

July 2019

Undated, December 24

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#### Recommended Citation

Jones, M. (n.d.). Cleveland County Early Days - Undated, December 24, The Daily Star. Fay Webb Gardner Collection, Gardner-Webb University Archives, John R. Dover Memorial Library, Boiling Springs, NC.

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# LIFE

Starts On Page One

1866, as a one-room log building with cracks big enough for a six-year-old child to crawl thru, no windows, flooring of random planks and slabs not nailed down, fireplace half across one end of the room, stick and mud chimney, no desks, but a shelf running along the sides and ends of the interior where slates were put for ciphering. The teacher had a split bottom chair; the pupils sat on rude slab benches.

## THE BLUE BACK SPELLER

The rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic were taught, though sometimes the only book the pupil had was Webster's Blue Back Speller; and spell the pupil must.

My mother went to one of these country schools and got her face smacked because she could not spell "incomprehensibility" and syllabize it thus: i-n in- c-o-m com- incom- p-r-e pre- incompre- h-e-n hen- incomprehen- si- si- incomprehen- sibil- incomprehensibil- i-i- incomprehensibili- t-ty ty, incomprehensibility.

As a rule, the teacher boarded among the scholars. That is, he spent a certain number of nights each term with each of the families who were patrons of the schools. He was usually an honored guest and was given the best his hosts could offer. In those days when a dollar looked as big as a wagon wheel this arrangement saved the teacher the cost of board and lodging.

## MUST "TREAT" SCHOLARS

At the close of the school the teacher must "stand treat." That is, he must give each pupil some little gift. Maybe a stick of red candy, maybe a red apple. But they expected him to make the gracious gesture. In fact, if he neglected to provide some sort of gift, the big boys took Mr. Teacher to a nearby spring or pond and ducked him until he did agree to "stand treat."

## MALE TEACHERS PREFERRED

In those early days the teachers were nearly always men. Since many of the pupils were young men just under 21, it was thought a woman could not control them. Furthermore, the man's idea was "let women do the things they are fitted for, and that does not include teaching anything so difficult as arithmetic."

The children of those days frequently walked six or seven miles each day to school and back. They studied their lessons by the light of a burning pine knot; they used pens made of quills from the wings of geese, probably shaped with a penknife; and ink from ripe crushed pokeberries.

## EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION

About the time the War came, our county citizens were becoming more interested in improving themselves and in educating their children. In 1860 an Education Association was organized in Upper Cleveland, in the neighborhood of St. Peter's school, and Kadesh church. Noah Hoyle was president, J. J. Hoyle was secretary, W. A. Warlick was vice president, and R. M. Sherrill was treasurer.

During the years, 1861-1865, nearly all the schools in the county were closed. Rev. L. L. Smith, however, continued teaching a term each year at Sharon, for which he received the munificent salary of \$12.00 per month.

## SCALAWAGS STOLE

## SCHOOL MONEY

For some years after the close of the war there was no State money for schools. During the so-called Reconstruction period scalawags and carpet-baggers from the

North, who over-ran the State and elected the majority of Representatives in our Legislature, spent and stole all the State's money, including the Literary Fund.

### **SMALL PRIVATE SCHOOLS**

Before the War and for many years thereafter, there were various small private schools. Mrs. Nursie Beam had a school for beginners, the Guigars had a school, Minnie Suttle taught a small school, Mrs. Marks (great-grandmother of Louis and Roland Hamrick) conducted a select school for young ladies in a small building located on what is now the back yard of the Gardner-Webb home on South Washington St.

"Elder Tillman Roland Gaines, who took charge of the Shelby Baptist church about 1862, organized the Roberts Female Seminary in 1863, which he turned over to E. A. Crawley in 1864."

### **A BRITISH SCHOOL**

The Union Jack (British flag) flew over the building that stood on the present location of the First National Bank during a part of the years of the Civil War. A man and his wife, British subjects from Nova Scotia, conducted a school there.

The above statements regarding the Gaines and the British school came to me from widely divergent sources. Could it be possible they were the same school?

One of the earliest brick buildings erected in Shelby was known as "the Old Ross Building" on the corner of East Graham and South Washington Sts. A number of boys' schools were conducted in this building. Traywick had a school, Baird had a school for boys from 14 to 18. Turner had a school. The pupils of these schools were mostly boys who had come here from the eastern part of the State, from South Carolina and from other sections where malaria was prevalent, because of our healthful climate, and because of the excellent mineral springs nearby.

### **BURIED AT NIGHT**

This school of Turner's was broken up by an epidemic of meningitis which claimed the lives of 10 boys within 24 hours. One of these boys apparently had no near relatives who could be reached, and town-folk had a suit of burial clothes made for him, bought a coffin, and buried him at night in Sunset cemetery. On his gravestone they told the story of his death.

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