

Professor Fredrick D. Perkins

In January 1955, the Richland Parish School Board appointed Professor Frederic D. Perkins as the new principal of Alto High School. As a minister, Professor Perkins was also known as Rev. Perkins by most students and staff at Alto High. He had previously served as a mathematics instructor at Rhymes High School and as a professor at Natchez College in Natchez, Mississippi. Alto High continued to grow and prosper under his administration and became a leading academic institution in the area.

Professor Perkins was educated at Leland College (Baker, LA); Bishop College (Dallas, TX), NLU (Monroe, LA) and Lasalle Extension University (Chicago, IL). He also received several degrees in Christian education from both Pepperdine University (Los Angeles, CA) and Natchez College (Natchez, MS). He was affiliated with a number of educational and religious organizations at both local and state levels. Professor Perkins authored a book, "The Messianic Hope in Isaiah", pastored the Marion Baptist Church (Marion, LA) and the St. Timothy Baptist Church (Bastrop, LA).

He was married to Emily Harris Perkins, an educator in the Richland Parish School System for thirty-eight years. They are the parents of two children, Cynthia Perkins Thornton and Renee Perkins. Principal Perkins transitioned from this life in March 2002 after a life devoted to God, family and the education of many students.

Members of the Alto High teaching staff who served under Professor Perkins include Isam Berry, Gladys Spears, Elvert Chisley, Lillie Chisley, Ruby Washington, Rotena Hicks, Velma Wagner, Ester Holliday, Inetta Smith, Tina Larkin, Ruby Hudson, Mary Miller, Zenovia Perkins, Gertrude Wagner, Juanita Bell, Earline Lyons, Mildred Griffin, Piccola Perkins, Easter Perkins, John L. Russell and Governor Richardson. Integration of the Richland Parish School System began in the fall of 1968. The first black teacher from Alto High to transfer to Mangham High School was Mrs. Tina Larkin who taught at Alto High School for twenty years before relocating to Mangham High School as a fourth-grade teacher.

In compliance with the Federal Desegregation Court Order, boundaries were drawn which determined where students would attend school since many of the small school were closed. Black students who had previously attended Mangham Elementary, Pardue, Egypt, and Alto High School came to Alto High School during the 1969-70 school year. Rhymes Elementary and High Schools closed, and most of these students went to Rayville. Alto remained an all-black school until 1970 when the High School officially closed its doors. During the 1970-71 session, three schools in the district were established: Mangham Elementary (kindergarten through sixth grades), Mangham Middle School in Alto (seventh and eighth grade) and Mangham High (ninth through twelfth grades). Professor Perkins remained principal of the Mangham Middle

School 7th and 8th grades at Alto until it closed and students were relocated to the former elementary school in Mangham.

Today, most of the high school buildings are destroyed. Some lay in ruins, some were partially saved and others were recognized as historic sites. However the bricks, wood and mortar were not the essence of our high school experience during our years in attendance. Instead, it was formed from the prayers, blood, sweat and tears of our ancestors and the principals and teachers who genuinely cared. Their dreams of a better life for their children, grandchildren, students and future generations are now a part of our DNA and leads us in this effort to create this living legacy of Alto High School.

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