

# HISTORY OF HERTFORD COUNTY SCHOOLS — (Cont. from Section B)

By J. ROBERT BROWN

At the outset I wish to acknowledge with appreciation the foregoing and most excellent treatise on the history of public education in Hertford County by Mr. J. H. Moore, former Principal of the Ahoskie School.

By way of continuation it might be of interest to give a few figures of comparison over the last ten years as found in the statistical reports on file and then to take up the significant events of this period. The value of school property in the county in 1928 was \$379,500; in 1938 it was \$487,400. The consolidation of schools has reduced the number of school houses from 52 in 1928 to 33 in 1938 and a few more consolidations among the colored during the current year has reduced the number to 29. The schools for the whites numbered 18 in 1928 and only 6 in 1938. The consolidation plan is gradually taking place among the colored where conditions justify and among the white schools it is about completed.

The total enrollment in 1928 was 5653, while in 1938 it was 5407. The increase in high school enrollment from 536 in 1928 to 985 in 1938 is noteworthy and the list of graduates from high school is much larger in 1938. The average daily attendance in 1928 was only 4210 as

(Editor's Note: J. Robert Brown, superintendent of schools, takes up where Mr. Moore winds up and completes the history of the Hertford County School System.)



JOSEPH ROBERT BROWN, son of the late Jesse Thomas Brown and Mary Dillard Brown, was born at Menola, Hertford County. He attended the public schools of his own county, and completed his education at Guilford College, North Carolina, and Columbia University, New York. He was graduated with the A. B. degree. He was inducted into the U. S. Army during the World War in 1918, and was discharged at Camp Lee, Virginia, February 14, 1919. He served in the Chemical Warfare Service and was stationed at Philadelphia, Pa. He taught in high schools of his native county until 1927, when he was elected Superintendent of Schools, succeeding the late N. W. Britton. He has held that position since then, and during his 12-year tenure has directed the changing school system of the county. Mr. Brown is a Baptist, Democrat, and member of the American Legion, Schoolmaster's Club, and other organizations of educational and civic significance. His avocation is directing farming activities on the old Brown homestead at Menola, which he now owns.

compared with 4471 in 1938. This indicates a growing interest in schools. The personnel or regular teaching force was 156 in 1928 and only 146 in 1938. This decrease is no doubt due to the increased teaching load. We had no vocational teachers in 1928, where we now have six, not included in the above figures.

In 1928 we operated 23 trucks for whites, which transported 570 pupils daily a distance of 400 miles. In 1938 we operated 35 trucks and transported 1960 pupils 1235 miles at a cost below the state average. One more truck for the colored was added this year, making a total of 36 trucks in operation. Student drivers are paid \$9.50 a month and the trucks are kept in repair by County and State employed mechanics where in 1928 the upkeep was done by local contract at local garages, except in a few cases where private cars were operated for hire.

In 1928 we had 4200 volumes in the school libraries; in 1938 we had over 9000 volumes. Three white and two colored high schools now meet the state requirements for accredited library service. Prior to 1928 we had four high schools on the accredited list and no elementary school. Today we have five high schools and three elementary schools available for this list.

So much for the statistical side of school development; let us look at another side of the picture. Our teacher training or preparation has advanced to beyond an average of more than three college years per teacher. Courses in vocational education have been added in three white schools and two colored. Commercial education was added in Ahoskie in 1935-36 and it is now serving a good purpose. Public school music has been added; also an orchestra or band which is one of the best in this section. Cafeterias or lunch rooms have been placed in a number of schools. These are equipped with modern electric conveniences and serve hundreds of pupils daily. Athletics have taken on new life and the school teams, besides furnishing physical development, have won a number of trophies in inter-scholastic competition. The schools now place teams in the various subject-matter and debate contests of the state and have made strides in the journalistic fields and other extra curricular activities.

The school plants or buildings have been improved in many cases. In 1928 the new Ahoskie and Union schools were built, the former at a cost of about \$90,000 and the latter about \$9,000. The construction of these buildings was financed through bond issues and State Loans. In 1924 a brick building was erected at Harrellsville and one at Winton about 1920. The Murfreesboro and Como buildings were erected just prior to 1920. In 1935 the County through the aid of the Public Works Administration launched a \$40,000 building program which resulted in an auditorium-gymnasium with vocational rooms at Murfreesboro, a truck shop at Ahoskie, a gymnasium at Harrellsville and a county garage at Winton. During 1937 the county built a 10-room high school building for colored at Ahoskie to accommodate the pupils of that section of the county. Here also in 1931 was erected a \$12,000, twelve-room elementary brick building which gives the colored of this town a fine school plant under H. D. Cooper, Principal. The teachers and patrons through their own efforts have added materially to the equipment. To answer a need for vocational agriculture at Ahoskie white school, the County built a \$4,000 brick building in 1937 and placed T. B. Elliott as teacher. At Murfreesboro the present home economics rooms were remodeled, repaired in 1937 and two rooms of the old Harrellsville frame being were converted into a vocational classroom. In addition to the above mentioned major projects a number of smaller schools have been built or rooms added for the colored race, within the past 10-year period. There is now pending an application for P. W. A. and State Funds in the amount of \$40,000 for a building program at various schools.

By way of consolidation in the last ten years, maybe prior thereto in some instances, a number of smaller schools have been consolidated at a central or union school. Woodrow, Mapleton and others of Murfreesboro Township and part of Como to Murfreesboro; St. Johns, Oak Grove, Bramblers and Hickory Chapel, Earlys, Union, Winton high school and others to Ahoskie; the local schools of Harrellsville Township to Harrellsville; Holly Springs elementary to Winton; Menola and Lassiter to Woodland; Hotons and Rawls to Aulander. Among the colored, consolidation has been confined chiefly to Ahoskie and Waters Training School, where there are now operated five and eight buses respectively.

There should also be a paragraph in this article pertaining to State interest in local schools. The old system of county and district supported schools gave way to the use of the so-called State Equalizing Fund. This Fund as its name implies was to equalize the burden of education and gave to the county a certain amount annually to supplement local funds. But to further equalize the state school system the Legislature in 1933 passed the state-wide uniform eight months school term and began to finance direct from Raleigh. The ad valorem tax on property was discontinued and school districts were abolished or changed. Hertford County was given four school districts, as follows: No. 1 Murfreesboro-Como; No. 2 Ahoskie; No. 3 Winton; No. 4 Harrellsville. The county is expected to finance through local tax its Debt

Service, Capital Outlay and some other items, such as Maintenance of Plant, under Current Expense. With this state control, the school budget locally has been reduced so that only a 25c levy this year for school purposes was needed. Districts pay their own debt service obligations. The State allotted to the county \$130,000 last year to operate the schools, most of which was for instructional service.

In 1935 a textbook rental system was enacted by the Legislature and in 1937 a law giving free elementary text books was enacted, the high school books being still on either the optional rental or purchase basis. This progressive step answered the parental cry of no money for books and is proving satisfactory in practice. In addition to free and rental books, the grade pupils can enjoy the state rented supplementary readers at a small cost.

Aside from the change in the financial set up, the abolition of former charter and district lines, the adoption of the high school rental and free elementary text book system, the state has adopted many other measures to promote efficiency in the operation of the public school system. Teachers' salaries and some other items were reduced or slashed during the depression years of 1931-33, but subsequent acts have partially restored such to their original status. In passing, let us here acknowledge with appreciation what the state officials and the General Assemblies have done in the interest of better schools, financially and otherwise. Space prevents a more detailed discussion of such matters.

From an historical standpoint, it might be fitting to give here a yearly account of the highlights of the school activities through the ten-year period as recorded in the minutes of the Board of Education.

In 1927 the members of the County Board of Education were, G. C. Picot of Como, W. D. Boone of Winton, and W. A. Thomas of Co-field. J. Robert Brown, a native of the Menola community of Hertford County, assumed office as County Superintendent of schools. He succeeded the late N. W. Britton who had served faithfully and efficiently for the past twelve years. A resolution of appreciation of his service is found in a preceding paragraph of Mr. Moore's. A check-up of the financial situation showed that a number of schools were charged with overdrafts in the aggregate of over \$20,000. The Board adopted the funding system of retirement of these debts, which are now being paid under the title of debt service. During this year the Early's school house was destroyed by fire and by special election this district was consolidated with Ahoskie. A committee from the Ahoskie school, W. L. Curtis and J. L. Sawyer, asked for the approval of a State Loan of \$75,000 for a new Ahoskie school building.

In 1928 the Union school building was erected on its present site donated by the Parent-Teachers Association. The contract was let to R. F. Stroud at the cost of \$8600. The Board approved the payment of \$300.00 to the attorneys who had represented the Board in the case of the Ahoskie Trustees versus the County Board of Education in the matter of a loan obligation from the Special Building Fund, the judgment having been set aside and all parties having reached an amicable agreement. The present building was under construction with the aid of a \$66,000 State Loan.

In April, 1929, G. C. Picot was re-elected Chairman of the Board. Miss Mary Williams was supervisor of white schools, and Kate M. Hart supervisor of colored schools. Hickory Chapel district by popular election defeated the plan to enter the Ahoskie Charter District, and so did Brantley's Grove, but Liverman District by a vote of 31 to 0 agreed to be annexed. During this year the Board agreed to accept the responsibility for the control and supervision of the buses for the colored, provided the county would not be involved financially. The purchase of buses and operation was made possible through the aid from the Rosenwald Fund. It might be here acknowledged that this Fund contributed ably toward the erection and equipment of several school houses for the negroes of the County.

In June, 1931, W. A. Thomas was elected Chairman of the Board, Mr. Picot and Mr. Boone being the other members. A dental clinic was held in the schools, with County and State cooperating. In a resolution the Board approved the retention of the Winton and Como high schools. A Home Economics department was established in the Ahoskie school. The cost of a county-wide extended term of two months was presented but denied on account of the cost, which seemed prohibitive. Mr. F. B. Attmore, member of the State Equalizing Board, met with the Board to consider the consolidation of Winton and Eure high schools, which act was not found feasible. Geo. E. Myers was continued as county truck mechanic, Como school excepted. The Board emphasized the fact that pupils are expected to attend the local schools of their respective districts. The colored supervisor with Rosenwald aid purchased \$900 worth of library books.

In March 1933, after twelve years of efficient, faithful and successful service, Mr. G. C. Picot resigned as a board member and proper resolution regarding such was duly adopted and recorded. He was succeeded by R. R. Copland of Ahoskie; the other members being certified by the General Assembly were Mr. Boone and Mr. Thomas. Mt. Clair, colored, was consolidated with Waters Training School. Some unused school buildings were sold at auction, while others were assigned for Home Demonstration club use. Local funds were made available for operation of the extended terms of two months.

Vocational agriculture was placed in the Murfreesboro School in 1934 and H. B. Crumpler, Jr., was employed as teacher. A number of janitors were sent to State-Janitor schools operated during the summer. W. D. Boone resigned as a member of the Board to accept the appointment as Judge of the newly created County Recorder's Court. A resolution of appreciation of his fine service was adopted. Bus routes were agreed upon at a public meeting and G. E. Myers was continued as mechanic, assisted by Will Manley.

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NOAH W. BRITTON, who succeeded the late John C. Scarborough as Superintendent of Public Instruction for Hertford County and held that position until April 14, 1927, when he was succeeded by J. Robert Brown. During Mr. Britton's tenure of office, county schools made much progress and underwent many changes. He died in 1934.



THOMAS EVERETTE BROWNE, son of the late William Thomas and Ida May Browne, was born March 17, 1891, in Hertford County. He attended public school at Woodland and Winton. He was graduated at Wake Forest College with A. B. degree and received his Master's degree at Columbia University, New York. He married Miss Martha Broadus Farrar, January 13, 1906, and following her death, he was married to Maude Barnard Browne, in 1919. There are three living children by the first marriage.

Moving from Hertford County in 1913, where he had for two years served as District Agent in farm extension work and six years as Superintendent of Schools and County Farm Agent, he became Assistant State Agent in charge of club work in the Extension Service at North Carolina State College. With the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act by Congress in 1917, he assumed the duties of organizing the Department of Vocational Education in the State Department of Public Instruction and Department of Teacher Training in the Field of Vocational Education at State College. He has had charge of both these activities, one at the College and one in the Public School System ever since.

He is a Baptist and prominent in the church's lay activities, serving as superintendent of Sunday School and as member of the Board of Deacons.



## As Ahoskie Grows . . . .

## During Future Years

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