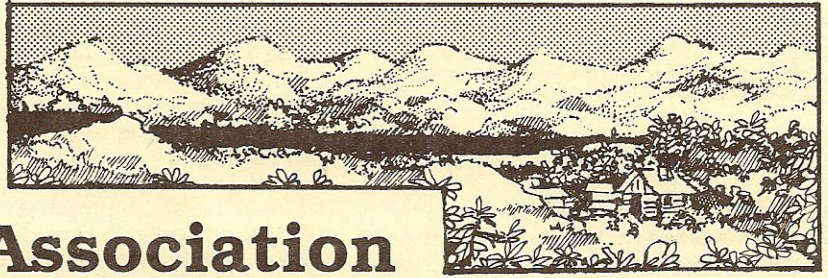


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Quarterly Newsletter Yancey History Association



VOLUME VIII, NUMBER 3

Preserving Our Appalachian Heritage

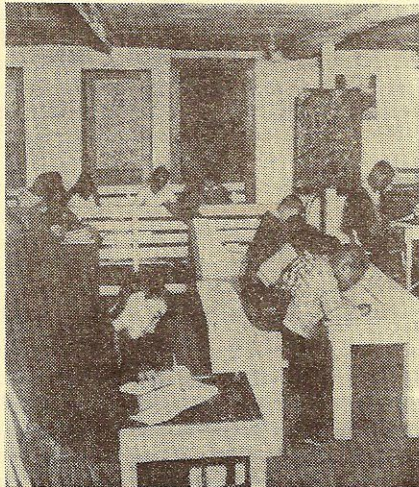
OCTOBER 1994

Yancey Schools Integrated By Federal Court Order

Selelia Griffith Recalls Historic Events That Put Yancey In The News In The 1950s And 60s

By Jody Higgins

The worn, brown suitcase filled with yellowed newspaper clippings from the late 1950s and early 1960s holds more than



While waiting for a ruling on school desegregation, black elementary students attended class in the basement of Griffith Chapel AME Zion Church. The schooling was funded by the interracial Burnsville Educational Project. (Charlotte Observer)

a collection of memories for Selelia Griffith. It is documentation of a long and eventually successful struggle to overcome an injustice placed on black children by the Yancey County Board of Education.

It was October 17, 1960 - 34 years ago this month - that black and white children first sat in classrooms together at Cane River and East Yancey High Schools. The enrollment of seven black children in the two schools made Yancey the first county in North Carolina to integrate its schools by directive of a federal court order.

When the first black students entered Yancey's white schools that year as the result of a suit filed by their parents, it had been six years since the U.S. Supreme Court declared in a 1954 decision that "separate but equal" was unconstitutional. For Selelia Griffith and the other parents of black students here, the struggle to provide an education for their children would make history and propell Yancey County, into state and national headlines.

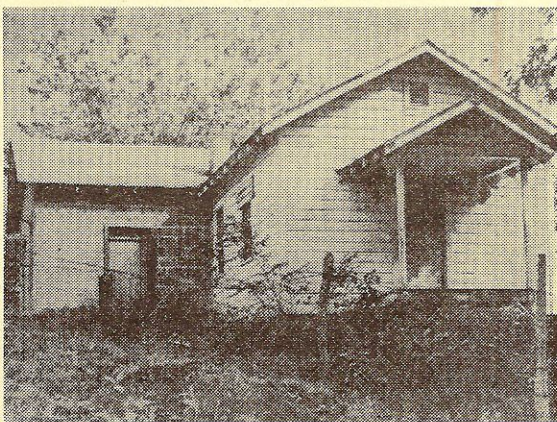
In 1959, Selelia and John Beacher Griffith, along with the parents of 27 black students had petitioned the Yancey County

Board of Education to let the students attend the all-white schools in the county. Black high school students had been bused to Asheville to attend black public schools there for a number of years, while children in grades one through eight attended a one-room, one-teacher school in the black community.

The school had been ordered closed by the State Department of Public Instruction after being condemned by a Yancey County grand jury as inadequate and unsafe. In addition, the Board of Education had hired a teacher for the school with only one year of college. The parents refused to send their children to the school.

The Yancey Board of Education, by special arrangement with the Buncombe Board of Education, reassigned the elementary students to Asheville's black public schools. The parents reluctantly sent their young children to Asheville's schools by bus, while they waited for the Board of Education to build a new school for the black pupils.

Selelia Griffith recalls that for one year
continued on next page



The one-room school for black children in the Lincoln Park community was closed by the N.C. Dept. of Public Instruction after the building was condemned by a Yancey County grand jury as inadequate and unsafe. The school was not accessible by vehicle and students had to carry coal up a steep hill from the all-white Burnsville Elementary School to heat the building. (Charlotte Observer)



Selelia Griffith (left) was instrumental in actions that brought about integration of Yancey's public schools. She is pictured with granddaughter Jeanette Henson, who now teaches at Cane River Middle School which was then one of the high schools Selelia helped integrate in 1960. (Photo by Jody Higgins)

Yancey Schools

continued from page 1

her children and the others rode buses the 80-mile round trip to Asheville to attend elementary and high school while the board of education and the county commissioners made plans to build a new school for black students — something that had been promised for years. The county had only recently built two new high schools for white students and said additional construction costs did not leave enough money for a black school. There were more excuses and more delays, and still no school.

After a year of sending their young children to Asheville, many parents refused to send them on the long trip the second year. Still without a school, the parents petitioned to have the students admitted to the white schools in the county. The board denied admission. The parents consulted with an attorney, and filed a federal suit to have the students admitted to the white schools. Meanwhile, an interracial group from Yancey and Buncombe Counties formed the Burnsville Educational Project. They solicited contributions to provide temporary schooling for the students while waiting for action on the suit. A retired black teacher was hired and classes were held in the basement of the Griffith Chapel Church. The teacher stayed in the home of Seleila and Beacher Griffith. High school age students attended Allen High School in Asheville, a private black Methodist school, and boarded with families. While the parents waited for action on the suit, an interracial group from Yancey County and Asheville formed the Burnsville Edu-

Yancey students pictured after enrolling at Allen High School in Asheville, a private Methodist school for black girls. The students boarded in private homes in Asheville while attending and waiting for a decision on the federal suit to let them enter Yancey's all-white schools. Pictured: Frances Griffith, Juanita Parker, Carolyn Young, Thomas Horton, Stephen Griffith, John Vance Jackson, and James Young. (photo by Ewart Ball, Asheville Citizen)

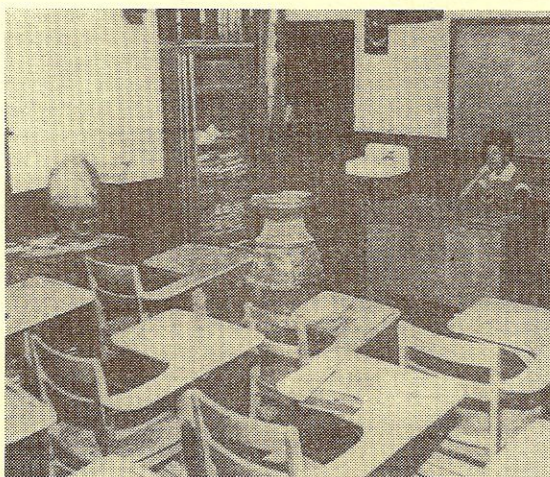


Photo of teacher Pearl Oliver in May of 1960 in the classroom that was set up in the basement of Griffith Chapel AME Zion Church. She taught the black students who declined transportation to Asheville to attend public black schools there where they had been assigned by the Yancey Board of Education. They also refused to attend the one-room black school in Yancey after it was condemned. The children waited for a ruling on the integration suit. The schooling at the church was funded by the Burnsville Educational project. (photo-Charlotte Observer)

cation Project. They solicited contributions, raising \$5,000 to provide temporary schooling for the students. A retired black teacher was hired and classes were held in the basement of the Griffith Chapel Church. The teacher stayed in the home of Seleila and Beacher Griffith.

Today, at age 84, Selelia recalls the days when she was fighting for an education for her children and others in the community.

"I talked to my husband and he agreed. We were tired of fighting with the board of education and the county, and we were determined that our little children were not going to ride the bus 80-miles every day for the rest of their school years to get an education - if there was anything we could do about it," she said.

She is quick to credit her husband, Beacher, who died last year at the age of 80. "We made the decision together. We were a team and he stayed by my side through it all," she said.

The Griffiths had three school-age children. She had four children by a previous marriage, but they were grown and away from home by this time.

An article in the *Charlotte Observer*, May 24, 1960, called her "a leader in the school protest movement in Burnsville." The article continued, referring to her refusal to send her children to a condemned school with an unqualified teacher, "Mrs. Griffith, in a way, was the one who broke the dam in the school situation here."

Griffith recalls, "We fought for years for a school and an education for our children. It didn't just start in 1958."

When the parents could not get results from the Board of Education, the church trustees of Griffith Chapel AME Zion Church went to Raleigh where they appealed to the N.C. Civil Rights Committee for help. A lawyer came and met with the local board of education and told them that the State Board of Education would accept a building as long as it was a decent building and that an education was made available to the children that was equal to that being provided to white students.

Eight grades of black students attended the frame, one-room school. It was heated with a stove fired by coal the students had to carry up a long, steep hill from the nearby all-white Burnsville Elementary School. "When it was real cold, the stove had to be fed all day long," Griffith said. "There was no bathroom or hot lunches."

She recalls that at one point a concrete room was added and installed with a toilet and stove for cooking, but no provision was made for heat. On the first cold night, the toilet and pipes froze and ruined the bathroom and small kitchen area. After that, the room was used to store coal for heating the classroom in the frame section. "We knew something had to be done. The board of education wasn't going to do anything."

continued

ESTATOEE

Volume VIII, Number 1

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Estatooe (es-to-toe-e) Also spelled Estootowie in early records. A Cherokee place name, shortened to Estatoe/Estatoah, from which the name Towe or Toe River is derived.

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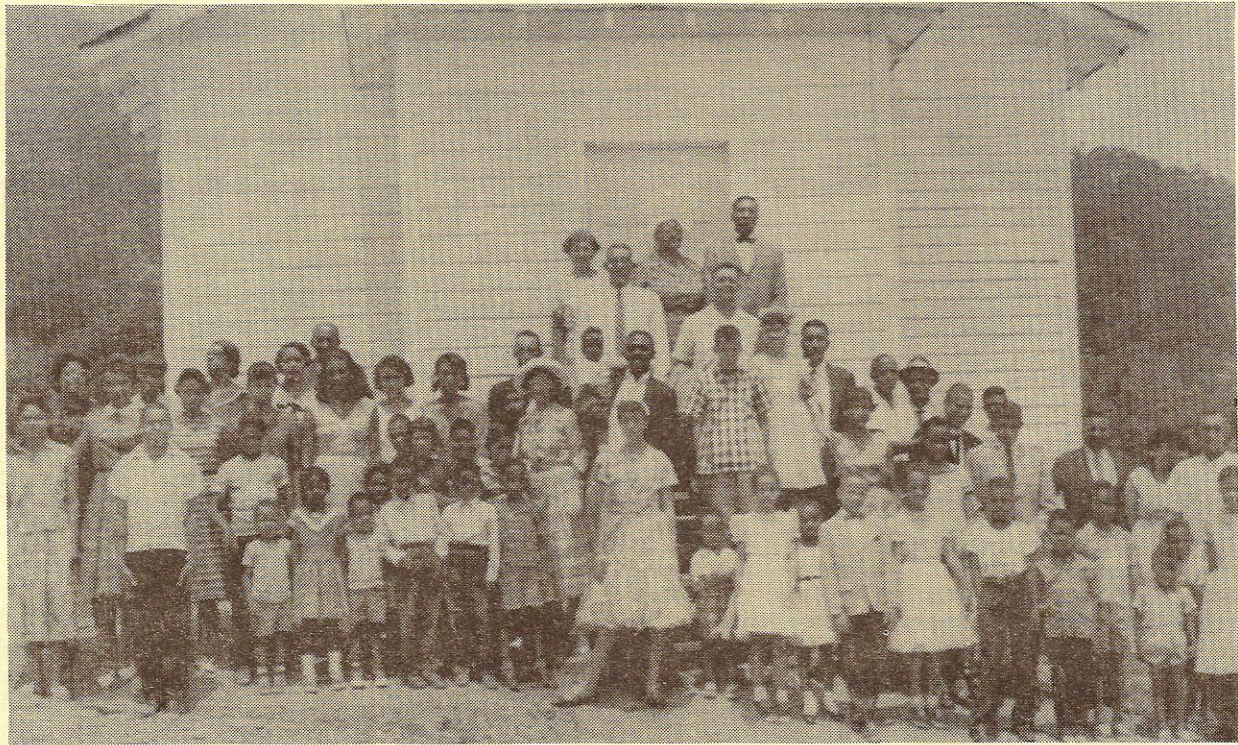
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Parents and students met with their attorney prior to filing a suit against the Yancey County Board of Education to admit the children to the school system. The students were bused to Asheville for one year, an 80-mile round trip. (photo courtesy of Selelia Griffith)

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was holding its state conference in Asheville. Griffith, along with other black church and community leaders attended. "We appealed to them for help. The black people here had nothing - not money or good jobs. We didn't have any resources as far as finances," she explained.

A poster for the conference read: "Meet the courageous leaders who are fighting for school desegregation in North Carolina."

A newspaper article about the meeting said, "Highlighted during the convention were the brave citizens of Burnsville, who have no school for their children. The old school which still stands...was not equipped and children would walk to the white school to get coal, then walk back.



John Beacher and Selelia Griffith

The school has been condemned three times, and again this year it was condemned, forcing the children to find other means of education."

The Education and Legal Fund of the NAACP retained three attorneys on behalf of the black students. Reuben Dailey of Asheville was the lead attorney in the suit against the Yancey County Board of Education on behalf of the black children. He was assisted by C.O. Pearson of Durham and Jack Greensburg of New York City.

In March of 1960, the State Board of Education voted to finance, in the form of a loan, a new two-classroom school for Yancey's black students. The new school, to house less than 30 students from grades one through twelve, would have a lunchroom, office, heating system and restrooms. The school would be built in the black community of Lincoln Park near the site of the old school.

The school was completed in August of 1960 in an effort to settle the suit that had been filed in November of 1959 by the parents of the 27 black elementary and high school students. The suit, filed in Federal Court, demanded that the board of education integrate the county's schools.

The school opened and two teachers were hired, but the students did not attend. They waited for a ruling on the desegregation suit from District Federal Court Judge Wilson Warlick.

Selelia Griffith recalls the reason she and other parents did not want to send their children to the new school.

"We older people had been deprived of

our education, but we wanted an education for our children," she said. "We realized that we did not want just a new school, because we knew that Yancey County nor any other county could provide an adequate separate education for 27 pupils, grades one through twelve, in two classrooms. The education of 27 pupils was just as important as that of 2,700 pupils. The black students had the same right to the same kind of education as the white students."

"I wrote a letter-to-the-editor asking the fair-minded white people of Yancey County if they would be willing to have their children go back to the days of the one-room, one-teacher schools. Would they dare send their babies at six-years-old all the way to Asheville on a bus — 80-miles round trip? As tax payers, would they pay tuition and board just so their children could go to high school?" she said.

"We were tax-paying, law-abiding citizens and we felt we were entitled to all the privileges given to other citizens, including allowing our children to go to regular county schools where they could have the opportunity to get the same education as white children," she explained.

On September 12, 1960 Judge Warlick made his ruling on the integration suit. The judgement ordered the defendants, the Yancey County Board of Education, to integrate the black high school students into the county's two white schools within 30 days. The ruling further ordered the

continued

Yancey Negroes Still Seek To Enter Schools

As school opened in Yancey County, the Yancey County Negroes, still dissatisfied with school conditions as they are in Yancey County, continued seeking admission to Yancey County White Schools. Tuesday, August 23, the Negroes entered a new motion in the hearing on the school problems under Federal Judge Wilson Warlick. This motion was one to amend the original motion and sought for immediate assignment to white schools in Yancey. There was still no word of decision from Judge Warlick on the original hearing. Both parties, the Yancey County Board and the Yancey Negroes, had expressed hope for an early decision. As yet, no decision has come and the Negro children are still assigned to the Oak Crest School.



Citizens from the black community in Yancey County attended the N.C. Conference of the NAACP held in Asheville, Oct. 1959 to appeal for help in the effort to integrate Yancey's all-white school system. Yancey residents are pictured sitting on the front rows at the conference which was held at Hill Street Baptist Church. (photo courtesy of Selelia Griffith)

board of education to reconsider its action assigning the elementary students to the newly constructed Oak Crest Elementary School. It ordered the board, within the same 30-day period, to assign those children on a racially non-discriminatory basis to either Oak Crest Elementary or Burnsville Elementary School.

In the October 20, 1960 issue of the *Yancey Record*, a front page story read: "Integrated classes began very quietly Monday at East Yancey and Cane River High Schools here. Seven Negro children were enrolled, three at East Yancey and four at Cane River. The routine at both schools was followed as on any other day. There was no congregation of onlookers anywhere during the day and everything went smoothly."

Oak Crest was eventually closed and all black students were integrated into Yancey's school system.

Newspapers throughout the state reported that Yancey's schools had been integrated without a fight. True, there was no violence and the court-ordered integration was peaceful.

But Selelia Griffith feels it was a fight. "We fought the board of education, we fought the county, and we fought in the courts to achieve our rights as citizens."

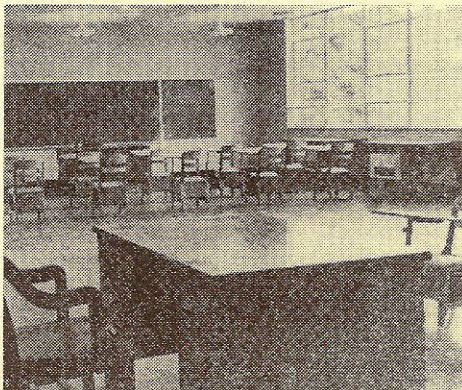
"It was a long struggle and there were times we feared violence. After we started a suit against the board of education, a cross was burned by the road at the end of my drive-way. Then, after the board of education built the new two-room school and we refused to send our children there, a big cross was burned on the hill by the new school," she said.

"I saw the flames from my living room window and told Beacher the school was on fire. Then, we saw that it was a cross burning. Beacher got his gun and we drove down there. We saw a light-colored car and

followed it to Mitchell Branch, then lost it. We went back home because we were afraid we might be hurt. For years, I kept a piece of the material that was burned on the cross. It was calico from a quilt that had been soaked in gasoline and wrapped around the wooden cross," she said.

For Selelia, the many years of fighting for equality in education for her children and future generations of black children in Yancey County is etched in her memory as if on stone. The wall in her bedroom is filled with photographs of grandchildren, nieces and nephews — and their children. Some have attended or are attending college, and others will be some day.

They are all special to her, but one in particular serves as a monument to Selelia's years of struggle. The smiling portrait of granddaughter Jeanette Henson is notable. She is a teacher at Cane River Middle School — the former high school Selelia's efforts helped integrate 34 years ago. ■



In March of 1960, the State Board of Education voted to finance a \$30,000 loan to the Yancey Board of Education to build a new school for black children (interior pictured here). However, the federal court ordered the county to integrate and the school was never used. (Asheville Citizen photo-1960)

Asheville Citizen

Yancey Negro Schooling Is Discussed Here

A group of Burnsville and Asheville citizens met Friday night at Allen High School here to discuss the plight of 28 Yancey County Negro students whose application for admission to all-white Yancey schools has been rejected.

Miss Elma R. Dennis and Mrs. Eugenia Jarrett were named co-chairmen of the group which plans another meeting sometime this week.

Some 15 persons, white and Negro, attended the meeting with the avowed purpose to discuss ways and means of providing an education for the Negro students.

The 28 students were assigned to Asheville city schools because of closing of the Negro Yancey School a year ago. However the students' parents have refused this year to send their children on the 80-mile round-trip bus ride to Asheville although the Yancey board of education has made a school bus available for the purpose. The Negro children attended school in Asheville last year.

Dismissal Of School Suit In Yancey Asked By 4 Men

Four Yancey County men—two members of the county board of education, a former board member and the superintendent of schools—have filed a motion to dismiss a suit in U.S. District Court here brought by 27 Negro students seeking admission to white public schools in the county.

In a petition which accompanied the motion, J. L. Robinson, Rex McIntosh, Phillip Westall and Hubert D. Justice stated that they are being sued as individuals and as such are not charged with any legal duties as to assignment or reassignment of any children eligible to attend county schools.

Robinson is chairman and McIntosh is second member of the board of education. Westall was the third board member until

he resigned on Nov. 12, the day following filing of the original suit with the clerk of court. Justice is superintendent of Yancey County schools.

(The suit, as filed on Nov. 11, lists defendants as Robinson, Westall, B. B. Penland and McIntosh, members of the board of education, and Justice, superintendent of schools. It was later amended to omit the name of Penland, who has never been a member of the board.)

The petition states: "Any action taken by these petitioners as individuals is not state or county action, and these petitioners, as individuals, are not charged with any legal duties as to the assignment or reassignment of any children eligible to attend the public schools of Yancey County, and as individuals possess no authority to exercise any of the powers the plaintiffs seek to enjoin," the complaint states.

It is further pointed out by the petitioners that "under the laws of the state, each county Board of Education as a body corporate is charged with the legal duty of prosecuting and defending suits for or against the corporation. . .

New Motion Seeks To Block Yancey School Segregation

A motion to block the Yancey County School Board from refusing admission this fall to 27 Negro students seeking assignment to that county's white classrooms was filed in United States District Court here Tuesday.

It countered a move by the Yancey board, which last Friday assigned the Negro pupils to the newly-constructed \$30,000 One-Crest School at Burnsville for the school term which begins there Monday. The motion claims the board's action last week has inflicted "irreparable injury to the plaintiffs, crowding children from 12 grades into a two-room school, totally segregated, for the year 1960-61."

Yancey Negro School Finished; Ruling On Integration Awaited

BURNSVILLE — Completion of a \$30,000 Negro school unit in Yancey County is expected this week, with a decision still pending on a suit to integrate the county's schools. Yancey County Schools Supt. H. D. Justice said Monday that

attend. Prior to the closing, the building had been condemned by a Yancey County grand jury. The students were then reassigned to Asheville elementary schools. (Negro high school students from Yancey had been attending Asheville's Stephens-Lee

State Antes \$30,000 For Negro School But Yancey Parents Will Pursue Suit

BURNSVILLE — Yancey Negroes, assured a new school house, nevertheless are going to continue their fight for integration, their attorney said today. Ruben J. Dailey, Asheville Negro attorney, said that the decision of the State Board of Edu-

his parents and next friend, et al., contend they are being deprived of their Constitutional rights. Before the court action was started, the board stated publicly that a minority among the county's Negroes is trying

without special tax provisions, and more flexible handling of vocational education programs. The curriculum commission also noted the importance of salaries to quality teaching. "Improvement in teacher training in North Carolina may only result in

CITIZEN-TIMES, ASHEVILLE
Sunday, January 3, 1960

Yancey County

I have been noticing in your very valuable paper the quantity over our schools in Yancey County. All that has been said has been very fitting and timely.

The thing that is most perplexing to me in this quandry is that people can't recognize a fact when they are losing. An old order is passing. It is not easy to die with it but to me the hardest task that the human family has is to face the realities of life and move into the higher order. The time has arrived and we may as well face it that nepotism, favoritism, and racial predominance regardless of race or station is antique, and the only thing we can cherish is its memories.

Yancey County, as has been well stated, is truly one of the poorest counties in North Carolina. With such fabulous debts and need of equipment for the schools we now have, and with space to waste, to me it would be the height of folly and a sinful waste to start to begin and equip another school building for 26 children, or even its double.

Jeter Hensley
Route 5, Burnsville.

N. C. STATE CONFERENCE *The National Association For The Advancement of Colored People*

16th ANNUAL CONVENTION
ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

OCTOBER 8-11, 1959

HILL STREET BAPTIST CHURCH
(Convention Headquarters)
135 HILL STREET

8:00 P.M. OPENING MASS MEETING

KEYNOTE ADDRESS . . . MRS. CONSTANCE B. MOTLEY, Attorney
Assistant Counselor NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.

BIG CIVIL RIGHTS MASS MEETING

3:30 P.M. HILL STREET BAPTIST CHURCH
ADDRESS — CLARENCE MITCHELL
DIRECTOR, WASHINGTON BUREAU NAACP

*Meet The Courageous Leaders Who Are Fighting For School
Desegregation In North Carolina*

Integration Begins Quietly In Yancey

By JOHN PARRIS
Citizen Staff Writer

BURNSVILLE — Integrated classes began without a hitch Monday in two previously all-white high schools of mountainous Yancey County.

Seven Negro children—four at Cane River High School and three at East Yancey High School—were enrolled quietly at 9 a.m. and got down to work immediately.

Before the day was out, John Van Jackson was running at end on the Cane River varsity football team and Louis S. Young was working out with the junior varsity.

Over at East Yancey, John Rom Horton expected to join the football team there Wednesday.

The enrollment of the seven Negro children marked the first time in North Carolina that school integration has been brought about by a direct federal court order.

At Cane River High School, Jackson enrolled in the 11th grade, Young, Rose D. Roland and Carolyn Young all registered for the ninth grade.

At East Yancey, Horton registered for the 10th grade and Marvin Griffith and Shirley Barnett entered the ninth grade.

Three others listed in the court order as applying for admission did not show up. School officials said two of them were in South Carolina schools and the third had been living in New York for several months.

At the time of registration, newsmen were barred from the grounds of the two schools but shortly after lunch this reporter was given an unhampered tour of the Cane River High School.

At no time during the day, either at the school opening or when they turned out at 3 p.m. were there observers present. There was no congregation of curious or of parents at either school.

Yancey Schools Supt. Hubert Justice said that the routine at both schools was followed out "so that nothing would be any different from any other school day."

"Our students are well-trained," Justice said. "They are responsible and do whatever they are told by their principals. I had faith in them. I knew there would be no trouble from them. And there wasn't.

"All of us—the county school board, teachers, students and citizens—have worked to keep things on an even keel so there wouldn't be any disturbance.

"We had confidence in our people and knew we could handle it without any outside help. Everything was done as usual. Nothing special. It was all according to school regulations.

"Our children are proud of their schools and they will do nothing to disgrace them."

Justice said that the newly-enrolled Negro students have been assigned to the regular school buses and will ride them to their respective schools unless they choose their own transportation, as do many of the white children.

This reporter and Justice visited the Cane River High School during the afternoon and were taken from classroom to classroom and out to the athletic field.

We stood on the heights above the athletic field with Principal Robert Peterson and watched Jackson work with the varsity.

"At 12:45 p. m.," Peterson explained, "Jackson went down to the dressing room and suited up in a varsity uniform. He suited up with the rest of the squad and there was no supervisor or coach present. There seldom is when the squad dresses. It was no different from any other day."

And then he pointed out Louis Young, who was working with the junior varsity and running plays up and down the field.

Back in the school we went down the corridor and looked through the windowed doors of the classroom where the other Negro children were on class or having a study period. In the study hall, Rose Roland was sitting on the front row. Carolyn Young was fourth back in a row of eight girls in the center row of her class.

Peterson explained that at lunch time the Negro students ate with the others.

"They were all friendly," he said. "Just as if they had been going to school here all the time. The atmosphere was wonderful. We have an excellent student body. They are fine boys and girls who have been well-trained by their parents."

Justice reported that everything had gone off fine at East Yancey.

"There was no untoward incident," he said. "It was just another day of school."

In Burnsville, which lies between the two schools, there was a placid atmosphere throughout the day. There was nothing to hint of what was taking place at the two high schools. The talk heard on the street, about the courthouse, and in the business places was of politics, not integration.

Officials obviously were proud of the way things went. Justice was particularly so. And he said as much.

"I never had the least doubt about our folks," he said. "I knew that they would act just as they have today. If we are left alone, everything will be all right. We have schools to operate and we are going to carry out our jobs."

The school board has declined to reassign 22 others to white schools, assigning them to the new, \$40,000 Oak Crest Elementary School for Negroes, where they began classes Monday. It has not been announced whether any of the 22 will appeal the decision.

The Negroes began their integration efforts in June, 1959 and filed suit in federal court last November. Judge Wilson Warlick ruled in their favor in September. The Negroes had refused to have their children ride 80 miles daily by bus to and from Asheville schools. Even after the county built a new Negro elementary school they kept their children in private classes here, at Asheville and in South Carolina.

THE YANCEY RECORD

THURS DAY, AUGUST 18, 1960

Open Letter

Around December 15, 1959 the Yancey County Board of Education, composed of the chairman, J. L. Robinson and members, C. Rex McIntosh and Ralph Edwards met in the Federal Building in Asheville with J. Ruben Dailey, attorney for the Negro people of Burnsville. This meeting was held in the presence of the Honorable Judge Wilson Warlick.

Present at this meeting were H. D. Justice, Superintendent of Yancey County Schools, C. P. Randolph, Attorney for the Board of Education, Tom Rhodes, Clerk of the United States Western District Court of North Carolina, and V. E. Bartlett, Deputy Clerk of the United States Western District Court of North Carolina.

At this hearing, as a result of the questioning of Judge Warlick, Attorney Dailey signified that all he was seeking was a school building for the Negro people of Yancey County. Judge Warlick recommended that the Yancey County Board of Education build the building.

The Yancey County Board of Education, as a result of this meeting, took the necessary steps to construct the building. The Board acted in good faith, believing that this building would be accepted by the Negro people of Yancey County.

Today the building stands almost completed and ready for use. The Board is ready to turn the building over to the Negro parents, and appoint for them a local school committee that would enable them to hire their teachers, janitor and bus driver.

The case is still pending before Judge Warlick on which he must rule. This ruling could come quickly or it could be delayed. It seems that to accept the above proposition would be for the best interest of all concerned at the present time.

YANCEY COUNTY BOARD
OF EDUCATION

Asheville Citizen
October 18, 1960

Goal Of Drive To Help Yancey Negroes Reached

The goal of \$5,000, to see Yancey County Negro children through the 1959-60 school year has been reached, the Burnsville Education Project announced Monday.

The project was formed last fall by private citizens of both races to try to finance private schooling for the children while a court action brought on behalf of 27 of the students remains unresolved. The suit, filed in U. S. District Court here last year, seeks admission of the 27 to white schools in Yancey, which now has no school for Negroes.

A spokesman for the education project said the additional donations will finance the students' expenses for the remainder of the present school year.

Approximately 25 Negro elementary school students are attending private classes under a private teacher in a Burnsville church. Seven high school students are attending Allen High School, a Methodist Church School for Negro girls in Asheville, and are living in private homes.

An education project spokesman also said a special committee has been appointed to set up a summer program in basic education. This will permit the students to make up the five weeks of school they missed last September, when Negro parents refused to permit their children to commute from their homes in Yancey to the Asheville Negro public schools to which they had been assigned by the Yancey board of education.

The program also will allow Yancey Negro junior high school students to fill in gaps in their backgrounds of previous schooling. It also is to provide community recreation activities.

In other action, the Burnsville project group is attempting to obtain an additional teacher for the Burnsville elementary school program for the remainder of the present school year. A finance committee is now preparing to try to raise the necessary funds for the additional teacher and the summer program.

Also announced was the formation of a Parent-Teacher Association

by Negro parents participating in the Burnsville elementary school program. This is the first PTA Yancey Negroes have ever had. A finance committee is preparing to try to raise funds for the additional teacher and the summer program.

More than 50 contributions to-

ward the \$5,000 goal have been received. Since Christmas, donations have come from churches, social clubs and fraternal and other organizations, in Asheville, Raleigh, Charlotte, Forest City, Winston-Salem, Yellow Springs, Ohio; and New York City.

In a recent development of the

Yancey case, the State Board of Education, meeting on March 14, authorized a \$30,000 loan to the Yancey Board of Education to finance a three-room school (two of the rooms classrooms) for Negro pupils in Yancey. It would be located in Burnsville and would serve grades 1-12.

Asheville Citizen

Give Negro Chance To Better Standards

A recent editorial in your paper suggested that Yancey County should begin right away to build a school for the Negro children of this county. I would like to express my opinion on this issue as I am a life-long citizen of Yancey County and am much concerned about this situation.

First, to build and equip a school for only twenty children seems ridiculous. Aren't we trying to consolidate our schools and get away from the one-roomed, poorly-equipped, low-standard schools? I realize the great need for consolidation because I went to a three-roomed school for seven years myself. Schools of this type just do not have high enough standards and cannot afford teachers

with qualified certificates, and therefore do not provide the child with a good enough foundation on which to build for high school and college.

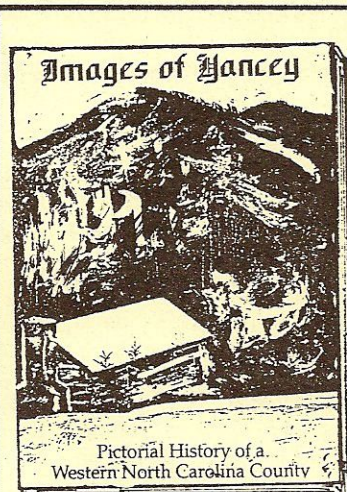
Second, if Yancey County should build a small grade school there would still be the problem of sending seven high school students to school in Asheville. I believe all children should be under parental care until they are through high school at least.

When there is mention of integration there are those who complain about the low-standards of the Negro and who give him various other false accusations. Should we not try to eliminate these complaints and give the Negro a chance to improve his standards. We have a wonderful group of Negroes in Yancey County, much above

the average elsewhere in this country.

I wish everyone had the opportunity which I had of attending an interracial school. I am a graduate of Warren Wilson College in Swannanoa, N. C. While there I met and associated with students from at least twenty-one countries and as many as five Negroes from our own South. I never met nicer boys and girls anywhere than at Warren Wilson College and two of the Negro students I will always remember as very dear friends. I hope someday we can all realize the truth of the Bible verse, "For God hath made of one blood all nations of men." Acts 17:26.

Barbara G. Geouge
Rt. 5
Burnsville.



Images of Yancey

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Purchase of *Images of Yancey* will automatically enroll you as a member of the Yancey History Association, allowing you to be a part of preserving the past for the future

Integration Topic Of Oct. 15 Meeting

The next meeting of Yancey History Association will be held on Saturday, October 15 at 7 pm in the Yancey Public Library Annex. This will be the final meeting of the YHA for 1994.

The program will feature a discussion with Selelia (Mrs. John Beacher) Griffith of Burnsville. Mrs. Griffith, who is 84 years old, will participate in a discussion of the history of the integration of Yancey County's public schools, which took place after several court struggles in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Mrs. Griffith was instrumental in bringing about this historic change that made Yancey's schools the first in North Carolina to be integrated by directive of a federal court order. This will be an interesting program and Mrs. Griffith will offer some unique insight into this important topic. Newspaper clippings, documents and photographs will be displayed for the meeting.

WPA To Be Topic Of Future Meeting

The first meeting of the Yancey History Association for the year 1995 is tentatively scheduled for Friday, April 14 at 7:30 pm.

The program topic for this meeting will be the construction of the five public schools in Yancey County by the Works Project Administration. These schools are located at Bald Creek, Bee Log, Burnsville, Clearmont, and Micaville. They were constructed in the 1930s as work projects during The Depression.

Anyone with information, photographs, documents, etc. about this topic should write to Lloyd Bailey, 4122 Deepwood Circle, Durham, NC 27707 or call him at 919-489-8731. Who worked at the various sites? Where did the masons get the stone? What sort of equipment was used? What were the wages?

Minutes Of Previous YHA Meeting

The quarterly meeting of the Yancey History Association was held on Friday, August 19 at Bald Creek Methodist Church with YHA members and guests attending. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm by President Theresa Coletta. Minutes were read and approved from the June 17 quarterly meeting.

Program Chairman Lloyd Bailey introduced Tillie Brooks, who spoke on her recently published "The Backside of Yesterday." Her presentation was followed with a question and answer session and book signing. Refreshments were served.

A brief business meeting followed the program, with treasurer Milidene Laws presenting a financial report to the member showing a fund balance of \$30,473.50 for the Association. Following a brief discussion of the financial report, motion for approval was made by Dr. Bailey and seconded by John Doyle and approved unanimously. James Byrd, sales coordinator with Milidene for "Images of Yancey" (2nd edition), reported to the members that the book was selling well and that copies remained available for purchase at Milidene's shop, Baker's Everything A to Z. James reported that periodic sale notices of the book would run in the newspaper to remind the public that the book is still available for purchase. Both James and Milidene were commended for their work in promoting the sale of the book.

Dr. Bailey reported on the impending publication "Heritage of the Toe River Valley," of which he is the editor. He highlighted some of the interesting articles featured in the book.

The membership was given an update by John Doyle on the Joint Steering Committee's work with the Museum/Visitor Center Project. Discussion followed on the Janirve Foundation grant of \$25,000 awarded to the YHA for this project. The president reported on the recent visit of John Horton, Restoration Specialist with Archives and History, to the museum house and of the anticipated stabilization work to begin soon under the supervision of Mack Ray. John Doyle's report was accepted with appreciation expressed for the excellent work he and John Young are doing as members of the Joint Steering Committee. The president tabled until a later date the appointment of a Museum Acquisitions Committee for the museum house.

Program Chairman Bailey stated that the final meeting of the YHA on Oct. 15, 1994 will feature Selelia Griffith who will discuss the intergration of public schools in Yancey County.

The meeting was adjourned with thanks expressed to Mrs. Brooks and to Dr. Bailey for the excellent programs he has made available to the YHA.

Family Genealogy & History Inquiries

If you are looking for information about your family genealogy or have specific inquiries about the history of Yancey County, readers of this newsletter may be able to help.

Send queries to: Yancey History Newsletter, PO Box 1088, Burnsville, NC 28714

Let's Make History In Yancey County

Enclosed is \$5 for a one-year membership to Yancey History Association (Members will receive Estatoee, the quarterly newsletter which contains history & genealogy articles, and information about meetings, publications and projects)

I would like to contribute to making Yancey history come alive with a donation to the museum project. (Includes membership)

\$1000 \$500 \$200 \$100 \$50 \$25 Other _____

I will consider museum project in my will to bequeath real estate, antiques, or money to help Yancey History Association preserve our past for the future.

Name _____ Address _____

Town, State, Zip _____

Mail To: Yancey History Association, PO Box 1088, Burnsville, NC 28714

All Gifts to Yancey History Association are tax deductible. Thank you for your support.

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