

(Exclusive to the CAMPUS HERALD)

BIOGRAPHY OF DR. JOHN ADAMS COTTON

Interviewed by Annie Belle Brame.....

Reverend John Adams Cotton (A.B., B.S., D.D.-1895) was born in Clay County, Kentucky. His father, Nelson Cotton, was a farmer. He was married in 1900 to Miss Maude Brooks, an accomplished teacher and a graduate of Oberlin College. They have one child, Miss Carol Blanche Cotton, now one of the outstanding women in the state.

In working out his education, Dr. Cotton attended Berea College, located in Berea, Kentucky. His parents moved there because the educational opportunities in Clay County were poor. He was eleven years of age when he entered the first grade at Berea. After completing three grades in one year, Dr. Cotton's family returned to their original home in Clay County. He remained there until he was nineteen years of age, being tutored by his cousin, two days a week, Fridays and Saturdays. His parents paid two dollars a day for this. At the age of nineteen, he went back to Berea College where he had three years of preparatory work. He completed two years of college work there also. He entered with thirty-three dollars and had to carry his trunk to his room on a wheelbarrow, because he wasn't able to pay the fee to have it carried for him. He then worked his way through those years without securing any aid from home. However, he did have five dollars at the end of the term. He went from Berea to Knoxville College from which he received his B. S. and A. B. degree. He won the latter in 1893. He taught school in Tennessee for two years. He returned to Knoxville and took the theological course offered there leading to the B. D. degree. In 1898 he studied at Pittsburgh, Pa. Later, the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by the National Training School in Durham in recognition of his work in North Carolina. He came into the work of the church when about twenty-seven years of age, and was ordained into the ministry in 1898. Coming out of college, he was called to Cleveland where he preached for four years. In fact, it may be said, that he created the Presbyterian work there. After his pastorate there, he was called to Henderson. He remained there for thirty-seven years, during which time, Henderson Institute prospered under his leadership. Beginning with a teaching staff of seven, he left with a staff of eighteen teachers. The plant has been greatly enlarged and a number of new buildings erected.

Dr. Cotton was called to the presidency of Knoxville College in 1940. He spent a successful year there, after which he retired to his beautiful home in Henderson, near the campus of Henderson Institute where he spent so many useful years and where he continues to be a

great inspiration.

THE HISTORY OF HENDERSON INSTITUTE

Henderson Institute was founded September 7, 1891; it is a school established and conducted to afford the colored people an opportunity of obtaining an education. It is part of the Missionary work of the United Presbyterian church. The United Presbyterian church gives each year about \$50,000.00 in money to carry on the work. For the last few years, the church has been cooperating with the city and county.

The Institute occupies a beautiful site outside the corporate limits.

The first principal of Henderson Institute was Mr. James M. Fulton, (the girls dormitory is named after him); he served in the Institute from 1891-1893.

In the year of 1891, when the school was founded, there were only five teachers and 353 pupils (all in the lower grades). The educational system was all under the United Presbyterian Board until 1933, since then it has been operated jointly by the Board and the County.

Mr. Fulton sent in a report to the Board November 9, 1891 concerning the night school. The report was: "Our night school is held four nights in the week, the enrollment is 90; average attendance 75%. There are 50 reciting charts and first readers. Each teacher, except W. S. Fulton, who teaches every night, is required to teach one night. We all deem this most interesting work. With the exception of half a dozen boys, ranging in age from 20 to 60, most of them are parents and laborers."

The principal succeeding Mr. Fulton was Mr. C. L. McCracken, 1893-1898, Mr. Albert M. Porter succeeded him from 1898-1899, then came Mr. D. A. W. Johnson, Mr. Cook, and in 1903 Dr. J. A. Cotton. During Dr. Cotton's time, there were 13 pupils enrolled in high school. Mr. O. T. Robinson was active principal under Dr. Cotton from 1933-1940, and in 1940 he became principal in charge. The number of pupils during their time is 421 and 17 teachers.

There are 15 girls in the dormitory and 9 boys.

I have said before that the school is outside the corporate limits. The administration building contains chapel, class rooms, and offices. The chapel has seating capacity of 358 and each room is well-lighted, well-ventilated and provided with modern equipment for school work, having water connections and steam heat.

The girls dormitory is an L-shaped, three story building 115 feet by 75 feet.