a testimonial to the executive and

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<sup>309</sup> *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, April 15, 1920.

administrative ability of Mr. Acker. The high school now ranks among the best in Texas and is affiliated with the State University on a number of subjects. In addition to his educational attainments Mr. Acker is a high toned Christian gentleman and is held in high esteem by the entire township of Waxahachie.

For the present Mr. Acker's family will continue to reside in the city until on June 1<sup>st</sup> he goes to Dallas to accept a position with the insurance agency of Tresevant & Cochran as a special agent.

Mr. Acker's letter of resignation follows:

Waxahachie, Tex., April 29, 1910

Hon. J. Lea Gammon, President School Board,  
Waxahachie, Texas—

Dear Sir: I hereby tender my resignation as superintendent of the public schools of Waxahachie—same to take effect June 1<sup>st</sup> of this year. Upon this connection I desire to thank each and every member of the board for the uniform kindness and courtesy shown me at all times and especially for the renewed expression of their confidence evidenced by a unanimous re-election for another year at your last regular meeting.

Upon severing my connection with the Waxahachie public schools, in which it has been my privilege to labor for fifteen years, I would hope [illegible] in your wisdom a superintendent of undoubted scholarship and successful experience may be secured who, with the splendid body of teachers you now have, will be able to maintain and advance the present high standard of our system of schools.

I shall ever watch with interest the city schools of Waxahachie, where I have spent with pleasure to myself, and I trust some profit to yours, fifteen of my best years.

Wishing for each and every member of the board every joy disinterested friendship can propose, I am in grateful appreciation. Yours very sincerely,

Walter Acker.<sup>310</sup>

The longevity and concomitant stability of the Acker regime, in comparison with the tenures of the town's earlier superintendents, helped congeal the somewhat amorphous expression of the grammar of schooling into an understandable and recognizable form if for no other reason than its provision of a predictable pattern. Stitching together the remnants of the earliest days, Acker brought definition to the "era of professionalization" that marked public schooling during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Acker exemplified the professional pedant, establishing an orderly classroom, precise in his words, meticulous in his deeds, conscientious of his ends. Entering the profession when the appellation of "Professor" was the norm for school men, Acker typified the title, fully investing in it even as it began to fade. If mechanistic principles of the industrial age were the hallmarks of understanding and achieving a social efficiency in education, all the better to have a superintendent who could be depended upon to be employed one year to the next. He appeared from year to year like clockwork. And although his philosophical traits might have indicated a closer identification with Kliebard's humanist school, Acker's consistency expressed a grammar of the social efficiency aspects of school. That "school" was being defined locally, and in such a fashion that its definition would ultimately supersede the personalities of those delineating it, was Walter's Acker's legacy.

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<sup>310</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, May 6, 1910.

## **Chapter Five: Maintaining consistency and adding complexity to the grammar of public schooling: the Winn Regime, 1910-1936**

### **The Local Expression of Progressive Education**

By 1910, amidst the flowering of the local Chautauqua movement, the growth and development of the Trinity University campus, the locally held iconographic status of the Sims Library regarding town cultural and literary pursuits, and the economic and cultural developments that would transpire in the next several years, the citizens of Waxahachie were inclined to conflate the progress of their town and the professionalization of its public educational endeavor with “progressive education” as it unfolded over the course of the next decade. Their graded school, the affiliated status with the state university, their new and modern school building, their rigorous curriculum and high standard of teacher credential requirements bespoke progress. In his landmark treatise, *The Transformation of the School*, Lawrence Cremin carefully demarcates the progressive *impulse* in education from the progressive *era*, figuring the former to have occurred from 1876 to 1917, and the latter from 1917 to 1957, with the First World War clearly marking the dividing line. For Cremin, the *impulse* toward progressivism in education was driven more by trade, labor, and business forces having to do with industrialization of the economy; the *era* of progressivism in education had more precisely to do with the theory, particularly learning theory, of a group of educators and

philosophers.<sup>311</sup> That many persons understood progress to be any departure from or innovation regarding a former, traditional means of conduct, also added to the sense that education, which had progressed beyond the one-room-schoolhouse, the caricature of the stern taskmaster, the four to five month school year, was itself progressive.

While John Dewey referred to his colleague Francis Parker as “the father of progressive education,” it is Dewey, today, who is most closely identified with the movement, primarily due to the ideas expressed in such books as *The School and Society*, *The Child and the Curriculum*, and *Democracy and Education*. Growing out of a series of talks in 1899, Dewey published *The School and Society* the following year and watched it become an immediate sensation. In his survey and explanation of the pedagogical scene of the day, Dewey faulted the effects of industrialism upon pedagogy, finding within it a departure from the “time honored education of the agrarian household and neighborhood, where every youngster shared in meaningful work, and where the entire industrial process stood revealed to any observant child.”<sup>312</sup> Dewey’s sense of progressivism was antithetical to the “progress” of the industrial age, which in fact served to ossify traditional approaches to education which predicated themselves upon the passivity of the learner, who was at once removed from the larger aspect of society, and upon whom (rather than for whom) the curriculum was enacted.

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<sup>311</sup> Lawrence Cremin, *Transformation of the School* (New York: Vintage, 1961).

<sup>312</sup> Cremin, *op. cit.*, 117.



Dewey formulated his theory of progressive education amidst the ferment of the professionalization era of modern schooling. Says Cremin:

All about him, a cacophony of voices was demanding educational reforms of every sort and variety. Businessmen and labor unions were insisting the school assume the classical functions of apprenticeship. Settlement workers and municipal reformers were vigorously urging instruction in hygiene, domestic science, manual arts, and child care. Patriots of every stripe were calling for Americanization programs. And agrarian publicists were pressing for a new sort of training for county life that would give youngsters a sense of the joys and possibilities of farming...<sup>313</sup>

Such was certainly the case as expressed in the pages of the *Enterprise* in the years leading up to G. B. Winn's tenure of office, as he assumed the superintendency of the Waxahachie Public Schools upon the departure of Walter Acker.

In May of 1910, G. B. Winn, the Ellis County Superintendent of Public Instruction was busily planning for the summer normal to be conducted at Trinity University. In planning his presentation he received word that he had been elected superintendent of the Waxahachie public schools at a Wednesday morning meeting of the board of trustees. The election of Mr. Winn had been by a unanimous vote, as trustees were eager to capitalize upon the experience of one of their own, even though there were several other applicants for the position. Winn was known and respected as a school man of wide experience and was considered well qualified for the position to which he had been elected. He had resided in Waxahachie since 1898, and was known throughout the

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<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*

county not only for his work over the previous four years as county superintendent, but from his and his brother's early days of teaching in the Ellis county communities of Boyce and Grove Creek. Winn had been connected with the Waxahachie city schools for seven years before becoming county superintendent, four of them as principal of the high school. He was stepping into a position for which he had been well prepared.

The timing of Winn's election could not have been more opportune. The drought over the span of the previous year had driven many farmers from the county, severely depleting the number of scholastic age children in the county. Waxahachie's public schools, however, continued to add students.

Winn's assumption of the superintendency that year corresponded with an uptick in the amount of education-related articles in the *Enterprise*, many of them reprints from larger papers, but all having to do with the increasing interest in vocational education. Bearing headlines such as "Progress In Education," the gist of many of these articles was that schooling of the Academic Scholar approach, or the rigidities associated with "mental discipline" had to give way to a form that was considered more practical and useful. Citing the arguments presented at the closing session of the National Education Association that spring, the argument was offered that not only was manual training, vocational and industrial education called for, but that there should "not be too much confinement within doors and not too much attention to books without sufficient attention to the requirements of health." This call for increased physical exercise—"more essential to the well being of growing boys and girls than to the grown -ups and...just as bad to

dwarf the body of the boys as it is to dwarf the intellects”—corresponded to the growing presence of campus athletics.

The physical weakling is almost as bad as the mental weakling. Exercise in the open air is always recommended as a promoter of health and longevity, and playgrounds for children are provided as an inducement. Manual training may possibly be made quite as entertaining and quite as beneficial in the way of exercise as play and it serves still another purpose in cultivating the mind as well as the muscles.<sup>314</sup>

Vocational schools were seen locally as a comparatively recent development of the educational system, but their value was becoming more and more appreciated. The notion that progress was achieved by embracing manual training and domestic science was an inherent feature of these articles. “In the past young men have left academies and colleges with a fine smattering of Greek and Latin and ancient history, but of little practical knowledge of the world of affairs or the means of earning a livelihood and some of them have been no better off from the book learning obtained from years of study because of the lack of knowledge of how to apply it to a useful purpose.”<sup>315</sup> Local sentiment agreed. Thus, when a bill before Congress seeking to contribute federal money to the states in the pursuit of educational interest, not very different from the Blair Bill of previous decades, the editorial viewpoint of the *Enterprise* took an altogether different stance than when it had attacked the Blair Bill as a federal intrusion upon states’ rights to set local educational policy. Reprinting in full an article from the Washington Post

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<sup>314</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, March 11, 1910.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*

entitled “Making Education More Practical,” the *Enterprise* pointed out that “the training of American youth in farming and shop work is a national duty, in the line of true conservation.”<sup>316</sup>

Within the first decade of the Winn regime, subtle shifts began to occur within the prevalent grammar of schooling as had been practiced to that point. Increasingly, school exhibits of student products began to supplant the perennial “entertainments” of prior years. The school year of 1912-1913 was capped by a multi-grade level display for patrons to view at the close of the year. Explained the *Enterprise*: “The trend of the public school education now is to do things rather than to know things.”<sup>317</sup> Thus, the domestic science department’s “culinary art and textile” coursework under the direction of Miss Harris culminated in the display of prepared food items and sewn garments, while the manual training department displayed for visitors their own “hand-made dress boxes, chairs, desks and many other useful household articles” constructed under the supervision of Professor Stovall. So too did the primary grades make displays of their own school work.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, July 1, 1910; reprinted from the *Washington Post*, June 9, 1910.

<sup>317</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, May 30, 1913.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*

## **G.B. Winn**

Gray Winn was born in Murray County, Tennessee, in 1866, the son of Arch W. Winn and Mildred Winn. The family moved to Texas in 1869, settling on a farm near Forresteron, Texas, a few miles south of Waxahachie. Gray, the eldest of five siblings, was followed by sisters Minnie and Lina, brother Clyde, and sister Maud. He and his brother and sisters were fortunate to be educated at the Nash school, a pre-eminent and longstanding institution which served the southern-central portion of Ellis county for many years, first as a common school, and then as a primary and secondary school. The greatest testament to the Nash school was the large number of premier citizens of Ellis county for which the school served as their foundational educational experience.

Winn showed academic promise from his early years, excelling at school and clearly intended for a life beyond the family farm. He attended the State Normal at Huntsville, excelling in science, graduating in 1890, and became a teacher at Garden Valley, now known as Bardwell. Later he taught at Grove Creek and Boyce, after flirting briefly with a school assignment in Taylor, Texas, which proved not to his liking. Said the Enterprise in 1891:

Prof. G.B. Winn went off a few weeks ago to try his luck in the far west, but has returned and directs that his Enterprise be sent here- after to Nash. He proposes now to stay in Ellis county.

A county favorite in school circles, Winn established early in his career his commitment to the education of the county's schoolchildren, becoming a perennial staple in the monthly county teacher institutes, frequently as a presenter, but always as a

discussant. In these often poorly attended institutes, Winn's name tirelessly appeared through the years in the short blurbs documenting them in the pages of the *Enterprise* and larger papers. He grew early into a role of school leadership, as evidenced by the advertisement for the Boyce High School appearing in the *Enterprise* in 1896:

Announcement of Boyce High School

Full Corps of Competent Instructors . Thorough English Education Given. The building is large, new, and furnished. Board may be had in private families at reasonable rates. A Conservatory trained teacher of music. No temptations for pupils. Tuition reasonable. For particulars and catalogue call on or address G.B. Winn, Principal, Boyce, Texas.<sup>319</sup>

In 1898, Winn came to Waxahachie as principal of the local schools, upon Walter Acker's ascendency to the superintendency.

In 1893, Winn was married to Miss Rena Hosford, at one time a student at Allie Speer's Waxahachie Female Academy. To this union were born three sons. Ralph, G.B., Jr., and Tom, all of them attending Waxahachie's public schools during the term of their father's superintendency.

Winn was a lifelong member of the Methodist Church. His twenty-year tenure as superintendent of the Sunday Schools paralleled his career in education with the Waxahachie public schools. Indeed, Winn worked to wed his efforts in the public schools and the Sunday schools in his local implementation of a "released time/dismitted time"

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<sup>319</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, August 7, 1896.

plan which allowed students in the public schools to be excused from their lessons on a weekday to attend a Sunday school of their choice.

Over time, Winn's work in the district characterized him as intensely student-centered in his thinking. While an adept and competent manager of the school's business over the years, Winn's true distinction was one of focusing on student needs beyond the mere cognitive or academic. Some evidence, comparative to his predecessor and successor, indicates an atypical concern for all students, black and white, as many of his efforts paid dividends for the African-American school population. Much evidence points to Winn's conscientious concern for student well-being as his primary objective. A case in point arose at the county teachers institute of November 1901, when Winn was teaching science as Park Public School's principal. When the discussion focused on teachers, Winn voiced the idea that more of them should attend the institutes that they might prove successful. He proposed "adopting some means by which all the teachers of the county could be induced to attend the institutes," as a means of improving education. When the discussion shifted to gaining the cooperation of patrons (read: parents), with the prevailing sentiment that many "sent their children to school because of the benefits to be derived from the free school fund," Winn maintained that the hoped-for cooperation of parents could not be secured by any other means except through the children. "If the teacher desires to have the co-operation of the parent, he must first win the love of the children."<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, November 29, 1901.

## **New campuses: West Ward, South Ward, Waxahachie High School, and Oak Lawn School**

With the continued growth of the district, and a perceptible growth in curricular aims, Winn faced the need for greater classroom space from the very beginning of his administration. The campus buildings of the old Marvin College, used continuously even after the addition of the new Park School building, were creaking with age. Winn realized that the ward schools so long called for by town patrons, and with which the town trustees had occasionally flirted, was an inevitability, not only for the citizens in the western portion of town, but now for those living in the southern portion. During the first term of his administration, Winn reported an October enrollment of 1100 white students and 133 African-American students. In January of 1911 Winn pointed out to council the need of more room for primary school pupils and publicly endorsed the idea of ward schools. Winn was faced with the choice of moving to a ward system of schools, or else adding yet again to the existing campus. Sentiment was divided locally, as there had always been a call for ward schools for the west side counterbalanced by a strong sense that the center of educational endeavor within the town lay upon the site of the old Marvin College. As for the western section of town, the “old academy” building had been torn down long ago to make way for the Sims Library. The former Texas College building was no longer an option, as its owners had sold and it had been separated into smaller units and moved to various locations about town. The new ward buildings would have to consist of new construction, and would have to be funded by bonds. In March,



1911, a bond election was scheduled in the amount of \$15,000. Amid the news of the high school baseball team's latest successes against the "high school" teams of Corsicana, and their "old rival" Ennis, the *Waxahachie Daily Light* reported the overwhelming success of the bond issue.<sup>321</sup>

Shades of years past threatened the bond issue, though, when the state comptroller refused to register the bonds. Apparently, the question of who was to purchase the bonds arose, but, after being rejected once, the attorney general's office ultimately approved the bonds for Waxahachie schools upon lobbying from J.B. Oldham, of Dallas, to whom the bonds were sold, and trustee president J.L. Gammon and trustee F.B. Kenner.<sup>322</sup>

The bond money was to purchase land and erect two school buildings, one in the southern portion of town and one in the western. School trustees closed a deal with Eugene Dunaway of Italy for about one acre of land in Bullard Heights, a hilltop neighborhood in the southern portion of town, on the other side of Waxahachie Creek, on which was to be erected one of the ward school buildings. The price paid was \$350.<sup>323</sup> The school was deemed Ward School #3 or simply, South Ward. The other ward school, #2, later officially designated as Ferris Ward, served the western portion of town, and was located just east of the Waxahachie Cotton<sup>324</sup> Mill, where its pupils many years later

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<sup>321</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, March 13, 1911.

<sup>322</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, March 14, 1911.

<sup>323</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, May 3, 1911.

<sup>324</sup> Personal Interview, Morgan Moses, December 17, 2009.

recalled hearing the hum of the mill machinery as they went about their lessons. The remnants of the Marvin College campus buildings, along with portions of the Park school building built in 1904 became Ward School #1, otherwise known as Central Ward, the upper floor serving as the Park High School, which with increasing frequency was referred to simply as Waxahachie High School.

With the addition of the two ward schools and an expanded curriculum, particularly in the area of vocational educational offerings, a distinct sense of pride for her schools emerged in the townsfolk of Waxahachie. A special feature of the Waxahachie Daily Light, penned by the new Superintendent Winn, spotlighted the school district and its distinct “progress” with the photographic depiction of the Park campus, Ferris Ward, and South Ward schools in December of 1912. Winn was particularly proud, and eager to advertise, the expanding domestic science and manual training curriculum for the year in progress. Detailing the domestic science department, Winn described the two rooms apportioned—“one for sewing and lectures, the other as a laboratory”—with accompanying chairs, tables, and cabinets for storage, and the laboratory complete with range, desks, individual “alcohol stoves” and cooking utensils. In a separate building was to be found the expanded manual training department, its machinery inclusive of a 12 inch rip saw, a two horse-power band saw, a speed lathe with a metal frame, capable of turning wood up to 36 inches in diameter, a tool grinder, an electric glue pot, and a host of other mechanical devices.

Within the joinery room were to be found 18 oak benches, lockers for student

articles, cabinets for tool storage, and student desks. Student products on display included upholstered footstools, settees, collar boxes, tie racks, coat hangers, bread boards, hammer handles, spoons and other household articles.

Winn's depiction of the high school athletic program gave demonstrative proof of the athletic program having come under school auspices during his tenure. There were organized football and baseball teams for the boys, and a girls basketball team.

Lest his discourse upon the innovations of the past several years leave the wrong impression, Winn commented at length upon the continued and expanded affiliated status with the state university in the following courses: English, ancient history, Medieval and Modern history, English history, civics, mathematics, solid geometry, Latin, chemistry, physics, and physiography, with intermediate grades accountable for seven subjects, including drawing. Winn was particularly proud of having a primary supervisor in charge of the first four grades.<sup>325</sup>

The addition of two new schools was not enough to absorb the increasing enrollment of the city's public schools. They filled immediately upon opening, and as the "country children" in the southern part of town showed up as the cotton season came to a close, an additional classroom and teacher had to be added.<sup>326</sup> The original structure of Marvin College, in continuous use for more than forty years was crumbling, its rooms

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<sup>325</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, December 16, 1912.

<sup>326</sup> Minutes, Waxahachie City Council, September 22, 1911.

pressed lately into service as the manual trades and domestic science classrooms. As the ward schools filled, creating ever more high school candidates, the need for a new high school became obvious. Calls for it began appearing as soon as Winn stepped on the scene.

By 1915, the situation had reached crisis proportions, and Winn knew he had to take action. Winn told the board members that he, himself, was willing to take the blame for any potential repercussions in the agitation of the school building question, especially regarding the proposed \$75,000 price tag. The town had only recently added two new school buildings, and the Park school building was yet only twelve years old.

Winn began by announcing to school patrons that the low first and third grades at the Central Ward were full to overflowing, and that no more children were to be admitted there. Those entering thereafter would be assigned to the Ferris Ward.<sup>327</sup> In conjunction with the board, Winn arranged a series of visits of town movers and shakers—businessmen and club women—to witness first-hand the crowded and dangerous conditions that were purported to exist. The first visit he arranged in mid-September was among Waxahachie's prominent businessmen, including Lynn Lasswell, Harris McIntosh, S.W. Durham, J.G. Cornwell, and C.A. Tunnell. Representing the local chamber of commerce, these men became Winn's chief allies in winning passage of a bond election.

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<sup>327</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, September 20, 1915.

Later in the month, at Winn's invitation, eight representative citizens visited the school to see for themselves the conditions there. These included D.H. Thompson, W.G. McClain, J.B. Naughton, S.P. Spalding, Will Moore, W.G. Johnson, W.M. Mincey, and J. Lea Gammon. They toured the third story "coop" of the Park building/Central Ward where the high school students were assembled in study hall. Originally intended as an auditorium, the room had been pressed into service as a study hall to meet the demand for classroom space. Next they witnessed the crowded class rooms in the main building's primary department and the "out in the yard" sections of the school, which included several various frame buildings which had been constructed over the years to fill the gap. The men noted the "narrow hallways, narrow and winding stairways and the steep fire escapes" as inconveniences and dangers of the present arrangement. Some lamented that "the present, ill-shaped, badly constructed house" had been intended to serve at least forty years—as was the case with Marvin College's main building. Only twelve years had elapsed since its completion. Others asserted that the Park building had served its usefulness and that no one could have foreseen the growth of the district. All of the visitors declared that a supreme effort should be made at once to give Waxahachie adequate school buildings. Reporting their comments in a special edition of the *Daily Light*, the accompanying reporter declared:

They would like to see a brick or stone structure erected on the campus alongside the present main building and then have the little cottages and makeshift old shacks torn away or moved off. They want a house where ventilation [sic] is featured, where spacious halls give pupils room to pass one another and with broad stairways. Of those who

expressed themselves, none favored a three or four story building. They believed in erecting a main high school building with large auditorium above and with wings on either side to take care of a growing school.<sup>328</sup>

Other visiting committees concurred that a new school, particularly a new high school, was in order. Mr. Durham, who had been part of the businessmen tour, advocated a high school removed from the intermediate and primary grades because of the age gap. Thus was a change in the grammar of schooling proposed, and ultimately accepted, unbeknownst to its speaker.

The Chamber of Commerce responded by appointing a committee composed of J.H. Miller, L.C. Curlin, and Superintendent Winn “to investigate the bonded indebtedness of the district to determine if bonds may be issued in the amount to erect a comfortable school building.”<sup>329</sup> With circumstances in their favor, the board prevailed upon the city council to request a bond election. The council deferred the issue to an adjourned meeting pending the outcome of a change in the city charter. This action delayed the call for a bond election until the next year.

In August of 1916, having awaited the reorganization of city government, the school board once again proposed a special election for the purpose of approving bonds

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<sup>328</sup>*Waxahachie Daily Light*, September 28, 1915. The “little cottages and makeshift old shacks” referred to in the article are visible in various photographs of the schools, but receive little comment in board minutes or trustee minutes of the time period. Frame structures equivalent to today’s “portable” buildings, they doubtlessly served the same function for a growing district. As they came and went without much official comment, they would be reviled by later critics as “abortions and misfits with which the people have been compelled to put up for the last twenty years.”

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*

for the construction of a new high school. The price tag had now jumped to \$90,000, but by the end of the month the council scheduled the election, wrapping the school bond with other municipal bond proposals. On Tuesday, October 9, 1916, Waxahachie voters overwhelmingly approved the bond issue by a vote of 317 to 21. Waxahachie would soon have a new, modern high school. The question of its location, however, proved to be the most caustic and divisive one since the district had been founded thirty-two years before.

During the school visits of the previous year, some stakeholders had noted with some concern the mixing of the very youngest of pupils with the very oldest of students, and had thought a separate high school to be the remedy. The two additional ward schools consisted only of the primary and intermediate grades. The Park Public School campus was the only one which mixed all the grades. As the curriculum expanded, and as extracurricular activities associated with the high school, particularly sports such as football which required a large amount of outdoor space, grew to attract more students, the need for a separate high school seemed to some to be a natural evolution in the manner in which schooling was to be expressed locally.

Board members, consisting of J.L. Gammon, C.W. Gibson, F.B. Kenner, George W. Coleman, J. Lee Penn, J. M. Alderdice, and J. J. McQuatters, met in early November to consider the employment of an architect for the new high school building. They were desirous of employing C.H. Page & Bros., having passed over Sanguinet and Staats Architects from Fort Worth. Within two weeks a contract was ready and accepted by both parties. Later, at the December meeting, a committee composed of Trustees Alderdice,

Gammon, and Penn proposed the purchase of the Rush Williams tract, a six-acre plat located in the northwestern section of town, in the direction of Trinity University, at a cost of \$2,000, for the location of the new high school, to which the board acquiesced, instructing the committee “to close the deal to that effect.”<sup>330</sup>

When word of the new location for the high school became public, several citizens took issue with the change from the traditional “college campus” which had birthed and fostered the pre-eminent educational endeavor in Waxahachie. These persons publicly prevailed upon the board to reconsider their intention to re-locate the present high school. At a meeting of the board on January 13, 1917, called to discuss the matter, board trustee J.M. Alderdice tendered his resignation, presumably over the issue. He was immediately replaced by the board with Harris McIntosh. Adjourning until the following Monday, the board re-convened, this time with a contingent of those opposed to the purchase of the new land in attendance. They included an assortment of town businessmen and professionals with traditional ties to the town, several of whom had matriculated at the old Marvin College: Bob Coleman, Tom Whipple, T.D Meyers, Henry Thompson, and F.S. Cronk. These men advocated the location the new building on the present campus site. Seemingly, the board was ready for the voiced opposition, and had their own contingent of professionals, including W.G. Lomax, J.R. Mayhew, S.L. Hornbeak, C.J. Kennedy, G.C. Groce, T.A. Ferris and others, who advocated the selection of the six acre tract of the Williams plat. The *Enterprise* covered the meeting:

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<sup>330</sup> Minutes, Board of Trustees, December 5, 1916.



After a full discussion of the matter the board voted with only one dissenting vote to accept Mr. Williams' proposal to deed a six-acre block to the city for school purposes in consideration of \$2,000 and a further consideration that he plat his entire property into the city lots and streets and open same, and further to restrict improvements adjacent to the campus plat, which is to be surrounded by streets so that all such improvements will face the campus property.<sup>331</sup>

The dissenting vote had come from trustee C.W. Gibson, who had his own ties to Marvin College, and whose wife had been so fundamental in the early schooling endeavor of Waxahachie.

The Board met in regular session on February 6, 1917 and made the purchase of the Williams tract official, registering \$2,000 in the accounts ledger as paid to "Rush Williams for Lot 15 to be paid out proceeds of bond issue." They then formed a committee of Gammon, Coleman, and McIntosh to "frame the verbage [sic] and the condition of deed from Mr. Rush Williams with reference [sic] to any unsightly fences or obstructions by respective parties."<sup>332</sup> Meeting again two days later at a called meeting, the board considered the "letting of the contract of the new high school building." Their final choice was with Caddo Construction Co. of McKinney, Texas, for which they entered into the minutes ledger a payment of \$62,000.<sup>333</sup> That they were moving quickly in their actions may have had something to do with the increasing vociferousness of the opposition. Indeed, their meeting of the 8<sup>th</sup> had to be adjourned to the following day in

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<sup>331</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, January 16, 1917.

<sup>332</sup> Minutes, Board of Trustees, February 6, 1917.

<sup>333</sup> Minutes, Board of Trustees, February 8, 1917.

order to contend with the “unfinished business” brought on by those seeking to amend their actions:

### School Site Protest Made

Mass Meeting is Held and Citizens Register A Vigorous Protest

Resolutions Passed: Condemning Board for Action and Calling Upon it for a Rescinding Order Before it is Too Late

The county court room was well filled and many stood in the door way to participate in the mass meeting called to enter protest against the erection of the new high school building on any other site than the present school campus. Promptly at 7:45 o'clock, the hour named for opening the meeting, F.S. Cronk came forward and called the house to order. He asked Judge T.P. Whipple to state the purpose of the meeting.

Judge Whipple did not mince words in stating the purpose—that of registering vigorous protest against the action of the school board in selecting a new site for the school building. He said in substance:

‘When the question of a new charter came up a number of us concluded to swallow our differences and vote for same for sake of the public school interests. The charter admitted of the issuance of school bonds in the sum of \$90,000 and the people marched up and voted for same, but in doing so I don't believe there is a man present who dreamed or suspected that any of this money would be used for the purchase of a site, but the next thing the people heard was the announcement that the board contemplated the purchase of a tract of six acres off Marvin street some two blocks.

This caused dissension and several of us went to the board and argued with them. It was agreed that a meeting be held when the people could enter protest, but time was not given in which to inform the people and there were only a few present and those who did go could not get the board to change their views. On that occasion I asked the board to submit the matter to the people and offered to stand

responsible for the total expenses of such an election. C.W. Gibson made such a motion but could not get a second.

Last Saturday night a few of us met and discussed the situation with the result we put out petitions. These petitions were put out Monday afternoon and I am informed that 450 signers were procured. Today we put out circulars announcing the mass meeting and what happened? Although the bonds have not yet been delivered and the board has not received a dollar on them, a deed was filed at 11:25 o'clock this morning showing \$2,000 had been paid for the new site. A deal is not completed until delivery is made and the board could not have had \$2,000 in money from the bonds to pay for the property, then I ask why the hurry of filling this deed? It was an effort to prevent interference by the people who have met here tonight.'

W.P. Hancock followed in a short talk in which he declared that it looked very much like twisting around the fence in an effort to aid real estate in that end of town. He declared it was a cold blooded proposition and the real estate men are not to be blamed, but he blamed the board of trustees—that the people are now speaking to them in an effort to get justice. He declared the board was elected by the people and should act for the people. He expressed the belief that 80 percent of the people favor the present campus and that they would not stand for this 'rough shod' work.

Speaking again, Judge Whipple declared that if the building was left on the present campus it would not disturb real estate values. He said there were a total of 140 interurban and street cars that passed the present school site every twenty four hours and that a change in the site would prove a great inconvenience in transportation. He declared the purpose of putting the deed on record was to throw cold water on the meeting of the citizens. He further declared that there is but one way to enforce government by the people and for the people and this is through the recall, which he declared ought to be adopted. He declared that the charter ought to be amended so that when an official refuses to act for the people he may be kicked out.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, February 19, 1917

The series of resolutions called for by the citizens in mass meeting demanded the board rescind their actions, or, at least, put the question to a vote of the citizens for final determination. Electing a “committee of ten” and charging them with presenting the resolutions to the board, these ten citizens stood before the board, awaiting their audience. The board first dispensed with other business, hearing from the committee which had been tasked with the investigation into the safety of the old Marvin College building, as talk had been circulating around town as to its unsafe condition. Should the building prove unsafe, its immediate demolition would certainly be called for, opening up the possibility of new construction on the old site. With Mr. Page, the architect, in concurrence, the committee “reported the building safe in their judgment.”<sup>335</sup>

Board members then heard from the “committee of ten,” reviewed their petition, and “after due consideration could not see sufficient cause to change the location and secured their action already taken.”<sup>336</sup>

Whipple and his supporters, not to be foiled, called for another mass meeting, this one to call for the direct submission to the voters the question which the board was obstructing. Sponsoring their own election to demonstrate their representation of the majority sentiment, Whipple and his colleagues kept up the pressure, whipping the town into a frenzy with yet another protest meeting.

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<sup>335</sup> Minutes, Board of Trustees, February 9, 1917.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*

## Mass Meeting Saturday Night

### School Patrons Take Final Fling at the Proposed Building Site

Another spirited mass meeting was held in the district court room at the court house Saturday night, to further discuss the school site proposition and to take the necessary steps to get the voters out to the polls today for vote on the proposition. Speakers declared they understood a movement was on foot to keep voters away from the polls, but they expressed the hope that all citizens would speak out their sentiments through the ballot.

The first speaker of the evening was C.W. Gibson, member of the school board, who re-stated his reasons for favoring the present campus as a site for the new high school building. Mr. Gibson declared he was the only member of the board who favored keeping the high school on the present campus and further that he made motion after motion to keep it there, but could not get a second. He likewise proposed to leave the matter to the people and was denied this plea. He explained that the board understood that when the new high school was completed that old Marvin college would be torn down and the campus cleared of the make-shift houses as much as possible and that he felt that there was room enough at the old campus for the new building.

Mark Smith made a heated talk in which he censured the board for its judgment. He declared he would give \$100 towards cleaning off the present campus and building the new building there. He said the people were going to have a high school there regardless of where the board erects the contemplated building. He pointed out that election time would roll around and that the patrons would elect a board that would grant the wishes of the people. He said it would not be a waste of money to put the new building on the proposed site after so long a time because Ellis county is doing everything in her power to build good rural schools and that the new building might be so utilized some time.

T.P. Whipple discussed the manner of calling elections for the bond issue, saying no published notice was given through any paper and that the people voted for the bonds

without a knowledge that the order provided for the purchase of a school site. He read a copy of the order taken from the records at the city hall. He called F.B. Kenner to task for a remark made at a former mass meeting...<sup>337</sup>

Board members defended, if somewhat feebly, their intentions and their actions. Kenner declared the board had put weeks and weeks of study into the site selection. He was of the opinion that school patrons did not always understand the problems schools faced, and often would not put themselves to the trouble to find out the “real conditions.” As a board member, he understood his responsibility to figure out a plan that would serve the best interest of the patrons. Admittedly, he felt the acrimony brought on by the present discord to be undeserved among his fellow board members “who had given so freely of their time to the administration of school affairs.”<sup>338</sup> Judge G.C., who had been asked to present the board’s perspective at an earlier mass meeting of the opponents had said that the high school lot if clear, would in his opinion be the ideal place for the new high school building, but that placing a new building amidst the “abortions and misfits” of temporary, ad hoc buildings scattered about the campus was ill advised. Additionally, he thought it wise to obtain new school sites now to meet future demands while they could be obtained at a reasonable price. Insofar as board members actions were perceived as overreaching their authority, he reminded his listeners that when the new city charter was being considered, a committee of the school board came before the executive committee of the charter commissions and represented that the tax of ten cents on the

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<sup>337</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, February 26, 1917.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*

\$100 which it was expected would be allowed for school building purposes would be insufficient, especially if new sites were to be obtained, and because of this the charter was finally written to provide for 12 ½ cent tax for the erection of buildings and the purchase of sites therefore. All this was stated in the order for the election, in the proclamation for the election and in all notices given for the election through the ballot, voted, as required by law, only provided for a vote for and against bonds. Groce further stated that because of previous conflicts of authority, between the school board and the city council, the charter commission provided that the school board should have full jurisdiction in all matters concerning the public school, and that it seemed to him unfair to severely criticize the board for its first exercise of this power so recently directly granted.

These arguments were insufficient to quell Whipple's anger at the board's "usurpation" of power, and the committee-sponsored election, not legally binding in the least, nevertheless showed a majority for his sentiment. That the continued agitation of the issue was rending the town was evidenced by the conciliatory language of yet another mass meeting:

The committee appointed by the citizens mass meeting having reported the result of the election have concluded to again ask the board of school trustees to order an election to decide the location of the high school building and to agree to be bound thereby.

The committee, having at heart the best interest of the people and believing that the majority should rule, and desiring to stop further agitation of this matter, have agreed that if this request be granted no matter what the result of such an election should be, that we will accept the result

and urge all who have been with us in this matter to join with the present board in their efforts to make the building and our school a complete success.

We urge all men and mothers, interested in this question, to talk with our trustees and request a compliance with the will of the people. A refusal to comply with this last request will leave this committee without any recourse except to comply with the orders given it, that it to use all legal and honorable means to accomplish a change from the present site selected b the board.

By stopping agitation, we mean not only with reference to the locations of this building, but also as to the coming April election. This is done because of statements made that this committee was making a personal fight against the present board, which were unfounded in fact. —J.P. Fleming, D.H. Thompson, T.P. Whipple, C.M. Supple, D.S. Fudge.<sup>339</sup>

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1917, the board met in a called meeting to hear from members of the citizen’s meeting—D.H. Thompson, D.S. Fudge, and John P. Fleming—who “requested that the school board reconsider their action in the location of the new school building on the Williams lot and call an election not later than next Monday and submit the location to a vote of the people.” The board discussed the committee’s proposition, and upon a motion by J. Lee Penn, seconded by Harris McIntosh, “respectfully declined the request.”<sup>340</sup>

The board then moved on to other business, including the payment of accounts to

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<sup>339</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, February 28, 1917.

<sup>340</sup> Minutes, Board of Trustees, March 1, 1917.



the usual vendors, including J.J. McQuatters in the amount of \$39.50 for fuel, F.S. Cronk in the amount of \$5.58 for plumbing, George W. Coleman in the amount of \$26.00 for various, D.H. Thompson in the amount of \$145.00 for lumber, Will Moore in the amount of \$9.58 for hardware, etc...

In April, 1917, the board met in a called meeting to install into office the newly elected members of the board. They included Mark Smith, J.W. Harrison, J.G. Cornwell, and D.S. Fudge. Outgoing members included F.B. Kenner, Harris McIntosh, J. Lee Penn, and George W. Coleman.<sup>341</sup> The newfound majority, however, of those opposed to the re-location of the high school away from the traditional lot was yet thwarted in their intentions. By April, plans of the Caddo Construction Company for the erection of the high school on the new site had progressed too far. The cost of changing the plans to locate the new high school on the old Marvin College site amounted to \$14, 124. 21—a bitter pill to those who had hoped that the board election would effect the change they'd hoped for. The best the new board could do was to offer to the town a plea for the subscription of the required sum, to be paid within seven days of May 10<sup>th</sup>. The money was never raised, and the high school was constructed on the new site.

That Superintendent Winn had managed to rise above the fray that had consumed the town over the location of the new high school was perhaps indicative of his non-confrontational demeanor, but certainly due as well to the nature of the superintendent position as it existed at the time. His was a transitional role during the second decade of

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<sup>341</sup> Minutes, Board of Trustees, April 17, 1917.

the twentieth century. Board members yet exercised a much greater degree of control over the day-to-day management of the schools in comparison to today, as they had since the public schools' inception. Board minutes of the day are rife with "instructions" to the superintendent, often in the carrying out of the most minor tasks, such as the ordering of floor wax, depicting him as but the servant of the board regarding all matters of substance. The high school location-struggle seemingly marked a turning point, though, in the manner in which Winn grew into greater spheres of influence within the management of the district. By the next decade, board minutes increasingly depicted his role as wider, more substantive, and possessing a greater range of authority. Within the next decade he saw the influence of his regime expand as the 1920's roared through the cotton-fields, church lawns, and sports-playing fields of Waxahachie.

## The Race Question

P.E. Goldthwaite, the one-time student of, first graduate of, and now Principal of Oak Lawn School, stood before the Board of Education in January of 1917, reporting to them an attendance of nearly 500 students. Goldthwaite had followed the popular and effective J.W. Tildon as principal in 1905, when Tildon moved on to attend medical school. Now in his twelfth year as principal of the Oak Lawn School, he was paying close attention to the manner in which school buildings came to fruition.

The African-American school population had mirrored the growth of the white community. Goldthwaite needed more classroom space and more teachers, and with the recent passage of the bond for the white community's new school, he intended to see what hand-me-down's might be headed his way, as historically the "abortions and misfits" of the Park Public School campus (and the earlier Marvin College) had found their way to Freedmen to be used as schoolhouses for the African-American community. Whether the board was sympathetic to his plight, or whether they merely sought to dispense with his request, they deferred the matter to Winn and Goldthwaite with no particulars other than to "procure more room and sufficient teachers to handle the situation at the colored school."<sup>342</sup>

The cotton culture and the agricultural work that accompanied it showed no signs of slowing down. Cotton in the fields meant the labor need for cotton pickers, and while a

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<sup>342</sup> Minutes, Board of Trustees, January 2, 1917.

sizable proportion of these were white, the labor market which enabled the economic viability of the crop was most certainly black.

### Ellis County Holds Record

#### Noses out ahead of Williamson County as Banner Cotton County

Ellis County produced 979 more bales than Williamson during the year 1916, according to the government figures...Ellis county...118,247 Williamson county 117,268....<sup>343</sup>

By midsummer, work was progressing rapidly upon the new site of the white high school. The exterior of the building was to consist of Elgin-Butler bricks, with a glazed enamel surface that added a level of attraction and sophistication to the finished building. The Caddo Construction Company had contracted, or perhaps sub-contracted, the bricklaying to those in possession of union cards. That several of those with union cards were also African-American came as a surprise to locally hired carpenters and construction workers who arrived one July morning to find African-American co-workers. Faced with the prospect of working alongside African-Americans, the local white construction workers struck, indicating to their bosses they would quit before they would accept African-Americans as co-workers. Initially, the local workers were told that as long as the black bricklayers had their union cards, the contractors had to accept them, and thus, the carpenters would as well. Several out-of-town workers indicated that they had no concern with the issue. Locals, however, were not as obliging. "We are not

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<sup>343</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, July 24, 1917.

accustomed to such methods,” one carpenter told the Enterprise reporter, “and of course could not continue on the job and maintain our self-respect.” They expressed the belief that the contractors would ultimately see things their way.<sup>344</sup> After this episode, work on the building progressed, but it was not determined if the black bricklayers continued in their jobs at the school worksite.

As work proceeded on the new high school throughout 1917, little came the way of the African-American community’s request for more classroom space. Some space had been afforded by way of rental of church property of the Wyatt Street Christian Church and the New Mount Zion Baptist church, but by the following year even it proved insufficient as enrollment was climbing toward 600 students. By early 1918, school trustees began the consideration of a new colored high school, at the insistence of J. Lee Gammon, who had only a few days before been defeated as a board trustee. He and others formed a committee that went before the Waxahachie City Council to request a bond election for the erection of a "substantial" public school building to serve the African-American community. Gammon stated that “a necessity exists for [the] erection of a new building and the people owed it to the colored people in the way of a duty and a promise.” Gammon’s comments were supported by Judge G.C. Groce. He also stated

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<sup>344</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, July 24, 1917.

that it was the duty of the town's citizens to give relief to the African-American school population from the congested conditions.<sup>345</sup>

In May of 1918, the Domestic Science Department of the Oak Lawn school held a dinner for the school trustees and at the meetings the trustees looked over the property next to and adjacent to the existing school. As a result of this meeting, a committee of trustees drafted a resolution to the city council for a bond issue for a new African-American school. It was presented to the council on May 20, 1918, and on June 3 the city council ordered the bond election to be held on July 2. The election results were 209 votes in favor of construction of the two schools as opposed to 11 votes against the bond issue. Superintendent Winn registered the bonds in August the week following the election. The trustees met again and chose Page Brothers Architecture Firm to draw up the plans for the new colored school. On July 30, 1918 the bids were opened with three contractors making the following bids: Trinity Construction Co. of Austin, Texas \$ 24,945.00; C. W. Burkhart of Corsicana, Texas \$ 17,628.75; and A. A. Few of Waxahachie, Texas \$ 16,988.20.

The trustees awarded the contract to the lowest bidder, A. A. Few Construction Co. The construction company was to immediately start on the African-American school.

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<sup>345</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, April 2, 1918.

The school was to be a brick two-story building and completion date was set for September, 1919.<sup>346</sup>

The principal of Oak Lawn, P.E. Goldthwaite achieved a long held dream in seeing the school come to completion. He served as its principal for five more years until his death in 1925. He was followed by Robert Davis, who served until 1932, when M.Z. Hicks took charge as principal, and became Oak Lawn's longest-serving principal.<sup>347</sup>

### **The Curriculum Experience of the Winn Regime**

G. B. Winn contended not only with the growth of the public school enrollment numbers, but in the growth of the expanding curriculum. Always one to see to his own professional growth, most visibly through his diligent attendance to, and organization of, the county and city teacher's institutes, Winn also came into his own as a seasoned professional school man, blending the role with his other as prominent church man.

Despite the crowded condition of his schools, Winn yet maintained the integrity of the curriculum regarding state university affiliation. In 1915 he proudly proclaimed receipt of a letter from J.B. Henderson which showed Waxahachie's public school to rank highly among the state's high schools. The letter promised the addition of a unit of credit,

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<sup>346</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, August 8, 1918. See also: Victor Pointer, "History of Oak Lawn School", [http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~txecm/oak\\_lawn\\_school.htm](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~txecm/oak_lawn_school.htm) (accessed January 6, 2010).

<sup>347</sup> Pointer, *op. cit.*

to make a total of 23, for the manual training class. Winn proclaimed that when the new high school was opened, there would be further opportunity for advancement.<sup>348</sup>

Winn did not lend himself to any tremendous amount of public speaking, the record of his remarks at public occasions were always at a minimum. Neither did he devote his thoughts to writing, as few traces of his professional life in writing are to be found. The twenty-five years of board minutes documenting his tenure as superintendent betray little in the manner of Winn's professional thinking or philosophy. The evidence of his career and its influence upon the school endeavor are to be found largely in his actions.

In 1913, Winn was selected by state superintendent Bralley to be on the state's Normal Board of Examiners, demonstrating a vote of confidence in his academic abilities.<sup>349</sup> Yet, Winn's ascendancy to the superintendency after the advent of Trinity University placed him in a decidedly subordinate status to other local educators. Whereas Walter Acker had for several years presided as superintendent of a school endeavor that was the local pinnacle, Winn's role seemed somewhat minimized by the ascendancy of Trinity professors and administrators, many of whom became the features of press articles dealing with local educational concerns. S.L. Hornbeak, in particular, rose to prominence locally as dean of students, and in later years, as president of the university,

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<sup>348</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, November 23, 1915.

<sup>349</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, June 24, 1913.



and finally as hallowed and respected educator, eclipsed Winn as the pre-eminent educator of the county.

As the definition of a “real school” continued to develop in its definition of curricular components beyond the “core curriculum” as expressed in the 1910-1911 Course of Study, Winn oversaw the expansion of vocational training departments, health and hygiene concerns involving building and campus design, athletic “programs” encompassing supportive associations, booster clubs, separate budgets, etc.; the Parent-Teacher Association arrived on the scene; the first World War with its signal warning of the strain in the agricultural labor market when young men enlist for service; the advent of the automobile and the burgeoning consumer society; all of these conspired to impact the educational program over which Winn began his supervision in 1910. The “entertainments” of previous years evolved into primary school performances of the type that still exist today, with songs and skits performed upon special occasions. As the “elocutionary” courses evolved into “expression” courses, associated both within the school and without, and athletic clubs became school teams, and bands and orchestras became outgrowths of the music programs of the schools, “entertainments” came to be associated with each organization. Throughout the “teens” of the second decade, the literary societies of the Park Public School (increasingly referred to as the Waxahachie High School, and after 1918 with the advent of the new building, exclusively as the Waxahachie High School) coalesced into a singular society—the Erisophian—with its own literary publication. Other societies became expressions of their club or curricular or extracurricular organization. Maintaining its prominence, even as the athletic “clubs” of

football and baseball began to attract players from among the students (and inversely, students to whom high school may not have been a chosen option, otherwise), the debating societies flourished, their participants often receiving high praise and media coverage.

A case in point was the debate held on February 19, 1914 with opponents from the Dallas High School. Commencing at 8 p.m. that evening in the high school auditorium, attendees to this “entertainment” were admitted for fifteen cents. Here, they witnessed Hastings Harrison and Sydney Johnson of Waxahachie debate the resolution: “That the next session of the Texas legislature should enact a compulsory education law, forcing all children between seven and fourteen years old who are not physically or mentally incompetent, to attend either a public or private school for at least six months during the scholastic year.”<sup>350</sup>

Winn’s first graduating class as superintendent, those who entered as freshmen in September of 1910, left a record of their school experiences in the form of a school yearbook, the *Cotton Boll* of 1914. In order to raise the required sum for the book’s publication, \$600, Winn joined with other faculty members in playing an exhibition baseball game against members of the senior class. Indeed, as he watched the athletic program grow, Winn felt compelled to offer his viewpoint regarding the growth of athletics at a monthly teacher’s institute, saying that he “strongly commended athletics,”

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<sup>350</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, February 18, 1914.

but that he “urged that we hold out athletics to a high plane, and that they never interfered in any way with [a] pupil’s studies...”<sup>351</sup>

### Class History

Early on the morning of September 14, 1910, a crowd of boys and girls stood long before the doors were opened, tremblingly but longingly, before High School. Anxiously we watched for the signal and proudly we heard the voice of the Superintendent when we presented our promotion cards—“up stairs, two flights, to the chapel!” It all seemed so unreal that we could hardly be persuaded to give up our cards—our treasured pass into our promised land.

The butt of all the jokes, we bore them bravely, in fact hardly noticing them in our rejoicing over our achievements. For could we not count to twenty-five in Latin and had we not successfully been steered into mysterious Algebra?

As Sophomores, our panic of last year forgotten, we lorded it over the Freshmen with little mercy. Gone was the glamor of Latin; the attraction of adding letters had disappeared—they were just plain everyday *studies*. But we settled down determinedly, setting before us as our goal the day when we should receive our reward.

Through Junior year we marched triumphantly, storming with Cicero against Caitiline, and doggedly explaining Archimedes’ principle, even though in our hearts we were convinced that he was wrong. Some of us this year began Domestic Science and tempting reports were brought to those who had elected Physics or Latin. Plane Geometry we entered as enthusiastically as if we had heard nothing of its dangers and pitfalls. In June we watched the Seniors, pale but happy, file up and receive their diplomas and thought that we would be the attraction next year and planned how graciously we would receive their congratulations. \

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<sup>351</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, March 7, 1914.

And now we have reached the last year of our course. We are Seniors now, yet we feel none of the elevation and distinction which we expected. O, of course we are proud, proud of what we have accomplished and prouder still of our record as a class. For with almost full ranks we have reached our goal, the largest class that has ever set out from our W.H.S. Not only in numbers do we excel but in every phase of High School life. Our boys are prominent in our literary societies and debates. Ours is truly an athletic class also, for each and all of us are enthusiastic workers in basket ball, football or track work. Socially, too, we have left our mark.

We will always remember our High School life; we confess we are a trifle afraid to leave it and start out for ourselves. But still if we strive with the same determination which has always been ours, we are bound to succeed and to triumphantly face life.<sup>352</sup>

One particular curricular strand upon which Winn focused much time and effort was a banking curriculum which brought banking, and the concomitant lessons of economy and thrift, into the schools. This grand effort was treated locally with much interest and discourse and remained a feature of the curriculum for several years. It frequently brought guest speakers and organizers into the schools to lay the groundwork and explain the curriculum.

J.A. McLean of Dallas, representative of the treasury department in this federal district in government school thrift bank's work, arrived in Waxahachie Tuesday to spend two or three days in organization work. Mr. McLean Tuesday announced that the organization work of the bank at Waxahachie High school had been completed and that Miss Gaynell Hawkins, thrift adviser, and the bank's directors would meet with them that afternoon, when he was to unfold to them the plans for operation of the banks.

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<sup>352</sup> The Cotton Boll, 1914, 29.

Laying before the organizations that plans that the government has worked out, Mr. McLean met Tuesday with the Chamber of Commerce, G.B. Winn, superintendent of Waxahachie public school, John Olsen, county superintendent of public instruction , and a number of ladies organizations.

Waxahachie is the first city Mr. McLean has visited since the new year opened, and he said that he hoped to see Waxahachie go over the top with 100 per cent organization and be the first in the district to achieve this honor. Banks will be established in both white and colored schools.<sup>353</sup>

That this program brought banking directly into the schools is indeed fascinating in light of today's "innovations" regarding on-site banking branches as part of career educational programs. Winn's program involved both the white and African-American schools. It utilized students as officers. Said Winn, "The thrift banks plan is now being widely used in schools of the Eleventh federal reserve district following its development in Dallas where its usefulness was demonstrated. It has been found by school authorities to meet a specified need, doing two distinct things. It uses the pupils as speakers to tell their associates why and how savings should be practiced, why and how saving should be invested in our government securities and what these securities are. It offers through the thrift bank opportunity to all pupils to invest their savings in these securities, which are the thrift stamps and the one dollar treasury and five dollar saving stamps."<sup>354</sup>

That Winn promoted such civic-minded patriotism, or patriotic civic-mindedness, was in keeping with his favorite resource for teacher's institutes—Strayer and

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<sup>353</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, January 4, 1921.

<sup>354</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, January 6, 1921.

Engelhardt's *The Classroom Teacher At Work in American Schools*. Often cited as the "textbook" from which the teacher's institutes topics would be chosen, the book offers a pedagogical guide from a distinctly administrative perspective. A departure from the professional development material of the previous era, such as the classical-content oriented Bay View Literary course, the *Classroom Teacher* presented its ideas succinctly and effectively in a highly readable fashion. From its introduction:

Whether or not a superintendent of schools believes in institutionalizing the participation of teachers in the development of administrative and supervisory policies, he would nevertheless be glad to have them understand the plans of work in which they are involved... The treatment of the purpose of education in a democratic society, the technique of teaching, teaching children to study, class organization and training for citizenship, while they deal more intimately with the detail of the teacher's everyday work, are made most significant only as they are related to the principles of administration which control.<sup>355</sup>

Highly practical, and complete with discussion questions following each chapter, the book's democratic impulses are ultimately subsumed by its social efficiency stance toward the organization of schooling. That Winn would subscribe to its teachings corroborates notions of social efficiency perspective. Yet the complexity of Winn, or indeed of any veteran school man of his era cannot be reduced to a mere label, for certainly Winn exhibited both progressive tendencies and those associated with a former age.

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<sup>355</sup> George Drayton Strayer and N.L. Engelhardt, *The Classroom Teacher at Work in American Schools*, (New York: American Book Company, 1920), 8.

In 1925, upon his re-election to the superintendency for another two years, Winn was hailed locally for his record “par excellence” in the local media.<sup>356</sup> The celebrated feature of his tenure, at the time, was his implementation of week-day Bible school for students of the public school. Not unknown to schools across the country, particularly as the limits between church and state were yet being delineated in the public schools (as many would argue, they still are today), Winn’s “plan” followed what was described as a “dismissed time” plan. In describing these and related plans, Edmond Drouin in his book, *The School Question: A Bibliography on Church-State Relationships in American Education*, documents the century-plus duration of the effort of churches to impact the public school curriculum, and the response of the state toward those efforts. Wrote Drouin in 1960:

Religion classes during school hours have been organized to supplement the secular work of the public schools. In this attempt to bring religion back to the curriculum, children are released from school by parental request to attend religion classes taught by qualified instructors of participating religious groups. The practice is sometime referred to as week-day religious instruction...In some localities, all public school students are dismissed during the time set aside for religious instruction. The practice is referred to as ‘dismissed time.’<sup>357</sup>

Winn’s local version of the plan was little noted beyond the local paper, and perhaps not duplicated regionally to any great extent. Its period of operation can only be

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<sup>356</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, March 5, 1925.

<sup>357</sup> Edmond G. Drouin, *The School Question: A bibliography on church-state relationships in American education*. (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1963), 131.

surmised from the brief references within the local paper, but it appeared to function for two to three years, before fading from the scene. Some evidence, particularly the notices of Winn's meetings with the local pastors of each denomination who were vital to the program's success, indicated logistical problems with the plan's permanent implementation. Speculatively, the plan proved unworkable due to wider perceptions of church-state conflict. In his encyclopedic overview of Texas towns, Alfred E. Menn wrote in 1925 of the program:

A recent development in school work had its inception in Waxahachie in a weekday Bible school. One hour each week is given to the study of the bible. This instruction is given at the different churches of the city so that the pupils may go to the church of their choice for this instruction. Credit is given on this work in the schools. (Waxahachie has the right spirit, teach the children the value of the Bible—but keep it out of the schools, make them go to their chosen churches for this instruction, thereby the plan Waxahachie has adopted is one that is approved, a plan every city in Texas should adopt. A.E. M.)<sup>358</sup>

Waxahachie High School, celebrated at its inception as a marvel of modern technology, a symbol of advancement, and source of pride to its patrons, opened on September 10, 1918, as the First World War was entering its final months. Ralph Winn, the eldest son of G. B. Winn was en route to the battlefields of France, having enlisted earlier that summer. Younger brothers G.B., Jr. and Tom remained on the home front, but several of the young men who would have otherwise matriculated at the high school also

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<sup>358</sup> Alfred E Menn, *Texas As It Is Today* (Austin, Texas, 1925) . The Portal to Texas History. <http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph5867/>. (Accessed October 16, 2009).



left to join the army, and so its inaugural year saw a slightly diminished enrollment. Compounding the problem of lower enrollment was the forced closing, for several stretches of days due to the influenza epidemic, then sweeping the country. Such a case of under-attendance or under-enrollment was short-lived. Built for a capacity of 500, the school was filled within a few years of its opening.

In 1920, the original Marvin College building finally gave up the ghost, and was demolished that year amid a flurry of retrospective commentary. Yet another school bond was passed to replace the space lost, culminating in a new school dubbed “Central Ward.” The 1904 Park Public School building yet retained its name on maps, but was itself frequently referred to as “Central Ward.” It outlasted the new Central Ward building, and retained the name, until it was re-christened Marvin Elementary in 1939.

Despite some budgetary crises which seemed to follow the district after periods of rapid growth in enrollments and salaries, there seemed to be no halt to the steady and deliberate growth of the Waxahachie Public Schools throughout the 1920’s. Throughout the decade, Waxahachie High School teams claimed state and regional championships in football and baseball, but did so outside of the auspices of the State University Interscholastic League. Its baseball championships, claimed consecutively for the years 1919 through 1926<sup>359</sup> prefigured the League’s oversight in this sport; in football, however, Winn’s eager coach ran afoul of the organization for playing ineligible players,

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<sup>359</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, April 11, 1926. Paul Richards of major league baseball fame was a player on several of these championship teams, which is today the home of Paul Richards Park, named in his honor.

and earned a disputed suspension the football program for the 1925 season. Scott's proclivities regarding the fast and loose practices of early Texas high school athletics may have raised Winn's hackles. On more than one occasion, Winn was quoted in the *Enterprise* as intending to keep the focus on academic concerns as opposed to athletic ones.

Throughout the 1920's, the students at Waxahachie High School continued to swell the graduation ranks, with larger and larger classes graduating each successive year, with yet greater proportions of females to males by about half. The grammar of schooling, however, was interpreted and augmented as much by the extracurricular, and the student autonomy therein, as by the curriculum as dictated by the faculty. The definition of a "real school" had as much to do with their activities outside of the classroom as within it. As the extracurricular athletic program had spurred the sense of a high school culture, so too did other extracurricular organizations. The advent of the *Cotton Boll* yearbook with its concomitant staff prompted fundraising efforts which manifested themselves in the form of an annual pageant, complete with parade and floats, dubbed the Nottoc Llob, as a humorous reverse spelling of the yearbook's title. Each year a Nottoc Llob queen was chosen, and presided in the parade which culminated in a festive carnival and dance. A Junior-Senior party began to be held, and reference was made to it as an annual event. The school's mascot, an Indian, was born, always in contention given the name of the town, but triumphant over the cotton motif when considered within the athletic realm. School colors, green and white, emerged and brought a halt to the tradition up to then of each senior class selecting its own colors.

The high school's newspaper, *The Beacon*, came into full flower at this time. Representatives from the High School Press Association visited the campus to encourage its editors and contributors to compete for a "Loving Cup" prize to be presented to the best high school newspaper in the state and stated that *The Beacon* stood high in their esteem.<sup>360</sup>

References to school lunches began to appear, first as board permission granted to a vendor to sell sandwiches, and later, more formally involving board committees and cooperation among the domestic science faculty.

Winn and his longtime colleague, P.J. Herndon, the long serving high school principal, carried out the remainder of the decade in routine fashion, seeing to the needs of the school and its students, and no doubt marveling at the advancements which had come about since their own early days in education in the last century.

Since the year that Winn had acceded to the superintendency, the population of Waxahachie had continued to grow, from 6,205 in 1910 to 7,958 in 1920, and right along with it the city school district. But throughout the 1920's, in spite of the roaring national economy over which Calvin "Cool Cal" Coolidge presided, economic life in the agricultural states, and particularly in the cotton-producing South, began a gradual slowdown from the boom of the turn of the century. In 1926, Ellis County came in third in state cotton production, outpaced by Nueces and Hidalgo counties, as the price

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<sup>360</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, March 15, 1923.

faltered. Onetime city superintendent Clarence Ousley, who had become Assistant Secretary of Agriculture during the Wilson administration, returned to Waxahachie on a speaking engagement warning against the continued investment in farming a commodity which had been overproduced and was currently underpriced.<sup>361</sup> Indeed, while the tagline “Queen City of the Cotton Belt” would yet grace the title page of the local newspaper for the next decade, *The Cotton Boll*, the name given the school yearbook throughout the 1920’s would become, in time, the Chief, as the athletics-inspired Indian mascot rose to the fore as a school symbol.

## **Depression and Decline**

As the agriculture economy faltered in the years of the Great Depression, Ellis Countians clung to the production of cotton, despite the continuance of falling prices for the staple in much more dramatic fashion than the slow decline in the previous decade. The heyday of the cotton production boom and all the economic development it had spurred locally and across the state was coming to an end. 1930 marked the last year of the local Chautauqua, as attendance had waned during the 1920’s, despite the efforts of the organizers to draw attendees through featured guests like Will Rogers, who appeared in 1927 in a final push for a revitalization of the enterprise.<sup>362</sup> Indeed, the Chautauqua in its final years had taken on aspects of vaudevillianism as entertainment features

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<sup>361</sup> *Waxahachie Enterprise*, November 19, 1926.

<sup>362</sup> Stott, *op. cit.*, 116.

superseded the previous years' focus on mental and spiritual improvement and social uplift.

Winn contended with an influx of children from the countryside, as people left the farms and moved into town. While the county suffered a loss of population, the city schools' enrollment grew, if ever so slightly.

Board minutes of the period reflect a sparseness and economy which perhaps mirrored the times. Never voluminous in their details, the minutes, appearing as typewritten in the 1920's—a change from the scripted minutes of former eras—became at times little more than four or five sentences during the first several years of the 1930's, often indicating merely the quotidian and the mundane. The April 4th meeting of the Board in 1930 contains but four items: announcing April 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> as “pre-Easter holidays,” recommending new teachers, re-electing P.J. Herndon, Miss Mabel Grizzard, Miss Eva Grizzard, and Miss Orlene McKinney as principals of the high school, Central, West, and South wards, respectively, and re-electing G.B. Winn for another two years. The following months minutes are even leaner: electing a finance committee, assigning T.C. Wilemon to be in charge of summer school, and officially electing teachers for the following year. Such were the issues, month after month, with dull predictability throughout the first half of the 1930's.

In 1935, over the holiday break, G.B. Winn took a fall, injuring his hip. His recovery was slow and painful, and his abilities on the job were noticeably affected. By the next year, he was retired, without fanfare, and a new superintendent took his place.

## Chapter Six: Reconciling Inconsistencies in the Grammar of Public Schooling: The Wilemon Regime, 1936-1970

### T.C. Wilemon

Tirey Caswell Wilemon was born in the Ellis county community of Maypearl in 1899, one of five sons born to William and Minnie Wilemon. The early loss of his parents—his father when he was eight years old, and his mother when he was 20—encouraged a self-reliance and resourcefulness in Wilemon that carried through his whole career. Educated in the rural schools of Maypearl, Wilemon, along with his brother Graydon, matriculated at Trinity University, graduating in 1921 with a degree in mathematics. A capable student, Tirey excelled both in the classroom and on the athletic field. He was talented in football, but his true love was for baseball. He was a star player for the Trinity Tigers for several years.

After flirting with a career in semi-professional baseball (he played for the Sherman team in the Texas-Oklahoma League in the summer of 1921),<sup>363</sup> Tirey began a teaching career in Ennis, Texas in 1922. By 1923 he had moved to Waxahachie High School as a math teacher and assistant coach for its growing athletic program. Working as an assistant to A.A. Scott, who had joined the high school faculty in 1915 as manual training teacher and athletic director, the two coached the 1925 Waxahachie baseball team to the state championship.

T.C. Wilemon immediately proved a popular teacher, and in 1933, became principal at Waxahachie High School. In June of 1935, Wilemon began regular attendance to the board of

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<sup>363</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, May 24, 1921.

trustee meetings, appearing monthly, sometimes by himself, and other times in conjunction with Mr. Winn. Whether he attended at Winn's invitation or otherwise is unknown. Certainly this period marked an "apprenticeship" for Wilemon, as he familiarized himself with the workings of the school board. Yet, no official recording of Winn's departure appears in the minutes, neither a letter of intent to retire nor an expectation that such was to occur. It is altogether possible that Winn and the board agreed that the 1935-36 school year would be his last, and that leadership of the district would devolve to Wilemon upon Winn's departure.

Board minutes from May of 1936 contained this telling statement: "Motion was made and carried that beginning September 1, 1937, teachers will be automatically retired at the age of 65 years." Winn, although not technically a teacher, was 70 years old at the time. At the May meeting, the monthly payroll of teachers, the printed roster of which usually served as the projected roster for next year's faculty, bore a line through the top name and monthly salary figure: ~~G.B. Winn, Superintendent...\$160.00~~. Just below, the name T.C. Wilemon, Principal, showed a monthly salary of \$200.00, raised ten dollars to \$210.00. By all appearances, T.C. Wilemon was the interim superintendent of the Waxahachie Public Schools.

In June of 1936, Mr. Winn attended his last school board meeting, thanking the current board for their cooperation during his years as superintendent. Such was the official recording of his retirement. Board minutes also noted the decrease in the scheduled time for P.J. Herndon, who had served in his capacity of principal of the high school longer than G.B. had been superintendent. He moved to part-time as a math teacher, and a new principal was hired to work under Wilemon. Indeed, an era was drawing to a close, and a new one about to take form.

Wilemon assumed full control of the district at a time when the steady growth of the district had seen a reversal, at least among the white scholastic population. Oak Lawn continued

to show positive growth from year to year.<sup>364</sup> The Depression, nevertheless, seemed to cast a sleepy pall over the district, and the final years of the 1930's showed little variance beyond the familiar school pattern which had been established in the previous decade. The PTA met regularly at Ferris Ward. The Athletic Association, the equivalent of today's booster club, met to promote the athletic program. The music program slowly and steadily built its program. What had been new and innovative in the previous decade was now becoming familiar, even traditional. Graduating classes from the early twenties were now having their fifteenth reunions. In 1937, Waxahachie High School established its school song—"Waxahachie High"—sung at the occasion of the reunion of the Class of 1929 by Miss Josephine Lumpkins.<sup>365</sup>

## **Renovations and Additions**

While the prosperity that had been promised as "just around the corner" never seemed to materialize to the extent that Waxahachie returned to its cotton-era heyday; nevertheless the district's growth that had been slowed during the late thirties seemed on the upswing. At least there was a sense of optimism among the school trustees that Waxahachie, with its new and energetic superintendent, could march forward. Crowded not long after it opened, the high school continued to add students and programs throughout the 1930's. And though the district had not passed a bond in almost twenty years, depression-era economics cast doubt over any extravagant plans for expansion of facilities. New Deal economics came to the rescue.

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<sup>364</sup> Texas State Board of Education, *Report, op. cit.*, 580.

<sup>365</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, December 27, 1937.



In June of 1938, trustees announced they had purchased adjoining land to the north of the high school. Their plans for additions to the high school and to the ward schools were made possible by a Works Progress Administration grant in the amount of \$118,000 which matched \$114,000 of local money.<sup>366</sup>

The federal dollars dispensed through the WPA program flowed to the district in a series of grants and matching funds. The promise of the matching funds allowed Wilemon and the board to promote bond issues that otherwise may not have passed in such dire economic times. Between 1938 and 1939, projects for the modernization and expansion of ward campuses and the high school campus included interior restrooms with modern tile at the new wing which joined two main campuses of Central Ward, adding an auditorium and a cafeteria. When completed, this “new” school was re-christened Marvin Elementary, in honor of the school endeavor which had begun on the site so many years ago. Ferris Ward received its own improvements regarding convenience facilities and an upstairs auditorium. Oak Lawn School received additional construction of four classrooms to relieve overcrowding. New and modern lighting was installed in all the schools. Drinking fountains were noted as installed—even a teacher’s lounge was added “at the new Marvin School [to] afford women staff a place to relax during recess and other periods when not busy.”<sup>367</sup>

The turbulent thirties of film and legend expressed themselves in one instance

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<sup>366</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, August 12, 1938.

<sup>367</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, September 27, 1939.

regarding T.C. Wilemon. All of Wilemon's brothers had done well for themselves, assuming professional occupations. His younger brother Graydon had also become a school superintendent. Two of his older brothers, including the eldest, Willis Darrell, went into banking and proved successful.

On a Wednesday morning in May, 1939, as Willis was opening the First State Bank at Maypearl, a lone, young gunman approached him, ordered him to open the vault at gunpoint, and shot him in the back as he was doing so. Willis Wilemon died that night, and the young man, Burton Franks, was captured soon thereafter—a twenty year old with a history of juvenile delinquency. Within a year he was executed in the electric chair after a sensational trial complete with controversy and courtroom histrionics.<sup>368</sup>

Through the trying episode, T.C. Wilemon was forever reminded of the consequences of the failure of the public school to not only educate those young men who populated the scholastic rolls, but also to mold and shape their character as citizens and productive members of society. In a retrospect upon his life, his family members would recall Wilemon's "chief concern as an educator was the production of good citizens. He was devoted to his family and the wider family of the school and community. One of his hallmarks was that he never gave up on any kid."<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>368</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, June 7, 1940.

<sup>369</sup> Personal Interview, Alice Wilemon Zerof, September 30, 2008.

As storm clouds of war gathered over Europe, a noted change came over the activities of the students of the schools in Waxahachie, despite the sense that Europe was an ocean away. In 1939, former graduate Hastings Harrison, who had proved so capable a debater in the heyday of the Erisophian Literary Society, returned to the high school as a guest speaker as part of a “patriotic program” sponsored by the American history class. His address was on “The American Way,”<sup>370</sup> and marked an introduction to a theme which prevailed throughout 1940 and intensified in 1941, prefiguring the country’s involvement in the war, but nonetheless, in a prescient way, preparing for it.

Throughout these years, the school administrators and teacher-leaders of the district, made ever more frequent addresses to a variety of civic groups and organizations on topics of a patriotic, or otherwise cultural or geographical nature. In January of 1941, Miss Mabel Grizzard, early graduate of Park Public School, and longtime elementary school principal, addressed the Century Club, the *Daily Light* noting:

Miss Grizzard does not get to be with the club often, and her presence alone, radiated with the graciousness of her person, is a privilege, and her subject “Modern Biographies,” so well given made the meeting one of double importance. Miss Girzzard was very thoughtful to bring at this time the lives of Winston Churchill and Lady Astor. ..<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>371</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, January 17, 1941.

Dean Shank, Waxahachie's celebrated band director, who had inaugurated the high school band in 1929 and nurtured it to prominence in state band circles, began more frequently to hold public concerts which featured patriotic music as the centerpiece. At the culmination of the 1940-41 school year, the band played at the graduation ceremony, held at the Chautauqua Auditorium in Getzendaner Park. Lt. Governor Coke Stevenson was the featured speaker. His admonishment to the graduates took the form of a geographical metaphor: the sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. Saying that both were fed by the River Jordan, Stevenson noted that of the two, the Sea of Galilee was bright and sparkling, and the Dead Sea, as its name indicates, was a place devoid of life. The difference, he noted, was that the Sea of Galilee had an outlet, which the Dead Sea lacked. People, too, must have an outlet, and he offered three; the first was the voice of authority through the ownership of property; secondly, the voice of delegated power which was given to public officers; and third was the voice of authority through the possession of superior knowledge. Stevenson urged the graduates and those assembled to find an outlet for their voice through one of the three channels suggested.<sup>372</sup>

Wilemon's plans that year may have had to do with patriotism only tangentially. He announced in October the district's intent to add another grade, a twelfth, to the existing program. Explaining the change to the Rotary club that fall, Wilemon predicated the plan on the preparation it would engender for greater success at the secondary level and beyond:

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<sup>372</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, May 27, 1941.

Supt. Wilemon stated that the 12 grade plan would eliminate the problem of too young children entering the first grade as well as eliminate the too early graduation of many students. The change, Supt. Wilemon said, really divides the work of the former first five grades into six units, enabling students in those elementary grades to spend more time in the important work and thus better prepares them for high school work.

A surprisingly large number of failures prevalent under the 11 grade plan probably will be reduced considerably under the new system, Supt. Wilemon said, and graduates would leave the school more mature and better prepared for college or business training...<sup>373</sup>

That this change may have been in reaction to Trinity University's stated plans to relocate to another location, for the same reasons that had brought it to Waxahachie forty years before, was in that regard too little, too late. By 1942, Trinity University left for San Antonio, demoralizing local parties of educational interest, but only for a seemingly short period. For there were other occurrences of a pressing nature.

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<sup>373</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, October 16, 1941.

## The War Years

The Enterprise noted the passing on September 4, 1941 of G.B. Winn, longtime Waxahachie educator with a distance and seemingly strange sense of unfamiliarity. Giving a short biography, and some notation of his descendents, the article recounted, ever so briefly, his years of service with the district, and gave the cause of death as a bout of pneumonia, adding that as the result of a fall in which he suffered a broken hip, he had been an invalid for the past seven years. Such an ignominious eulogy to such a pioneer educator of such long service perhaps portrayed more of the local, regional, and national mood of the day than to any lack of gratitude.

In October the following was announced:

### Democracy-In-Action Series Patriotic Events for Waxahachie

Entitled 'Democracy in Action,' a series of four programs based on patriotic themes will be presented at early dates at Marvin Elementary Auditorium, the series to be sponsored by Trinity University in cooperation with County Supt. of Schools Bob McCrady and City Schools Supt. Tirey Wilemon. One of the features will be an open forum on vital American topics. It was announced that an interesting exhibit will be maintained in the auditorium foyer. No admission will be charged and the public has been invited to attend.<sup>374</sup>

So continued in a periodic pattern the speaking events, the public forums, the panel discussions, the concerts, equating somewhat the "entertainments" of school years gone

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<sup>374</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, October 28, 1941.

by, but these events, on many occasions, eclipsed the schools by virtue of the greater participation amongst all community members.

The war years marked a strange dearth of local press coverage regarding the doings of the schools, but not necessarily of the school children or of their teachers. Palpably, the journalism of the day conveyed an increasing sense of apprehension amidst a type of nervous quietude. The patriotic club-meetings, panel discussions, concerts, and rallies prior the declaration of war transformed thereafter into a flurry of activity from civic groups, clubs, and organizations, several connected to the school, but many only loosely so in their involvement of school-aged children.

Boy Scouts led early drives for metals, with tin drives and key drives; rubber drives followed, and the like. An organization of young women appeared on the scene. The Guardettes initially seemed to be attached to the school as a club, but later showed membership from all age groups. This organization led the effort for war bonds and stamps, serving as the main promoters and salespersons as the frequent band concerts which band director Dean Shank kept in full swing. They also conducted the fur drive, leading the effort to collect articles of clothing fashioned from animal fur.

Not one given to verbosity, Wilemon, through the war years, seemed even more silent than usual. Seemingly stunned, the record of the time from the board minutes and local media indicate Wilemon contended with multiple school closures on days of distributions of war ration books for various commodities, as the schools were pressed into service for this purpose. Certainly he contended with a drop in high school

enrollment, particularly among males, as they left high school either to enlist or to take employment in many of the war-related jobs opening up. At one point he was compelled to quash the rumor that Waxahachie would forfeit its football season for failure to field a team.<sup>375</sup> Insofar as news emanating from the school, the following article typified the war years:

#### Supt. Tells About Task of War Period

Arrangements Made Are Announced To Public By  
Wilemon: Waxahachie Public Schools will close Monday and Tuesday in order that sugar registration may be carried on, it was announced today by Supt. Tirey Wilemon. Superintendent Wilemon has prepared the following statement concerning the huge task of sugar consumer registration, which gives all details of the plan:

‘To facilitate the work of registration the following arrangement has been made:

‘Persons with surname beginning with the letters A through K will register Monday, May 4.

‘Persons with surname beginning with the letter L through Z will register Tuesday, May 5.

‘The Waxahachie Public Schools will remain closed Monday and Tuesday. Registration for whites will be at Marvin Elementary School and Bullard Heights School. All members of the negro race will register at Oak Lawn School.

Though May 4,5,6 and 7 are designated for registration, the school officials are asking that the people register in a two day period in order that the schools may resume their regular duties. The hours of registration are from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. each day.

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<sup>375</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, September 11, 1942.



Everyone should register, if you are in doubt report to your registration center. Any member of the family who is 18 or more years of age may register for all members, provided that person comes equipped with identifying information concerning each member of the family. This includes full name, address, age, height, weight and color of hair and eyes.<sup>376</sup>

And so it went throughout the war years. Wilemon, it appeared, was busy preparing other statements regarding the increased demands upon the schools, as its facilities were utilized for a variety of extracurricular, governmental, and civic-oriented purposes. Federal schools of drafting and aviation utilized high school spaces, resulting in the addition of a building at the high school—known as “the hangar”—and used after the war as a gymnasium and as storage area.<sup>377</sup> Canning schools were held in the domestic science departments at Waxahachie High School and Oak Lawn School.

Holding a position of authority, Wilemon perhaps felt the necessity of maintaining morale in the face of the monumental tasks before the school and the community. His announcement regarding the beginning of the school year is laden with clues as to the challenges the school district faced:

Plans For Opening Schools Outlined By Superintendent  
Waxahachie Public School Opening Schedule.  
Thursday, September 10  
9:00 a.m. General meeting of all teachers at high school  
building.

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<sup>376</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, May 1, 1942.

<sup>377</sup> Personal Interview, Morgan Moses, December 2009.

1:30 p.m. Enrollment of all low ninth grade pupils.

Friday, September 11

All pupils in the elementary schools will report for enrollment at 9:00 a.m. and be dismissed at noon.

High School Plans; The following schedule is given for the enrollment of the high school pupils:

12<sup>th</sup> grade—8:30 a.m.

11<sup>th</sup> grade—10:30 a.m.

10<sup>th</sup> and High 9<sup>th</sup>—1:30 p.m.

The school buses start their regular runs on Monday, September 14. Regular class work begins Monday, September 14 at 9:00 a.m. The school buildings are open for the pupils at 8:30 each morning.

‘The month of September brings to a close the vacation season for millions of American boys and girls, said Supt. Tirey C. Wilemon. The schools once more open their doors to pupils and teachers. The back to school movement not only affects the daily life of boys and girls and teachers, but of most everyone in the community. Certainly it affects the daily routine in home affairs—also the work of the mothers in the home. I had always thought it increased this work until one mother told me last week that she would take her vacation as soon as school started. It stimulates business in the direct buying of school clothes and school supplies. It is the rallying time for Sunday School and church attendance.

This year in the schools we feel the stress of the crisis facing our nation as we do in all other walks of life, but the education of boys and girls must not only continue as usual, but the processes must be stepped up, especially is this true for high school boys who are facing active military service. All will be affected by the rigors of war. We know our children cannot be spared.

Some school activities of normal times must be curtailed or abandoned. Others must be intensified. Of course this to be done to fit into the national program.

In Waxahachie, we are ready for the opening of school. Our faculty is complete. The physical plant has been repaired and brightened. New books, teaching materials and supplies have been purchased and made ready for use.

We urge boys and girls to continue in school, even though high wages are available at this time. Your future depends on what you do today.

We welcome our pupils, and teachers back to school. We seek the continued interest and cooperation of the citizenship of Waxahachie and surrounding communities in an educational program designed to train boys and girls for essential living and for effective citizenship.<sup>378</sup>

In the years after the war, the slow but steady growth of the Waxahachie Independent School District returned, albeit for different reasons, and without a corresponding growth of its tax base. No longer were Ellis County's city school districts growing along with the county's rural districts; they were growing despite them, and due to an overall reduction in the rural population. Rural schools, especially rural high schools, never an easy proposition, were finding it increasingly more difficult to serve the needs of their students, much less to keep their doors open. Increasingly, talk of reorganization of school districts was presented as the solution.

The national commission on School District Reorganization formed in 1946 as a joint effort between the National Education Association's Rural Education department and the University of Chicago's Rural Education Project. The NEA and the Rural Education Project perceived a reorganization of school systems across America as necessary. The Reorganization commission issued a sixteen-page preliminary report in

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<sup>378</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, September 9, 1942.

1947, entitled *A Key to Better Education*, that gave a preview of the determinations in the expanded report that was published the next year under the title *Your School District: The Report of the national commission on School District Reorganization*.

The Commission's findings revealed how much had changed as a result of the war. Between 1840 and 1940, the percentage of citizens who made their livelihoods in agriculture declined from nearly 69 percent to just over 17 percent. In the years prior to the Second World War, farm production increased by a third, even though over 4.5 million people left their farms seeking jobs in the cities during the Great Depression. In the first half of the 1940's, rural areas across the United States lost almost a third of their population. Rural communities saw their adults and their children leave because of the depression and the war. Rural areas faced a major problem because young people had been leaving small communities for many years. During the roaring Twenties across America, twenty percent of the young men who had grown up on farms had left for towns and cities. A greater percentage—one third—of farm girls also had departed.

So many youth left the farms during this period that one study suggested rural schools should prepare their students for skills they might need in urban areas.<sup>379</sup> As the county seat, and largest town in the county, Waxahachie was viewed as the urban area of choice for many who were leaving behind subsistence farming in the agricultural economy.

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<sup>379</sup> National Commission on School District Reorganization, *Your School District* (Washington, DC: department of Rural Education, National Education Association, 1948), 37.

## 1949: Legislators, College Professors, and Lawyers and Judges

### Consolidation

Rae Files came from an old community in the south central portion of Ellis County known as Files Valley. When she married, she kept her maiden name as her middle name, and when Rae Files Still, government teacher at Waxahachie High School in 1939 decided on a lark to run for state representative, no one was surprised. Her articulate means of presentation and her short-haired attractiveness surely brought votes her way. That she was returned to office four consecutive times, enjoying a ten-year term of office, becoming chair of a select committee on education, all the while maintaining her position as classroom teacher, certainly was to her credit. Certainly her service in the legislature and her occupation as a civics teacher—as the course was then known—was of mutual benefit to her and her students. Ms. Still, the type of teacher who knew everyone’s name, whether they were enrolled in her class or not, was known and remembered most for telling her students in her American government class that there were five great traditions in American culture: democracy, nationalism, capitalism, religion, and technology. She was fond of apprising her students that “in a society that’s as pluralistic as ours, we will never have a society entirely free of conflict.”<sup>380</sup>

Rae Files Still was instrumental in shepherding through the Texas legislature the landmark Gilmer-Aiken bills, which reorganized public education in Texas on a

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<sup>380</sup> Personal Interview, Morgan Moses, December 17, 2009.

wholesale level, the most comprehensive public school reform in Texas history, “effecting...the entire school system of the state—pupils, teachers, school administrators, parents, school districts, cities, counties, and taxpayers.”<sup>381</sup> Certainly the most remembered outcome of the legislation was the increase in teacher salaries. Dr. Morgan Moses, a student of Ms. Still’s in 1943, and later a teacher at the time the Gilmer-Akins laws took effect, remembered his pay going from \$2000 to \$2400 within the first year.

The Gilmer-Akins law, though, had effects beyond the raising of pay for teachers. It replaced the elected office of State Superintendent with an appointed administrator, expanded the role of the state in what had been a local responsibility, and increased the amount of money the state spent on education. Through its funding formulas and rearrangement of priorities and processes, it also accelerated the end of the one-room school, and paved the way for rural school consolidation.<sup>382</sup>

That consolidation had been underway among the smaller common schools was no secret. In 1939, after its recent building activity, the paper noted about 80 students from the surrounding villages, with place names that had also corresponded with common school districts, were bringing students to Waxahachie on a daily basis. Announced the *Daily Light* to a readership only recently accustomed to school buses: “A Waxahachie bus goes every morning to Colliers Chapel, Howard, Nash and South Prong,

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<sup>381</sup> Rae Files Still, *The Gilmer-Aiken Bills: A study in the Legislative Process* (Austin: Steck, 1950).

<sup>382</sup> Gene B. Preuss, *The Modernization of Texas Public Schools: World War II and the Gilmer-Aiken Laws* (Doctoral Dissertation: Texas Tech University, 2004).

picking up some 45 students, and each afternoon, the bus makes the circle back through these towns.”<sup>383</sup>

Wilemon’s relationship with Still, for better or worse, has not been determined. Whether he found her activism meddlesome or complementary to his own efforts is unknown. What may be said regarding the encroaching consolidation of the county’s rural school districts into its city districts as well had to do with the expansion of the district to include areas previously provided for with common schools. As these students continued to trickle in, Wilemon was once again presented with the problem which had haunted his predecessors—where to put them.

In his thirteenth year of supervising what had recently become the Waxahachie Independent School District, T.C. Wilemon attained his Master’s degree from Southern Methodist University. His thesis was entitled *School Building Needs in Texas*, consisting of five chapters in which he gave an introduction into the post-war crisis in the shortage of school buildings, presented an historical overview of education in Texas, surveyed the current state of the school building program in Texas, identified ways and means of financing further building, and his offered his own conclusions and recommendations. For Wilemon, “the lack of adequate space in the school plan constitutes one of the major problems of boards of education and school administrators at the present time.” Certainly he had contended with the need for more classroom space prior to the war, and many would argue he did so most effectively.

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<sup>383</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, October 1, 1939.

Wilemon relied upon two main sources of information for his study. The first, he identified as “library materials, consisting of textbooks, bulletins, reports from surveys and special studies, magazines and other reading materials.” Of these, the most pertinent were unpublished papers authored by Frank L. Williams, whose name appeared as the primary signatory on Wilemon’s thesis title page. Doubtless, Williams had an effect on Wilemon’s thinking as he was obtaining his master’s degree; Wilemon cited liberally from papers entitled “Buildings to Fit the Need of Our Changing Curriculum,” and “Status of School Bonds in Texas Independent School Districts.” The other major source of data came from Wilemon’s own survey of 963 superintendents of independent districts and 250 county superintendents, of which he received a 49% response rate.

Wilemon’s thesis, a slim 65 pages, of which a large portion is devoted to a digressive Texas school history, nevertheless offers up clues to his character by way of demonstrating his thinking. As a means to an end, it perhaps shouldn’t be overanalyzed, and conclusions drawn from it are perhaps merely speculative. But given the circumstances of the time in which it was written, several passages bear scrutiny and analysis.

In the introduction Wilemon predicates the well-being of the educational enterprise upon environmental factors, particularly upon the physical environment of classroom space. “To the child an attractive and well-equipped building provides inspiration and an environment to grow not only mentally and physically, but socially and spiritually.” In this manner, brick and mortar, and more importantly, classroom design,



were crucial in meeting the educational needs of the child, which for Wilemon included mental, physical, social, and spiritual needs. Additionally, Wilemon felt that the environmental stimulus of “an attractive and well-equipped building” served the needs of the teacher, as they lent inspiration and promoted satisfaction “in her work.”

Elsewhere, Wilemon integrated contemporary learning theory into his thesis, betraying the grammar of schooling, that, as the school district’s chief executive officer, was a *lingua franca* of the city’s public school endeavor:

Education is not now generally conceived to be erudition, the acquisition of knowledge, or the training of the mind exclusively. The modern philosophy or theory is that activity, selected experiences, and inspirational group association through which child growth and development become an orderly process, lead the child to desirable objectives in the society of this day. The Educational Policies commission has said that desirable objectives of education for the day are (1) Self realization, (2) Human Relationships, (3) Economical Efficiency, and (4) Civic Responsibility.

By then a seasoned chief administrator, and ever the mathematician, Wilemon was most at home in dealing with the questionnaire responses he had received from the superintendents across the state—men who were dealing with circumstances similar to his own, and the financial aspects of school construction. Chapters III and IV of his thesis are economical, concise, and to the point. These are entitled: “The Present Status of the School Building Program in Texas,” and “How to Finance the School Building Program,” respectively.

## Butler versus Wilemon

“In a real sense the school building of today is considered an integral part of the educational program. It is a piece of instructional equipment planned to function effectively in advancing the educational objectives of the community.”

—T.C. Wilemon, *School Building Needs in Texas*

Waxahachie, Texas

1/19/49

To the Honored ~~Supt.~~ Supt.

Honored Sir:

This is to certify that we, the mother's & Dad's club of the Oak Lawn Sch00l have recently studied and compared our High Sch00l with other High sch00ls and aauthorites and find that we are minus of the following ~~Texts-Books~~ subjects: Biology---or Zoology----Typing & commercial----Physcology & a Library & an equiped manuel Training shop.

Chemistry

In order to qualify our boys and girls for an entrance in colleges that they may further their education, we beg leave to request that you please consider the above mentioned subjects, and provide us with the same, we the under signed are: [hand written signatories]

--Preamble (rendered verbatim) of petition presented to WISD Board of Trustees<sup>384</sup>

*“A request for a hearing by the board from a group of negro patrons of the Oak lawn School was presented by President Arden, the Board requested Mr. Arden to confer with the group and arrange a meeting later in the year.”*

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<sup>384</sup> Minutes, WISD Board of Trustees, February, 1949.

--Minutes, Board of Trustees, WISD, February 10, 1949

Within the minutes of the board of trustees of the Waxahachie Independent School District over the next several months, there appeared no further reference to any meeting with the “negro patrons of the Oak Lawn School.” Presumably, the matter was dropped, or forgotten, or ignored. It most certainly wasn’t settled, as later events illustrated.

Dauthard Roosevelt Butler, a student at Oak Lawn School, was fourteen years old in 1949. Yet a minor—in the parlance of the court, an *infant*—any lawsuit on his behalf necessitated a parent’s or guardian’s participation. His father, Lonnie Butler obliged him, and, along with five other fathers of Oak Lawn students, filed suit on behalf of their children in the Northern District Court of Texas, Dallas Division. Defendants for Civil Action #3750 were listed as T.C. Wilemon, Superintendent of Public Free Schools, Waxahachie Independent School District, and, as members of the Board of Trustees for the Waxahachie Independent School District, Dr. J.R. Gill, Mrs. Dow McGregor, Mrs. W.D. Anderson, Jack Eastham, T.C. Morris, and Edd Clark.

Claiming jurisdiction of the federal court on grounds of equity arising “under the Constitution and Laws of the United States, viz., the Fourteenth (14<sup>th</sup>) Amendment...” the precise complaint of the plaintiffs was declared as:

A proceeding for a declaratory judgment and injunction under Section 274D of the Judicial code for the purpose of determining a question of actual controversy between the parties, to wit; the question of whether the practice of the

defendants in adopting, enforcing, and maintaining the policy, custom and usage of the defendants, and each of them, in maintaining and providing inadequate, unsanitary, sissimilar [sic] and inferior school houses, school grounds, school facilities, curricula and educational opportunities for Negro children in the city of Waxahachie, Ellis County, Texas and in the Waxahachie Independent School District, between the ages of six (6) and twenty-one (21) years, while maintaining and providing modern, sanitary, safe and superior school houses, school grounds, school facilities, curricula and educational opportunities for white children in the said city of Waxahachie, Ellis County, Texas and in the Waxahachie Independent School District, constitute a denial of the right to these plaintiffs, their children and those in whose behalf this suit is brought, to equal protection of laws and of privileges guaranteed to these plaintiffs under the Fourteenth (14<sup>th</sup>) Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

Upon the issuance of the court summons to the defendants named, the board minutes reflected a called meeting in special session taking place on September 16, 1949 “for the purpose of discussing the negro situation.” Nothing else was stated, and news of the lawsuit was kept from the local media until the day of the hearing. Dates appearing on court records indicate a flurry of activity took place between the meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> and the date of the Defendant’s Answer and Request for Jury, delivered to the court on September 29<sup>th</sup>. Counsel was retained in the form of local lawyer Lynn Griffith, who quickly got to work in drafting the response, filing it two days before the hearing was scheduled on October 1, 1949 before the Northern District Court, Judge William H. Atwell, presiding.

In the defendant’s response, Wilemon and the board denied, wholesale, item by item, and line by line, the litany of complaints made by the plaintiffs “for the reason that

said allegations are contrary to the facts as they actually exist and prevail, and which prevailed prior to the time of the filing of this suit by the plaintiffs herein.” Astoundingly, the defendants maintained that “the grade school system for the negro students is in many respects better than for the white children and that there has been no discrimination against any of those negro children of Waxahachie Independent School District because of their color or by any other means.” Insofar as the inferiority of the school houses were concerned, the defendants maintained “that each year and from time to time these defendants spend available money for the necessary repairs and maintenance of school buildings and that all the school buildings within the Waxahachie Independent School District need certain work or repairs done and performed, and these defendants specially show that they have done their utmost to keep the Negro buildings in as good condition as possible.”

On October 1, 1949, testimony was heard from the plaintiffs, represented by NAACP lawyer Ulysses Simpson Tate, and Dallas lawyer C.B. Bunkley. Beginning with Willie L. Lewis, Jr., testimony was given to the lack of an auditorium, gymnasium and football facilities at Oak Lawn campus. He was followed by R.A. Lay, a Dallas photographer, who had introduced as evidence a series of photographs which documented the alleged inferiority of the Oak Lawn School. “He elaborated on what he had seen in the Waxahachie school plants and told of [the] need for more and better Negro facilities.”<sup>385</sup> Also giving testimony was W.A.Kirk, professor of social science at Tillotson College in

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<sup>385</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, October 2, 1949.

Austin. He told of examining the schools in Waxahachie and stressed particularly the need for a cafeteria and playground at Oak Lawn, as well as for a better library. In his opinion, “a Negro child using the library at Oak Lawn School could not get training offered the White pupils.”<sup>386</sup>

T.C. Wilemon took the stand for the defense. He “contended that donations had bought most of the physical facilities that the white school had and the negro school lacked. He admitted that there were several courses taught at the white school that were not taught at the Negro schools, but mentioned that state law provides that ten students must request a course or it does not have to be taught.”<sup>387</sup> In answer to a complaint that Negro students in Waxahachie were deprived of school bus facilities, Wilemon “attempted to explain that the Reagor Springs bus was discontinued after several days run, when not more than seven negro pupils were riding it.”<sup>388</sup>

Herein lay the crux of the proffered defense, not untrue in its representation, but deceptive in its devastating effects regarding school administration: at the start date of school each fall, even as late as 1949, in post-depression, post-war Waxahachie (and certainly in other towns across the state), the agricultural economy yet prevailed in the lives of many a poor African-American, necessitating their labor in critical numbers through the first month or two of school. As it had for all the years preceding, this fact led

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<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>387</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, October 2, 1949.

<sup>388</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, October, 2, 1949.

to administrative decisions which needed immediate adjustment as the numbers of scholastics swelled the rolls once the school year was underway. It was this fact that created an African-American schooling situation which accounted for twice as many students per teacher (when those teachers made half as much as their white counterparts); it was the major technicality for denying program choices in September, when too few students appeared on the rolls to justify course offerings.

Yet, there were deeper issues involved, more clearly embedded in race, racism, and racial discrimination. Testimony had arisen that Negro students had been asked not to use the toilet and shower facilities of the stadium which they shared with the white school, and that on occasion they had been locked out of the facilities. Wilemon denied the allegations, but curiously, in its coverage of the proceedings, the local paper had felt inclined to emphasize Wilemon's remarks that "the school board has discussed the possibility of building another plant to be used as the Negro high school, with the present Oak Lawn building then to be used as the elementary school." Additionally, the paper, in its opening sequence, had felt compelled to relate, once again, in bold print, that "no mention was made of segregation in the Waxahachie schools, with the chief contention being for equal opportunities for white and negro schools."<sup>389</sup>

Atwell's summary judgment pending the outcome of the suit made headlines locally and in the major media markets of the state. "District Told to Add New Negro Courses" graced the front pages of the Dallas Morning News. Atwell, essentially

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<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*

providing the injunction requested by the plaintiffs that the district desist in maintaining an unequal system of public education, ordered the school officials to immediately offer courses in chemistry, geometry, vocational training, bookkeeping, occupations, journalism, public speaking, mechanical drawing “and other teaching such as helps young people who are just coming along.”

Perhaps dumfounded, but nevertheless obedient to the will of the court, the following “Superintendent’s Bulletin” dated Monday, October 3, 1949 appeared in board of trustee minutes:

To M.Z. Hicks, Principal, and Teachers in the Oak Lawn School, Waxahachie,  
Texas.

Effective on Tuesday, October 4, 1949, the following courses—Physics, Biology, Typing, Bookkeeping, Junior Business Training, Texas History, Journalism, Public Speaking, and Vocational Agriculture will be offered to the students of the Oak Lawn High School. Regardless of what courses students are now taking, they are to be permitted to change their schedules and select any of the above subjects. Equipment and supplies needed to set up and carry on these courses will be secured as soon as the number of students selecting each of the various subjects has been determined. The purchase of other materials and supplies for the Oak Lawn School will be considered as soon as the lists of supplies and materials requested by the Superintendent’s Office on September 6 have been submitted.<sup>390</sup>

That the district may have been complying with the letter of the law, by so diligently and promptly complying with the judgment, but may not have intended to comply with its

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<sup>390</sup> Minutes, WISD Board of Trustees, October 1949.



spirit, yet hanging on the possibility that state law requiring a minimum of students be enrolled for a course to “make” even though it had been “offered” was betrayed by the last portion of the notice:

Friday, September 30, was the close of the first month of school. Your monthly reports will be due in a reasonable time after blanks are furnished. Be sure that each student is coded according to printed instructions in your registers. If you are in doubt about the status of any pupil, confer with your principal.<sup>391</sup>

The ploy, if indeed it were one, didn’t work. In November, saying that he had found no “bad faith on either side,” Atwell yet ordered the addition of the courses specified earlier when testimony arose that most of the courses still were not being taught at Oak Lawn. Once again, Wilemon was called to testify, wherein he said he had personally spoken to each of the negro high school grades, asking students if they wanted to take the new courses. Only two students did, he said—one for biology in his spare time and one for vocational agriculture—and the latter changed his mind.

Atwell wasn’t swayed. His final judgment, declared in court on November 16<sup>th</sup>, and filed on December 1, 1949, but made known to the defendants in November, left no room for doubt.

It is therefore ordered, adjudged and decreed by the Court, that defendants and each of them, are permanently enjoined and restrained from further failing to provide and teach to negro scholastics located in the Waxahachie Independent

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<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*

School District, the same courses that are offered to white students, and with respect to said courses to provide for said Negro scholastics the exact treatment of said courses, equal laboratory facilities, teachers and equal facilities for the teaching of said courses, and defendants are given thirty (30) days within which to comply with the fullness of this order.

At a special session of the board held on November 24, the court's oral opinion in Civil Action Number 3750 was read to the board. After "much discussion" the details of which did not make it into board minutes, a motion was made authorizing Mr. Wilemon and two board members to "satisfy the court's order, to the best of their knowledge, as soon as possible." The motion carried.

By the next year, groundwork was laid for the passage of a bond to build a new and modern high school for the African-American community. Turner High School became a reality in 1952, built on land bequeathed to the district by Willia Getzendaner Skinner, daughter of the first president of the first city school board in Waxahachie in 1884, W.H. Getzendaner, and herself a graduate of Mrs. J.E.B. Stuart's School for Girls in Virginia. The school was named for Mrs. Skinner's favored house servant, a woman by the name of Turner.

Turner High School served the African-American community in Waxahachie for a short eighteen years. In its lifetime it built a proud tradition in music and sports, the Turner Lions highly competitive among area African-American schools. But even as the finishing touches were being placed on it, the national strategy of the NAACP, which had been to press for a true realization of the equality clause in the separate-but-equal

doctrine, had now proposed a different strategy, and one that confronted directly the question that news stories seemed to answer even when they had not been articulated: segregation, and the direct challenge to the Plessy doctrine of separate but equal.

Butler v. Wilemon became a landmark ruling, cited often in the literature chronicling the civil rights struggle for equality of opportunity in schooling, albeit as a footnote to the larger cases. His judgment in the Butler v. Wilemon civil case notwithstanding, Atwell bore few signs of progressivism in matters of civil rights. He was, perhaps, best understood in contemporary terms as a “strict constructionist” of constitutional law. He slowed the pace of desegregation in the Dallas ISD after the Brown v. Board of Education decision, finding it lawfully groundless, and based on “modern psychological language.”<sup>392</sup>

### **Continued Growth**

Each decade of the school district’s existence, save for the 1940’s, had seen the pressing need for more classroom space or additional facilities. The Park School building had been added in 1904, the Ferris ward and South ward buildings had been added in 1911, the Waxahachie High School building added in 1917, the Oak Lawn School building added in 1919, the Central ward building added in 1920, and the Marvin Elementary/WPA expansion added in 1938-39. As Turner High School freed up space at Oak Lawn for elementary students in the early 1950’s, growth throughout the district continued to occur. Light industry was being attracted to the Waxahachie area as the new

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<sup>392</sup> *New York Times*, December 20, 1956.

interstate (I 35) was planned and constructed just to the west of the town. As had he and his two predecessors, Wilemon was faced again with the need to provide for additional construction to be paid through bonded indebtedness of the district. By the 1950's, growth in the town was trending northward. Wilemon successfully steered the district through another bond issue, and the result was North Elementary, later deemed Northside Elementary.

North Elementary offered the latest in school design, modeled on the one-story "finger plan" school constructed of brick and a small quantity of steel. This type of school construction was both economical and was felt to be more humane, with its covered walks, open to the air, replacing the noisy tiled double-loaded corridor of traditional school construction. Certainly Wilemon felt the opportunity to apply the expertise of his graduate education in the planning and construction of this school. North Elementary rapidly rose in the esteem of the local citizens, becoming the town's prized elementary school.

### **Desegregating Schools in Waxahachie ISD: From "Not Much Happenin'" to a Unitary School District, 1965-1970**

The story of desegregation of the public schools is by no means an unfamiliar one. School textbooks document the Supreme Court ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education*, which struck down segregation as unconstitutional, as a major landmark, and include it with such other historical rulings as *Marbury v. Madison* and *Plessy v.*

*Ferguson*, the latter of which *Brown* overturned. And yet, desegregation stories differ from school district to school district. The manner in which each district managed and dealt with desegregation—in becoming a *unitary* school district—is bound up in the unique particularities of each district. For there was no single date in history, post *Brown*, wherein every school which had formerly been exclusive to one race was instantly integrated by judicial decree. While *Brown* may have changed the law, the enforcement of that law became the truer story of desegregating the public schools. That enforcement required additional court rulings, statutes, and the commitment of the two remaining branches of government—legislative and executive—before genuine desegregation of schools could be realized.

Every Texas town, as indeed, every American town, has its own story to tell regarding the implementation of school desegregation, some perhaps more dramatic than others. While *Brown v. Board of Education* set the clock ticking in 1954, sixteen additional years elapsed before the full desegregation of schools came about in Waxahachie. During these years came statements of lawful compliance, increased investment in black schools, desegregation plans of a few sentences—so minimal as to be expressed on one half page—and a general perceived, or perhaps actual, foot-dragging on the part of school officials. Some years in the mid sixties were marked by complete silence on the issue. This wait-and-see attitude demonstrated by Waxahachie school officials was common to other southern school districts. Essentially, the desegregation

period between 1954 and 1970 followed four stages—absolute defiance, token compliance, modest integration, and massive integration.<sup>393</sup>

From the advent of public schooling in Waxahachie in 1884, to the year of 1954, when *Brown v. Board of Education* became the law of the land, little in Waxahachie had changed regarding race relations. Clearly a watershed in the annals of school desegregation, the words of the ruling must have come as a rude awakening (or overdue admission) to many. The degree to which the ruling contradicted the notion of separate but equal was overtly stated in the opinion offered by Chief Justice Earl Warren:

We conclude that, in the field of public education, the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. This disposition makes unnecessary any discussion whether such segregation also violates the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

Mention of the landmark ruling years later elicited only raised eyebrows and shrugged shoulders when Waxahachie citizens who witnessed the ruling and its immediate effects on the schools in the city were asked about their remembrances. The failure of the court ruling to effect substantive change in the district is understood today by those persons as yet another federal promise (a la "forty acres and a mule") from a far

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<sup>393</sup> J. Harvie Wilkinson, *From Brown to Bakke* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 78.

away national government which seemed to have little influence in the cities and towns of the old South. In many ways, the apartheid concept of separate but equal had become so ingrained to the local citizens—so much a part of the everyday accepted state of affairs—that expectations for genuine change were low, at least as far as the public schools were concerned. The regular habit of making a living took precedence to leading the charge for school desegregation, even after the *Brown* ruling. Persons went about their business. Black educators continued to staff black schools while their white colleagues worked “across the tracks” at the white high school, which happened to be named for the town which it served—Waxahachie High School. Only in other areas regarding civil rights, as if efforts for change had to be marshaled in specific areas, did organizations such as the NAACP press locally for changes in more strident and vocal ways.<sup>394</sup>

The momentum that *Brown* had built from the previous cases essentially halted the following year with the ruling issued in *Brown v. Board of Education II*, issued in 1955. As if intimidated by the opposition of the White South and with seemingly little support from the executive branch, the Court justices ordered the implementation of desegregation under the vague formula of “all deliberate speed.” This formula essentially

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<sup>394</sup> Personal Interview, Jimmie Ray, October 18, 2006.

returned the enforcement of desegregation to southern federal district courts without guidelines, instead of establishing firm guidelines and timetables.<sup>395</sup>

School officials in Waxahachie, as well as elsewhere across the South, chose to focus on the “deliberative” aspect of the law as opposed to the “speed” with the result of continued school segregation. From the date of the Brown ruling up to the fall of 1965, schools in Waxahachie were uniquely white or black.

With the advent of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, school integration began to creep forward. Title IV of the Act expressly addressed desegregation in the public schools. It stated:

Whenever the Attorney General receives a complaint in writing-- (1) signed by a parent or group of parents to the effect that his or their minor children, as members of a class of persons similarly situated, are being deprived by a school board of the equal protection of the laws, or (2) signed by an individual, or his parent, to the effect that he has been denied admission to or not permitted to continue in attendance at a public college by reason of race, color, religion, or national origin, and the Attorney General believes the complaint is meritorious and certifies that the signer or signers of such complaint are unable, in his judgment, to initiate and maintain appropriate legal proceedings for relief and that the institution of an action will materially further the orderly achievement of desegregation in public education, the Attorney General is authorized, after giving notice of such complaint to the appropriate school board or college authority and after certifying that he is satisfied that such board or authority has had a reasonable time to adjust the conditions alleged in

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<sup>395</sup> Thomas F. Pettigrew, “Justice Deferred: A Half Century After Brown v. Board of Education,” *American Psychologist* September 2004 Vol. 59 Issue 6, 521-529.



such complaint, to institute for or in the name of the United States a civil action in any appropriate district court of the United States against such parties and for such relief as may be appropriate...

Further, Title VI of the Act called for the cutoff of federal funds for schools which practiced discrimination in enrollment. It stated:

No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

Faced with lawful mandates which had a fair degree of enforcement “teeth,” school districts such as Waxahachie’s opted for the next stage in the evolutionary development of school desegregation—the Freedom of Choice plan, ruled in 1966 by the Fifth Circuit Court as an acceptable measure for school districts to meet integration goals.<sup>396</sup>

Full integration of Waxahachie public schools wasn’t realized until the fall of 1970. The years prior to that date were marked by the tokenism and moderate compliance which throughout the 1960’s frustrated the aims of those seeking equal educational opportunities for all. Ostensibly, Waxahachie began the nominal desegregation of its schools relatively early for a Texas school district, when in August 1963 a unanimous

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<sup>396</sup> Wilkinson, *op. cit.*, 108.

board vote called for “stair-step” integration to begin the next month with the first grade. The plan, a single sentence, called for the gradual increase of school integration, one grade level at a time until all twelve grades were integrated.<sup>397</sup> By such a plan the district would be fully integrated by 1975.

Throughout 1963 and 1964 Waxahachie’s schools remained segregated, with little or no word recorded on the issue. Black students attended Oak Lawn Elementary up until the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, at which time they attended Turner High School. White students attended Ferris, Marvin, (and later, Northside) Elementary Schools up until the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, at which time they attended Waxahachie High School. Faculties were exclusively white or black at each school, as they had been since the inception of the district in 1884.

By 1965, events had begun to take on a decidedly quicker pace, due in large part to the provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VI of the act provided for the cutoff of federal funds to districts failing to make adequate progress in ending segregation. In order to remain eligible for funding, districts were obliged to file their desegregation plans with the Texas Education Agency. Thus was born Waxahachie’s version of the Freedom of Choice plan. WISD board minutes of the time reflect increasing correspondence between the district and TEA, and, more notably, between the district and the federal office of Housing, Education, and Welfare.<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>397</sup> Minutes, WISD Board of Trustees, August, 1963.

<sup>398</sup> Minutes, WISD Board of Trustees, various dates.

In January 1965 school district officials received a letter from TEA with the following subject line: Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs, Department of Housing, Education, and Welfare, Title VI, Civil Rights Act of 1964.<sup>399</sup> The district was obliged to respond to the letter by noting on an enclosed form one of four responses: 1) full compliance, 2) districts under a “Final Court Order”, 3) districts with locally initiated plans for desegregation, or 4) districts not in compliance. In a February response to the letter, the board repeated its desegregation “plan” from 1963 as its locally initiated plan, expanding the plan to an entire page noting that “attendance zones were not changed and pupils are eligible to attend the school in the area of residence.” Further, the returned document indicated a racial makeup of the district as 2,483 white and 831 negro. In spaces requiring a response as to “how many negro pupils presently attend white schools by grade level” there was a “0” in each space for each grade level. In the space for “integrated faculty” there also appeared a “0”.<sup>400</sup>

Later in 1965, the desegregation plan, still documented in business letter form, grew to a four page length, as further details were added relating to attendance zoning, busing, extracurricular activities, and the placement of faculty. The letter ended by noting that a 30 acre site had been purchased and a portion of bonds had been voted for the

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<sup>399</sup> Minutes, WISD Board of Trustees, January 1968.

<sup>400</sup> Minutes, WISD Board of Trustees, January, 1965.

construction of a new high school. The letter said, “The plans are for this school to be the only senior high school in the district.”<sup>401</sup>

During this time, there began to appear in the back pages of the local newspaper an official Notice of School Desegregation Plan Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 detailing the ability of parents to choose the school to which they wanted to send their student(s), provided they did so within the allowable 30 day period from March 1<sup>st</sup> to March 30<sup>th</sup>. The notice stated that “no choice will be denied for any reason *other than overcrowding*” (italics added). It continued, “In cases where granting all choices for any school would cause overcrowding, the students changing the school who live closest to it will be assigned to that school.”<sup>402</sup>

While students were nominally free to choose a school outside of their attendance zone for the 1965-66 school year, and some—mostly athletes—actually did (Ray), faculty members were obliged to teach where assigned. In August, 1965, a desegregation form was returned to TEA noting that staff desegregation would not begin until the 1966-67 school year, a full year and a month in the future. During that school year, one black teacher was assigned to each of the white schools and one white teacher was assigned to each of the black schools.<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> Minutes, WISD Board of Trustees, March 1965.

<sup>402</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, January 15, 1965.

<sup>403</sup> Minutes, WISD Board of Trustees, August, 1965.

Thus, the freedom of choice desegregation plan for Waxahachie ISD initiated black entry into the formerly all white institution of Waxahachie High School, if only for a pioneering or token few. However, by the 1967-68 school year, the number of students requesting transfers from their neighborhood black school, Turner, to Waxahachie High School dropped substantially. Watchdogs at HEW took notice. A letter from the HEW office, dated February 1, 1968, stated that the Waxahachie school system had not made substantial progress toward eliminating its dual structure and that the office intended to “initiate administrative proceedings for the termination of your school system’s Federal financial assistance if appropriate steps are not taken.”<sup>404</sup>

The issue came to a head in March of 1968 when school board members met with lawyers from HEW—one Mr. Miller, one Mr. Williams, and one Mr. Johnson. Board members were unable to persuade the men that “leaving the situation as it is” until the new high school could be finished was the best course of action, and one that was supported by the entire community, black and white. Mr. Miller stated that “only integration of the top three grades by fall of 1968 was acceptable.” On April 18, 1968 the *Waxahachie Daily Light* led with the headlines: “School Board Orders Integration of Two High Schools: Turner Loses Top 3 Classes.” The article went on to state that “substantial integration of faculties” was also part of the plan.<sup>405</sup> Evidently, the faculty integration was not substantial enough to satisfy the requirements of the HEW lawyers. The plans

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<sup>404</sup> Minutes, WISD Board of Trustees, February 1968.

<sup>405</sup> *Waxahachie Daily Light*, April 18, 1968.

drawn up in May of 1968 for staff integration for the coming school year called for the assignment of “three negro teachers to Waxahachie High School, four to Marvin, and one each to Ferris and Northside...” Whether such numbers were unsatisfactory, or whether due to the possible loss of positions for African-American teachers, the case was forwarded to the Washington office of HEW, presumably for further action regarding legal proceedings against the district. On July 5, 1968, Superintendent T.C. Wilemon sent a letter to the Education Branch Chief at the Office of Civil Rights, Dr. Lloyd Henderson, stating his surprise that the district’s file had been forwarded for corrective action. Superintendent Wilemon acknowledged that Mr. Miller felt the case warranted further clarification and he intended to provide it. “No teachers have been released because of these changes,” he stated.<sup>406</sup> No action was taken against the district as a result, and the 1968-69 school year saw the first major integration of the district, at least for grades 10, 11, and 12. Grade levels below 10 continued to operate under “freedom of choice” provisions.

By the end of the 68-69 school year, it became apparent that the new high school building would not be completed on time for the coming school year and that an extension in the school district’s desegregation plan would have to be requested. The request was denied by the Dallas office of the HEW on the grounds that they had no authority to grant an extension. Thus began a flurry of activity throughout the month of May to stave off impending forced integration. At a special called board meeting on May

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<sup>406</sup> Minutes, WISD Board of Trustees, July, 1969.

13, 1969, board members drafted a full tentative desegregation plan which used existing schools to house a variety of grade levels. One board member voted against such a plan.

<sup>407</sup> May 19<sup>th</sup> saw a community board meeting attended by 650 citizens, most of them there to learn the details of the HEW law, but a few of them there “strictly as troublemakers.” Trustees felt inclined to downplay the level of discord that was surfacing throughout the community. Board minutes of the meeting record the following:

These few were for taking the law in our own hands regardless of the Government’s final answer. Only about 5% were abusive in their language and wanted to make a personal issue of the meeting.

By May 22, at another community meeting, the crowd had dwindled to a mere 175 persons. The board president, Stuart Lumpkins, had called Roberto Gonzalez, Acting Chief of the Dallas Education Branch of the Office of Civil Rights to plea for more time. Mr. Gonzalez had instructed him to make a detailed report, with supporting evidence, as to why a delay was needed. By June of 1969, board minutes from an “informal” board meeting indicate that Gonzalez felt the larger issue was in mixing faculty at Turner and Oak Lawn “to match the ratio of whites to negroes in the district.”

In a letter to HEW dated June 11, 1969, Board President Lumpkins pled for more time on the grounds that complete integration of grades 9-12 in the existing high school would put 939 students in a building built for 700. He indicated that Canterbury and Co.,

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<sup>407</sup> Minutes, WISD Board of Trustees, May, 1969.

contractors for the new high school, had begun breaking ground for the building within ten days of the contract and that everything was on schedule. His letter was followed by another from the Education Committee of the Waxahachie Chamber of Commerce, an ad hoc citizens group, which decried the “unforeseen inflationary forces which resulted in drastic duplication of planning effort” in bringing about the new high school on time. “Neither negro nor white want forced integration and overcrowding in the Waxahachie school system nine months ahead of completion of the new high school.”<sup>408</sup>

Several days later, Gonzalez responded:

Before we can approve your request for an extension of time, we must obtain a commitment from your district which would increase substantially your faculty desegregation.<sup>409</sup>

Two days later, on June 20, 1969, the board, in yet another “brief meeting” authorized that a letter be written in which “we agree to adjust the percentages of whites to negroes by approximately 40% in the two schools identified,” Oak Lawn and Turner.<sup>410</sup>

The 69-70 school year repeated the previous year’s desegregation plan, effectively integrating only the top three grades at Waxahachie High School, without penalty from HEW. A representative of OCR, Carlos Vela, visited the district during the

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<sup>408</sup> Minutes, WISD Board of Trustees, June, 1969.

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*



fall of 1969 to verify the desegregation of the professional staff. In a letter dated December 11, 1969, Roberto Gonzalez acknowledged from Vela's report that the district was in compliance and that "your 441B Assurance of Compliance will remain in effect and provide a basis for the approval of applications and for payment of Federal financial assistance." In a follow up letter dated March 26, 1970, he added that, with the new high school set to open on time in the fall of 1970, the district will finally be able to convert to a "unitary, non-racial school system."<sup>411</sup>

Waxahachie High School opened in the fall of 1970 to all students in the district. The previous Waxahachie High School became T.C. Wilemon Junior High School. Turner High School became Turner Middle School. Oak Lawn Elementary, a school the new Superintendent, Billy Bates, found to be "unfit for human habitation," was closed.<sup>412</sup>

T.C. Wilemon retired in the spring of 1970. He worked for several years thereafter at the school district's credit union, exercising his mathematical skills that had served him well throughout his career. A talented athlete and an avid sports fan for his entire life, he enjoyed televised baseball games in his retirement years. He died in 1979, a victim of cancer. His youngest daughter, Alice Wilemon Zerof, remembered him as an educator whose chief concern was the production of good citizens. "He was devoted to

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<sup>411</sup> Minutes, WISD Board of Trustees, December, 1969.

<sup>412</sup> Personal Interview, Billy Bates, November 4, 2006.

his family and the wider family of the school and community,” said Mrs. Zerof. One of his hallmarks, she said, “was that he never gave up on any kid.”<sup>413</sup>

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<sup>413</sup> Personal Interview, Alice (Wilemon) Zerof, September 30, 2008.

## Epilogue

Linguistic flux denotes the changing nature of language over time, as those who use the language shape it, modify it, augment it, or otherwise restructure it. As language changes over time, so too do its structural components, although some prove more lasting than others. Tyack and Cuban employ the metaphor of a *grammar* of schooling to demonstrate the manner in which those who practiced (and practice) “schooling” contended (and contend) with those aspects of grammar which changed despite their best efforts, or otherwise persisted despite equal efforts to dispel them. As stakeholders in the public educational endeavor sought to lend credence to their efforts, that the schools they established be “real” schools, they relied, initially, and narrowly, on precedent and authority, as real schools were shaped by academics and academicians; ultimately as the pool of stakeholders widened, and more persons employed the *grammar* of public schooling to make the meaning of a “real” school, the definition of the school changed, and moved through periods identifiable with philosophical approaches defined by *scholar/academic, social efficiency, and learner-centered*. To the extent that public schooling became an increasingly and truly public endeavor, the definition of a real school came to be interpreted by greater numbers of stakeholders, all of whom utilized the existing grammar and in so doing forged a dialect all their own, indistinguishable in many regards from the standard form, but in as many ways unique to the local culture.

From the *lingua franca* of Waxahachie's grammar of schooling at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: "real" schools had grades. Real schools apportioned students to those grades and promoted students from grade to grade based on merit, measured as the mastery of the content for that grade, and accorded a Carnegie unit of credit toward a required minimum for graduation; in this regard an efficiency in delivering instruction and managing students and the curriculum administered to them was achieved. Real schools met for nine months of the year, although this element of grammar was difficult to apply, like a correct, but complex verb tense, aspired to for correct form, but more often than not, missed. Real schools displayed their students before the stakeholders, usually in entertaining fashion, but always with the aim of demonstrating the product, affective as much as cognitive, of public schooling. From the local dialect: "real" schools promoted grace, refinement, chivalry, values. The proof of their effect was measured in the elocutionary and oratorical skills of the students. Real schools, at the higher level, included only the elite, the sons and daughters of local gentry and professionals, whose sons and daughters had time and opportunity for educational advancement or enrichment. As public institutions, bureaucratic by design, real schools were not beholden to patrons, but yet used the terminology, and co-opted the approach of private schools, with which they competed, albeit feebly at times.

Thus, when Walter Acker acceded to the superintendency of the city's public schools, he inherited a district narrowly defined and structured largely on the authority of pedagogues—men of letters, mostly—and supplemented in its administration by public-spirited gentlemen promoting an economic interest as much as a social one. But even

then, the grammar was expanding in usage if not in form, used increasingly by those upon whom the public school and its curriculum was intended to act, for indeed, such was the liberalizing nature of education. Add to this fact the element of race, and the factors of religion and regime became all the more important for their conservative or mediating influence.

Thus, when G.B. Winn inherited a highly professionalized, but yet academic-scholar-oriented institution, he contended with the forces of progressivism expressed as a liberalization in opening up the curriculum to include vocational education, and greater choice regarding student options for their education. He yet beheld an influence of the extra-curriculum and its force upon the definition of a real school, and this at the interpretation of those for whom the curriculum was intended to act upon—the students—and the community-at-large, for whom the school came to be a symbol of the town and its aspirations. Forgoing a reactionary policy, whether by design or by happenstance, Winn instead navigated the new terrain through an expanded managerial professionalization, carefully conserving and cultivating those grammatical elements which had lent previous meaning to the definition of a “real” school, such as an affiliated status with the state university, the maintenance of Latin within the curriculum as a last vestige of the classical curriculum, and ultimately, a brick-and-mortar structure which cemented into place the twentieth century concept of “school” as a geographical landmark in place of the abstraction of a collection of learners. Prior to Winn, the appellation of Waxahachie High School, or Park High School, referred merely to the assemblage of students and teachers. Winn oversaw the period during which the name

*Waxahachie High School*, as a lexical marker of the grammar of schooling, referred to the place, the physical substance of the materials, and perhaps to the location—all the more reason why such controversy arose over its placement in town.

T.C. Wilemon was the legatee of a working, professional *system* of public education. His job was but to conserve, protect, and refine the mechanics of the machine with his own mechanical efficiency. Continuing the work of his predecessor in refining the efficiency in the delivery of the educational service, he was afforded, ever so slightly at first, an additional opportunity to focus upon the object of curriculum delivery—the student, and his and her needs for *mental, physical, social, and spiritual* growth, advancement, or enrichment. That societal forces of war, reactionary or recalcitrant politics, cold war, and a struggle for civil rights would complicate his job, in ways only hinted at for his predecessors, challenged all the more his managerial acumen, and his vision to make the promise of the public educational endeavor a reality for all students.

That the public schools were secular institutions, administered by local officials of the state is undisputed. The grammatical aspects of public schooling that were denominationally derived were rejected by the organizational powers of the public school endeavor as unworkable, untenable, and unproductive, but not unworthy. That an ecumenical protestant ethic and theology could and should be part of the public school endeavor was a clear majority view, its practice questioned and answered throughout the course of the twentieth century in court cases sequentially establishing the precedence of a secular program in place of a religious, and limiting the prior practice of the expression

of religion regarding the public school program. But to this day, the religious propensity to impact the instructional program yet manifests itself in terms of curriculum battles over social studies content, the inclusion of the Bible as legitimate curricular study, the nature and degree to which religious points of view, including curricular strands of creationism and intelligent design, may be included as compulsory elements to the curriculum. These battles, and the viewpoints they represent, are not merely vestiges of the previous era, they are the grandchildren of them—living, vital, and pressing their claim.

That Acker, Winn, and Wilemon were each highly religious men of faith and conviction, and that their faith exercised an influence upon their judgment, choices, and demeanor, is equally indisputable. Acker's religiosity expressed itself most notably through his work with the Masons, Winn's through his superintendency of the Methodist Sunday School Association, and Wilemon's through his vibrant, devoted, and very public membership in the Men's Bible Study, an ecumenical Sunday worship group which met in the local movie theater in order to accommodate the group's size. Each of these men found within the public school system a means and a purpose for embracing the spiritual aspect of human development.

That race was a central theme to the evolution of the public school endeavor goes without saying. The local story was but the regional one, which was a national one. The imposed second-class status of African-Americans, and other persons of color, was an indisputable fact. That the African-American population made do with an unequitable

share of the common wealth is a testament to their perseverance and resolve; that they were compelled to do so was the shame of those for whom the bountiful table was spread only for the invited, only for the nobility of the prevailing regime. Seemingly, though, in Waxahachie, race, as the marker of second-class citizenship, took the status of the proverbial white elephant in the room. It could not be dispelled, and ignoring it took all the more effort at pretense. That prevalent notions of racial superiority among whites were inconsistent with their pretense toward cultural refinement became increasingly apparent, and required ever greater delusion, ultimately proving untenable. Chautauqua and Trinity could never fulfill the promise of the town's progressive aims while an historic and sizable portion of its population was denied the rights of full citizenship.

That Acker, Winn, and Wilemon exercised a regime of power and control by virtue of their professional longevity, or otherwise symbolized a regime of the prevailing power structure which capitalized upon or promoted their renewed terms of office, is exemplified by the sheer length of their respective superintendencies. Through their ability to shape the district, they became, if not the most powerful, at least the most visible, arbiters of the local grammar of schooling.

That Waxahachians were impelled to rely upon the consistent leadership of three superintendents for a seventy-two year period which encompassed the infancy, adolescence, and young adulthood of the district, investing in them a regime of control of an enterprise so crucial to the town's posterity, indicated first that those leaders were returning the investment in proportion to the town's expectations among its growing



public school interests and constituencies. Secondly, it spoke to the agility of each man to assess the demands of those constituencies, and either acquiesce to those demands, or to challenge them to change. Acker, Winn, and Wilemon managed to keep their constituencies placated, each man facing larger, and more diverse constituencies as the public school endeavor developed. Their feats and failures, designs and dreams, are the legacy of generations, and the foundation upon which the Waxahachie Independent School District rests, resists, or reconciles.

## **Appendices**

## Appendix A: A Note on Sources

Several archives were important to this study. They included the Ellis County Clerk's office that housed many of the original county Judge records during the period when the County Judge acted as the County School Superintendent. Likewise, the City of Waxahachie, whose website archives city council minutes extending to the 1884 election which created the city's public school system, shone tremendous light upon the legal proceedings of the early days of the school district. Records from the Commissioner's Court of Ellis County illuminated persons and events preceding the days of the public school system in Waxahachie.

The administration building of the Waxahachie Independent School District, the former Ferris Ward/Elementary School, houses Board Minutes which extend back in time to the school year 1912. As Butchart points out, board minutes of school trustees are often "spartan and prosaic," often revealing "only final action on issues, not the content of debates, disagreements, or battles."<sup>414</sup> Such was certainly the case in the course of this study. Yet, the longitudinal scope of the minutes, the comparison of decade to decade, era to era, on the inclusions, omissions, tone and subtext of the documents, sheds its own revelatory light in place of specific findings. Additionally, inclusive of these minutes minutes are letters, proclamations, receipts, rosters, and related school district

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<sup>414</sup> Butchart, *op. cit.*, 60.

correspondence between citizens, school district officials, and legal and governmental entities.

The Ellis County Museum on the courthouse square in Waxahachie holds collections of school-related ephemera, including pamphlets, manuscripts, yearbooks, school district publications, catalogs, courses of study, and class-reunion memorabilia. Its website served as an additional resource in researching Marvin College and Oak Lawn Academy. It also houses a collection of Sanborn maps relating to the town's development.

Sims Library in Waxahachie, Texas serves as a research center for local history as well as a pre-eminent institution for local genealogical research. Its microform collection of early Waxahachie newspapers including the *Enterprise*, the *Argus*, the *Democrat*, and the *Daily Light* were indispensable in tracing a timeline of development and a compendium of personages associated with the city school district and its related concerns. The library's vertical files offer a wealth of information relevant to the persons, events, and concerns of the development of the town's and the school district's history. Its collection of local histories compiled by civic organizations such as the Rebekah Boyce chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution were of particular importance in suggesting avenues of further research and in corroborating other research.

The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, was also an important archival resource. Not only did its vertical files hold vital information on early Waxahachie educators, its collection of Sanborn maps documented and clarified the order

in which Waxahachie school buildings appeared and/or disappeared. These buildings often went by a variety of names in different publications which, but for the sake of the maps' documentation as to exact location, complicated their placement. The Center also houses rare copies of the Marvin College catalog, along with value-added correspondence of the Marvin college graduate who supplied the university with the copies. These catalogs present a rich treasure trove of information illuminating not only the organizational arrangements of the college, but its animating ethos and spirit.

The National Archives and Records Administration in Fort Worth, Texas houses the records of the landmark court case of *Butler v. Wilemon*, a 1949 civil rights case which prefigured the *Brown v. Board of Education* suits and typified the focus of civil rights lawsuits of the time to apply equal protection under law. The case delineates the assertions of local African-American citizens, suing on behalf of their children, to whom the district failed to apply equal protection under law in its separate and unequal provision of educational facilities and opportunities.

Additional qualitative data was obtained from personal interviews of the direct descendents of T.C. Wilemon, his first and last daughters Katherine (Wilemon) Owens and Alice (Wilemon) Zerof, respectively; early graduates of Waxahachie High School, and early employees of the district.

Of course, numerous secondary sources, many of which by virtue of their dates of publication functioned more as primary sources, were utilized. For example, two histories of education in Ellis county written as master's theses in 1929 and 1930, respectively,

shed light on the development of local educational enterprises from a time period much closer to the actual inception than is the case today. Included in each of these works were interviews with persons of pre-eminent importance in the development of local educational issues, but for whom only primary source data exists today in the form of lifeless records. Thus, their inclusion in these works is akin to finding a primary source illuminating their thoughts and actions. Likewise, the ready availability of rare, hard-to-find, or out-of-print books on websites such as Google Books (*www.books.google.com*) allowed for the perusal of many of the original textbooks used in distant decades past. The Portal to Texas History hosted by the University of North Texas Libraries (*http://texashistory.unt.edu*) holds a wealth of published journals of minutes of Methodist conferences throughout the latter 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Likewise the Internet Archive (*www.archive.org*) allowed for closer introspection of persons referred to in primary sources, particularly the early Methodist ministers, with its collection of Methodist histories.

## Appendix B: Tildon's Annual Address

Reported in the *Dallas Morning News*, July 2, 1897

### Tildon's Annual Address

#### The Race's Progress in Education

What is Needed, What is Possible, What is Hoped for by the Colored Teachers of Texas

Waco, Tex., July 2, --The following is the annual address of President J.W. Tildon of the Colored Teachers' state association of Texas, delivered July 1:

Fellow teachers: We have met to-day in the thirteenth annual convention of the Association of the Colored Teachers of Texas. The words of welcome spoken in behalf of the citizens and teachers of Waco and the responses of gratitude delivered in behalf of the visiting teachers may be taken as indicative of the interest, which many feel in this association. Hence, in the formal opening of this meeting it is proper to touch lightly upon the character of our association, the problem which it would help in solving and the means it advocates.

This association has its springs of action in the extremes of human emotions—the lowest and the highest, the egoistic and the altruistic. All organizations among men having for their object respectively the benefit of the member, the benefit of others, or the benefit partly of both. The first class has demonstrated the superior power of organized over individual effort and is illustrated by trusts and combines. The second has materialized the highest ideals yet compassed by human endeavor and is illustrated by organizations for purely benevolent purposes. The third, to which our association belongs, seeks to benefit both its members and others.

The first class has done most to subdue nature and to place civilization upon its present high plane of material prosperity. The second has done most to give it its prospect for permanency and its clement of sublimity. The third has done most to give it the highest form of civil government the world has seen and the highest type we can hope of human nature to accept.

How well this association succeeds in reaching the end it seeks I shall not undertake to say, but that it amply repays the members for the outlay, which it necessitates few will deny. We believe, indeed, that no teacher with open eyes and ears and receptive mind can enter into the work of these sessions without receiving valuable help. Brighter ideas will illumine the chart of life, new inspiration will invigorate the being, focused thoughts will solve perplexing problems and the power of organization will help promote the interest of our common cause. To others—not members—the benefits, though mediate, are as large, for improvement of the teacher multiplies in the pupils and in the community in which he lives.

For our own people we must furnish the pabulum digested from the past experience of the human race by diligent research and study. For the white people we must furnish the proof by our bearing in the higher walks of life that our variety of the human race can survive the climatic influences of Anglo-Saxon civilization and can live within its tropics, breathing its purest air, eating its choicest fruit, and drinking the clearest water which springs out of its hidden chambers. The great value to us of such a demonstration is readily appreciated when we reflect upon the manner in which we may be affected by the opinion which others have of us. A false estimation will shut doors in our face at every turn, will break out here in pity, there in scorn; will banter us in the street and cajole us in the market place, will make genius hide her face to avoid its surprised stare and quit her task to escape its complacent slaps, but a just estimation will call forth all our latent possibilities, will kindle the fires of ambition, of confidence, of hope and of good will; will turn over the old stone, leaving the unsightly, decrepid [sic] creatures of darkness to perish in the sunlight of truth, and will gather up from the fields of doubt and distrust the decaying carcasses of extinct institutions and lay them away to rest forever in the silent tomb of an age that is no more.

The problem, the solution of which the association aspires to be an element, is not essentially different from that which confronts every people. Simply stated it is: How may the masses be elevated to a higher plane of living? It differs from that of any other people only by degree. The peculiarities of any people are proven to be accidental [sic] and not essential hindrances to the realm of higher life when one of that people is “admitted to the right of reason,” and thereby “made a freeman of the whole estate.” One little apple which would not fall when unsupported would break into shreds the mighty law which stakes the sun and all the stars out on the planes of heaven.

That we are lower in the scale of civilization than the white people is at once patent. To deny this shows a degree of ignorance or of insincerity which can serve no



good purpose. The civilization of a people is a kind of average; some are above it, some below it; hence, exceptions prove nothing.

To the citadel of the problem there are two approaches. One is by the way of a favorable sentiment along which philanthropy and justice send their cohorts; the other is by the growth along which the supplies for character and intelligence find their way. Philanthropy has expended her millions, justice has revised her laws to help on the solution, and withal to good effect, for no healthy willing eye can fail to see a consequent upward bounding of the whole people. Along this line, much has been, much is now doing and much remains to be done, but without undervaluing and this we willingly acknowledge that we believe the chief work in the elevation of our people yet to be done must be done from within. There must be a growth of character, individually and collectively. The leader of one people cannot console himself simply because he does not suffer in comparison with the groundling of another. A good character is great strength and its forces [sic] is as certain to affect human life as the force of gravity is to affect matters [sic]. There must be mental growth. Mind is master. In the progress of civilization its supremacy is not a matter of speculation, but is a matter of fact proven by every page of human history. Hence the arbiter of a people's destiny is what they are and know. What they have and what is thought of them depend upon these conditions.

The use of popular education as a means in the work of elevating the masses needs no argument to support it, for reason and experience are all on its side. The universal willingness to submit to taxation for the support of free schools and the liberal donations made by men of wealth and by benevolent institutions for the promotion of learning show how thoroughly confidence in this means is interwoven with the fabric of civilization. Our state superintendent in his last biennial report takes occasion to present a number of excellent selections which set forth in a light coming from every point of the human compass the claims of popular education. One of the most beautiful features of this belief in the desirability of popular education is the universality of application. It assumes the brotherhood of man and goes to work. States which yesterday held men as chattel to-day extend to them the precious boon of a liberal education.

Texas holds no mean place in this particular. Her schools for colored children look out from every nook and corner. Her appropriations for their support are made according to the number within school age, and not according to their color or the taxable values which they represent. This, however, is but common justice, and justice is the only basis sufficiently broad to support a civil superstructure. There is therefore no sacrifice of self-respect on our part in receiving these appropriations and no self-sacrifice on the part of the whites in according them. Better results will follow from a sense of

justice than from a sentiment even of kindness in matters of this sort. In addition to these numerous primary schools Texas maintains and supports for her colored citizens thirty-four high schools, a normal at Prairie View and an institute for the deaf and dumb and the blind at Austin, and promises that in the near future the glory of our public school system—a state university. In setting apart 100,000 acres of land for the establishment of this university the twenty-fifth legislature of the state of Texas has given another evidence of that sense of justice and feeling of good will which can furnish the only hope not only for the permanency and benefit of the public school system, but also for the lasting good and happiness of the whole people, and at the same time it has challenged in us that filial feeling, that loyal spirit, that patriotic devotion which leads men to grapple fearlessly with the king of terror and willingly to lay their lives upon the alter of their country. This action by the powers that be is a sufficient acknowledgment of our need for the university, but its friends can not afford to cease their efforts in its behalf until its doors swing open to admit our youths, and therefore I recommend the continuance of a committee in its interest.

The work of popular education at public expense is largely supplemented by denominational and other private schools. Kindergartens, night schools, and private day schools are to be found in many of our towns. The denominational schools have the entire field in the work of higher education and do a large share of the secondary and industrial training. With regard to the character of the education which should be given it seems worth while to note what modifications of the old notion the advocates of the new would make. The great interest in favor of industrial education has made itself felt throughout the entire ocean of educational thought and with especial force in those parts where float the fleets of negro education. The foremost apostle of this doctrine, the incarnation of this idea, is the eminent teacher, the famous orator, the president of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial school, Prof. Booker T. Washington. Through the work of his school and his eloquent presentations of the claims of industrial education he has touched a responsive chord in every part of this land. The large numbers of unskilled, idle, and shiftless among us make further argument to demonstrate the need for a general industrial awakening unnecessary, and can not fail to convince many of us that an enlargement of our old notion of education is the part of wisdom. But in our haste to receive the advantages which flow from skilled labor and the privileges of wealth we must not supplant the work now done for the development of the mind with that to be done for the development of the hand. A hand, however skilled, is powerless or dangerous without a mind and heart to know the right and a will to choose it. To permit industrial education to supplant our higher education as some advocate would be to give up an agency which has proven efficient in the elevation of other people and to try in its stead an experiment without any

history. It would be a repetition on a grand scale of the trade Esau made, and here lies the parting of the ways of the friends of industrial education.

Without entering into a discussion of the merits of this question, I wish to point out three sources which are fertile with error in many of the discussions: 1. Confused notions of what constitutes a school for higher education. With some all secondary schools are included. 2. Disregard for the great difference between the time required for the development of an individual and that required for the development of a people. Epoch culture is based upon the principle that each individual repeats in his life history the various stages of the whole human race. 3. The belief of a few that the negro is designed for no other calling than some form of manual labor. This variety of believers, thanks to the law of the survival of the fittest, is fast disappearing. I should say then that the old notion of popular education should be enlarged as to make industrial education supplement, but not supplant the old forms. I believe that the old which education shall bring to our elevation must come through a simultaneous development of all the essential functions of civilization so correlated as to blend into one harmonious whole. Nature demands this, for she will not permit one vital function to wait on the development of another; intelligence demands it for our physical characteristics have marked us for a distinct people.

In conclusion, the work of the association in the interest of a higher standard for the profession is the greatest good it has done, has been done along this line. The inspiration which has been received at these annual meetings has been the life of the efforts put forth and the feelings aroused in favor of a higher standard. Individuals have applied themselves to systematic study, and many teachers are anxious for larger opportunities for professional progress. The task of formulating such a plan for establishing a school of methods as would have the approval of the state superintendent and the sympathy of the association was assigned to a round table as a part of the programme for this meeting. In line with this movement, I recommend this body to indorse the work.

## Appendix C: Timeline

Late 1840's	Waxahachie area settled by Emory Rogers
1854	Common school districts created in Ellis County; common schools conducted until 1858
1861	Waxahachie Academy established by local members of Masonic Order
1868	Marvin College established; Marvin College buildings and campus located in northern section of town;
1884	City Public Schools established; Clarence Ousley first superintendent;
1887	City Public School tax rescinded
1887	Waxahachie College established by Rev. John Collier
1888	Waxahachie Female Institute established
1889	Waxahachie High School established as private school; City Public School tax restored; no public schools offered until Jan. 1890
1890	Park Public School established; Alex Hogg, superintendent

- 1898 Walter Acker, superintendent, Waxahachie Public Schools
- 1900 Chautauqua encampment appears annually until 1930, peaking in popularity during its first decade
- 1901 Waxahachie Cotton Mill brings light industry to town
- 1902 Trinity University locates in Waxahachie from Tehuacana; remains until 1941
- 1904 Park Public School building constructed in front of old Marvin College main building
- 1910 G.B. Winn becomes superintendent of Waxahachie Public Schools
- 1911 South Ward and Ferris Ward constructed; ward system implemented; Park School referred to as Central Ward
- 1917 Waxahachie High School constructed at alternate location from Park Public School/Marvin College campus amid controversy
- 1918 Oak Lawn School new building constructed
- 1920 Additional building constructed on the Central Ward campus; demolition of old Marvin College building
- 1922-1924 Winn implements Weekday Sunday School for public school students

- 1936 T.C. Wilemon becomes superintendent
- 1939 WPA and PWA funding matches local funds for new construction and additions to Central Ward, Oak Lawn, and High School campus; Central Ward renamed Marvin Elementary
- 1949 Waxahachie school teacher and state representative, Rae Files Still, Waxahachie Gov't teacher and state representative, instrumental in passage of Gilmer-Aiken bills; T.C. Wilemon writes *School Building Needs in Texas* as Master's Thesis at SMU; Butler v. Wilemon
- 1952 Turner High School constructed; Oak Lawn School becomes Oak Lawn Elementary
- 1958 North (aka Northside) Elementary opened
- 1970 Waxahachie High School opens as an integrated high school of a unitary school district; Oak Lawn Elementary closed; Turner High School becomes Turner Middle School

## Appendix D: Photographs



Figure 1. Marvin College, main building constructed 1870.



Figure 2. Marvin College, circa 1883. The two-story frame house on the right may have been removed from the campus to serve as the "two-story schoolhouse of the Oak Lawn School."



Figure 3. Superintendent C.M. Lyon, at left, with faculty members and graduating class members, circa 1894.



Figure 4 First graduating class of the Oak Lawn School. J.W.Tildon, center, principal of Oak Lawn School, and President of the Colored State Teachers Association in 1897. To the left is P.E.Goldthwaite and to the right is Robert Davis, future principals. The women are not identified.





Figure 5. Robert Davis, at left, and P.E. Goldthwaite, on right, with faculty of Oak Lawn School, circa 1912.

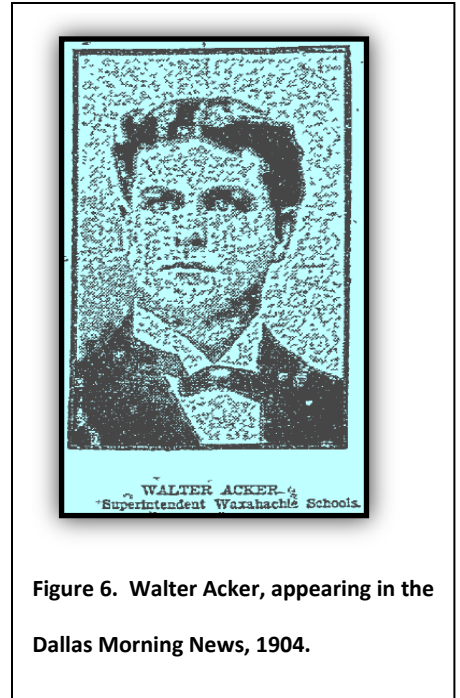


Figure 6. Walter Acker, appearing in the Dallas Morning News, 1904.



Figure 5. Trinity University, constructed 1901, which produced teachers for the town, county, and surrounding area, and served as a focal point for local college aspirants for forty years.

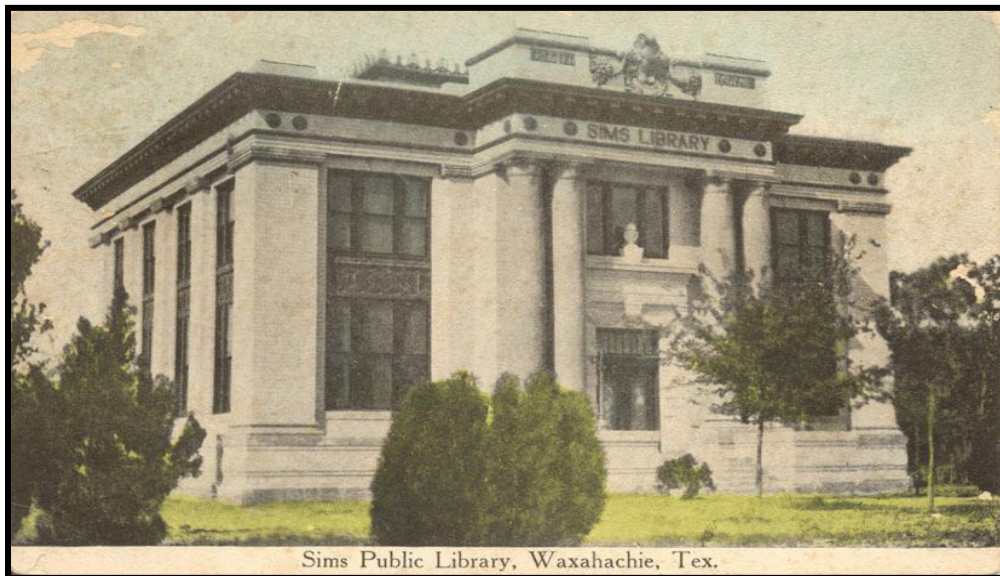


Figure 6 Sims Library, which augmented the local educational endeavor, providing a rich resource of literary and reference materials to the town's white students for many years.

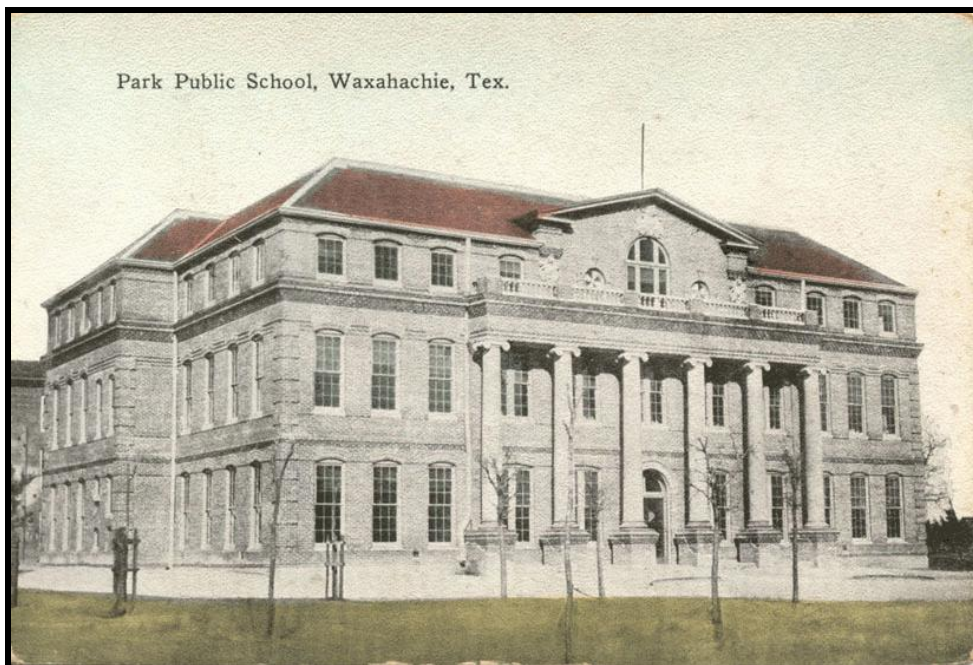


Figure 7 Park Public School, constructed 1904. The older structure of the main building of Marvin College is just visible to the left. Later known as Central Ward, and then as Marvin Elementary.

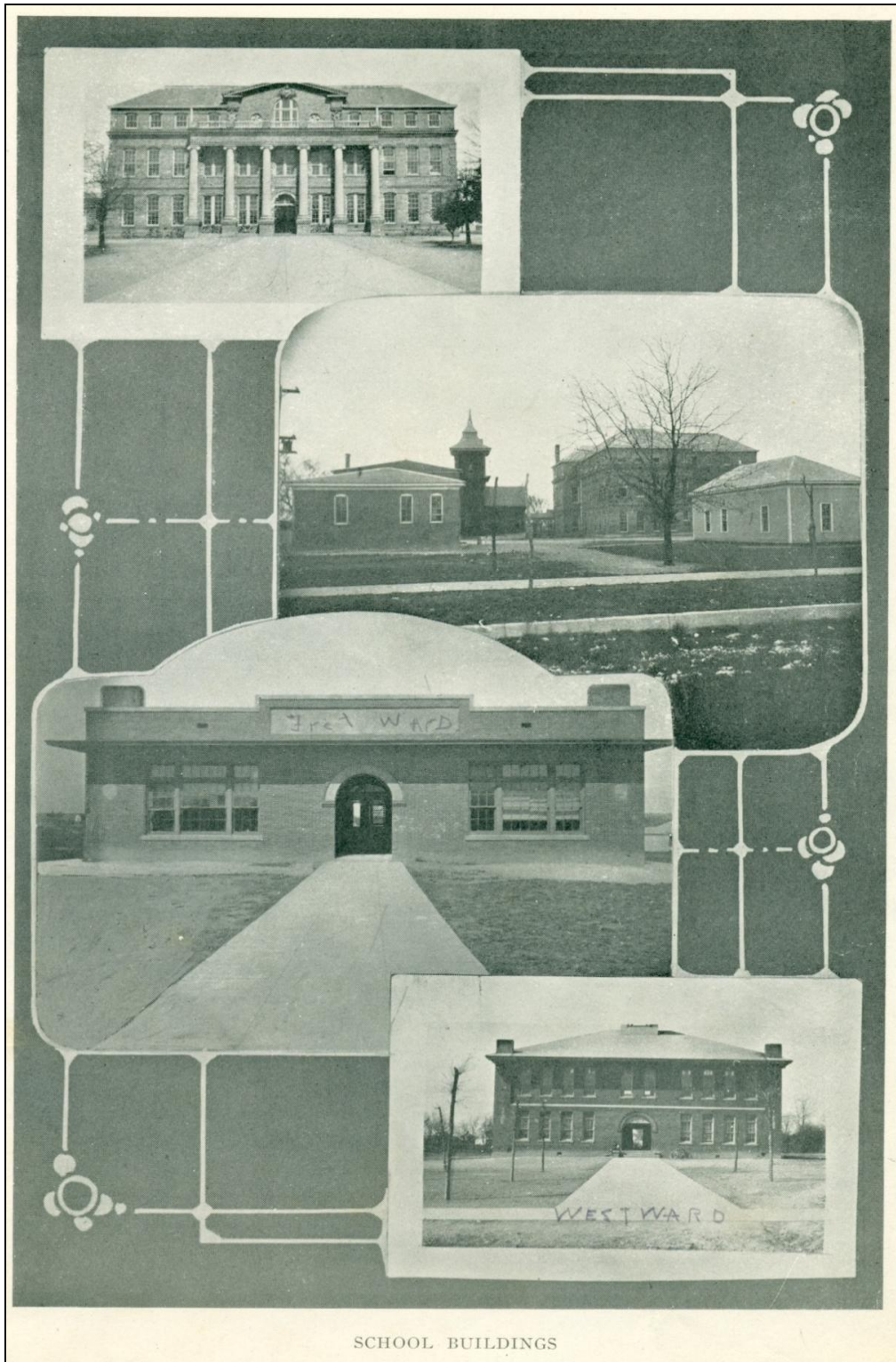


Figure 8 .The Ward System of schools, circa 1914; Top--Central Ward; Center-top--Central Ward, with Marvin College/Park School visible to the rear; Center-bottom-- South Ward; Bottom—West Ward, aka Ferris Ward.



Figure 9. Waxahachie High School, constructed 1917.



Figure 10. Oak Lawn School, constructed 1919.



G. B. WINN  
Superintendent

Every one connected with W. H. S. was overjoyed with the announcement by the School Board that Mr. G. B. Winn, City Superintendent of Public Instruction, who has been at the head of the Waxahachie Public school system since 1910, had been re-elected for the 1922-23 term. For Mr. Winn is popular both with students and faculty alike. He has always had the best interests of the local schools at heart. The present High School building and the new primary building on the Central Ward campus on Brown street were erected during Mr. Winn's administration.

Figure 11. From the 1922 issue of The Cotton Boll.

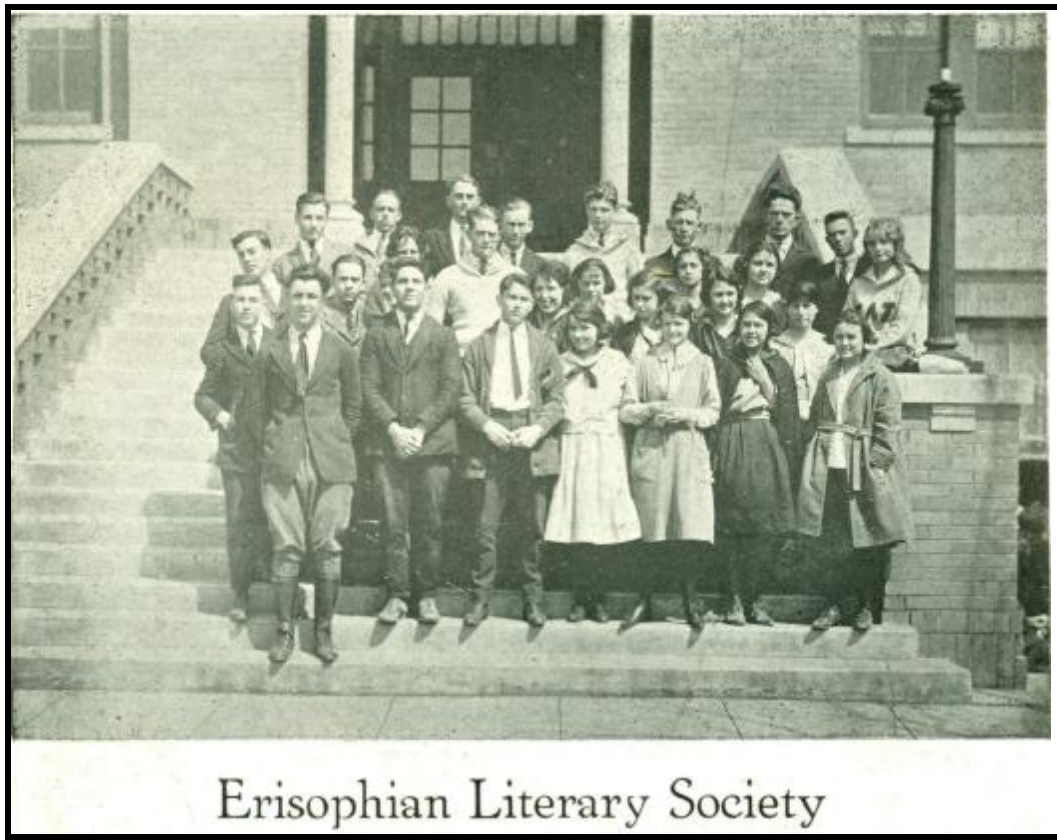


Figure 12. From the 1922 Cotton Boll.

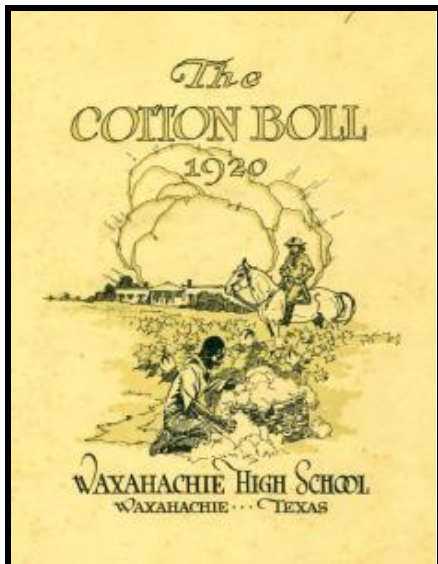


Figure 13. Thematic artwork of the 1920 Cotton Boll



Figure 14. Addition to Central Ward campus, renamed Marvin Elementary, 1939.



Figure 15. Typing classroom at Oak Lawn School in 1949; introduced as evidence in *Butler v. Wilemon*.



Figure 16. T.C. Wilemon, Superintendent, 1935-1970.

Photographs courtesy of the Ellis County Museum.



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