

## **THE AUTRYVILLE SCHOOLS**

Captain James Lindsey Autry, founding father of Autryville, set aside Lot Number 6 on the map of the Community of Autry's, September 13, 1889, for a public-school building. The lot was located approximately where the Autryville Cemetery is located today. The school was struck by lightning and burned in the early 1900's. A larger wooden structure replaced it. The current Autryville School was built and opened in 1921 as a part of the Sampson County School System.

However, they were not the first schools in Autryville. Captain Autry's office was located on the corner lot number 88 of the 1889 map (approximately where the old Autryville Hardware Store building is located today). The Clement Model Academy was located on the second floor of Autry's office. The Clement Model Academy/Clement High School was one of three opportunities in Sampson County for a higher education. The other two were Salem Academy (Salemberg) and Goshen High School.

Before her death, Mrs. Margaret Vinson Jaynes, wrote a history of the Autryville Schools. The following is quotes of her story:

“The Reverend Frank Underwood was the pastor of the first Baptist Church and the first Principal of Autryville School, he taught all grades.

Some of the teachers who taught in the school following Rev. Underwood were Mr. John Oates and his brother Dave, Mr. Isham Royal, who became the first Superintendent of Sampson County Schools. Later the school became a state public school with Mr. F. I. McKenzie as the first teacher of the public school. At the close of the 1910-1911 school year Mrs. Louise Bullard, a teacher, held the first County Commencement (graduation ceremony) ever held in North Carolina. Seven students received certificates that entitled them to enter any high school of their choice. At this commencement State Elementary School Supervisor L. C. Brogden spoke and was responsible for the district voting a special local school tax in 1915.

After the new two room wood building was completed in 1914 Cat Head School consolidated with Autryville School. The school attendance increased until two more rooms were added and now four teachers were employed. In 1920 Sampson County built a new brick building with NO modern conveniences.

It seems there was a struggle to keep the school at Autryville. In 1955 the school building was condemned by members of the Grand Jury. In 1956 a group of patrons led by Mayor I. L. Vinson, who served as a school committee and worked diligently for the school, went before the Board of Education asking for some consideration and justice as the wheel of education turned that their children be given an equal chance with others. Superintendent J. T. Denning and the members of the Board of Education were not interested in the Autryville School.

In 1957 improvements were made to the building such as adding restrooms and some much-needed painting. The local school leaders, led by I.L. Vinson continued to meet with the Board of Education and County Commissioners and were promised a new building with all the modern conveniences including a cafeteria. These promises were never fulfilled and in the spring of 1967 the school closed.”

Those of us growing up in Autryville in the 1940’s and 1950’s will remember many of the teachers and principals: Mrs. Leola P. Babson, Mrs. Molly Bryant, Mrs. Helen Dowdy, Mrs. Ethel Park Broome, Principal/teacher, Reverend Dennis Wright, Reverend Roger White, Mrs. Ethel Pierce, Principal, Mr. Ben Jaynes, Mr. Freeman, Mrs. Mylar Jackson, Principal around 1952, Mrs. Warren, teacher about 1957. Just a partial list of the names I located.

The local PTA made up of citizens and parents, spent many long hours maintaining the school, establishing a library, donating books, raising funds, painting, restoring floors and taking care of the general maintenance, all items NOT provided by the Sampson County Board of Education.

A Boy Scout Club was established with Mr. George Chase and Mr. Robert Cashwell as scout masters. A school 4H Club was established with Mrs. Donna Cashwell as leader who continued to serve for over 50 years. Mrs. Heddie Hall of Roseboro taught piano weekly and some students were transported to Roseboro-Salemburg High School to participate in the marching band. No one who attended the school will ever forget the Fall Carnivals, talent shows and ballgames at recess. We all have wonderful memories of the school, classmates and teachers.

After the school closed in 1967 it was sold and changed hands a couple of times until Robert and Donna Cashwell purchased the structure. It remains in the family today. I always laugh and say it is probably one of very few schools in Sampson County today that does NOT have a leaking roof.

The following prayer hung in Mrs. Leola P. Babson’s classroom and was repeated daily along with the Pledge to the Flag of the United States of America:

Classroom Prayer

**OUR PRAYER**

Father, as I begin this day

I take time to get still and pray

Help me to choose the way that is good

Help me to act as Your child should

**This document has been graciously provided by Mrs. Kathleen Squibb.**