

# An Institution

## Deteriorating Walls, Crowded Classes, It's School As Usual At Turlington

By Sherry Matthews

Peeling paint, cracking plaster, loose flooring tiles, leaking ceilings, over-crowded rooms, inadequate plumbing; all these things could describe any run down building junked after years of use, but in this case the adjectives fit a Hoke County school building still standing and still in use.

Turlington School, one of seven in the county system, stands today with these problems and many more, yet it houses some 800 children Monday thru Friday from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m.

The 800 children who attend this school are all fifth and sixth graders.

"We are in a facility built for about 500 students, and yet we must crowd 821 students into it," Turlington Principal Emma Mims said.

"It isn't fair to the students to be cramped in such a fashion."

According to school Superintendent Raz Autry, Turlington School was built in 1934 and was formerly the Raeford High School.

"Turlington was the high school for the white race when the schools were segregated," Autry said.

Some of the facilities other than the building itself are still remaining from those early days, Mims said.

"Our bathroom facilities are very inadequate. We have the same bathrooms that were installed in the 1930's," Mims said.

"It is not unusual for us to make a call to the plumber at least once a day," Mims added.

Aging plumbing is not the only problem that plagues the children and faculty at Turlington school.

Classrooms are over crowded and steep steps leading to the upstairs rooms are dangerous, according to Mims.

"We are so cramped that we have had to place classrooms underneath the gym, and this is just not safe or fair," Mims said.

Of the five classrooms underneath the gym, three have between 30 and 33 students in attendance.

"The rooms are smaller than regular classrooms, yet hold as many if not more students," Mims said.

"These rooms are so crowded that children have to squeeze through the aisles and then it's almost impossible to avoid

touching the other students," Mims added.

"Those classrooms underneath the gym are hazardous in many ways," Mims said.

A major problem seems to be the distractions that go on above the children's heads during gym classes.

"Generally there are two gym classes going on at once, this means that at least 66 children are doing jumping jacks at the same time the children below are attempting to take a spelling test or hear their teacher explain a problem," Mims said.

"This sort of thing makes learning very difficult."

According to one student, the noise from upstairs sounds like a never ending thunderstorm raging out of control.

"Teachers have to shout to be heard over the noise, and that makes paying attention a harder task," Mims said.

"At that age (10-11) paying attention is hard enough without distractions from outside the classroom."

"This is a misfit school, and not a good place for children that age," Autry said.

Another reason for the concern over the school is the steep stairs and fire evacuation problems they might present.

"It concerns me greatly that children have to climb up and down those stairs several times each day," Autry said.

"The stairs are not safe for children. The ones used every day are wooden and relatively steep, and the stairs used as fire escapes are cement and extremely steep," Mims said.

There are, however, some good aspects about Turlington school.

"The building is not in real bad shape because we have spent a great deal of money trying to improve it, but it is still not a place for children," Autry said.

"We have a new roof which keeps the rain from coming into the building," Mims added.

"The best thing about the school, however, is its faculty. They have remained very positive and have not let the conditions keep them from attempting to give the students a good learning atmosphere."

According to Autry, something can be done about the existing conditions of Turlington.

Autry believes there is a way to eliminate the "critical problem" of Turlington school.

"In my opinion we have a solution to the problem in our reach," Autry said.

According to the superintendent these things could be done to eliminate the problem.

\* Build 13 classrooms and expand the lunchroom at Scurlock.

\* Build four classrooms and expand the lunchroom at West Hoke.

\* Build four classrooms and expand the lunchroom at South Hoke.

"If this is done, these three schools can take care of all the fifth and sixth graders in Hoke County, and then we can eliminate the J.W. Turlington School," Autry said.

"It is my hope that a tragedy does not have to happen before something is done about the Turlington situation," Autry added.

As for the other six schools in the Hoke County School System, problems are minimal.

"All of the building that has been done in the last 15 years has been built under my tenure as superintendent and was completed by 1976," Autry said.

According to Autry, Hoke High has two new vocational shops, a new library and a gymnasium.

The other schools are also in pretty good shape.

"Some need a coat of paint and others need the ceilings fixed, but none are in the shape that Turlington is in," Autry said.

Added space seems to be the main thing that the other six schools need.

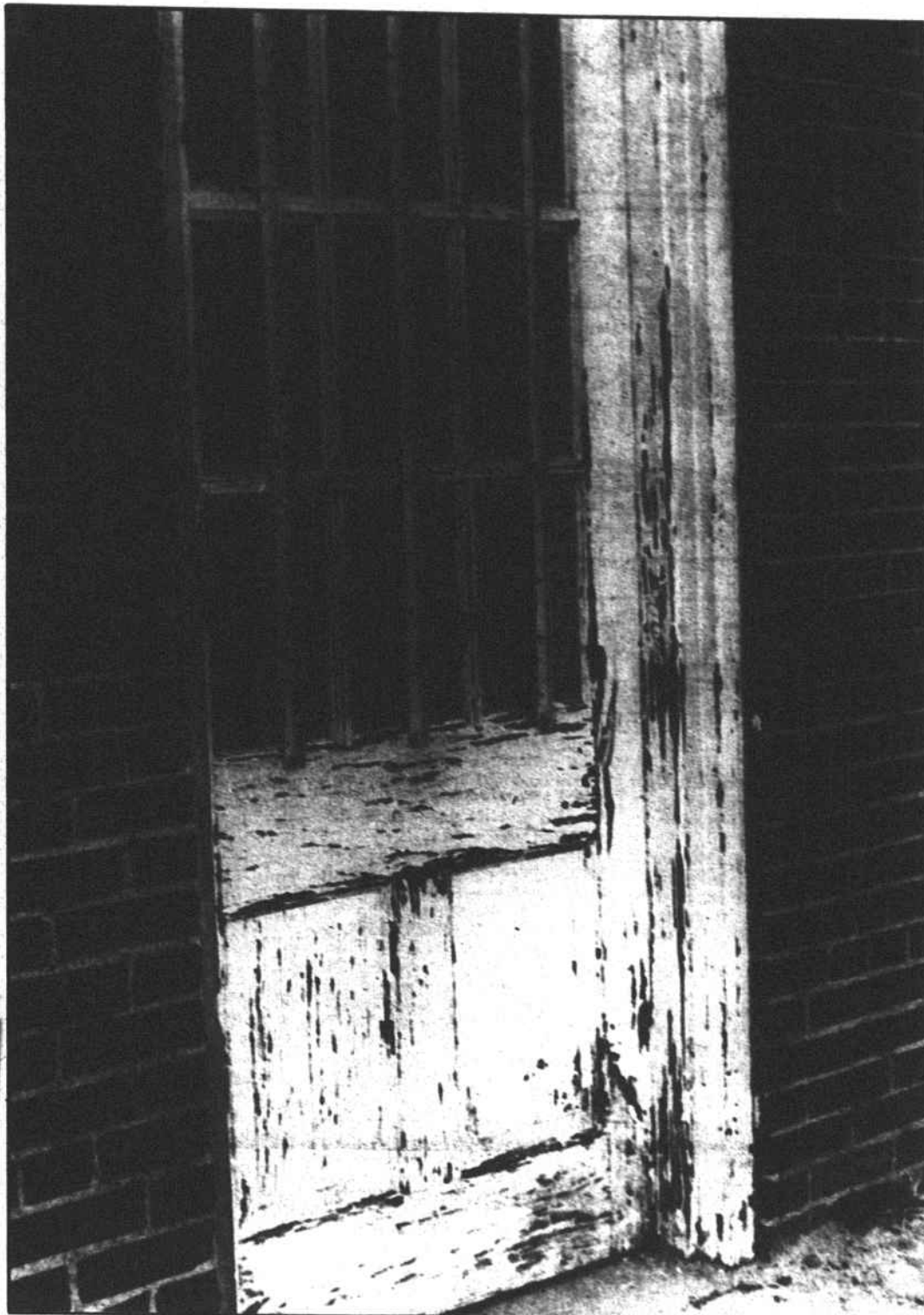
"Scurlock and West Hoke need an all-purpose building where children can meet and play when it rains," Autry said.

"Hoke High also needs to add a science, math, and music building to their facilities."

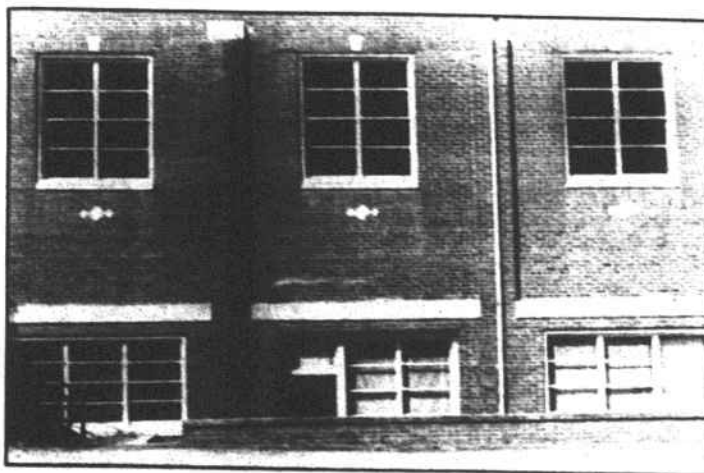
"If these things can be done, the schools would be in pretty good shape," Autry added.

As for the J.W. Turlington School, it still stands, but it remains over crowded, with peeling paint, floors shedding tile and with students who are trying to learn over the noise that pounds on the ceiling from the gym above.

"I only hope that something will be done and done soon," Emma Mims said.



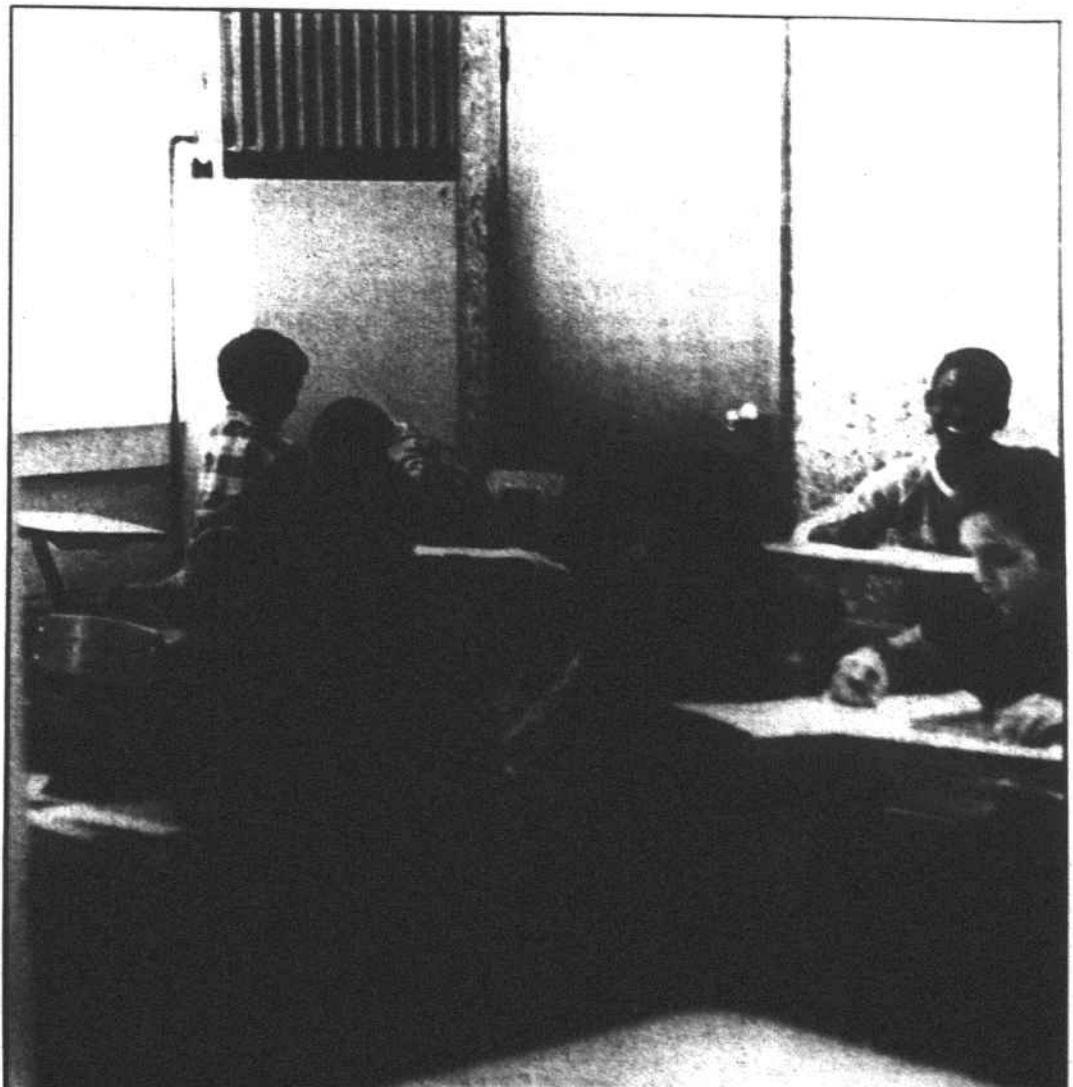
**SPLINTERED ENTRANCE:** Cracked paint and splintered wood are only some of the problems that exist at Turlington school.



The two story building (right) houses gym classes on the upper level and the classrooms in the smaller spaces of the lower level.



Loose tiles, swollen with water stains are some of the other bad conditions that exist at the school.



**CRAMPED SPACE:** Turlington students must study elbow to elbow in the classrooms underneath the gym.