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THE EDUCATIONAL HISTORY OF McMINN COUNTY, TENNESSEE: THE DEPRESSION YEARS, 1930-1940

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Science

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Sally DeWitt Ealy

December 1985

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It was my pleasure to be involved in the East Tennessee Historical Society's (ETHS) pioneer community history project entitled "Hard Times Remembered." The study was patterned after a group history project begun twenty years ago in Great Britain by Professor Alan Rogers of the New University of Ulster. The study was funded by a $10,000 grant from the Tennessee Committee for the Humanities and was administered locally by the McMinn County and Bradley County Historical Societies. Local amateur historians did the actual research and writing which resulted in the publication in 1983 of two books, one of which was entitled Hard Times Remembered, A Study of the Depression in McMinn County. I thoroughly enjoyed researching and writing the chapter entitled, "The Depression Goes to School."

Because of the success of the two-county project, the ETHS received a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to continue the community history program through 1985 and to expand it into ten East Tennessee counties, including McMinn County. "Hard Times Remembered" was grounded in the conviction that people learn best when they are actually "doing history." When asked to participate in the history project, as a teacher I chose to take a

retrospective examination of the school system of McMinn County. With additional research and writing, I have expanded that study into my master's thesis.

I am deeply indebted to several individuals who have guided me in this thesis. I would like to thank Dr. Charles Bryan, Jr., Executive Director of the ETHS, and Dr. Mark V. Wetherington, Projects Director of the ETHS, for all their help in developing the pioneer project. I would like to thank Bill Akins, President of the McMinn County Historical Society and local project director, for all of his help and guidance; without him there would have been no local project. I am especially indebted to the local contributors whose rememberances brought life into the study. I also would like to thank Dr. Clinton Allison. It was my good fortune to enroll in his History of American Education class when I needed help and guidance in expanding this study. I am indebted to him for his suggestions and insights. To the other members of my committee, Dr. Kermit Blank and Dr. Carl Murphy, I say thanks.

ABSTRACT

The Great Depression was a traumatic experience for the American people. As a result of the economic collapse in 1929, all institutions were strained. The Depression severely tested the schools. The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of the Great Depression and the New Deal on the schools in McMinn County, Tennessee, in the 1930s.

Sources consulted included former students, teachers, administrators, and elected officials of the 1930s. After research in newspapers, local, state, and federal documents, school records, old photographs, and many oral interviews, the story was pieced together telling of events in McMinn County some fifty years ago.

Although the Depression forced severe cuts in education budgets, McMinn County schools never closed during the 1930s. They were among the most stable institutions in the county. However, teachers and students knew want. Students went to school without sufficient books and supplies and without enough food or clothing. Many one-room elementary schools were replaced by the consolidated graded schools. Some curriculum innovations took place. The transition from horse-drawn to motorized transportation for pupils took place in the 1930s. Cafeterias were added to the schools.

Significant relief began with the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933. The New Deal alphabet agencies--CWA, TERA, NYA, CCC, WPA, PWA, TVA--provided many projects that were useful to the McMinn County schools. Badly needed school buildings were constructed, additions were added to existing buildings, and repairs were made.

The schools were a source of identity and pride; they served as the glue that held the communities together during the hard times. The cooperative community spirit helped the schools not only to endure but to succeed. The help the New Deal gave to the school system brought needed improvements and kept the schools from degenerating further. A legacy of concern came from the difficult times. The school accepted a much broader role in the lives of students than it ever had before.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
	The Setting	1
	The People	4
	Demographics	5
	Economic Effects	8
	Politics	9
	Contribution of Churches	11
	Blacks	13
	Tennessee Wesleyan College	16
	Cooperation of the Races	20
	News and Entertainment	22
	Beginning of the Decade	24
	Focus of Study	25
II.	EDUCATION IN THE DEPRESSION YEARS	26
	Organization	29
	Finances	35
	Facilities	41
	Support Services	57
	Teachers	70
	Student Life	86
	Curriculum	108
	Conclusion	131

III. EDUCATION AND THE NEW DEAL IN McMINN COUNTY. . 132

Bank Holiday 137

Civilian Conservation Corps 139

National Youth Administration 148

National Recovery Administration 151

Repeal of Prohibition 152

Civil Works Administration 152

Tennessee Emergency Relief Administration. . 159

Works Progress Administration 163

Public Works Administration 166

Tennessee Valley Authority 168

Conclusion 175

BIBLIOGRAPHY 178

APPENDIX 187

VITA 198

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
I.	Average Length of Elementary School Term . . .	34
II.	Number of Schools in McMinn County, 1930-1940	42
III.	School Transportation in McMinn County, 1930-1940	59
IV.	Training of County Elementary Teachers, White, 1930-1940	71
V.	Training of County Elementary Teachers, Black, 1930-1940	72
VI.	Training of High School Teachers, White and Black, 1930-1940	75
VII.	Average Monthly Salaries of Elementary Teachers	78

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		PAGE
1.	Counties of Tennessee	2
2.	Map of McMinn County	7
3.	First Summer Bible School of Niota First Baptist Church, 7 July 1938	14
4.	J. L. Cook High School, Grades 1-12	17
5.	School Budgets in McMinn County, 1929-1940	38
6.	Mouse Creek School. Two-room school located five miles west of Athens	44
7.	Effie Bigham, a teacher at Mouse Creek School	44
8.	Hortons School. One-room school located near Riceville	51
9.	Professor W. E. Nash in the 1930's	52
10.	The first school bus used to transport students to J. L. Cook High School was a 1929 truck.	63
11.	1940 School Bus	63
12.	Etowah High School	67
13.	Total Enrollment in McMinn County, 1930-1940	87
14.	High School Enrollment in McMinn County, 1927-1940	89

FIGURE PAGE

15. 1936 McMinn County High School Football Team 119

16. Barn. Original Stadium at the McMinn County High School Football Field 121

17. 1936-1937 McMinn County High School Girls Basketball Team 125

18. 1935 Eighth Grade Graduation Class from Forrest Hill School 130

19. Class of 1933, McMinn County High School . . . 138

20. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) 146

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During the 1930s the United States experienced one of the most traumatic events in its history, the Great Depression. It not only affected the lives of individuals, it severely strained institutions as well. This study deals with the impact of that Depression on the school system of a small, rural, southern county located in East Tennessee (Figure 1).

The Setting

McMinn County is located in the upper South on the edge of Appalachia. It is nestled in the heart of the great Tennessee River Valley, midway between the cities of Knoxville and Chattanooga. This triangular shaped county is bordered by Bradley, Polk, Meigs, and Monroe Counties. Carved from Cherokee Indian Territory in 1819, the county includes 420 square miles. McMinn County is characterized by local historian Stephen Byrum as having wooded knobs, low parallel ridges, panoramic vistas punctuated by the distant peaks of the Unaka and Great Smoky Mountains, and

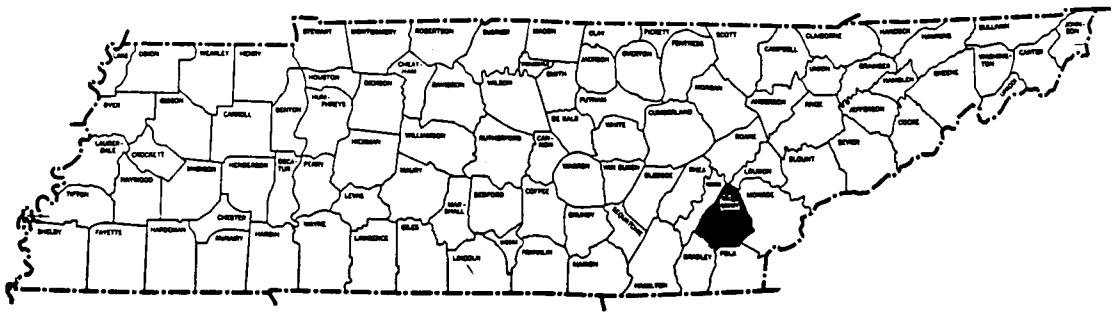


Figure 1. Counties in Tennessee

seven swift flowing creeks which flow into the Hiwassee River along the county's southern boundary.[1]

Blessed with some of the best farm land in the state, McMinn County has always been an agricultural center. By the 1930s farming in McMinn County had become diversified. A 1925 Chamber of Commerce publication stated that livestock, including dairy and beef cattle, sheep and hogs, were grown. Major crops consisting of wheat, corn, cotton, and tobacco were major sources of income for farmers.[2] The accessibility of land on which to grow food kept suffering to a minimum during the early, difficult Depression years. However, it was not until the 1930s, with the advent of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), that the full impact of all of the natural resources of the great valley was fully realized.

Byrum underscored the importance of the railroads to McMinn County. In the 1930s, the county was served by the main lines of two great railroads, the Southern and the Louisville and Nashville (L&N).[3] These afforded an outlet

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[1]C. Stephen Byrum, McMinn County (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1984), 1.

[2]Chamber of Commerce, "Athens, Tennessee," 1925.

[3]Byrum, 43-44.

to quick and ready markets in all directions. He said that "the railroads were to an earlier time what interstate highways have been to the present time."[4]

The People

In Hard Times Remembered, Bill Akins concluded that contrary to the views held by many people fifty years after the Depression, not everyone in McMinn County was affected alike. He found that most individuals fell into one of three categories. The first group included those living at the poverty level before the Depression and who "never missed what they never had." The second group contained those individuals who lost jobs, homes, businesses, and farms and who suffered "invisible scars" still painfully remembered. The third category included a very small group of people who had money, or access to money, and while they did not flaunt it, took advantage of the depressed prices of property to accumulate more wealth.[5] News items in the local newspaper revealed that the wealthy lived well and sent their

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[4] Ibid, 44.

[5] Bill Akins and Genevieve Wiggins, eds., Hard Times Remembered, A Study of the Depression in McMinn County, Tennessee (Athens: McMinn County Historical Society, 1983), vi-vii.

children to such prestigious schools as Columbia University, Vanderbilt University, and Agnes Scott College.[6]

Even though there were no soup lines or "Hoovervilles" in McMinn County as were found in other parts of the United States, the people were adversely affected by the Depression. A letter to the editor of the local newspaper expressed the plight felt by many:

> I cannot even earn wages as a farmer to support myself much less my family, and not one penny to contribute towards relief of others. I need clothing for my family, school books, food, and folks asking me to pay my debts. . . . I have no underwear and it is winter. Some neighbors in better--some worse circumstances.[7]

Demographics

McMinn County in the 1930 Census reported a population of 29,019. Nearly 50 percent of the white, native-born farmers lived on farms as owners or tenants. Blacks numbered 1,818 or approximately 8 percent of the population.[8]

Applications for marriage licenses declined between 1930 and 1933 with an average yearly reduction of 22 percent

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[6]Athens Daily Post-Athenian, 3 June 1938.

[7]T. A. Moss, Letter to the Editor, Daily Post-Athenian, 6 November 1934.

[8]Tennessee Valley Authority, Agricultural-Industrial Survey of McMinn County, Tennessee, 1934, 8, as quoted by Akins, vi.

as compared with the years before the Depression.[9] The birthrate also declined during the Depression. The number of births in 1930 was 655; this declined 6 percent during the 1930s to an average number of births of 616.[10]

A TVA survey in 1934 noted that the McMinn County population was divided among six towns (Figure 2). The county seat, Athens, located in the center of the county, had 5,383 residents and dominated the educational, cultural, and business life of the county. Etowah, located ten miles east of Athens, had 4,209. Four other trading centers were within the boundaries; all of them were located on a rail line so they could contribute their share toward the prosperity of the farmers. There were banks in each town. These towns and their populations were: Englewood, 1,471; Riceville, 530; Niota, 443; and Calhoun, 236.[11]

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[9] McMinn County Marriage Records, 1923-1940, as quoted by Laura Brown, "The Depression Hits Home," Hard Times Remembered, A Study of the Depression in McMinn County Tennessee, Bill Akins and Genevieve Wiggins, eds. (Athens: McMinn County Historical Society, 1983), 54.

[10] Tennessee Vital Statistics, 1920-1940, Tennessee Department of Public Health, Nashville, as quoted by Brown, 54.

[11] Tennessee Valley Authority, Industrial Data, 27.

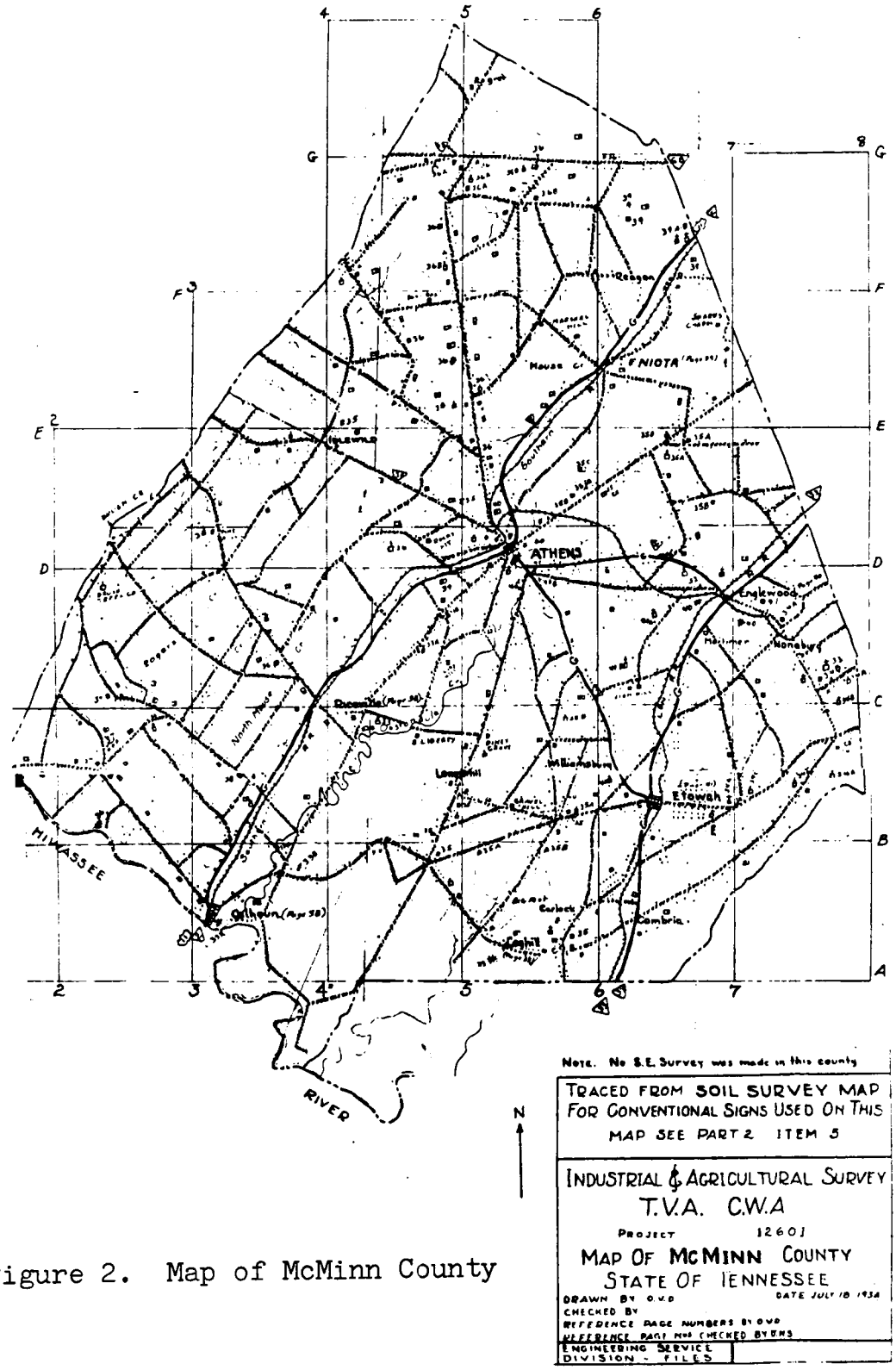


Figure 2. Map of McMinn County

Economic Effects

The Depression, according to Carol Tullock, affected the towns differently. She found that Athens, with a diversified economy, fared better than Etowah and Englewood which were extremely hard hit. The industrial base of Athens consisted of two hosiery mills, a plow manufacturing company, a stove manufacturing company, a table manufacturing company, a paper box company, a concrete pipe and brick plant, and a woolen mill. Etowah, on the other hand, was a one-industry town although it had a few small industries. Actually, she indicated that Etowah's decline began before the Depression set in when, in 1928, the "L&N management announced that it would switch to steel gondolas instead of using wooden cars which were built and maintained in the Etowah shops." The city suffered further when in 1931 "L&N moved its division headquarters to Knoxville."[12] In less than three years the labor force of 2,100 shrank to eighty.

As Tullock pointed out, even during the best of times, the level of prosperity in Englewood had been far below that

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[12]Carol Tullock, "The Crisis Years: 1929-1933," Hard Times Remembered, A Study of the Depression in McMinn County Tennessee, Bill Akins and Genevieve Wiggins, eds. (Athens: McMinn County Historical Society, 1983), 6-7; Akins, vi.

of Etowah. Englewood's two major employers in the 1930s were textile mills which operated sporadically on a part-time basis and with a decreased payroll. When both mills operated at capacity, the maximum combined employment was about 400, most of whom were women. The one textile mill in Niota never closed. Workers managed to get a few days per week of employment throughout the Depression. Calhoun and Riceville were without an industrial base, serving primarily as trading centers for farmers of the area.[13]

Politics

Politically, in the 1932 presidential election, McMinn County remained in the Republican column.[14] Although located in the Democratic state of Tennessee, since Reconstruction, McMinn County, along with many other East Tennessee counties, had voted Republican. As Akins explained:

> McMinn Countians were grateful to the Roosevelt administration, but it was not until the election of 1940 that they were grateful enough to surrender their political allegiance to it.[15]

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[13] Tennessee Valley Authority, Industrial Data, as quoted by Tullock, 6, 11, 14.

[14] Daily Post-Athenian, 9 November 1932; Tullock, 17.

[15] Akins, vii.

However, at the local level, politics were a different story. Specifically, as Theodore White wrote:

> The Republicans would let a Democrat get elected now and then, but the sheriff was theirs and they held tight to the county trustee who disbursed funds and issued poll-tax certificates.[16]

The laws of Tennessee provided an opportunity for the unscrupulous to prosper. All officials were paid by fees.* An editorial in the local newspaper alleged that "Athens has earned the bad reputation all over the state for having more fee-grabbing officers than any other town of its size in the United States."[17]

In the 1930s Tennessee fell under the control of Democratic bosses. E. H. Crump of Shelby County created the state's most powerful political machine. As White put it, in 1936 the system descended upon McMinn County when the Democratic candidate for sheriff "took the county from the Republicans by a famous vote-grab."[18] Fee-grabbing became worse than ever. As Lones Seiber stated emphatically, "The head of the Democratic machine enjoyed his lucrative

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*A fee was a charge for a professional service. Arrests were made whether a person was guilty or not. In McMinn County the sheriff was paid a fee for each arrest, for each witness called to testify, etc.

[16]Theodore H. White, "The Battle of Athens," Harper's Magazine, January 1947, 54.

[17]Daily Post-Athenian, 23 September 1935.

[18]White, 54.

suzerainty over McMinn County until the 1946 election."[19] Under this corrupt system, money that normally would have flowed into the public coffers instead went into private pockets. All government entities, including the schools, were hurt by this political machine. On August 1, 1946, GIs returning from World War II fought "The Battle of Athens" which unseated the political machine. White stressed that

> . . . The Good Government League (formed by the GIs) wants to see what resources are available for the two most pressing local problems: schools and roads. . . . The Good Government League wants to divert money from the sheriff's heavy budget to the education budget.[20]

Contribution of Churches

There was little religious diversity in McMinn County. In the 1930s the community was heavily main-line Protestant. Baptists dominated; other prominent denominations included Methodists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians. Quoting from the local newspaper, Jeanne Taggert found that there were ninety-three churches in McMinn County, eighty-one white and twelve black. Membership represented about 38 percent of

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[19]Lones Seiber, "The Battle of Athens," American Heritage, February-March 1985, 74.

[20]White, 56.

the population. Contributions sank to an all-time low causing a drastic curtailment in church expansion.[21]

People in McMinn County believed that more institutions than just the schools educated the young. In a chapter entitled "More than Schooling," Donald Warren refers to the writings of Lawrence Cremin. Cremin said:

> The public school has never functioned alone or in isolation. Where it has succeeded, it has functioned as part of a large configuration of institutions, including families, churches, Sunday schools . . . committed to essentially complementary values.[22]

Because of this belief that many institutions educate students, Jeanne Taggert noted that

> Churches were especially concerned over the welfare of the youth and made every effort to provide wholesome and entertaining activities for them. Groups such as the Methodist Epworth League and the Baptist Young People's Union kept young people occupied throughout the 1930s.[23]

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[21] Daily Post-Athenian, 3 July 1931, as quoted by Jeanne Taggert, "The Depression Goes to Church," Hard Times Remembered, A Study of the Depression in McMinn County Tennessee, Bill Akins and Genevieve Wiggins, eds. (Athens: McMinn County Historical Society, 1983), 123.

[22] Donald R. Warren, ed., History, Education, and Public Policy (Berkeley: McCutchan Publishing Corporation, 1978), 28.

[23] Taggert, 133.

Sunday Schools and Summer Bible Schools, such as the one pictured in Figure 3, were important adjuncts in educating the young.

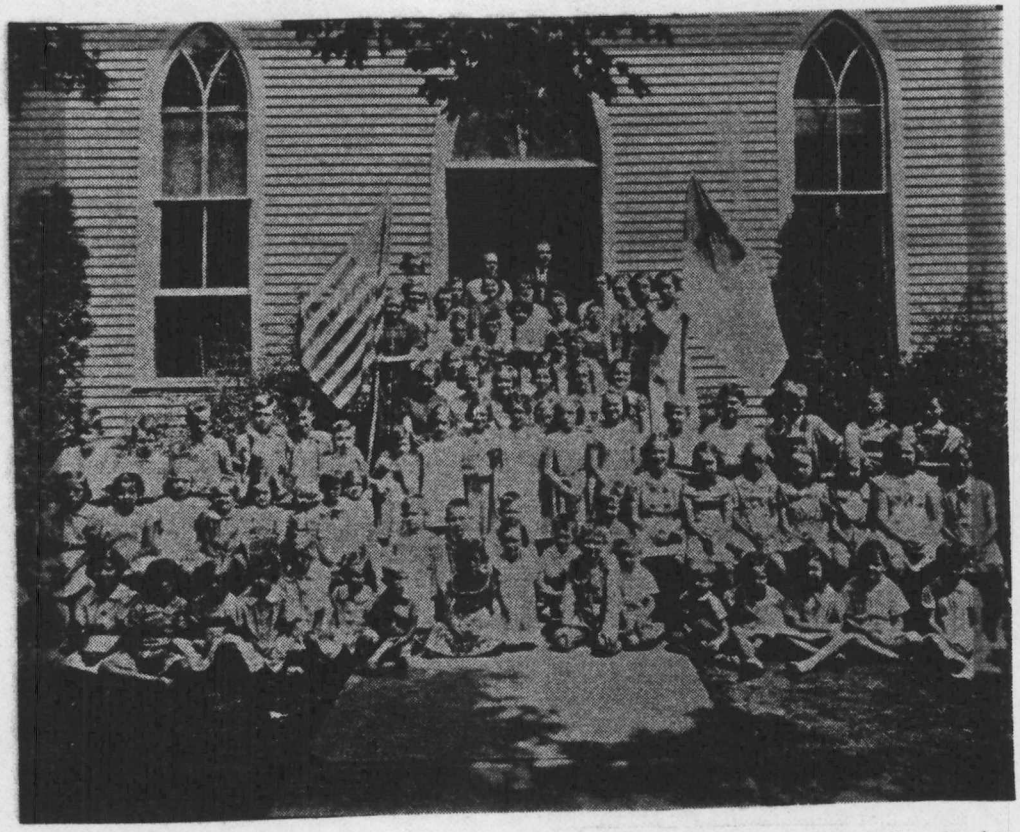
Although the public school administrators realized the value of having the churches cooperating in educating the young, they assumed much of the responsibility for the educational activities of the community. They focused their attentions on the very young since many McMinn County students terminated their formal education in elementary school or when they finished the eighth grade. Community leaders were justifiably proud of all the high schools especially McMinn County High School, founded in 1903, since it was the first high school established in East Tennessee and the second high school in the state of Tennessee.[24]

Blacks

Throughout its history, from the antebellum period through the 1930s, McMinn County generally mirrored the sentiments of East Tennessee. On the eve of the Civil War, the slave population in the state of Tennessee was 283,019

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[24] Daily Post-Athenian, Progress Edition of 1939.



Courtesy of Mrs. Frank Harrington

Figure 3. First Summer Bible School of Niota First Baptist Church, 7 July 1938.

or 25 percent of the total population.[25] In 1860 the slave population in McMinn County was 1,909, or only 14 percent of the total population of 13,555.[26] Most local owners held only a comparatively few slaves; only eight families owned twenty or more slaves. When the vote was taken in McMinn County on whether to join the Confederacy, only 892 voted for joining; 1,152 voted against.[27]

In the early 1930s, most blacks in McMinn County were Republican; by the end of the decade most had switched to voting Democratic. In the 1930s the Southern caste system was still entrenched in McMinn County. Blacks lived in separate communities, attended separate schools and churches, and had limited job opportunities; many went "up North" for better job opportunities.

McMinn County had a dual system of education made mandatory by the Tennessee Constitution of 1870. Of the ninety-five Tennessee counties, W. E. Turner listed only twenty-three four-year black high schools in Tennessee in

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[25]Stanley L. Folmsbee, Robert E. Corlew, and Enoch L. Mitchell, Tennessee, A Short History (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 217.

[26]United States Bureau of Census, 1860 Slave Census, Eighth Census of the Population of the United States.

[27]Athens Post, 8 June 1861, as quoted in Daily Post-Athenian, Bicentennial Edition, July 1976.

the 1930s.[28] McMinn County was fortunate to have a new high school for its black residents. Because there was not a sufficient number of black high school students in McMinn County to meet the requirements for a four-year high school, students were recruited from surrounding counties. J. L. Cook High School (Figure 4), built in 1926,[29] was particularly significant since blacks only comprised approximately 8 percent of the total population of McMinn County in 1930.[30]

Tennessee Wesleyan College

The only post-secondary school, Tennessee Wesleyan College, was a small coeducational Methodist junior college established in 1857.[31] It was situated in the heart of the city of Athens. Even though it was located in the South, Tennessee Wesleyan College was supported

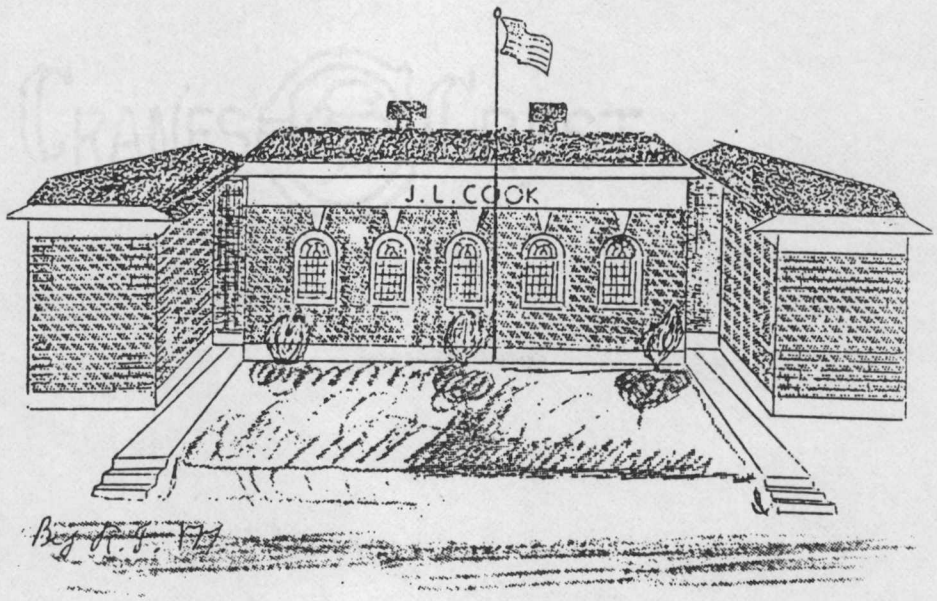
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[28]W. E. Turner, "A Survey of Negro High Schools in Tennessee" (Master's thesis, University of Tennessee, 1933), 129.

[29]Program, "Grand Opening of the Colored High School," 10 December 1926.

[30]Tennessee Valley Authority, Industrial Data, 8.

[31]LeRoy A. Martin, A History of Tennessee Wesleyan College, 1857-1957 (Collegedale, Tennessee: College Press, 1957), 5.



Courtesy of W. E. Nash

Figure 4. J. L. Cook High School, Grades 1-12

by the Methodist Episcopal Church, the northern branch of the Methodist Church. He noted that this continued until 1939 when the Northern and Southern branches of the Methodist united.

Genevieve Wiggins found that high school or preparatory courses were offered until 1933. Emphasis was upon liberal arts instruction, but teacher-training courses and commercial courses attracted a considerable number of students. As part of the teacher training program, she stated that an observation and practice school was built on the campus, using the plan recommended by the Tennessee Department of Education for two-room rural elementary schools.[32]

Wiggins pointed out that the Depression years witnessed a considerable decrease in the number of Wesleyan students. In 1929 there were 485 students; in the depth of the Depression in 1934, enrollment dropped to its lowest level of 283 students. She concluded that a sizeable number of students who might have enrolled in Wesleyan during more affluent times could not pay the tuition cost of $35 per

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[32] Tennessee Wesleyan College Catalog, 1929-1933, as quoted by Genevieve Wiggins, "Tennessee Wesleyan College: The Depression Years," Hard Times Remembered, A Study of the Depression in McMinn County, Tennessee, Bill Akins and Genevieve Wiggins, eds. (Athens: McMinn County Historical Society, 1983), 112-113; Martin, 127, 133.

quarter. In the 1930s the student body of Wesleyan was drawn largely from the surrounding area; nearly 60 percent of students from nearby high schools who attended college enrolled at Wesleyan. Hence, she observed most students were from rural homes.[33]

The people of the community took advantage of the courses offered at Wesleyan. Enrichment programs for the talented elementary students included lessons in piano, violin, voice, art, and elocution. In 1929-1930, Wiggins found that fifty-two students were receiving music lessons and forty-one were taking lessons in elocution or expression. In 1930-1931, the number of special music students had declined to thirty-six and the number of expression students to fourteen. She reasoned that when parents found it difficult to provide food and clothing to their children, music lessons and expression lessons were frills which had to be cut from the family budget.[34]

Wesleyan also had a cultural bond with the community; numerous concerts, plays, speeches, and performances enriched the lives of the members of the community. Also,

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[33]Wiggins, 112-113.

[34]Ibid.

much entertainment was provided to spectators as they watched Wesleyan's football and basketball teams.[35]

Cooperation of the Races

Even though Tennessee Wesleyan College experienced financial difficulties during the Depression years, the educators did not forget another school in more serious financial straits. In an interview for the local newspaper, the black educator W. E. Nash, who has been a central figure in the community credited "Tennessee Wesleyan College, Judge E. B. Madison, the women of Athens, and many others with keeping black education afloat."[36] Good relations between the races are recorded for many years and Wesleyan played an important role. A white minister in 1933 wrote his fifty year recollections of local events and asserted that

> I don't believe there is any town in the United States where the relations between the white and colored people are more agreeable than it is in Athens. In largest measure it is due to J. L. (Jake) Cook and the noble teachers who followed him in our city.[37]

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[35]Genevieve Wiggins, informal conversation with author, 1 July 1984.

[36]Fran Ellers, "Professor Nash," Daily Post-Athenian, 19 July 1985.

[37]J. M. Sharp, Recollections and Hearsays of Athens, Fifty Years and Beyond (Published locally, 1933), 68.

Nash also echoed this racial climate. He recalled that he had been told that when the black teacher, J. L. Cook, preached around the turn of the century in a small black church, many times over half of the people would be white college students.[38]

Writing in a magazine article in 1947, Nash expressed his recollections of his own arrival in Athens in 1921. He remembered:

> We were taken around by our principal and introduced to many of the white businessmen in their respective places of business, and were received in a spirit so absolutely free from any evidence of racial consciousness that we were at a loss to account for such a reception.[39]

He also practiced "learning to call white men by their surnames, something I had never done before."[40] After watchful research for a few years, Nash was convinced that the fine spirit of race relations was a fixed custom. He found civic and religious cooperation. He continued:

> When we asked about the cooperation of the educators and the educational institutions, we found an area of greater interest and concern. They would begin to tell of the fine spirit which had existed between white Tennessee Wesleyan College and the colored United Presbyterian

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[38]W. E. Nash, informal conversation with author, 30 June 1984.

[39]W. E. Nash, "A Lesson in Cooperation," The United Presbyterian, 3 February 1947, 13-14.

[40]Daily Post-Athenian, 19 July 1985.

> school known as the Athens Academy. They seemed to discuss with great pride and enthusiasm many pleasant and even profitable incidents of cooperation which had taken place between the two institutions and their administrators. We at once decided that we had now discovered the factor more largely responsible than any other for the most wholesome relations which exist between the races in this community.[41]

Nash elaborated further by recalling acts of kindness. Each time the president of Tennessee Wesleyan College came to speak at Cook High School, he brought books for the library. He also made Wesleyan's practice field available to Cook's football team. Hand-me-down basketball uniforms were shared with Cook's teams.[42]

When integration came to McMinn County in the 1960s, Tennessee Wesleyan College led the way. It was the first school desegregated in McMinn County and the public schools followed in a few years.

News and Entertainment

News came to McMinn County primarily through two sources, newspapers and the radio. There were two community newspapers, the Daily Post-Athenian, and a weekly publication, the Etowah Enterprise. County residents who sought

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[41]Nash, The United Presbyterian.

[42]Nash conversation, 30 June 1984.

more information than the local newspapers provided relied on the Knoxville and Chattanooga newspapers. The absence of a public library in Athens was a serious limitation to the educational opportunities available to local residents. Etowah had a small Carnegie library and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) helped establish the regional library system by the late 1930s.[43]

News of the outside world also came to McMinn County by way of the radio, especially with President Franklin D. Roosevelt's fireside chats. Laura Brown estimated that even though there was a scarcity of money, "by 1939 with the advent of cheap electrical power, 90 percent of McMinn County homes had a radio."[44] She stated that there were no local radio stations in the 1930s but that residents eagerly tuned to WNOX, Knoxville, WDOD, Chattanooga, WSM, Nashville, WWL, New Orleans, and WLW, Cincinnati for entertainment and news.[45] They followed the exploits of Joe Louis and Joe DiMaggio and listened as Kate Smith sang "When the Moon Comes Over the Mountain."

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[43]David E. Lilienthal, TVA, Democracy on the March (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944), 200.

[44]Brown, 66.

[45]Ibid, 59.

Beginning of the Decade

The stock market crash in October 1929, which signaled the beginning of the Great Depression, did not immediately affect McMinn County, according to Tullock. Business and employment were good at the beginning of the decade. She found, however, that things soon changed. Retail sales went down and unemployment rose. Three banks failed and industries curtailed production, resulting in high unemployment and a demand for relief.[46]

Much has been written by historians about the prosperity of the 1920s, however, rural people suffered economically during the decade of the 1920s. McElvaine states that "in 1929 fully one-quarter of all employment in the United States was in farming."[47] The portion of people owning or working on farms in McMinn County was much higher than that. Tullock concludes that even before the Depression struck, McMinn County farmers, like their counterparts everywhere, were suffering from low prices and over production. During the early 1930s farmers in McMinn County began to farm for subsistence; they raised the things their families

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[46]Tullock, 3-4.

[47]Robert S. McElvaine, The Great Depression (New York: Random House, Inc., 1984), 36.

needed and few went hungry. Subsistence farming kept suffering to a minimum during the early Depression years.[48]

Focus of Study

This study deals with the impact of the Great Depression on the school system of McMinn County and explains how rural people responded to the crisis of the 1930s. Since this study was done fifty years after the Depression, former students, teachers, administrators, public officials, etc. were available to recapture the daily experiences of the period. Answers to the following questions are found in the study. How did local school systems deal with the years of scarcity? Did the schools close during the hard times? Was it a period of bleakness? What attempts were made to alleviate the suffering? Did any innovations take place? Did the role of teachers change? What values carried the people through the difficult years? Did the Depression shake rural people's optimistic belief in education? How did the New Deal help at the local level?

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[48]Tullock, 2-4.

CHAPTER II

EDUCATION IN THE DEPRESSION YEARS

Historians have never had an easy task when they have tried to measure the effect of the economic collapse of 1929 on American education.* Schools were open during the 1930s and during the years of great poverty and destitution debates over educational philosophy continued. Edward Power said, "It is difficult to know whether poverty and economic dislocation were allies or enemies of Progressive education." He was certain that "the progressive spirit in America, a reality for generations, began to atrophy, and optimism surrendered to despair."[1]

The Depression tested the educational system of McMinn County. Schools faced declining revenues and increasing needs; local communities faced the great burden of maintaining the schools. Sally Ealy emphasized the fact that "the McMinn County schools never closed during the 1930s, making them a source of community identity and pride; they

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*A recent study of the American schools during the Depression was done by Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot.

[1]Edward J. Power, The Transit of Learning, A Social and Cultural Intrepretation of American Educational History (Sherman Oaks, Alfred Publishing Company, Inc., 1979), 337.

were the most stable institutions in the county."[2] This was accomplished through the cooperative effort of the county's governing entities working with the school personnel to keep the schools open.

In 1934 in the depths of the Depression, Walter Cocking, Tennessee's Commissioner of Education, described the effects of the hard times on the schools of Tennessee. He stated that

> It is true that our schools, our teachers and our pupils have known actual want; that they have suffered severely from the lack of material things; and that throughout the length and breadth of our land children have gone to school without books, without clothing to keep them warm and without food sufficient to sustain them. . . . Too much praise cannot be given to the Tennessee Congress of Parents and Teachers and the various relief agencies for the work they have done in providing hot, nourishing meals and clothing for underprivileged children during these difficult years.[3]

Teachers and administrators found that their roles changed as they became "social workers" since they were able to identify families in need. In McMinn County, one superintendent became a member of the board which had the responsibility of distributing government cloth to the

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[2]Sally DeWitt Ealy, "The Depression Goes to School," Hard Times Remembered, A Study of the Depression in McMinn County, Tennessee, Bill Akins and Genevieve Wiggins, eds., (Athens: McMinn County Historical Society, 1983), 69.

[3]Annual Report of the Department of Education, State of Tennessee, For the Scholastic Year Ending 30 June 1934, 15.

needy. Another superintendent concerned himself with the students' lack of shoes. Teachers became cooks when government surplus food became available.[4]

Despite the effort it took to care for the basic needs of the students, some innovations took place. Attention was given to curriculum improvement. The principal of the black high school noted that it received state recognition because of its successful programs.[5] Also, school boards began the expensive transition from horse-drawn to motorized transportation for students. An expanded sports program came out of the 1930s.[6]

Students' lives were drastically affected. All depression-era students interviewed for this study commented that they "never wanted to live through another depression." However, one of those students echoed a theme heard many times. Willard Yarbrough summed up the feeling.

> The disciplines and adversities in time of great depression were blessings in disguise--lessons that taught us character and resolve to make our lives richer and the world a better place in which to live.[7]

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[4]Frederick Edward Wankan, "Echoes from the Great Depression" (Typescript, Athens, 1984), 26; Daily Post-Athenian, 30 August 1932; Ealy, 81.

[5]W. E. Nash, interview with author, 28 December 1982.

[6]Ealy, 84, 107.

[7]Willard Yarbrough, letter to author, 4 January 1983.

Organization

The organizational structure for education in Tennessee during the 1930s was under the guidance of the State Department of Education. In the 1920s Governor Austin Peay, as part of his reorganization of state government, "changed the name of the superintendent of public instruction to commissioner of education and gave him cabinet status."[8]

Whether an alliance of education and politics pays has always been open to debate, but it has always been difficult for education to remain aloof of politics. Andrew Holt found it interesting that

> During the decade of 1923-1933, in which the educational leaders were definitely affiliated with one political faction, great progress was made in public school legislation. . . . When identified with Governor Peay's political cause, the educational forces reaped abundant rewards in school legislations; with Governor Henry Horton in his first term of office their good fate continued; with Horton in his second term, the school program met ignominious defeat.[9]

With the inauguration of Governor Hill McAlister in 1933, the alliance of education and politics came to an end. During his campaign he pledged "that the public school

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[8]J. H. Warf, Tennessee State Department of Education 1900 to 1968 (Nashville: State Department of Education, 1968), 18.

[9]Andrew David Holt, The Struggle for a State System of Public Schools in Tennessee, 1903-1936 (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1938), 384.

system must be permanently removed from politics."[10] In keeping his pledge, McAlister appointed to the commissioner's post

> Walter D. Cocking who had earned his Ph.D. degree at Columbia University. The governor . . . named a man for this key office whose qualifications were educational rather than political.[11]

Cocking made provisions for a comprehensive study of the state's educational system and aroused interest in improving the public school system. This study by the Educational Commission was useful when prosperity returned.[12]

A former principal explained the organizational structure at the McMinn County level. It began with the governing body known as the County Court of Quarterly Sessions. The membership of the court was composed of seventeen justices of the peace who were elected by popular vote from civil districts within the county. The court had both legislative and administrative functions.[13] The basic law regarding school board organization, passed in 1925, "authorized the county courts to appoint seven member

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[10] Ibid, 364.

[11] H. Blair Bentley, "Pedagogy in Peril: Education in the Volunteer State During the Depression" (Paper delivered at the meeting of the Tennessee Conference of Historians, Tullahoma, March 1983), 2.

[12] Holt, 400.

[13] J. Will Foster, interview with author, February 1983.

school boards on a rotating basis--one member each year for a seven-year term."[14]

Lay school boards were tied to politics by virtue of the fact that they were appointed by the county court members. The professional administrator, the County School Superintendent, was also appointed by the court members. Three men served as superintendent during the 1930s. All three were local men who had been educated in the colleges of Tennessee. They were: Austin A. Hanks who served from 1927-1931; he was succeeded by E. L. Lingerfelt who served two terms, 1931-1935. Will J. Swafford was appointed in January, 1935, and served until the fall of 1942.[15]

Many times their administrative duties, such as the appointment of teachers, were taken over by the school board members. The assumption was made that local control guaranteed that teachers would be responsive to the wishes of the community. Through this assumption, they inferred that "the people" controlled the schools. When asked about the prevalence of political intervention in McMinn County some

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[14]Edell M. Hearn, "Public Educational Changes Through Legislation in Tennessee, 1935-1959" (Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 1959), 27.

[15]Will J. Swafford, telephone conversation with author, 12 July 1983.

teachers and principals admitted that "a lot of that went on."[16] One commented that "it had died down some by the late 1930s."[17]

Some strong principals were allowed to do their own hiring of teachers. J. Will Foster, a long-time educator, declared:

> My school board member at Niota, John Cate, did not bother me. He let me do my own hiring of teachers and he would vote for them. Other principals were not so fortunate. Some school board members played politics quite a bit. When this happened the teachers hired by school board members were loyal to them rather than loyal to the principal. I was fortunate to have school board members who did not bother me.[18] I never had a teacher hired and then sent to me.

The black schools were not bothered very much by the school board members' political meddling. W. E. Nash, principal of the black high school, recommended to the superintendent those persons who should be hired to teach and then the school board members voted for them. He developed his own method of dealing with the county court. Nash had a friend on the county court, E. B. Madison, who consistently backed his efforts. He would get his approval first, then go from judge to judge (He can still name them

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[16]Foster interview.

[17]Swafford conversation.

[18]Foster interview.

in the order of his route around the county.) until he got nine signatures. With this majority, Nash would then bring the matter to the attention of the entire county court.[19]

In 1930, Ealy found, there were seventy-eight elementary schools in the county and city systems. Most of these were small rural schools. The county maintained seventy-four schools: forty-four one-teacher schools, fourteen two-teacher schools, and sixteen three-or-more teacher schools. Towns maintained four three-or-more teacher schools. The county also had six two-year high schools, and five four-year high schools.[20]

In the late 1920s Governor Austin Peay made numerous school reforms. One of those reforms "guaranteed eight-month school terms for all counties which would insure certain local financial support."[21] Nine months were required for the high schools. The number of days for a term varied across the state. Throughout the 1930s, McMinn County required more days than the state average (Table I). While historians have written much about the discrepency in

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[19]Fran Ellers, "Professor Nash," Daily Post-Athenian, 19 July 1985; Nash interview.

[20]Annual Report of the Department of Education, State of Tennessee, For the Scholastic Year Ending 30 June 1930, 95, 155, as quoted by Ealy, 72.

[21]Warf, 18.

TABLE I

AVERAGE LENGTH OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TERM

Year	County		City	
	White	Black	White	Black
1930	157	144	168	175
1931	157	156	170	175
1932	157	154	161	155
1933	156	157	162	175
1934	153	158	170	175
1935	156	159	170	175
1936	156	155	170	175
1937	156	157	172	175
1938	156	156	173	175
1939	155	157	172	180
1940	156	155	172	171

Source: Annual Reports of the Department of Education, State of Tennessee, For the Scholastic Years, 1930-1940.

the number of days in the white and black school terms, this was not the case in McMinn County. Located in an agricultural region, McMinn County set the beginning of the elementary term to accommodate the farmers. W. W. Eledge explained that "the elementary schools opened in July when the crops were 'laid by' and students went to school until the crops matured."[22] When harvest time came, elementary schools, both white and black, closed for two weeks to a full month.

Finances

As the Depression began, the State of Tennessee was experiencing one of its stormiest periods of political history. Governor Austin Peay died in office and was succeeded in October, 1927, by Governor Henry H. Horton who was elected twice in his own right. Folmsbee, Corlew, and Mitchell pointed out that Horton was impeached, but not convicted, on charges of official neglect of duty and conspiring to permit the use of state funds by personal friends for their own profit. Horton's alleged connection with the Caldwell and Company banks caused the state to lose nearly $7,000,000 in tax money when the banks closed. Thus, they declared, the state treasury of Tennessee was in dire straits

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[22]W. W. Eledge, interview by author, tape recording, February 1983, as quoted by Ealy, 74.

as the Depression deepened. In 1933 when Franklin D. Roosevelt became president and Hill McAlister took over the reins of state government, it was a most critical time. The nation and the world were in the worst part of the world-wide Depression. They found that Governor McAlister, a keen student of finance, having served several terms as State Treasurer, cut all state expenditures including those for public education.[23]

The State of Tennessee's delay in meeting financial obligations that had been made during the period of prosperity greatly affected the school budgets of McMinn County. While the State of Tennessee was having its problems, local units of government found that declining property values resulted in a reduction in income from related taxes. There was difficulty in collecting property taxes and this caused a severe financial problem in the 1930s.[24]

The McMinn County Quarterly Court cut all budget items including the school budget. The School Department was forced to adjust to this. Ealy underscored the fact that school building construction practically ceased. Teachers

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[23]Stanley J. Folmsbee, Robert E. Corlew, and Enoch L. Mitchell, Tennessee, A Short History (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 491-497.

[24]Ealy, 70.

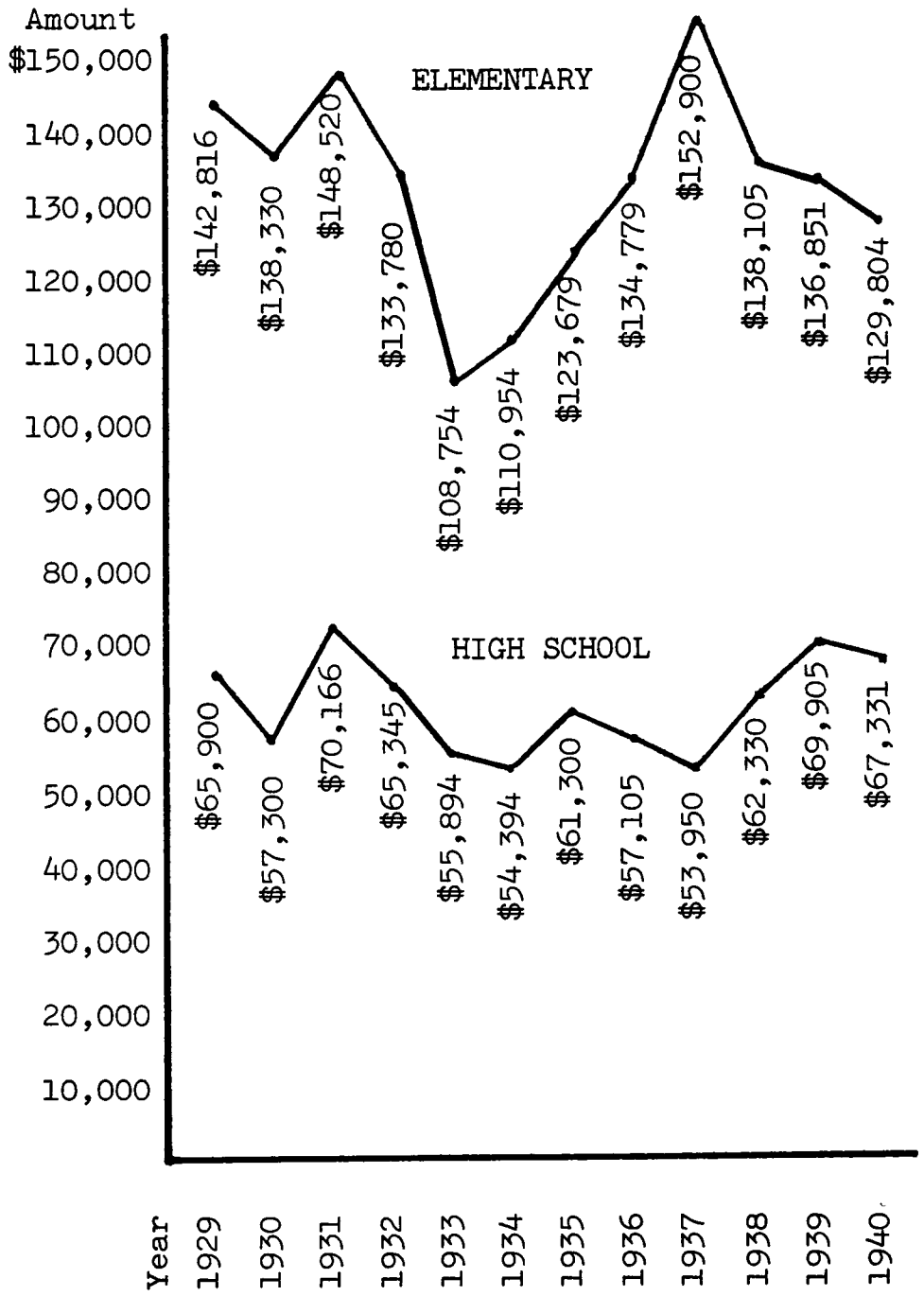
found their salaries greatly reduced; many times teachers found their warrants (a method used to pay teachers) stamped with the infamous clause, "payable when funds are available." Many schools were consolidated to save money, some school activities were discontinued, and some teachers were terminated.[25] As shown in Figure 5, the total level of funding for all school purposes in McMinn County during the 1930s varied considerably from $218,686 in 1931 to the lowest point of $164,648 in 1933.[26] Not until the early 1940s did the school budget regain the 1929 level of funding. McMinn County never knew how much state aid would be available or when the state would meet its obligations. Early in 1932, the only time the school board actually considered closing schools because of past due state funds, the members recorded in the Minutes their fears that the state would not be able to meet its obligations:

> Because of the lost confidence in the state paying its obligations to the schools . . . it is indeed unusual if not entirely unprecedented in the history

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[25] Ibid.

[26] The current principal of McMinn County High School commented that approximately $177,000 was spent during the 1983-1984 school year to pay the utility bill for McMinn County High School. That amount fifty years ago exceeded the total expenditure for all school purposes for one year. He indicated that in 1933 that amount of money would have supported seventy-five elementary schools and eleven high schools. Oran Creasman, informal conversation with author, 10 August 1984.



Sources: 1935 Figures from Proposed Budget, Minutes of McMinn County Board of Education, 14 March 1935, 90; All others from Minutes of the McMinn County Quarterly Court, 19 December 1929 through 1 April 1940.

Figure 5. School Budgets in McMinn County, 1929-1940

> of Tennessee, that public confidence in the state government is so shaken and disturbed that the ability of the commonwealth to pay its obligations as created and fixed by solemn legislations enactment is officially questioned.[27]

The most serious financial crisis came in November, 1931. A former principal explained how the crisis was met:

> Because of lack of money the school board voted to close the elementary schools at the end of four months and the high schools at the end of four and one-half months. The county was due $115,000 from the state, but there was no money in the state treasury. The decision to close the schools resulted in a tremendous public outcry and an appeal was made to the governor to keep the schools open.[28]

B. L. Hale, a high school principal and president of the county teachers organization, set up a steering committee to study ways of keeping the schools operating until state funds were available. A call was issued for all teachers to meet on Saturday, November 7, 1931. Not all of the teachers attended the meeting, but Hale emphasized that 90 percent of the teachers met and voted unanimously to continue to teach without obligation to the county for the remainder of the eight or nine months school year.[29]

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[27] Minutes of the McMinn County Board of Education, 4 January 1932, 60, as quoted by Ealy, 70.

[28] B. L. Hale, interview by author, tape recording, 29 December 1982, as quoted by Ealy, 76.

[29] Ibid; Daily Post-Athenian, 3,4,6 November 1931; Minutes of the McMinn County Board of Education, 57-59, as quoted by Ealy, 76.

The Minutes stated that the original teaching contracts were terminated and that new individual contracts listing the following conditions were made by the teachers: that the McMinn County Board of Education would agree to pay for this service "if and when" the state funds were available, and that unless the state fulfilled its obligations, McMinn County would be under no obligation to pay for this service.[30] Eventually all teachers who signed the "if and when contracts" were paid for their service although many years passed before all the outstanding warrants were paid. As late as 1936 there was a notation in the Minutes that some warrants were still outstanding for the 1931-1932 school year.[31]

Because of this action by the teachers, the McMinn County Schools never closed during the Great Depression. When this unprecedented action was considered, B. L. Hale acknowledged that four questions, not all of them entirely altruistic, were raised by the teachers. First, they demonstrated their concern for the students. If schools closed halfway through the school year, would students be forced to repeat the entire grade the following year? Then,

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[30] Minutes of the McMinn County Board of Education, 58.

[31] Ibid, 103, as quoted by Ealy, 76.

they thought of themselves. There were no other jobs available in 1931 so what would the teachers do if they were not teaching? Next, would the teachers spend more money or get themselves deeper into debt if they had time on their hands? Finally, in order to ask a merchant for credit to buy food and the necessities of life, would it be easier to obtain credit if they could say that McMinn County owed money to them?[32]

Facilities

The lack of funds for McMinn County schools was reflected in the physical conditions of the school buildings. While small country schools were typical of all schools in other southern rural counties in the 1930s, they varied tremendously in the quality of facilities. They served the students in their neighborhoods, most of which were relatively homogeneous. In 1930 McMinn County maintained seventy-eight elementary schools and eleven high schools (Table II).

Some of the schools located in the poorer sections of McMinn County were nothing more than abandoned church buildings.[33] Some were in dreadful disrepair; the roofs

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[32]Hale interview.

[33]Ealy, 70-71.

TABLE II

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS IN McMINN COUNTY, 1930-1940

Year	Elementary Schools	High Schools	Consolidated Beginning	Consolidated End
1930	78	11	8	8
1931	80	10	8	8
1932	79	11	12	12
1933	75	11	12	12
1934	73	11	11	12
1935	70	11	No Report	
1936	72	11	No Report	
1937	64	11	No Report	
1938	65	10	No Report	
1939	67	10	No Report	
1940	65	10	No Report	

Source: Annual Report of the Department of Education, State of Tennessee, For the Scholastic Years, 1930-1940.

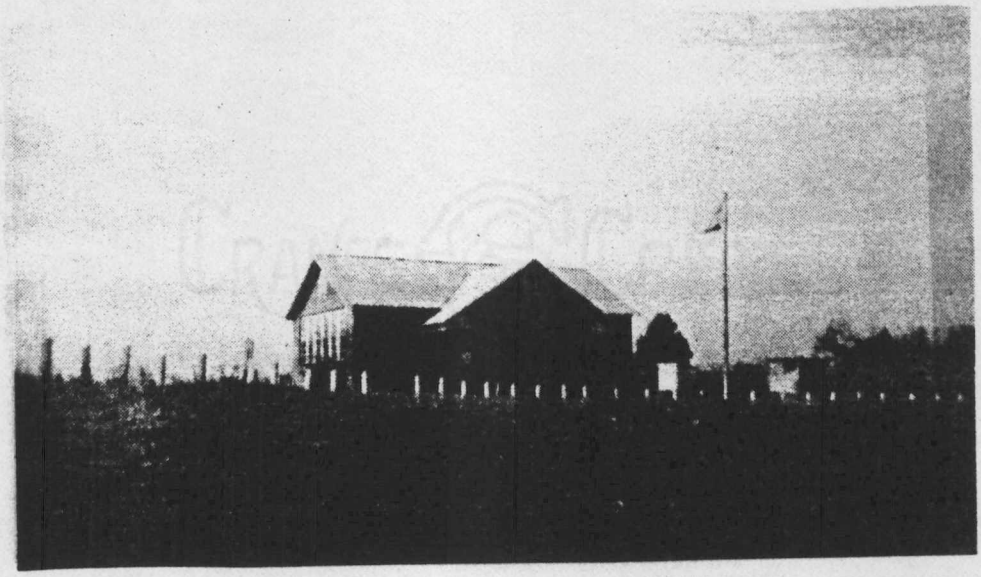
leaked; the paint had peeled; the clapboarding was off; the usual pot-bellied stove even at red heat failed to warm the place; windows provided little light; some had no provisions for restrooms, either indoor or outdoor. An example of a poor school was Mount Arnon, a one-teacher school located about two miles north of Englewood. A former teacher who began his teaching career there described it:

> The school was accessible only by hiking in. The building was an old abandoned church, unpainted, with few windows making it very dark inside. It had no electricity and no restroom facilities; boys and girls "just hit the woods in different directions." Finally, through the government sanitation program, outdoor toilets were built. The school was heated with a wood burning stove. Most of the time we cut our own wood.[34]

Other schools, constructed of brick, were located in better neighborhoods. Mouse Creek School (Figure 6) was portrayed by Effie Bigham (Figure 7) as a "model" rural school. When rural electrification came to the western part of McMinn County in 1936, Mouse Creek School was one of the first schools with electric lights. It also had the first sanitary drinking fountain in McMinn County. Mouse Creek School served eight grades, four grades to each room and there were wooden desks, one student to a

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[34]Eledge interview, as quoted by Ealy, 71.



Courtesy of Effie Bigham

Figure 6. Mouse Creek School. Two-room school located five miles west of Athens



Courtesy of Effie Bigham

Figure 7. Effie Bigham, a teacher at Mouse Creek School

desk. There were blackboards on the wall. The building was heated by two Warm Morning heaters purchased by the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) which also installed glass window boards for proper ventilation.[35]

Teachers and students indicated that there was a wide variation in the high school buildings. Union Grove High School was a seven-room brick building that served grades one through twelve. When additional space was needed, the auditorium was partitioned by a curtain to make rooms for elementary grades. A retired teacher, who spent her first year of teaching there, explained the problems created by this division.

> My first year was my worst year of teaching. I taught the fourth and fifth grades. My "room" was part of the auditorium with Buster Latham on the other side of the curtain with his eighth grade students. The amount of noise was certainly 90 percent his voice. Electric lights were not installed at Union Grove until 1939.[36]

One student from the Class of 1933 of McMinn County High School, one of the largest four-year high schools, commented on the difference in appearance in the parking lots today compared to fifty years ago. Specifically, he said, the consumerism of the 1920s had not reached the

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[35]Effie Bigham, informal conversations with author, 5 April 1983, 7 July 1983, as quoted by Ealy, 71.

[36]Nellie Ruth Ray Bowers, letter to author, March 1983.

high school teachers and students in McMinn County. Few owned a car. On any given day in 1933

> there would be no more than six cars in the parking lot at McMinn. This included cars belonging to both teachers and students. In 1980, when the county opened its new comprehensive high school, about five acres were paved for the parking lot. A lot of the new cars belong to the students.[37]

Shut out of the white schools at a time when barriers between the races prevailed, blacks in McMinn County were educated in separate schools. The rural black schools were located in the black churches in the area. There was one new school building, J. L. Cook High School located in Athens. It was built in 1926 after a fire in 1925 destroyed the building maintained by the United Presbyterian Church as a mission school. The church, then, discontinued all aid. The city of Athens and McMinn County maintained a dual system of education after they assumed all responsibility for the educational program of its black citizens. In 1926, Cook School had grades one through nine. A grade was added each year until there were twelve grades.[38]

In 1935 newly elected County Superintendent Will J. Swafford reminded the McMinn County Quarterly Court

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[37]Orbel Ervin, informal conversation with author, July 1983.

[38]Nash-Ealy interview, 28 December 1982, as quoted Ealy, 90.

of the critical need for better facilities. With seventy rural schools to maintain, the court only budgeted $6,000 for repairs. In August of 1935, Swafford again reported that fifty schools needed improvements and three new buildings were needed to relieve overcrowding. Throughout the decade he continued to call to the attention of the court the deplorable situation of school facilities.[39] Ealy listed the changes that occurred as a result of retrenchment and consolidation.

> In 1930 there were forty-four one-teacher schools; by 1940 there were only twenty-seven. There were fourteen two-teacher schools in 1930, and that number grew to twenty-one. The number of three-or-more teacher schools dropped from twenty to seventeen. The number of high schools remained about the same. In 1930 there were six two-year high schools, and by 1940, there were five. There were no changes in the number of four-year high schools, which remained at five.[40]

The New Deal alphabet agencies helped with some building. The Civil Works Administration (CWA), the Public Works Administration (PWA), and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) helped with repair work and built additions to several schools. These are discussed in detail in

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[39] Etowah Enterprise, 22 August 1935; Daily Post-Athenian, 3 April 1939, as quoted by Ealy, 72.

[40] Annual Report of the Department of Education, for the Year 1930, 95, 155; Annual Report of the Department of Education, for the Year 1940, 107, 161, as quoted by Ealy, 72.

Chapter III. These renovations were very much needed and kept the buildings from further deterioration.[41]

The Tennessee Teacher reported that in the state of Tennessee in the 1930s, one-room school buildings comprised approximately 50 percent of the total schools.[42] In the Annual Report of 1930 McMinn County reported seventy-eight elementary schools, of which forty-four were one-room schools.[43] These rural community schools were marked for consolidation for educational efficiency. Many educators became convinced that the most efficient way to educate children was in large, graded schools. The one-room schools where all eight grades were taught might have been chaotic but at least they were flexible. Students progressed (or failed to progress) at their own rate; in the graded schools, rigidity was the result. The one-room and two-room schools accommodated both slow learners and the gifted. Before the gradation of classes, students had less pressure to master a given amount of material, predetermined by an adult or by a curriculum guide, during a given eight-month period, year in and year out. Many bright students who mastered material quickly skipped grades. A nonreading twelve year old would

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[41] Minutes of the McMinn County Board of Education, 14 December 1933, 85, as quoted by Ealy, 72.

[42] Tennessee Teacher, February 1984, 9.

[43] Annual Report of the Department of Education, for the Year 1930, 95.

not be stigmatized as in a graded school. All students associated together during the recess period. To teach in a one-room or two-room school, a teacher had to be particularly knowledgable in many different subjects. Gradation of classes meant that a teacher had fewer class preparations.[44]

Consolidation for educational efficiency was an idea that always came from outside, either from professional educators or progressives. No record was found where any McMinn County community asked to have its school consolidated with another. To the contrary, parents demanded that schools not be consolidated. The small community school was a great source of pride for neighborhood residents; when a community lost its school, it lost its identity since so many activities revolved around the school.[45]

Despite the difficult economic times and demands for more economy in government, many communities had delegations that attended Quarterly Court meetings seeking increased expenditures for their particular school. Opposing consolidation, some communities succeeded in getting closed schools reopened. The local newspaper reported that

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[44]Swafford conversation; Eledge interview; Bill Akins, informal conversation with author, June 1984.

[45]Akins conversation.

residents from the southwestern part of the county, South Liberty, Hortons (Figure 8), Mount Zion, and Brush Creek "thronged about the Courthouse asking that their closed schools be reopened."[46] It seemed they, like so many other county residents, wanted economy in government but not at the expense of their own school.

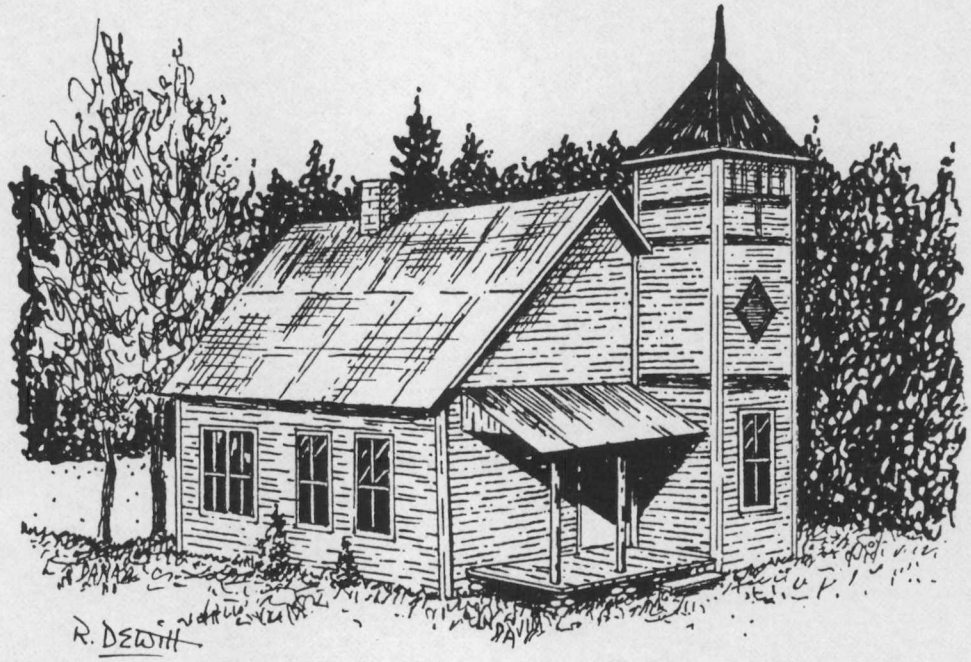
Black schools were also consolidated in the 1930s. Seven small schools (Rocky Mount, Beth Salem, New Salem, Mount Harmony, Riceville, Britton, and Brush Creek) were closed and students were transported to Athens and to Etowah.[47] Consolidation of these schools meant that the Athens school, J. L. Cook High School, had to be enlarged.

Cook School was classified as both a city and a county school. Nash credits the cooperation between the city and county school boards as the major factor in the development of Cook School. It grew from a small elementary school to an accredited high school in a very few years. The man most responsible for its quality was the principal, W. E. Nash (Figure 9), a name synonymous with black education in McMinn County. A reporter for the local newspaper summed

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[46] Daily Post-Athenian, 7 July 1932, as quoted by Ealy, 73.

[47] Nash-Ealy interview, 28 December 1982, as quoted by Ealy, 93.



Drawing by R. C. DeWitt

Figure 8. Hortons School. One-room school located near Riceville.



Courtesy of W. E. Nash

Figure 9. Professor W. E. Nash in the 1930's

up what apparently happened. She said, "Nash took the new building and steadily, relentlessly made a school of it."[48]

Cook School was financially supported by two government entities. Nash confirmed that "the states were not up to giving too much money out to the blacks."[49] The city of Athens paid one-half of the expenses for the elementary part of the school. The county paid one-half of the expenses for the high school. Chuck Redfern acknowledged that

> The black schools were not the first priority for local school dollars. When there was ample county money, the black schools got their share; but when funds were short, the black educator, Nash, had to work harder for a portion of the funds.[50]

Cook School opened November 10, 1926 in a six-room building. Nash explained how additions were made to the school. In 1931 two lots adjoining the property were bought with the city paying two-thirds of the cost and the county paying one-third. Because of consolidation and increased enrollment, Nash wanted to add two rooms at a cost estimated at $10,000. He said that the city and county agreed to pay $2,500 each towards the cost. Nash

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[48]Fran Ellers, "Professor Nash," Daily Post-Athenian, 19 July 1985; Ealy, 90.

[49]Ellers.

[50]Chuck Redfern, "Nash Born Fifty Years Too Soon?" Daily Post-Athenian, 11 June 1980, as quoted by Ealy, 93.

learned that the New Deal agencies were building additions to schools. He sought a WPA grant for the remaining funds but was turned down. Later in the decade he was told confidentially that he did not ask for enough government money, that he would have received the money if he had asked for as much as $10,000. Nash knew the additions would have to be built with local resources. Cooperation between the races and a community spirit solved the problem. Nash asked Hugh Hoback, a white man who owned a planing mill, what he would charge to build the two rooms. Hoback understood that Nash only had pledges of $5,000; therefore, he generously built the two rooms and charged exactly $5,000.[51] In a newspaper article Nash credits

> Judge E. B. Madison, Tennessee Wesleyan College, the women of Athens and many others with keeping black education afloat. He lists time after time, with sincere enthusiasm, how the kindness of others helped him expand the high school, or build a gym, or provide extra clothing, or set his programs in place.[52]

Never in the history of McMinn County was the black population large enough to support a four-year high school. Every effort was made to obtain the required number of students. Residential facilities were added to Cook School.

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[51]Nash-Ealy interview; Minutes of the McMinn County Board of Education, 44; W. E. Nash, informal conversation with author, April 1983, as quoted by Ealy, 94.

[52]Ellers, Daily Post-Athenian, 19 July 1985.

Nash explained that a dormitory "batching" program was started for

> twenty-four rural students who were lodged in buildings located close to the school. A teacher supervised the girls' building, and the janitor lived in the boys' building. Various town patrons gave furniture; in addition Nash bought iron beds for $2.00 each and obtained springs and mattresses, but students furnished their own bed covers. The Board of Education did not require students to pay to live there, but the utilities bill had to be paid by the students.[53]

In order to have additional students, Nash recruited blacks from Meigs, Monroe, and Loudon Counties, as well as from the Charleston area of Bradley County. A few students came from as far away as North Carolina and boarded at the school. He gives credit to the Athens and McMinn County Boards of Education; they never questioned the residency of students.[54] In reading the Minutes of the McMinn County Quarterly Court, Ealy found no record of the surrounding counties contributing to the financial support of their own black students enrolled in Cook School.

Warf explained that northern philanthropy had established an interest in the cause of improving southern education. He said:

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[53]Scrapbook, prepared for W. E. Nash by the Athens Educational Association on his receiving the first E. Harper Johnson Human Relations Award from the Tennessee Education Association, June 1980; Nash informal conversation, 30 June 1984, as quoted by Ealy, 94.

[54]Nash-Ealy interview.

> This interest was made effective in the formation of its executive arm, the Southern Education Board, which was gradually merged into a larger, more comprehensive, and more richly endowed organization, the General Education Board, a body which became largely underwritten by the Rockefeller family.[55]

Clinton B. Allison emphasized that the University of Tennessee, located fifty miles from McMinn County, was deeply involved in the Southern Education movement and its numerous boards.[56] Two nationally prominent organizations came to the aid of the McMinn County black schools. The Anna T. Jeanes Fund and the Julius Rosenwald Fund, along with others, affected practically every branch of black education in the South.[57]

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[55]Warf, 12.

[56]Clinton B. Allison, University of Tennessee class lecture, 7 February 1984.

[57]Anna T. Jeanes, a Quaker philanthropist from Philadelphia, established the Rural School Fund for the purpose of assisting the "rural schools of the Southern United States Community" where the great mass of blacks lived.

The work of the Rosenwald Fund, established by the Sears Roebuck business executive Julius Rosenwald, permeated the educational experiences of the blacks more deeply than that of any other fund. His interest in the general welfare of the race was broader in scope. It did not aim to do the whole job but to get both blacks and whites accustomed to doing it themselves. This fund first directed its attention toward building rural schools, later toward the support of high schools and colleges, and finally toward the provisions of fellowships to enable blacks and whites of unusual promise to advance their careers. No foundation ever cast a more benevolent shadow across the path of the black school. The

Every facet of black life was touched by the benevolence of the Rosenwald Fund. The Jeanes Fund and the Rosenwald Fund supplemented finances for the McMinn County black schools but the Rosenwald Fund was the more active fund. In 1926 the Rosenwald Fund provided $1,500 toward the total estimated cost of $20,000 for the construction of J. L. Cook High School. In addition, this organization also helped construct buildings in East Etowah, West Etowah, and Britton.[58]

Support Services

An important change to come out of the 1930s was the transition from horse-drawn wagons and trucks used to transport students, to the use of steel school buses. By 1939 the Tennessee State Legislature required the use of steel buses for the transportation of children.[59]

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fund's first and greatest undertaking was its constructive cooperation with southern states and local school districts in building schoolhouses for blacks. Henry Allen Bullock, A History of Negro Education in the South (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1967), 84-85, 125, 138-143.

[58]W. E. Nash, "Negro Education Progresses Through Years in McMinn" Daily Post-Athenian, Sesquicentennial Edition, 1969; W. E. Nash, interview by Verdell Latham, n.d., tape recording, Knoxville College, as quoted by Ealy, 91.

[59]Minutes of the McMinn County Board of Education, 52.

According to Reuben Godsey, the first transportation furnished to students in McMinn County was by privately owned wagons placed in service in the school year 1917-1918. In 1924 wooden bus bodies were built and placed on privately owned chassis.[60] In 1930 McMinn County had twenty-two wagons and seventeen cars/trucks transporting students (Table III).

As listed in the Minutes, there were several grades of transportation:

> Motor bus-Class A was a modern motor truck having four wheel brakes, front entrance, back door for emergency, fourteen inches of seating space for each child and glass windows.
>
> Motor bus--Class B was the same general type as A but with twelve inches of seating space and weather proof curtains.
>
> Motor bus--Class C was a bus body put on behind a truck cab; it had some seating facilities or standing room for the students.
>
> Horse Drawn Vehicle--Class A was a regular school wagon with fourteen inches of seating space and glass windows.
>
> Horse Drawn Vehicle--Class B was an ordinary farm wagon with twelve inches of seating space and weather proof curtains.
>
> Horse Drawn Vehicle--Class C was a farm wagon covered with canvas of the old "covered wagon" fashion; it either had seating space or standing room. All were drawn with a good strong team.[61]

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[60]Reuben R. Godsey, "A County Wide Study of Pupil Transportation in McMinn County, Tennessee" (Master's thesis, University of Tennessee, 1950), 5-7.

[61]Minutes of the McMinn County Board of Education, 20-22.

TABLE III

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION IN McMINN COUNTY, 1930-1940

Year	Number				Cost per pupil
	Wagons	Cars/ Trucks	Other Buses	All Steel Buses	
1930	22	17	0	0	$ 2.00 per month
1931	13	25	0	0	2.24 per month
1932	7	24	0	0	2.30 per month
1933	5	28	0	0	2.14 per month
1934	5	25	0	0	1.80 per month
1935	5	26	0	0	1.71 per month
1936	3	33	0	0	2.00 per month
1937	3	34	0	0	19.79 per year
1938	0	2	32	0	15.82 eight months
1939	0	3	32	1	15.50 eight months
1940	0	2	28	4	17.26 eight months

Source: Annual Report of the Department of Education, State of Tennessee, For the Scholastic Years, 1930-1940.

During the 1930s there were schools located in most communities; therefore, most students walked to school. McMinn County made provisions for transporting students who lived in areas where transportation was required. Only students who lived two miles or more from school were transported. Exceptions were made for children ages six and seven who lived one or two miles from school. Bus drivers made one year contracts with the McMinn County Board of Education; their pay varied according to the type of vehicle used and the type of road on which they had to travel.[62]

Former students recalled how they got to school. Marie Milligan attended Mount Harmony School, a two-room school not served by school buses. She writes:

> We walked to school during warm weather. In rainy weather we rode in the buggy because the road had so many mud holes that the car would stick in the mud and then everybody had to get out and push it. If we had a big snow, daddy would take us in a sled drawn by the horses and we would pick up all the children along the way.[63]

Another former student remembered that schools were never closed because of snow. Eledge said, "We thought that was a good time to go to school because you could not do any

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[62] Ibid.

[63] Marie Orr Milligan, letter to author, 13 April 1983.

farm work in the snow. We walked in the snow to get to school."[64]

June Stephens attended Niota School, a large school which served the north central part of the county. She noted:

> Things had improved since my mother and father were in school. I walked a mile to catch the "school wagon" to ride two miles. The wagon had a squared bed with a flat top and curtains that rolled down over the sides for protection from the rain and cold. There was a long plank bench down either side and a short bench across the back. Highway 11 was the only paved road in the area, so the wooden, steel rimmed wagon wheels rolled over rough roads. Many times rocks were hauled and put in low, muddy places to keep the road passable. I can remember times we school children would get out of the wagon so the team of mules could pull it through deep mud. The wagon had no heater. Dad would sometimes double me on horseback to meet the wagon.[65]

The consolidation program necessitated pupil transportation to the large schools. In 1937 the State of Tennessee began to allot funds to counties that were transporting pupils. This allotment of state funds further spurred the consolidation and transportation programs. Transported pupils, as a whole, had a better average daily attendance than non-transported pupils.[66]

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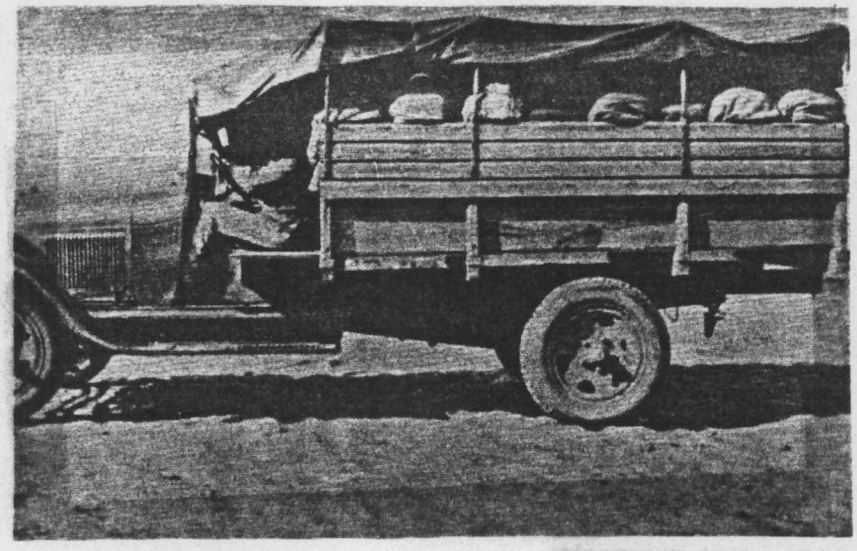
[64]Eledge interview.

[65]June Reed Stephens, letter to Bill Akins, 1 April 1983.

[66]Godsey thesis, 7, 23.

In the early 1930s the Rosenwald Fund helped with the operation of the bus program for black schools. Nash explained that the Rosenwald arrangement gave the county time to make provisions for transporting these pupils. It provided $500 the first year, $300 the second year, and finally $200. Not only did the transported pupils need the service to get to school, J. L. Cook High School had to have the pupils to meet the minimum number required for a four-year high school (Figure 10 and Figure 11). When the Rosenwald funds ended, the McMinn County Quarterly Court had to fund the bus program. The principal, W. E. Nash, never went before the seventeen court members to ask for money until he had previously conferred with nine members and received their approval before bringing up the matter in a meeting. He had followed this procedure for the bus program. E. B. Madison, a great friend of the black schools and a direct descendent of President James Madison, helped the bus program get court approval. One court member strongly objected to spending county tax money for the bus program and asked, "Do you mean 'that thing' that comes by my house? When I attended school I walked eight miles, and they can do the same." Madison gave the following analogy to the court member:

> Suppose you were real hungry and someone cooked a nice meal of fried chicken, vegetables, and all the trimmings, and set it on the table in front of you. Just as you got ready to eat,



Courtesy of W. E. Nash

Figure 10. The first school bus used to transport students to J. L. Cook High School was a 1929 truck.



Courtesy of W. E. Nash

Figure 11. 1940 School Bus

> someone came and took it all back into the kitchen. These people have worked to get the bus program for their school and we cannot take it away from them.[67]

The court members found the necessary tax money to fund the bus program for Cook School.

Another support program that had to be budgeted was the janitorial services. During the 1930s the McMinn County School Board had no uniform policy regarding the payment of janitors in the elementary schools. Some schools had janitors and other schools of equal rank had none. Where there were no janitors, teachers assumed clean-up duty along with building fires to heat the school. To correct this situation, early in 1931, the Board recommended the sum of $2.00 per teacher, per month, be allowed for janitorial services; the recommended total was $2,560. This support was discontinued after one year.[68]

In some schools a student was hired for janitorial duty. Rex Moses, a student who attended the three-room Mountain View School recalled:

> In the wintertime I received five cents for each fire that I built in each of three pot-bellied stoves as well as five cents for sweeping each room, making a total of thirty cents per day. That was a lot of money for a boy. With the thirty cents I bought my school books and my clothes.

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[67]Nash conversation, October 1983; Ealy, 94.

[68]Minutes of the McMinn County Board of Education, 25, 69.

> I sometimes had to hold my warrants because the county did not have the money to pay. When they had money, I got full value. Otherwise, I had to trade the warrants to someone and they would give me less than they were worth, usually just half.[69]

Janitors were employed for the larger schools. At McMinn County High School and Etowah High School they were paid $35 per month. At six of the other large schools, they were paid from $12 to $25 per month.[70]

The support service that appeared in many schools by the late 1930s was the cafeteria. At the beginning of the decade there were no regular cafeterias. In the early 1930s students routinely carried their lunches in molasses buckets, or wrapped in newspapers, or in paper bags, referred to as paper pokes. The food usually was the product of the family's own farm or garden. The type of food reflected either the family's extreme poverty or their relative freedom from want if there was plenty of food at home. Students contended with peer pressure during the Depression years just as they do today. Any food bought at a store was a kind of status symbol, reflecting a family's ability to buy. Students would trade tasty "farm food" for very bland sandwich relish spread on loaf bread just to have

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[69]Rex Moses, interview by W. W. Eledge, tape recording, n.d.

[70]Daily Post-Athenian, 7 July 1932.

something to eat that was bought. One Depression-era student found it interesting that the type of food offered in the popular fast-food restaurants today was not considered preferable because it was so commonplace in rural homes. She commented that

> Today a biscuit and ham is a real treat. When I was a child, such food was always available but not desirable. I longed for the bought loaf bread and peanut butter that many of the "town" children brought for lunch. I remember one time when Mom tried to find something that I would eat for lunch and she made "rollies"--rich biscuit dough spread with real butter, sprinkled with brown sugar and cinnamon, rolled, sliced, and baked. Delicious!!! But when my lunch bag was misplaced and ended up at the teacher's desk, I was too ashamed to claim it. Later, my parents bought one loaf of bread a week for my lunch.[71]

A student at the black high school wrote that black schools had no regular cafeterias. She said:

> I know of quite a few students who lived as far as two miles out who went home for dinner (that is what it was called in those days), and they would be back in time for the next period. Brown paper bags were very much around.[72]

Willard Yarbrough, another Depression student, remembered similar incidents in the white high schools. He revealed that

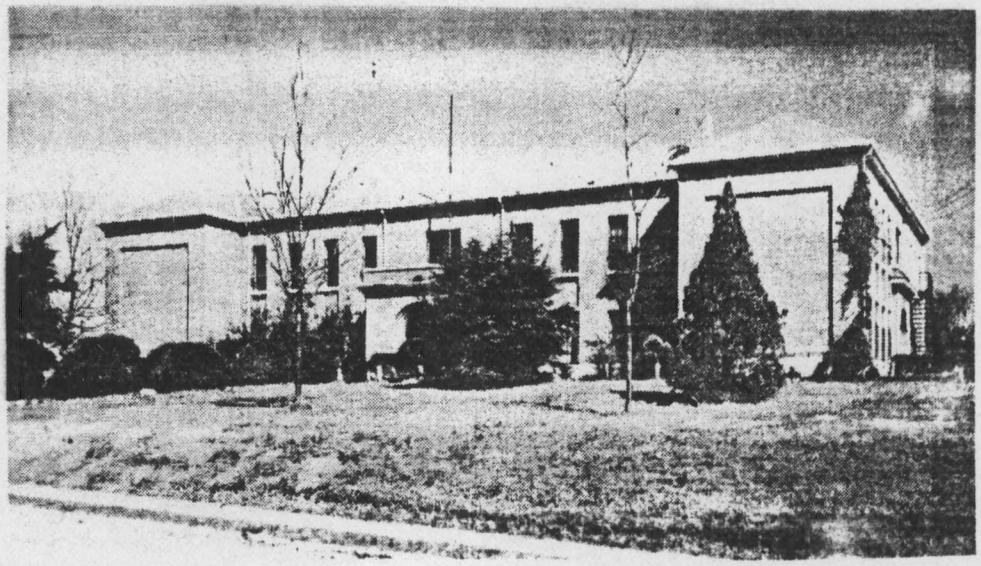
> Students were well aware of those families who had no money. It was easy to tell at Etowah High School (Figure 12). Students whose fathers

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[71]Stephens letter, as quoted by Ealy, 78.

[72]Amy Dickerson Johnson, letter to author, 3 February 1983, as quoted by Ealy, 97-98.

CRANES CREST



Courtesy of Bonnie Clayton

Figure 12. Etowah High School

> had jobs ate at the school cafeteria where home economics students, all girls, prepared the food. Those who did not eat there went home for lunch. Those who lived too far away skipped lunch and went hungry.[73]

The PTA women assumed the tremendous task of feeding hungry students. Since McMinn County was located in an agricultural region, farmers who produced more food than their families needed, donated bushels of vegetables. The PTA women spent hours canning a soup mixture; they then took turns serving the hot food to the students who did not live close enough to walk home for lunch.[74]

Later in the decade the government began its program of providing surplus food (beef, evaporated milk, prunes, etc.) and elementary teachers added one more job to their agenda. A former student indicated that teachers took time from their regular schedule to cook a soup mixture for the students. From Monday through Friday, students ate soup; they contributed whatever they could--carrots, potatoes, onions, or meat. She said, "My sister would take a ten-cents box of crackers for her week's soup. I was older so I helped serve and wash the bowls in exchange for my lunch."[75] A

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[73]Willard Yarbrough, letter to author, 4 January 1983, as quoted by Ealy, 78.

[74]Daily Post-Athenian, Sesquicentennial Edition, 1969, as quoted by Ealy, 78.

[75]Ruth Buttram Miller, letter to author, May 1983, as quoted by Ealy, 79.

Niota student remembered that she paid a quarter per week for her soup, crackers, and milk and that her father thought that this was an outrageous price.[76]

The government food was also distributed by the teachers to the parents of the students. Rural people unaccustomed to government hand-outs were reluctant to accept the food. One teacher did not send food home unless students asked first and parents agreed. If they said yes, she then bagged the food and sent it home with the student.[77]

By late 1935 with help from one of the New Deal alphabet agencies, the WPA, free lunch programs were begun in fifteen county schools. The Superintendent reported a notable increase in school attendance as a result of the free lunches.[78] According to Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot using surplus government food to feed needy children "was not a new idea . . . but the WPA succeeded in institutionalizing the practice."[79]

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[76]Kate DeWitt Buckner, informal conversation with author, 19 February 1983, as quoted by Ealy, 79.

[77]Bigham conversation.

[78]Daily Post-Athenian, 22 January 1936, as quoted by Ealy, 79.

[79]David Tyack, Robert Lowe, and Elisabeth Hansot, Public Schools in Hard Times (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 132.

Teachers

Children were the most important people in any school. Next to the children in importance came the teachers. The role of the teacher was greatly expanded during the 1930s. Out of necessity teachers accepted roles traditionally assumed to be the family's role. Not only did they teach, they became social workers doing what they could to improve the lives of their students.

In some ways, the teachers of the 1980s look with envy on the teachers of the 1930s. Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot state that public educators of the mid-1980s "have had to learn to cope with three kinds of scarcity: pupils, money, and public confidence."[80] Of the three problems, the teachers of the 1930s coped with a scarcity of money. Americans kept their optimistic belief in education throughout the Depression years. Lack of pupils was not a problem in the 1930s.

Although certification requirements for teachers were not high during the 1930s as they are in the 1980s, the educational attainments of the McMinn County teachers were quite respectable for a rural, southern county (Table IV and Table V). An unusual thing happened in 1933 when the State of Tennessee extended a "Depression courtesy" to the

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[80] Ibid, 187.

TABLE IV

TRAINING OF COUNTY ELEMENTARY TEACHERS, WHITE, 1930-1940

Year	5 Years College	College Graduate	3 Years College	2 Years College	1 Year College	H.S. Grad.	Less than H.S. Grad.	Grand Total
1930	0	7	5	34	69	29	6	150
1931	0	13	5	37	60	30	8	153
1932	0	11	5	40	67	16	6	145
1933	0	10	6	48	57	9	4	134
1934	0	11	6	46	56	6	2	127
1935	0	11	11	53	49	3	1	128
1936	0	13	10	59	37	6	1	126
1937	1	15	10	68	32	6	2	134
1938	1	8	10	84	19	5	1	128
1939	3	16	12	97	14	1	2	145
1940	3	15	14	94	14	1	2	143

Source: Annual Report of the Department of Education, State of Tennessee, For the Scholastic Years, 1930-1940.

TABLE V

TRAINING OF COUNTY ELEMENTARY TEACHERS, BLACK, 1930-1940

Year	5 Years College	College Graduate	3 Years College	2 Years College	1 Year College	H.S. Grad.	Less than H.S. Grad.	Grand Total
1930	0	3	1	2	5	6	0	17
1931	0	2	2	2	3	5	2	16
1932	0	4	1	4	3	2	0	14
1933	0	3	1	1	5	2	0	12
1934	0	3	0	1	3	3	0	10
1935	0	2	0	3	5	1	0	11
1936	0	3	1	3	3	3	0	13
1937	0	3	1	2	2	3	0	11
1938	0	4	0	2	4	3	0	13
1939	0	5	0	3	1	2	0	11
1940	0	4	0	4	1	2	0	11

Source: Annual Reports of the Department of Education, State of Tennessee, For the Scholastic Years, 1930-1940.

teachers since the state could not meet its appropriations for the salaries of teachers.[81] Andrew Holt did not agree with this; he argued that certification requirements should have been kept at the 1933 level. He asserted that

> The educational forces suffered a set-back in the passage of an apparently harmless bill which granted a "depression courtesy" to all teachers holding limited training certificates, by allowing them to teach for the next biennium under their old certificates, without complying with the requirements of attending summer school or renewing them by examination. Thus, the 53 percent of the state's elementary teachers who held certificates based on less than two years of college work were freed from the necessity of continuing their professional training during the next biennium.[82]

Money was given by the General Education Board in the form of scholarships to deserving black teachers in order that they might be able to continue their professional training in summer schools.[83] Every other year throughout the 1930s, W. E. Nash, principal of the black high school, received one of the grants to attend summer school; through this program he amassed many hours of graduate credit.[84]

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[81] Annual Report of the Department of Education For the Year Ending 30 June 1933, 13.

[82] Holt, 397-398.

[83] W. E. Turner, "A Survey of Negro High Schools in Tennessee" (Master's thesis, University of Tennessee, 1933) 20.

[84] W. E. Nash, informal conversation with author, 29 June 1984.

In McMinn County, where local politics were a fact of life, many school board members actually did the hiring of teachers. A valued qualification for being employed in the white schools was that the teacher was from McMinn County. Jobs were scarce during the 1930s and local politicians took care of their own. A former county superintendent confirmed this. He said, "We did not have to go out of the county very much to find teachers unless it was to hire someone to teach business courses."[85] Cook High graduates, recommended by Nash, made up the majority of teachers for black public elementary schools in the county.[86] McMinn County had many competent teachers but some residents who wished to remain anonymous, admitted that, like most any time, there were both good and bad teachers. There were persons whose ability and training were commensurate with the small salaries they received.

High school teachers were better trained than were elementary teachers. As shown in Table VI, the majority were college graduates; all had at least two years of college. Most had been trained in Tennessee colleges. For the most part, the white high school teachers were local people; however, this was not the case in the black high

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[85]Will J. Swafford, informal conversation with author, 29 June 1984.

[86]Nash conversation.

TABLE VI

TRAINING OF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS, WHITE AND BLACK, 1930-1940

Year	College Graduate		3 Years College		2 Years College	
	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black
1930	34	4	3	0	6	0
1931	40	5	1	0	4	0
1932	40	5	1	0	4	0
1933	33	5	0	0	2	0
1934	32	5	1	0	3	0
1935	32	5	0	0	3	0
1936	35	5	3	0	0	0
1937	No Report					
1938	No Report					
1939	No Report					
1940	No Report					

Source: Annual Reports of the Department of Education, State of Tennessee, For the Scholastic Years, 1930-1940.

school. A persistent criticism by historians of black schools was that teachers were poorly trained. At J. L. Cook High School all five teachers were college graduates and all taught in their areas of certification. Nash indicated that the three male teachers represented three states: Alabama, Virginia, and Ohio. All were educated at Knoxville College. The two women teachers were from Kentucky and Chattanooga, Tennessee. One was educated at Lane College and one graduated from Tennessee State College in Nashville.[87]

In the public schools of McMinn County where the preponderance of teachers were women, there were no female principals of large schools. Where education was supposedly a woman's field, women seldom made it to the top, but one did. Otho Burn was hired during the late 1930s as supervisor of the elementary schools.[88]

In 1934 the following rating and salaries of teachers was in effect:

Rating of Teachers
Class A required a Bachelor's Degree
Class B required a four years course
Class C required four professional examinations
Class D required four years night school
Class E required four years high school or the equivalent

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[87]Nash conversation.

[88]Minutes of the McMinn County Board of Education, 107.

Salaries of Teachers

Class A received $85 a month for nine months
Class B received $70 a month for nine months
Class C received $60 a month for nine months
Class D received $50 a month for nine months
Class E received $35 a month for nine months

An additional $2.50 per month was allowed for each year of experience up to the maximum of six years. Thus no teacher received over $100 per month.[89]

Average monthly salaries of elementary teachers, as shown in Table VII, varied considerably. Throughout the 1930s men generally received higher average salaries than women. Teachers' salaries, both elementary and high school, were frequently reduced during the 1930s. B. L. Hale, principal of McMinn County High School, watched his 1928 salary of $2,250 per year decrease many times. By 1943, when salaries had increased somewhat, his salary was almost back to its 1928 level.[90]

Often the reduced salaries were not paid promptly. A local newspaper reported in 1930 that Etowah city teachers

> had not been paid for their March services. The city could not pay until property taxes were collected and these were slow coming in. Also,

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[89] Tennessee Valley Authority Industrial Data, 43, as quoted by Ealy, 75.

[90] Annual Report of the Department of Education, 1930-1940; Hale interview.

TABLE VII

AVERAGE MONTHLY SALARIES OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

Year	County				City			
	White		Black		White		Black	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
1930	$92.29	$81.19	$80.83	$74.29	$148.33	$84.66	$144.45	$60.00
1931 1932 1933 1934	Maximum, Median, and Minimum Salaries Reported							
1935	72.63	68.87	97.50	60.55	96.67	68.38	80.00	60.00
1936	85.31	78.41	108.00	74.81	89.50	76.87	80.00	60.00
1937	88.38	78.80	110.00	78.55	81.29	150.00	80.00	60.00
1938	79.48	76.04	81.00	73.44	122.00	77.93	80.00	60.00
1939	81.37	78.02	83.00	81.43	126.20	80.98	60.00	65.00
1940	80.74	75.44	72.12	79.14	123.23	81.81	60.00	77.95

Source: Annual Reports of the Department of Education, State of Tennessee, For the Scholastic Years, 1930-1940.

> Athens city teachers worked four months without pay in 1931. Their salaries were forthcoming when the Board of Aldermen authorized the city to borrow $12,000.[91]

When McMinn County had trouble collecting property taxes, it was forced to issue warrants stamped with the clause "payable when funds are available." Teachers and other support personnel receiving these warrants and needing the money were forced to discount them. Fred Wankan maintained that several merchants and banks added to their wealth at the expense of the teachers by buying the warrants and shaving about 15 percent from the full value. He said, "These scalpers knew when the county had money and cashed them in at full value."[92]

Teachers used ingenuous ways to cash their warrants. Jessie McCurdy, who taught at a two-teacher school, did not

> discount her warrants. She had friends who paid her the full price. In turn, they took the warrants and paid their county property taxes with them. Finally, the county put a stop to this because no "real money" was flowing into the county treasury.[93]

Another teacher, unmarried and living with her parents during the 1930s, kept all her warrants. When she cashed

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[91] Etowah Enterprise, 18 April 1930; Minutes of the City of Athens, Board of Aldermen, 14 December 1931, as quoted by Ealy, 75.

[92] Fred Wankan, letter to author, September 1983.

[93] Jessie McCurdy, telephone conversation with author, 1 February 1983, as quoted by Ealy, 75.

them in the 1940s, she had accumulated enough to pay for her own home.[94]

An amusing story circulated in McMinn County for years regarding the warrants. Frank McKinney related the story:

> On one occasion a woman teacher did have success in getting her warrants cashed at the store where she traded. She told a man teacher about her success and he decided to contact the storekeeper.
>
> As he approached the store a deputy sheriff intercepted him, "Hey, buddy!" he said, as he laid his hand on the man's shoulder, "I have a warrant for you."
>
> "You can keep the damn thing," the school-teacher said. "I have a whole pocket full of them I can't get cashed."[95]

Teachers who had no means of transportation "boarded" with a family in the community where they taught. The necessity of such arrangements tended to keep the staff young and unmarried; therefore, the salaries were also kept low. One teacher who boarded said the sum she paid for her lodging and meals "varied from $8 to $15 per month and the family usually provided me with a packed lunch."[96]

Those teachers who lived at home and had no car found transportation to the rural schools a problem. One former

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[94]Violet Plank Riggs, interview by Jo Clift, 9 August 1984.

[95]Frank McKinney, letter to author, 23 September 1984.

[96]Bigham conversation.

teacher shared her experience of getting to and from school. She wrote:

> I rode with the principal of another school that was located farther on down the road. He could not pick me up in the afternoon after school so I rode the train from Riceville to Athens and then walked from the train station to my home.[97]

Though teachers were poorly paid and lacked high social status, they, nevertheless, were expected to be models of Christian character. Local communities had unwritten standards of behavior. Church membership and participation were expected. Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot quote from Willard Waller's book The Sociology of Teaching about standards of behavior. They said:

> Outside school--at least in small communities--teachers were expected by patrons to toe the line of the strictest moral standards regarding smoking, drinking, and sex; inside the school, teachers were expected to maintain order while giving the young the kinds of instruction familiar to their parents.[98]

This standard of behavior was typical of what people in McMinn County expected from their teachers.

Some students recalled teachers who had maintained the expected standards of behavior. For many reasons, these teachers had a positive influence on pupils. A former Cook School student recalled the United Presbyterian minister's wife who taught in the elementary grades. She wrote:

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[97]Miller letter.

[98]Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 167.

> Our first grade teacher, Mrs. C. H. Wilson, was one of the truly great teachers. She used spools that thread had been on. She strung them up the whole length of the blackboard. From those spools we learned to count, to add, to multiply--even our ABC's and Bible verses.[99]

Fifty years later, Depression students fondly remember those teachers. A former Etowah student shares his feelings:

> Back then, hopefully now, my teachers in junior high and high school were to me heroes and heroines. We respected them and teachers in turn inspired us to study hard and inspired us to great accomplishments, such as college educations and great careers.
>
> One such teacher was Annabelle Powell who taught me English. One day in class she read to us a theme I had written as an English assignment. She extolled my meager efforts and inspired me to become a writer. Primarily because of that recognition and inspiration I became a journalist. I believe my career has been highly successful.[100]

That same student recalled another teacher whose behavior amused the students and made headlines in the high school newspaper. He continued:

> Courtships were of the greatest as "two by two they came marching through." An attractive brunette teacher, fresh from college campus, was love-bitten also. She and a student struck up more than a casual relationship. Their lover spats were overheard in the hallways between classes--when a class moved to another room for another subject. The woman teacher told her younger romantic what she thought of him in no uncertain terms. Thereafter, her classroom students suffered because her mind was not on her teaching.

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[99]Johnson letter.

[100]Yarbrough letter, 4 January 1983.

> This extracurricular episode made the front page of a mimeographed newsletter dubbed THE SNOOPER. That's where my own journalistic career budded. The principal, a dogmatic educator and would-be disciplinarian, called me to the office. I took the "Fifth" when I truly didn't know the meaning of a word that was to surface decades later. A newspaperman, you know, doesn't likely identify certain facts; nor will he willingly incriminate himself. (The teacher-student affair ended happily in marriage.)
> THE SNOOPER, however, was short lived.[101]

Tenure or permanance of teaching positions did not concern McMinn County School Board members in the 1930s. Teachers taught as long as their behavior pleased board members. The local newspaper reported the latest edict of the Board:

> Women teachers in the McMinn system who marry during a school year will thereby vacate automatically their places, only one teacher from a single family will be employed in the elementary grades except in exceptional cases (This would not apply to widows with dependents.), and any teacher, man or woman, who is found at a dance hall, beer garden, or skating rink will avoid dismissal by resigning instantly.[102]

The Tennessee Teacher of December 1934 confirmed that the practice of removing experienced teachers was widespread throughout the state:

> During the past three years there has hardly been a county in Tennessee in which there was not one and often, many instances involving the removal of a tried and experienced teacher in order that the place might be filled by an inexperienced and untrained person by

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[101] Yarbrough letter, 14 January 1983.

[102] Daily Post-Athenian, 15 April 1936.

> way of discharging a political debt. This type of political meddling is the favorite indoor sport of local politicians in many of our Tennessee counties. I was recently informed by the principal of a large county high school that only the protection afforded by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools has prevented the local politicians from wrecking his teaching staff.[103]

The Athens City School Board actually did the type of political meddling reported in the magazine. One teacher received an engagement ring from her fiancé and would not wear it for fear of losing her job.[104] Her fears were real because in April, 1933, three married teachers at Forrest Hill School and one at North City were replaced by single women. The local newspaper reported that it was because their husbands were employed and single women needed work more. One of the dismissed teachers told a different story:

> A school board member's daughter had graduated from college and had been led to expect a teaching job. When applications for the following year were to be submitted, it was suggested that only two of the married teachers apply for the 1933-1934 school year. If we agreed to do this, the school board could hire the board member's daughter and two of the married teachers. As experienced teachers we refused to be manipulated in this manner and none of us were rehired. The only reason given was that we had married.
>
> In that same year the Athens City Schools ran out of money before the school year ended. All three of us taught the last two weeks free of charge. We felt the children needed a full year of instruction.

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[103] Tennessee Teacher, December 1934, as quoted in Tennessee Teacher, February 1984, 35.

[104] Riggs interview.

> My husband was very upset. When he was asked by the chairman of the board several years later if I would reapply for a teaching job, he replied, "She is still married to the same man that she married in 1932 when she was refused a job."[105]

Educators faced other forms of intimidation in other areas of the United States as William Randolph Hearst "filled his national chain of newspapers with cartoons and editorials warning of the red menace in schools and colleges.[106] Some influential groups in Tennessee, such as the American Legion, requested the Tennessee State Board of Education to institute special requirements for teachers such as an oath of allegiance to the Constitution of the United States.

Whether McMinn County teachers had ever heard of George Counts or William Heard Kilpatrick at Teachers College at Columbia University, or read their radical magazine, The Social Frontier, is not known. However, the American Legion had heard from somewhere about some educators who focused on educational radicalism during the 1930s that smacked of socialism and communism.[107] The American Legion recommended that McMinn County teachers make a statement. Therefore,

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[105]Blanche Moses, telephone conversation with author, 23 April 1983, as quoted by Ealy, 76-77.

[106]Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 63.

[107]Joel Spring, The Sorting Machine, National Educational Policy Since 1945 (New York: Longman Inc., 1976), 11.

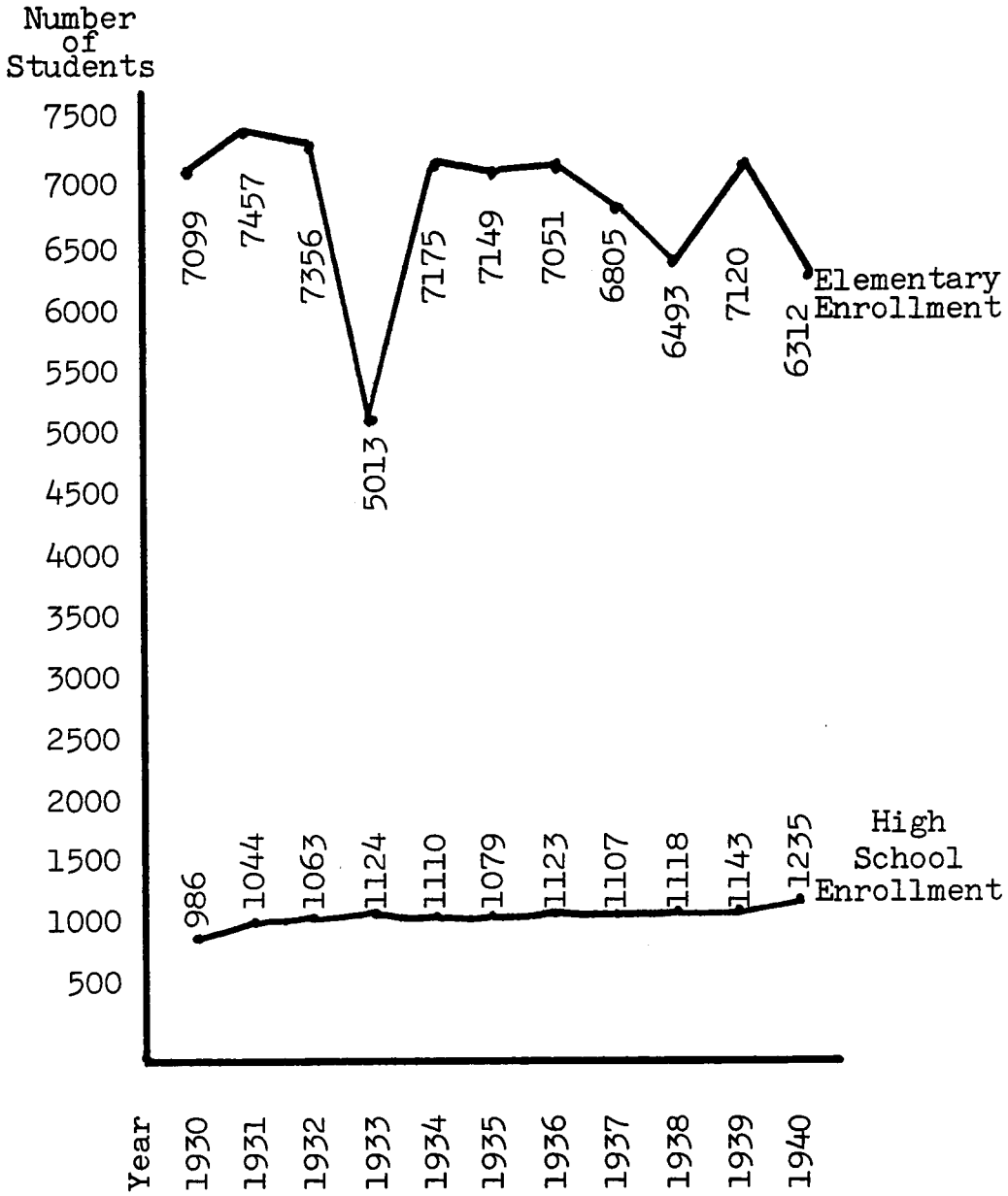
an elaborate ceremony was held on a Saturday in October, 1934. The newspaper reported that all McMinn County teachers, city teachers from Englewood, Etowah, and Athens, along with the Tennessee Wesleyan College faculty took the oath administered by a judge from Maryville, Tennessee. The newspaper was careful to report that there was no suspicion of disloyalty on the part of any teacher in McMinn County. For those teachers, the oath was only a gesture, an encouragement to other counties to do likewise. McMinn County was the first county in the state of Tennessee to respond to this call for the oath.[108] No opposition was found to the oath-taking ceremony.

Student Life

Never before had so many students suffered so much. The Depression's effects on student health, appearance, and enrollment were quite apparent. Elementary enrollment was particularly affected. The graph in Figure 13 indicates a precipitous drop in 1933. When these figures were compared with figures from other Tennessee counties having city schools, it was evident that the state statistician did not combine city and county school enrollment figures for 1933. Average daily attendance for McMinn County elementary schools

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[108] Daily Post-Athenian, 12 October 1934.



Source: Annual Report of the Department of Education, State of Tennessee, For the Scholastic Years, 1930-1940.

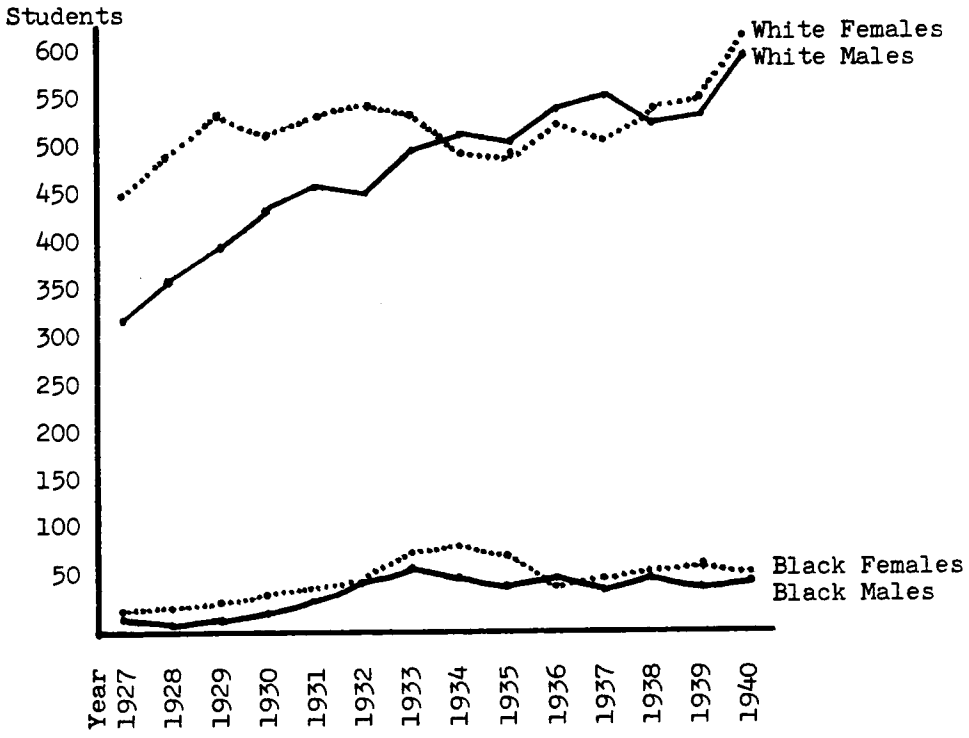
Figure 13. Total Enrollment in McMinn County, 1930-1940

was higher than the total enrollment figures for the county in the year 1933. Nevertheless the enrollment of elementary students was more affected than was the high school enrollment.

During the 1930s, the highest enrollment in the elementary schools was 7,457 in 1931. High school enrollment was steady throughout the 1930s. There had been a steady increase in high school boys since 1928; prior to that time, mainly girls were in high school. By 1934 there were as many boys as girls enrolled in high school (Figure 14). The largest high school enrollment occurred in 1940 when 1,235 students enrolled. High Schools assumed custodial responsibility for youth since there were few jobs available.

Well-to-do students went to high school. Many other families illustrating their faith in education, made sacrifices to send their young people to high school. Ambitious students with "nothing to do" went to school because no jobs were available. Older students who had been out of high school for a number of years returned. Therefore, high school enrollment remained steady throughout the 1930s.

The drop-out rate for elementary students was significent. In the 1930s, many students in McMinn County ended their formal education at the eighth grade level rather than leave their one or two-room school to continue on to high school.



Source: Annual Report of the Department of Education, State of Tennessee, For the Scholastic Years, 1927-1940.

Figure 14. High School Enrollment in McMinn County, 1927-1940.

School attendance was compulsory in the 1930s. Holt pointed out that Tennessee passed a compulsory attendance law in 1913.[109] However, absenteeism was a tremendous problem throughout the decade. At one point, the truant officer reported that 500 children were out of school due to the lack of clothing. The newspaper reported that, according to the superintendent, this surpassed all previous records of its kind. PTA units, all affiliated with the Red Cross, attempted to solve this problem before federal government funds became available. Things improved, and by 1938 McMinn County rigidly enforced school attendance laws. For example, an Englewood man was fined $10 and sentenced to eighteen days in the workhouse for failure to send his children to school.[110]

The principal of the black high school did everything he could to keep students in school. The flexibility of his rules was recalled by a former student:

> I attended J. L. Cook High School. I had three friends who lived in Riceville about six miles from Athens. There were times when they missed their ride and would have to walk. It was the policy of our school that if there was a young child and no one to care for him, rather than keep an older child at home to babysit and deprive him or her of schooling, as

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[109] Holt, 109.

[110] Daily Post-Athenian, 27 November 1934, 14 February 1938, as quoted by Ealy, 77.

> long as the younger child could walk, Professor Nash allowed the child to come to school. That was what the Caldwell boys of Riceville did. When they walked they would carry the youngest. He couldn't have been over two years of age. Only sickness kept them from school. They grew up to be good, prosperous, happy, well adjusted people who were also generous.[111]

Lack of sufficient clothing was a problem. The County PTA President, Harry Ward, the County School Superintendent, E. L. Lingerfelt, and the Home Demonstration Agent, Myrtle Webb, had the responsibility of distributing government cloth. The PTA members made garments which were distributed by the teachers to children needing clothes. Later in the 1930s sewing centers were set up which served a two-fold purpose; they taught many women to sew for their own families and the garments were useful in clothing needy children. Schools set up clothes closets whereby good used clothing was distributed to the needy.[112]

Too much credit cannot be given to the PTAs for the work they did keeping needy children in school. To finance their many worthwhile projects, the PTAs conducted many fund-raising events--the most popular events were "pie suppers." Fred Wankan, the local newspaper editor, had a powerful public speaking voice; he auctioned off pies at pie suppers

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[111]Johnson letter, as quoted by Ealy, 97.

[112]Daily Post-Athenian, 30 August 1932, 21 October 1932.

and conducted cake walks.[113] Pie suppers were also social occasions in the community and rural people looked forward to seeing who would get the cake for being the prettiest girl, the jar of pickles for the ugliest boy, and the rolling pin for the most hen-pecked husband. While most had good memories of pie suppers, fifty years later one former student shared her disappointment:

> Our big event was the annual pie supper. Once I made my pie and put it into a box elaborately wrapped with crepe paper. I put a bow of another color on top. I was so excited because I expected this tow-headed fellow that I had a crush on, to buy my beautiful pie. Much to my dismay, "he" showed up but not long enough to buy my pie and eat it with me, because he brought his girlfriend from his own community with him. I was heartbroken and I always, until this day, think of that whenever we have a Friday the 13th. I wasn't as lucky as my older sister whose pie always brought the highest price because all of the boys wanted her pie. They would bid the price up as high as possible so her current "beau" would be compelled to bid-it-in.[114]

Eledge told of other PTA fund-raising events. He said they included box suppers, plays, and performances by noted personalities with the PTA sharing in a percentage of the profits. Once he remembered, Roy Acuff came with his Smoky Mountain Boys.[115]

The PTAs used their money to enrich the lives of the

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[113]Wankan, "Echoes," 113.

[114]Milligan letter, as quoted by Ealy, 80.

[115]Eledge interview, as quoted by Ealy, 80.

students. Mouse Creek School had a very active PTA. They purchased

> stage curtains, uniforms for the ball teams, glass window boards (the first in the county), a piano, World Book Encyclopedias, library books, two Warm Morning heaters, and also trees and shrubs to beautify the grounds.[116]

Typical clothes for students of the 1930s were overalls for the boys and dresses made from feed sacks for girls. One pair of shoes had to last the winter and when they could no longer be resoled, students went barefoot. Teen-agers at every age have their own standards for a macho image. Eledge was amused when he remembered the standards of the 1930s. He said, "Boys of the 1930s considered it a sign of virility to be the first to go barefooted in early spring." He also recalled one town student who was small for his age, who "asked his parents to buy him the heavy, ankle-high brogan work shoes like the farm boys wore."[117]

Several students described the type of clothing worn by girls. Cochran said:

> I lived on a farm and wore clothes made of feed sacks that had been washed and boiled until most of the letters and pictures were faded. Sometimes clothing was made from sacks with floral design prints. Even underwear and nightgowns were made of feed sacks.[118]

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[116]Bigham conversation, as quoted by Ealy, 80.

[117]Eledge interview, as quoted by Ealy, 80.

[118]Marian Cochran, letter to author, March 1983.

Miller stated, "When I graduated from McMinn County High School, I sang with the Glee Club

> wearing a suit made out of sugar sacks, and I was proud of that suit. With little cash on hand, mothers would buy gingham cloth for 10¢ a yard or three yards for 25¢. If they did not sew, they would hire a seamstress to make a dress for 25¢ to 50¢. There were few patterns, and many girls went to school wearing dresses that ingenuous mothers had copied from the Sears, Roebuck catalogue or the latest Progressive Farmer magazine.[119]

Massengill continued:

> People "made do" with the clothes they had. Neighbors, friends, and relatives shared "hand-me-down" clothes. At times, blackberries were picked and swapped for used clothing.[120]

Stephens concluded that "while all of this had a humbling effect, it also made people alert to every opportunity to fashion material into clothing."[121]

Ealy found that individuals did what they could to help clothe needy children. John Astor Bloom started a local program that continues to the present time. Bloom, a bachelor who knew how to invest money, cared about

> the children of Englewood. He perpetuated his family name in a positive way and helped clothe thousands of children. He left specific instructions in his will. The Bloom Fund was to be used for the benefit of the worthy, helpless, destitute, poor children of the

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[119]Miller letter, as quoted by Ealy, 80-81.

[120]Louise Massengill, interview by Bill Akins, 4 May 1983, as quoted by Ealy, 81.

[121]Stephens letter, as quoted by Ealy, 81.

> vicinity of Englewood. In 1982 approximately 140 needy children of the Englewood area received clothing.[122]

Women in states other than Tennessee helped to keep black education afloat. Four New Yorkers helped with the clothing in the black community. The need for clothing did not end with the Depression years. A few years after the Depression a white woman from New York Rose Vincent Trotta, visited Athens. Her daughter shared her story:

> Mother was visiting me as I was a student at Tennessee Wesleyan College. She met my housemother who invited her to a recital at J. L. Cook High School in Athens. Mother accepted and met Mrs. Willie Nash. Mrs. Nash, wife of Professor Nash, told Mother of the need to help, in any way, the children of the community and when Mother returned home she, in turn, told family and friends.[123]

No one in Athens realized how sincere the New Yorker's interest was or how long the interest would continue. Beginning in the 1940s and continuing to 1974, Mrs. Trotta and her sisters, Mrs. Alfred Esposito and Mrs. Anna Friscia, and Mrs. Y. J. Villani, a friend of Mrs. Friscia, sent to Nash and his wife thousands of dollars worth of new and used clothing to be distributed in the black community. For thirty years, three or four big boxes arrived each year.[124]

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[122]John Middleton, telephone conversation with author, 7 July 1983, as quoted by Ealy, 81.

[123]Maria Trotta, letter to author, 15 July 1983, as quoted by Ealy, 95.

[124]Nash-Ealy interview, as quoted by Ealy, 95.

Nash recalled one particularly large shipment of suits and Trotta recently revealed where the suits originally came from. She said:

> After graduating from Tennessee Wesleyan, I lived in Georgia for several years and then returned home to New York. I obtained a position with Rockefeller Center, Inc. as their receptionist and now in 1983, I am an executive secretary. We had a guided tour office that gave tours of the Center to people who came to New York on vacations and also to anyone who was interested in seeing Rockefeller Center. The guides wore uniforms. In the summer they wore light weight beige two piece outfits and in the winter they wore heavy suits with even heavier overcoats.
>
> A decision was made to change the color and the outfits. When I learned of this I asked if I could have the old outfits and explained why I wanted them. I was immediately given permission if the Rockefeller Center logo was taken off the sleeves. My company even made available transportation to get all of these uniforms to my home.
>
> I remember Mother and I, in the backyard, snipping off the patches and for days after the birds swooping down, picking up the threads and I am sure, making nests out of them.[125]

Mending might never appear on a syllabus of a course but one home economics teacher included it in her class. The home economics teacher at the black high school made her students mend their clothing if they wore something that was torn.[126]

During the Depression superintendents spent much of their time helping students care for their basic needs. Lack of shoes was a recurring problem; there never seemed

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[125]Trotta letter, 25 July 1983, as quoted by Ealy, 95.

[126]Johnson letter.

to be enough to supply the need. In 1936 there were 600 children out of school chiefly due to the lack of shoes. Teachers reported that some students came barefooted to school until Christmastime. Superintendent Swafford learned that a firm in Jellico, Tennessee, had bought out a wholesale shoe house which had thousands of pairs of shoes in stock. The company was willing to give away shoes to the needy if transportation costs were paid. Swafford sent a truck to Jellico. His prompt action led to the gift of 4,000 pairs of shoes. No one seemed to care that most of the shoes were old styles; many women and children had not been accustomed to the latest styles.[127]

A vast variety of activities that could never be found listed in any syllabus began to appear in schools. Health of the body was essential to the health of the mind. Many of the residents who lived in the city of Athens had no indoor bathroom facilities. Therefore, the Forrest Hill School PTA women conducted personal inspections of children to make sure their bodies were clean. The newspaper reported that for $15 the PTA installed a shower in the basement of the schools so the children could bathe.[128] Teachers probably wondered whether bathing of students was their charge, but there were the children and there were the lice!

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[127] Daily Post-Athenian, 3 June 1936, as quoted by Ealy, 81.

[128] Daily Post-Athenian, 26 January 1933.

Concern for children's health illustrated many of the school's acceptance of broader responsibilities for students, a characteristic of schools of the Twentieth Century. Local doctors donated their services to children by giving typhoid and diptheria shots.

Laura Brown wrote about the effects of the monotonous diet that some students ate. She suggested that

> While food for a well balanced diet was not a serious problem for most families, others were not so fortunate. For Amy Johnson's family, the 1930's became the "pumpkin depression" as the family ate pumpkin cooked in every conceivable way--fried, baked, broiled, in pies, and in bread. A sizeable number of families who were forced to subsist on a monotonous diet of cornbread and one or two other foods, often fatback and molasses, succumbed to pellagra, a disease caused from a diet insufficient in vitamins B and G. In 1931, 250 cases of pellagra were reported in the county, and many cases were probably not reported. Children were especially susceptible to the disease. Treatment consisted of two teaspoons of powdered yeast three times a day for six to ten weeks, along with a properly balanced diet of fresh vegetables. The Red Cross made garden plots available to those families who were without a source of vegetables.[129]

Even the civic clubs became concerned with the health of the students and worked with the schools to solve health problems. As Ealy pointed out, by 1940 the Kiwanis Club of Athens was directing a Blue Ribbon Health Program for

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[129]Laura Brown, "The Depression Hits Home," Hard Times Remembered, A Study of the Depression in McMinn County Tennessee, Bill Akins and Genevieve Wiggins, eds. (Athens: McMinn County Historical Society, 1983), 50.

elementary students sponsored by the Tennessee Department of Health. Students received prizes for complying with three stipulations; they were to (a) take the examination given by the McMinn County Health Unit, have no correctable faults, and meet immunization standards, (b) make satisfactory progress in school work and school discipline, and (c) be cooperative in the practice of prescribed health habits. Prizes were awarded to schools having the highest scores. The county health doctor and nurse went to the schools to make the check-ups.[130]

Christmastime was a highlight of the school year. During the 1930s, with money in such short supply teachers had to be especially attentive to insure the happiness of students. One student from a very poor home looked forward to drawing names at school. Unfortunately, the girl who drew his name was in worse financial straits than he. She gave him a penny pencil and when he could not hide his disappointment, he cried. His teacher gave him a small rubber ball and it made him very happy.[131]

Students took every opportunity to make money to help out at home. Niota School, located next to the golf course,

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[130]Daily Post-Athenian, 21 March 1940, as quoted by Ealy, 82.

[131]Charlie Morris, interview by Bill Akins, n.d., as quoted by Ealy, 82.

had a problem with absenteeism on Wednesday afternoon as boys cut classes to caddy. The principal asked the golfers not to hire students. One golfer noted that the eighth hole of the golf course was located so close to the school that the principal could catch any students there and return them to their classes.[132]

The principal of the black high school, W. E. Nash, tried to find work for his students. In the 1930s very few jobs were open to blacks; there were jobs at the lower end of the occupational ladder. Nash knew that well-to-do homes needed domestic maids and while this probably was not the type of work he preferred for his students, he was practical enough to know that it was available. Many young high school students not only earned enough to help support themselves during the hard times, they were able to help their families as well.

An astute observer of education, the editor of the Daily Post-Athenian, credits the principal with this milestone in education. He observed:

> To the best of my knowledge Professor W. E. Nash began the first on-the-job training program in the state of Tennessee. This type of training in education has now become a major tenet in the field of education.[133]

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[132]Paul J. Walker, telephone conversation with author, 12 July 1983, as quoted by Ealy, 83.

[133]Neal Ensminger, telephone conversation with author, 30 April 1983, as quoted by Ealy, 96.

Seeking work for his students, Nash went to the white missionary women's meetings at the local churches and talked with the members about taking a student into their homes and giving her proper training in making beds, taking care of linens, washing and pressing clothes, cleaning rooms, and maintaining the kitchen in a manner that would please any good housekeeper. The church women responded and trained these students. They were under no obligation to pay anything during the training period, but all of the ladies paid them more than they would have charged.[134]

Before long people throughout Tennessee learned of this program. T. D. Upshaw, principal of Booker T. Washington High School in Memphis, used this idea in completing his research for his Master's Degree, according to Nash. Also, W. J. Hale, president of Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial College, visited Cook School to observe the program and asked Christine Alexander, the home economics teacher, to come and instigate a similar program in his college. Then, Nash continued, W. E. Turner, a white man who was supervisor of the Tennessee black schools, observed her work there and asked her to introduce this idea throughout the state of Tennessee. She served in that capacity for many

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[134]Nash-Ealy interview, as quoted by Ealy, 96.

years, traveling many miles to acquaint other counties with this program.[135]

One student who was in the Cook School work program remembered:

> Miss Alexander taught her students how to cook, how to plan a menu, how to set the table properly using all of that silverware that would come in a full set of silver. She also taught us how to serve and how to clean the table.[136]

Therefore, the work program which many today would consider racist, became an integral part of the black high school curriculum in Athens and throughout Tennessee.

Money was so short during the 1930s that all students used any method they could to widen their limited knowledge of the world. One large family, through its own resourcefulness, managed to collect materials to read. Johnson revealed that

> Julian's Drug Store would tear the backs off of their magazines and throw them in the garbage. Books sold for 10¢ and we didn't have the dime to buy them. So we got them from the garbage. We had quite an extensive library which was good because my brother George loved to read. There were copies of Wild West Weeklys, Ranch Romance, Argosy, National Geographic, Doc Salvage's The Spider, The Shadow and others.[137]

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[135] Ibid.

[136] Johnson letter, as quoted by Ealy, 98.

[137] Ibid.

Some families had a limited knowledge of national events. A rural student whose family did not own a radio, nor could they afford the newspaper, had not heard that disaster had struck the Great Plains in the 1930s. As the dust swirled up in clouds that blew as far as Tennessee, she described her fright:

> The Great Plains states almost turned into a desert after years of drought. We did not have enough money to subscribe to a newspaper so we were not immediately informed about the "current events" of our country. One afternoon as I walked home from school, there was a most unusual, eerie, yellow atmosphere with very limited visibility. I met Mother and Dad walking to meet me. I was scared and they were alarmed at the peculiar situation. Later we learned of the terrible "Dust Bowl" of the Midwest. You could see it from as far away as East Tennessee.[138]

Hard economic times bring out desperate and inappropriate behavior in students and McMinn County was no exception. Would-be disciplinarians had their hands full dealing with students. Former high school students remembered school pranks of the 1930s. An Etowah High School student explained that:

> Perhaps mischief at school was required to keep sanity at a time when men obtained WPA jobs that accomplished nothing except for a man to keep his pride by not joining a free food line--but never a soup kitchen as now. For example, men would dig ditches as though to lay a water line, but once done the ditch simply would be refilled with earth.
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> No wonder then that school pranks occurred. Fred Stewart, later to become a prominent civil

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[138]Stephens letter.

> electrical engineer with ALCOA, drove his new Ford car (a rarity back then) up and down fifteen steps at the front of the school.
>
> Others got their kicks another way. Budge Masden, to become an Alabama railroader, set off firecrackers in the boys room. Principal William Tarwater literally knocked the restroom door off its hinges to learn what happened. Six students lined his office wall and, pointing a finger at Masden, Tarwater asked: "Did you do it?" "No ma'am," Masden replied, his cheeks reddening at his error. "Don't you ma'am me!" the principal stormed back, and with purpose. Most students figured that his wife who held down an office job at school, was the real principal anyway, and the principal himself had heard such ugly comment.[139]

Other high school students found unique ways to express opposition to school rules. At McMinn County High School:

> B. L. Hale, principal, issued an edict that everyone would have to get a pass to the restroom from him personally. That presented some problems if you were in a hurry because he spent little time in the office. I got his attention by placing a sack of corn cobs in the central hall with an appropriate sign. He took it in good humor reminding me on a later occasion that he saw me bringing in the sack.[140]

One elementary student used the deteriorated condition of Nonaburg School as an aid in his meanness:

> I knew where there was a knot hole in the school floor. I took a quart jar and put it over a yellow jacket nest. I beat on the ground until I caught a jar full of yellow jackets. I crawled up underneath the school to the knot hole and turned the yellow jackets loose. I regreted that I did this thing when

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[139]Yarbrough letter, 14 January 1983.

[140]William L. Ray, letter to Marie Milligan, 1983.

> I heard the teacher and students hollar in pain as they were being stung. They had to close school until the yellow jackets got out.[141]

Mischief outside of school took other forms. Halloween night was one of the busiest nights of the year:

> On Halloween, outdoor privies were overturned and big farm wagons were disassembled and piece-by-piece put back together on top a downtown commercial building with a flat roof--mischief but no violence or criminal intent. Youngsters seldom were arrested --Oh, maybe a time or two when some would pilfer a roosting chicken in a fruit tree.[142]

Discipline came in many forms. When corporal punishment was needed, it was given with a hickory, a leather paddle, or a wooden paddle. Parents expected children to behave at school and usually a paddling at school meant another one when the student arrived home.

Some students who did terrible things lived to regret them. For this mean thing, correction came twice. The student relates the incident:

> While I was attending Nonaburg Elementary School, I had the job of building fires in the stoves at school. I was about fourteen years old. I found a stick of wood with a hole in it. I put a shotgun shell in it and packed mud over the top of it. I made the fire early one morning, and about thirty minutes after school started, this stick of wood blew

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[141]Ora Paul Land, telephone conversation with author, 14 April 1983.

[142]Yarbrough letter, 14 January 1983.

> the bottom out of the stove. The teacher gave me a good whipping and my dad, realizing the danger, gave me another hard whipping when I got home.[143]

Refusing to accept prescribed punishment was serious. Students were dealt with firmly but with compassion. An embarrassing incident resulted in the reassignment of a young male teacher:

> At the end of the school year, four boys from Niota "went on strike." The event got a lot of publicity. Being a young athletic teacher, I was transferred to Niota. The next school year I came into contact with the "strikers." After establishing good rapport with them while playing basketball, I brought them in and lectured them about what they had done and told them they had a choice--take a paddling or leave school. Three took the paddling and one left school. After one week, he returned to school and took his punishment. He became an outstanding citizen of McMinn County and returning to school made a difference in his life.[144]

Other events, not quite as serious, caught the principal's attention. An Etowah student relates:

> Discipline, then as now, came in many forms. In junior high one day--during chapel conducted by the principal who not only prayed in school but read the Bible usually from Proverbs--a mischievious boy sitting behind me flipped my ear painfully. I turned and told him not to do that again, but the incident interrupted the Bible lesson. I was summoned to the principal's office, the other fellow was not. My punishment was a beating by a leather paddle across my buttocks, bringing tears. The guilty one escaped punishment.

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[143]Land conversation.

[144]Eledge interview.

> On the other hand, a later principal dealt with me with compassion. I was guilty of throwing chalk, which struck my pretty teacher by mistake. This principal sat me down in his office without scolding or paddling. He never said a word. Never again in junior high did I do anything to spoil my deportment.[145]

Sometimes teachers learned more from paddlings than the students. A Cook School student shares her story:

> Teachers were allowed to spank. In elementary school one teacher took one of my brothers and put his head between her knees and spanked him. He turned his head and bit her and that ended that kind of spanking.[146]

Ealy concluded that there was a sameness about everyday life for most students; however, most managed to have a good time despite the hard times. Teachers assigned homework then as now and many Depression students remember studying by the light of oil lamps, or close to fireplaces, or in cold bedrooms. Some students managed to take memorable trips; in 1938 twenty-five McMinn County High School seniors visited Washington, D. C. and other points of interest.[147]

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[145]Yarbrough letter, 4 January 1983.

[146]Johnson letter.

[147]Daily Post-Athenian, 7 April 1938.

Curriculum

It is true that in the 1930s Tennessee schools did not rank with the nation's top schools in the criteria usually used by educational statisticians to measure schools. However, there was a continuous expansion of the curriculum, frequently in directions advocated by progressives. The McMinn County elementary schools continued to stress the three Rs, most of the time the four Rs--reading, 'riting, 'rithmetic, and religion. Along with these, spelling, history, and handwriting were taught. The inclusion of health and geography were indicative of McMinn County's efforts to broaden the curriculum.

Most McMinn County students were not college bound; many were not even high school bound. There were no college scholarships for most, or federal aid or grants. Nevertheless, many found ways of working their way through college. Some students witnessed the real poverty of the Depression from a safe and sheltered distance; their families still had money, and they attended some of the prestigious schools.

For those students fortunate enough to continue to the secondary level, they found additions to the traditional curriculum during the 1930s. The Rules and Regulations of the Tennessee State Department of Education had more to do with what subjects were offered than any other single factor.

In 1932 the State of Tennessee required four units in English,

> three in mathematics, one in American history and Problems of Democracy. All boys and girls were required to offer one unit in science, and the girls were required to offer one unit in home economics. The remainder were electives. Sixteen units were required for graduation.[148]

The college preparatory program of the four-year high schools offered a variety of subjects: English, Mathematics, Arithmetic, Solid Geometry, Ancient History, Medieval and Modern History, American History, Economics, Civics, Latin I, Caesar, Cicero, French I and II, Spanish I, Chemistry, Physics, Physical Geography, and Geography. The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 resulted in the development of agricultural, industrial, and home economics subjects. The Act accelerated the process of adding vocational subjects and standardized it along certain lines. A successful commercial department resulted in the offering of typing, shorthand, and bookkeeping. These courses were expected to attract a wider group of students. This was indicative of the high school's progressive efforts to prepare students for all of life itself.[149]

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[148]Joe Leon Marshall, "A Decade of Curriculum Trends in Tennessee High Schools, 1923-1933" (Master's thesis, University of Tennessee, 1936), 219.

[149]Annual Report of the Department of Education For the Year Ending 1930-1931; B. L. Hale interview.

Local curriculum improvement advocates received a tremendous boost with the election of Will J. Swafford as McMinn County School Superintendent on June 17, 1935. Standards were in effect in the high schools where only 19 percent of McMinn County students were enrolled. The great majority, 81 percent of students, attended elementary schools where no set standards existed. His program to upgrade the elementary schools pleased progressive educators of the 1930s. The newspaper reported that he planned:

> to set up a new system of keeping student records. A study of each student's environment was to be made, and a thorough system of student transfer was to be put into effect. A careful record was to be kept of every student, both in elementary and high school. With the help of PTAs special attention was to be given to the large number of children who were out of school because of the lack of clothing and food. He also planned to organize a "teachers' council," representing teachers from all over the county, to make a personal survey of the entire school system and to continue the testing program begun three years earlier. In addition, he planned to put libraries in each school and to increase the number of volumes in the libraries already in existence.[150]

Since the library is the heart of any school system, much emphasis was put upon upgrading the facilities. After serving only one year as superintendent, Swafford reported that "county schools, led by the PTAs, had raised money to buy books and that the State Department of Education had

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[150] Etowah Enterprise, 17 June 1935; Swafford conversation, 12 July 1983, as quoted by Ealy, 83.

given $250 to match the county fund."[151] By 1940, after five years of hard work, Swafford reported that

> libraries had been established in every school and more than 18,000 books had been purchased. Trained librarians were employed for all four-year high schools, and a circulating library had been established throughout the entire school system. McMinn County teachers, students, and the communities raised more than $10,500 for school purposes, almost all of which was used for library books. During only one year did the county court contribute money for the library fund.[152]

Continuing his efforts to upgrade the schools, Swafford invited prominent educators to speak to the teachers. At the teachers' banquet in 1936 he asked Dr. John A. Thackston, Dean of the College of Education of the University of Tennessee, to give the address. The elementary teachers also heard P. W. Alexander, head of the training school at State Teachers College, Johnson City, Tennessee. His subject was "The Unit Plan of Teaching." In 1936 this model was hailed by educators as the very latest in educational plans and McMinn County planned to adopt it for the following school year. In the unit plan, a subject was to be taken up and studied in all of its branches, as contrasted with the existing plan of considering related subjects separately

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[151] Daily Post-Athenian, 17 June 1936, as quoted by Ealy, 83.

[152] Ibid, 2 April 1940, as quoted by Ealy, 83.

and at different stages. At the same time Swafford invited a battery of experts from the State Department of Education to visit every school in the county and to make recommendations for improvements. This visit was timely as the WPA was involved in extensive repairs and improvements to the buildings.[153]

The curriculum at the black high school also expanded during this time. Erected in 1926 the school was first named the Athens Training School, an industrial school. Its principal, W. E. Nash, was a great admirer of Booker T. Washington and his Tuskegee School. The early years of Nash's life were very similar to those of Washington. Both entered elementary school later than most students and both were educated in industrial schools--Nash at Thyne Institute and Washington at Hampton Institute. After a short time the name of the Athens school was changed to J. L. Cook High School. The emphasis shifted from an industrial to an academic curriculum, although the school continued to offer industrial courses. The manual training teacher at Cook School was educated at Tuskegee Institute.[154]

During the 1930s at a time when industrial education was considered by many southern educators to be the proper

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[153] Ibid, 6 March 1936.

[154] Nash-Ealy interview.

education for blacks, Nash began to offer a mixture of industrial and traditional academic subjects at Cook High School; it became somewhat of a duplication of the education offered to white students. The curriculum developed under very little supervision or care on the part of the school officials. With budget cuts during the Depression, black schools were not the first priority for school dollars. This fact never discouraged Nash in his drive to educate his students and to see Cook High School achieve accreditation so that blacks could enter college without an entrance examination. Nash always wanted his students to have a solid academic foundation.[155]

McMinn County blacks had little opportunity for industrial employment. About the only work available to black women were jobs as domestic maids in hotels and private homes. However, for a short time during the Depression, black women worked for the PWA in a mattress factory.[156] Job opportunities were scarce and many blacks left the county to go "up North" to find work. In the 1930s, whites invaded labor fields in McMinn County in which blacks had held a monopoly. One local black, who wished to remain anonymous, saw white men digging ditches and commented that "the Depression taught whites to work."

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[155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid.

Some undesirable jobs had long been reserved for black men. Such jobs became less undesirable to whites when no other work was to be found. Studs Terkel quoted Clifford Burke when he said, "The Negro was born in depression. It only became official when it hit the white man."[157]

During the Depression years parents were responsible for providing their children with necessary books and supplies. Most parents did the best they could afford to do; however, many teachers and students worked with insufficient supplies and teaching materials. Throughout much of the 1930s, students whose parents could not buy books went to school without them. The county owned several thousand textbooks which Superintendent Swafford loaned to the elementary schools which had the greatest need for them.[158]

Just as in the 1980s, textbook changes took place every five years. When new textbooks were adopted, parents had to buy new books. In 1936 while McMinn County was considering the adoption of the unit plan of instruction, permission from the state was obtained to delay making

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[157]Studs Terkel, Hard Times, An Oral History of the Great Depression (New York: Washington Square Press, 1970), 104.

[158]Minutes of the McMinn County Board of Education, 30 June 1939, 160, as quoted by Ealy, 74.

textbook changes. Although some books were obsolete, especially history and geography, parents were spared the extra expense that year.[159]

The Boards of Education helped parents whenever they could with books; however, living in a small community meant these individuals knew a lot about everyone else's business. The Athens City Board members took action when they observed parents spending money for non-essentials and then asking the board to furnish free textbooks for their children. They formally adopted a policy regarding requests for books. Specifically, their "car rider policy" stated that parents who were able to maintain and operate run-down cars, buy gas and oil to operate them, pay fines for bootlegging, and buy a lot of unnecessary things, would get no consideration on school book purchases.[160]

Some former students from large families fondly remember the ingenuity that went into getting books and school supplies. Wade recalled that

> Getting our school books was almost like a game. A week or two before school started we would scan the neighborhood trying to swap books. We would exchange books and try to get as many as possible for me and my brothers and sisters this way. Then, what we lacked we went to Kuhn's Store

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[159] Daily Post-Athenian, 17 June 1936; 2 July 1936.

[160] Ibid, 2 September 1931, as quoted by Ealy, 74.

> and bought secondhand. Occasionally, we got to get one new book; this was a real treat. Now, with our secondhand books, a penny pencil, and a nickel tablet, we were ready for school.[161]

In a home where education was a very high priority, sacrifices were made for the necessary books. Stephens said:

> Once during the school year I had completed one book, probably a reader, and was to get a new one. My parents had absolutely no money. But "where there is a will, there is a way." My dad put a sack of wheat on the back of a horse and rode to town to sell it for 50¢ a bushel to get money for my book.[162]

Other former students told about the condition of the used textbooks. Johnson pointed out that

> Some never had a new book. Those who did shared theirs with the other students. I fell heir to my uncle's books. The first part of the books always had missing pages. Being the second of fourteen children had its drawbacks.[163]

An expanded sports program came out of the 1930s. This provided some escape from the harsh realities of the Depression. Improvisation helped incorporate sports into the curriculum until the federal government programs added a measure of permanance. The WPA leveled football fields

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[161]Frances Buttram Wade, letter to author, May 1983, as quoted by Ealy, 73.

[162]Stephens letter, as quoted by Ealy, 74.

[163]Johnson letter, as quoted by Ealy, 98.

that are still in use today, and the PWA built the first gymnasiums in McMinn County.[164]

Elementary schools had no organized physical education classes. Softball was very popular at recess and basketball was played outside on dirt courts. Volleyball, horseshoes, and jump rope were also enjoyed. Tournaments were held between schools; often different grades within the same school would challenge each other to a game. If an elementary school had basketball uniforms, they were probably purchased by the PTA using some "pie supper money." Tennessee Wesleyan College sometimes allowed elementary schools to play ball in their gymnasium.[165]

One young, energetic teacher was determined to teach the students at Mount Arnon School the game of basketball. A two-room former church building served as the school. The ceiling was low but he installed a goal and organized a coeducational team. His students succeeded so well in learning the game that three of the girls had no difficulty in making the Englewood High School team the following year.[166]

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[164] Etowah Enterprise, 22 August 1935.

[165] Bigham conversation; Foster interview.

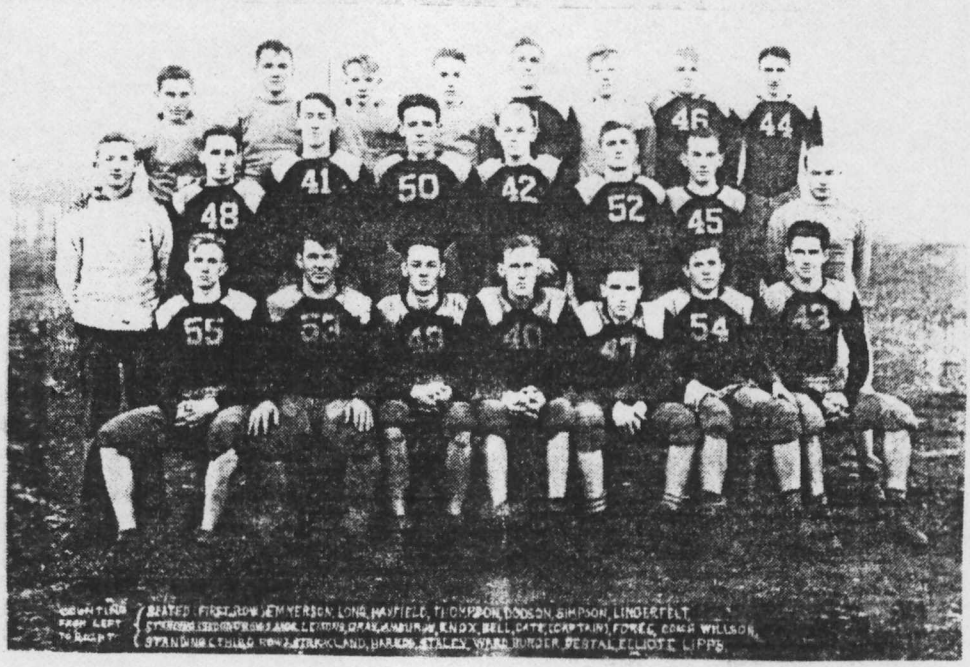
[166] Eledge interview, as quoted by Ealy, 84.

A former coach, William P. Willson, explained how the football program started. In 1930 one of the four-year high schools already had a football team. "Gobo" Cartwright coached at McMinn County High School during the depth of the Depression. Willson emphasized that Cartwright's players furnished their own equipment; they put cleats on their own shoes and wore no headgear. Willson was employed in the fall of 1935 with the understanding that football was to be incorporated into the regular school program. Willson knew the sloping athletic field needed to be level. A county employee offered to grade the field free of charge if gasoline was furnished. From sports enthusiasts in town, Willson solicited enough money to buy the gasoline and to install thirty-two lights at the field (The field now has 150 lights.). The power company installed the lights free of charge.[167] Willson's 1936 football team is pictured in Figure 15.

Since football was a part of the school program, the principal, B. L. Hale, had the responsibility of seeing to it that all spectators paid the admission fee. This was difficult since the field was not fenced. Hale described what he did by saying that he allowed cars to be parked around the field. He then placed students holding flags

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[167]William P. Willson, telephone conversation with author, 8 July 1983, as quoted by Ealy, 85.



Courtesy of Thomas Mayfield

Figure 15. 1936 McMinn County High School Football Team.

about twenty feet apart. If someone attempted to come to the game without paying, the student waved the flag and deputies came and collected the money.[168]

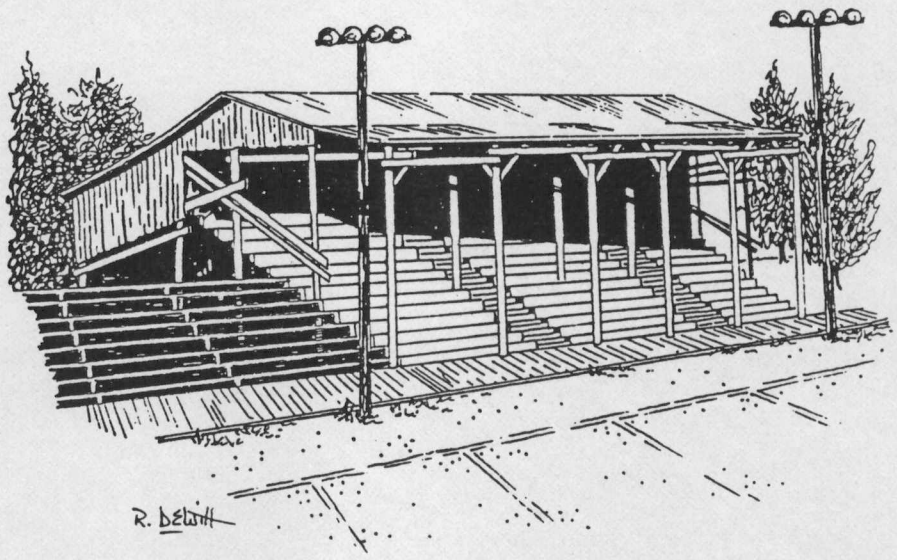
Thomas Mayfield revealed how McMinn County came about building one of the most unique football stadiums found anywhere. He noted that farmers from this agricultural region needed a show barn for cattle and the high school athletic department needed seats for their spectators. To further their common interests, an alliance was formed between the Tennessee Jersey Cattle Club and the McMinn County High School athletic department. As shown in Figure 16, a barn was built at the athletic field. Seats were installed underneath the roof and cattle stalls were built underneath the seats. Consequently, McMinn County High School was one of the first schools located between Knoxville and Chattanooga to have a covered stadium and a lighted field. The WPA improved the playing field in 1938 by sodding it.[169]

McMinn County owned more land than was needed for the athletic field. The WPA planned to build a very large armory. Therefore, in March of 1940 the School Board co-operated with the WPA by deeding a portion of the field

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[168]Hale interview, as quoted by Ealy, 86.

[169]Thomas Mayfield, telephone conversation with author, 12 July 1983, as quoted by Ealy, 86.



Drawing by R. C. DeWitt

Figure 16. Barn. Original Stadium at the McMinn County High School Football Field

for the purpose of the WPA's erecting a National Guard Armory.[170]

The development of the football program at Englewood High School was different. Its football field was leveled by men working with shovels, picks, and wheelbarrows.[171] Marian Cochran, a former Englewood student wrote:

> Football started in Englewood during the 1930s and seemed to pull the town together. We got a new principal, Homer Laws, who introduced the game to our town. Somehow equipment was obtained. Mr. Laws imported some big boys from Middle Tennessee who knew football and helped the locals learn the game. Also, many older dropouts returned to school, furthering their education and bolstering the team. Everyone was excited about this new sport and supported the team.[172]

The most famous of the Middle Tennessee boys brought to Englewood by the principal was Shirley Majors, patriarch of the famous Majors football family.[173]

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[170] Minutes of the McMinn County Board of Education, 29 March 1940, 188, as quoted by Ealy, 86.

[171] Eledge interview, as quoted by Ealy, 85.

[172] Cochran letter, as quoted by Ealy, 84.

[173] Majors is the name of a family that became prominent in Tennessee in connection with the game of football. John Majors, All-American in 1956, returned in 1977 to the University of Tennessee as Head Football Coach of the Volunteers. Billy and Bobby Majors had outstanding careers playing for the Vols. John Majors visited Englewood School in December 1984 to reminisce with the men who were enrolled in high school and who played on the team with his father. He told them that his mother still had the telegram from Homer Laws inviting his father to come to Englewood. John Majors, informal conversation with author, 7 December 1984.

Basketball was also a popular sport. Before the federal government helped construct gymnasiums at two of the four-year high schools, practice was held outside on dirt courts. There were two places in Athens where games could be played indoors. One was the gymnasium at Tennessee Wesleyan College and the other was a big open room on the second floor of Horton's Drug Store in downtown Athens. The ceiling of the room was so low that players had the advantage of being able to bank a shot off the ceiling into the basketball goal. Because this big open room was used by many organizations, some strict parents objected to the high school games being held there. One such student underscored the fact that

> This big room at the drug store was used for many things, among them as the National Guard Armory. My strict father would not let me attend the high school basketball games since he referred to the room as "the Hell hole" because he objected to the public dances that were sometimes held there.[174]

Residents were grateful when the federal government started its building programs. Excitement could hardly be contained when the following item appeared in the local newspaper in 1935:

> An extensive school building program is planned for McMinn County with expenditure of $100,000. A PWA loan of $55,000 is being secured with a bond issue, plus a $45,000 additional gift from the government.

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[174]Frank Willson, telephone conversation with author, 8 July 1983, as quoted by Ealy, 86-87.

> Superintendent Swafford has outlined the following building program: McMinn County High School and Etowah High School each will construct gymnasiums, two additional classrooms, and equipment at the cost of $25,000 for each school.[175]

In the 1930s it was not unusual for a person to coach two major sports. In addition to his promotion of the football program, William P. Willson also coached basketball at McMinn County High School. When the new gymnasium was completed, he painted the lines on the floor, and again asked sports enthusiasts in town for donations for the backboards and basketball goals. In Figure 17 his 1936-1937 girls basketball team is pictured in the new gymnasium.[176]

In his history of progressive education, Cremin states:

> Along with the proliferation and reorganization of the formal curriculum, there came a concomitant expansion of extracurricular--or as the progressives called them to emphasize their integral part of the school program, "cocurricular"--activities. The informal student clubs and activities that had been radical innovations at the turn of the century became established features of the American school.[177]

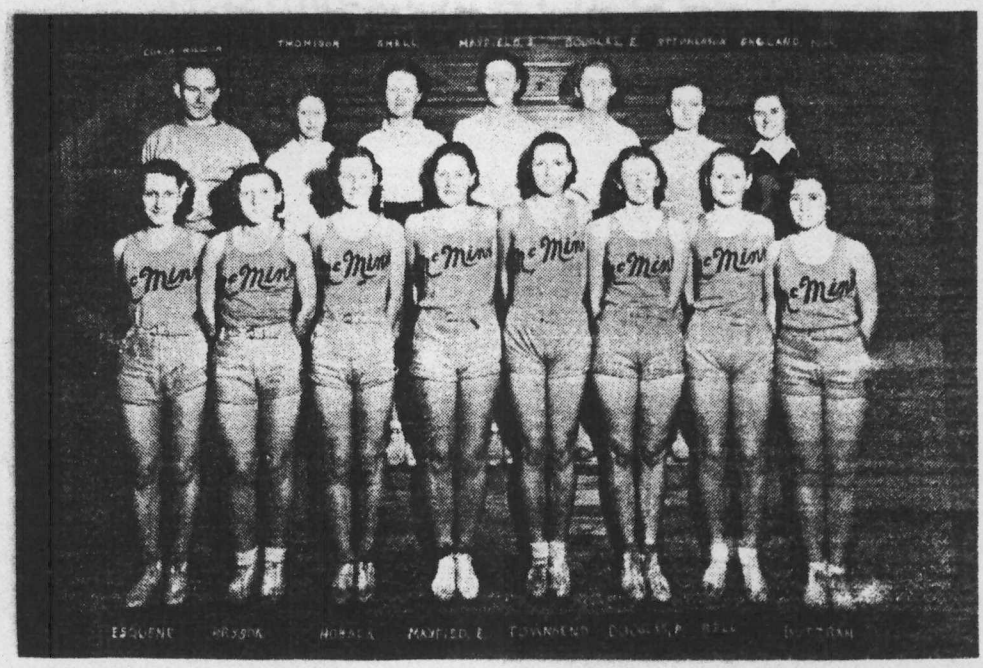
Cocurricular activities were extremely popular at McMinn County High School where 85 percent of the students joined

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[175] Etowah Enterprise, 22 August 1935, as quoted by Ealy, 87.

[176] William P. Willson conversation, as quoted by Ealy, 88.

[177] Lawrence A. Cremin, The Transformation of the School (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1961), 306.



Courtesy of William P. Willson

Figure 17. 1936-1937 McMinn County High School Girls Basketball Team

some club. The principal, B. L. Hale, supported this so strongly that he set aside two chapel days per week for club meetings. The program was flexible; if during the school year a student tired of a club, the student returned to chapel or chose another club. There were three kinds of clubs: self-improvement, service, and academic. Clubs included: Pep Club, Glee Club, Literary Club, Thespians, Math Club, Hi-Y, 4-H, Honor Club, Key Club (sponsored by the Kiwanis Club), Radio Club (members repaired radios), Photo Club (members set up a photo lab underneath the stairway), and Model Airplane Club (members made models to specifications. During World War II, the Navy used some of these models as teaching materials in training men to recognize various airplanes.).[178]

The curriculum was enriched through the regularly scheduled thirty-minute daily chapel programs. Cochran explained that students marched into the auditorium and were seated by grades. She noted that religious services were daily activities in the public schools. Reading of scripture and prayer by teachers or students always opened chapel services; group singing followed. Song books were distributed and Depression students learned such songs as "Dixie," "Billy Boy," and "Onward Christian Soldiers." Skillful pianists or not so skillful pianists had

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[178]Hale interview.

opportunities to perform. Programs were given by various grades, and during football season, pep rallies were held.[179]

Musical groups from the high schools gave freely of their time. For special programs, chapel was extended to an hour. The McMinn County High School Glee Club was extremely popular. The newspaper verified that this ninety member group (seventy girls and twenty boys) traveled to Knoxville in 1938 and sang on radio station WNOX.[180] Foster commented that the splendid voices of the black Cook High School Chorus always sang to appreciative audiences. High school bands visited other schools for band concerts. Special days were observed, especially May Day.[181]

Eledge indicated that community volunteers added their talents to enrich the curriculum. One such person was Elizabeth Brient of Englewood who had been educated in music. She agreed to help with the music program at Englewood School. Years later she was named "the most outstanding lady in Texas" for developing a similar program in that state.[182]

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[179]Cochran letter, as quoted by Ealy, 88.

[180]Daily Post-Athenian, 19 April 1938.

[181]Foster interview, as quoted by Ealy, 88.

[182]Eledge interview, as quoted by Ealy, 88.

The teaching of values has always been an important aim of schools in the history of American education. Therefore, chapel speakers came from many vocations, ranging all the way from local ministers to, on one occasion, the governor of Tennessee. The auditorium of the McMinn County Schools was a forum for discussions on character. Good manners and right conduct were dwelt upon. These speakers tried to inspire students to greater heights and challenged them to strive for better lives. Bible reading, prayers, and discussions of Jesus Christ's life, practices which the Supreme Court has since found unconstitutional, were considered a necessity in the public schools as part of the moral training of students.[183]

Since few schools had intercommunication systems, chapel period was also used for announcements or policy directives. One principal who installed an intercom scared one of his students as a result of it. A member of the family told the story:

> The first day of school for the baby boy was also his last for a year. When he came home he told mother that he heard God talking to him. (Professor Nash had installed the intercom at Cook School.) My mother asked what did God say. Harold said that God said, "Children be quiet."

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[183]Foster interview; Cochran letter; Yarbrough letters; Nash-Ealy interview.

> His twin sister didn't scare so easily. She remained a grade ahead of him until high school but they graduated together.[184]

Much emphasis was placed upon end of the year programs. Stephens recalled that Junior-Senior banquets were highlights of the high school year. Perfect attendance was encouraged, and she remembered the Superintendent giving $1.00 perfect attendance awards. A Niota student described their end of the year programs:

> They were special events. A lot of effort was put into class plays, class nights, and graduation exercises for both eighth grade graduates and those completing the second year of high school. Later when more pupils continued on to the four-year high schools, less emphasis was placed on these graduations in order not to give the impression that school life was finished.[185]

An eighth grade graduation class from Forrest Hill School in Athens is pictured in Figure 18.

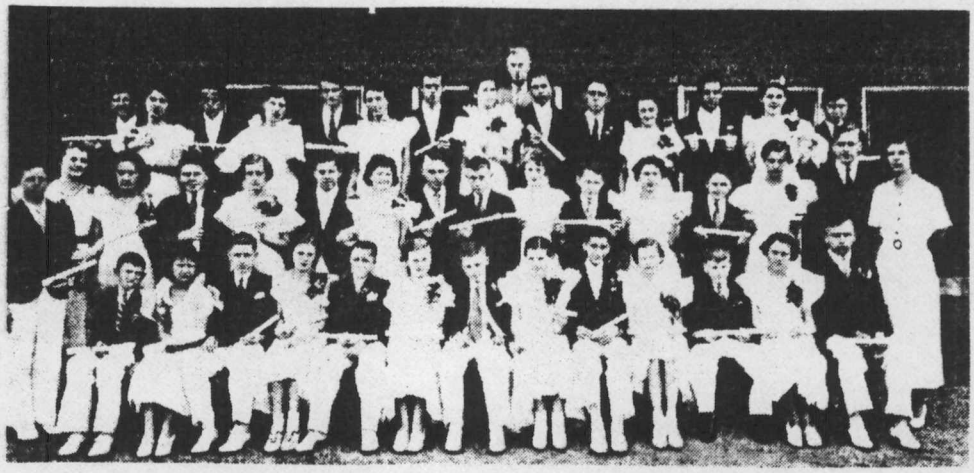
Closing exercises at the four-year high schools were elaborate. An Etowah High School student remembered an example of an inspirational speaker.

> Our teachers and guest speakers inspired us to greater heights in time of real depression, giving us faith and hope for the future. I remember one high school talk by the President of McCallie School in Chattanooga. This scholarly man from a private school knew how to instill confidence in graduating students at Etowah High School, predecessor of McMinn Central High School. His words were unforgettable:

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[184]Johnson letter, as quoted by Ealy, 98.

[185]Stephens letter, as quoted by Ealy, 88-89.



Courtesy of W. R. Selden

Figure 18. 1935 Eighth Grade Graduation Class from Forrest Hill School

> Hitch your wagon to a star,
> Hang on, and there you are!
>
> So the wagon might not make it all the way to the star; but if one fell somewhat short, the person still was successful in life and career.[186]

Conclusion

The Depression wrecked havoc upon the lives of individuals and severely tested the schools of McMinn County. Some lives were drastically changed by the Depression. In spite of the hard times, in McMinn County the Depression fostered a spirit of cooperation and sharing and a concern for one another. Residents of the county shared the general American faith in education and confidence in the schools remained strong.

Ealy concluded that the McMinn County schools were probably

> the most stable institutions in the county during the hard times. They were a source of identity and pride and, along with the local churches, served as the glue that held the communities together. Had it not been for this cooperative community spirit, the educational system could not have functioned. Too much praise cannot be given to the PTA and the various relief agencies for the work they did in providing the necessities of life for the underprivileged during these difficult years. Rural people, steeped in the American values of self-reliance, hard work, and thrift, helped the schools not only to endure but to succeed.[187]

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[186]Yarbrough letter, 4 January 1983, as quoted by Ealy, 89.

[187]Ealy, 90.

CHAPTER III

EDUCATION AND THE NEW DEAL IN McMINN COUNTY

With President Franklin D. Roosevelt's inauguration in 1933, the New Deal was born. There can be no full understanding of the federal government's attempt to cope with the crisis of the 1930s until historians are fully aware of the many ways in which local conditions modified and interpreted policies made in Washington, D. C. Local conditions had an impact on New Deal policies as the New Deal had an impact on local conditions.

As Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot explain, the New Deal programs constituted a new view of public education. It created alternative educational institutions. The short-lived alphabet programs were not part of the structure of the public school system. The New Deal programs were not aimed at all segments of the population; they were specifically designed for the poor. In many instances the programs were staffed not by certified experts but by all kinds of people who could teach. Learning took place in all kinds of settings.[1]

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[1]David Tyack, Robert Lowe, and Elisabeth Hansot, Public Schools in Hard Times (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 93.

Edward Power wrote that the government took some action along educational lines

> with the introduction of such programs as the Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Youth Administration. . . . The Public Works Administration made funds available for school building, thus helping local communities and the Works Project Administration sponsored educational activity in nursery schools, adult education programs, vocational training and the education of immigrants.[2]

The New Deal was the right project for the Depression years. The public works jobs put people back to work. The alphabet agencies undoubtedly touched the lives of more students and their families than did anything else in the 1930s.

"The New Deal may have been a watershed in politics and the centralization of government," according to Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, "but it was clearly not one in the governance and finance of public schools."[3] "By February 1934," they continued, "the National Education Association Journal was complaining about the New Deal's neglect of public schools."[4] Although both local and national educators feared federal domination, they needed and wanted

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[2]Edward J. Power, The Transit of Learning, A Social and Cultural Interpretation of American Educational History (Sherman Oaks: Alfred Publishing Company, Inc., 1979), 338.

[3]Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 95.

[4]Ibid, 97.

federal money. Vocational education mandated by the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 and controlled by the federal government was already in American high schools. McMinn County educators considered local and state control preferable to federal control. The federal money coming to the schools came in the form of relief and public works rather than direct aid. McMinn County teachers saw the benefits of New Deal programs that kept secondary students in school. Educational facilities were improved and hot lunch programs were established.

New Deal programs having the greatest impact upon the students and their families in McMinn County included:

CCC - Civilian Conservation Corps
NYA - National Youth Administration
NRA - National Recovery Administration
CWA - Civil Works Administration
FERA - Federal Emergency Relief Administration
TERA - Tennessee Emergency Relief Administration
WPA - Works Progress Administration
PWA - Public Works Administration
TVA - Tennessee Valley Authority

The New Deal provided relief for poor people on an unprecedented scale. When FDR referred to "the forgotten man," McMinn Countians assumed that he was referring to them with his work relief, free school lunches, and surplus commodities. Despite the government's generosity, rural people criticized the programs and made them the butt of

many jokes. One former principal nicknamed the WPA, "We Piddle Around," after he observed many workers performing jobs very slowly and sitting around on overturned buckets.[5] Despite this, the New Deal agencies completed many useful and needed projects for the school system.

The chief source of financial support for the McMinn County schools came from property taxes although state funds were received for educational purposes. Carol Tullock reported that as the Depression deepened, "property values declined with a corresponding decline in related taxes."[6] The loss of taxes left the County Quarterly Court totally unprepared to deal with the greatest economic collapse in the history of the industrial world. McMinn Countians did not sit and wait for someone else to care for the needy people. In the early years of the Depression, the poverty-stricken families were cared for in an informal way by various groups and individuals. The local newspaper explained the coordinated effort that was brought about in October 1931 with the selection of Fred Wankan, owner and

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[5]J. Will Foster, interview by author, February 1983.

[6]Carol Tullock, "The Crisis Years: 1929-1933," Hard Times Remembered, A Study of the Depression in McMinn County, Bill Akins and Genevieve Wiggins, eds., (Athens: McMinn County Historical Society, 1983), 14.

publisher of the Daily Post-Athenian, as head of the local Red Cross organization. Wankan appointed an advisory committee in each community to receive and review requests for assistance.[7]

Tullock described how McMinn County tried to cope during the crisis years of 1929-1933. She followed accounts as they were recorded in the local newspaper. The advisory committees were responsible for receiving and dispensing flour marked with the lettering RED CROSS. Farmers donated corn and each person receiving flour got a peck of meal. Coal was distributed in quarter-ton lots. Despite this and other assistance, conditions deteriorated and by the spring of 1932 over 1,000 persons were being assisted by the Red Cross. A county-wide campaign to establish gardens for every family without employment was started by Wankan with help from the Athens Kiwanis Club and the Athens Chamber of Commerce. Also, many individuals contributed to alleviating the suffering. The volition to work together helped the people survive the Depression better than many other areas of the United States. The accessibility of land on which to grow food and the willingness to plant a garden and preserve vegetables helped the people to avoid the soup

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[7]Etowah Enterprise, 13, 30 October 1931, as quoted by Tullock, 15.

lines and the living off garbage heaps which existed in other parts of the United States. School children may not always have had a balanced diet every day, but there always was some kind of food.[8]

McMinn County, located in Republican East Tennessee, had been a stronghold for that party for almost seventy-five years. The majority of McMinn voters remained faithful to the Republicans in the presidential election of 1932 even though FDR's pledge of a New Deal held the promise of relief to the county.[9]

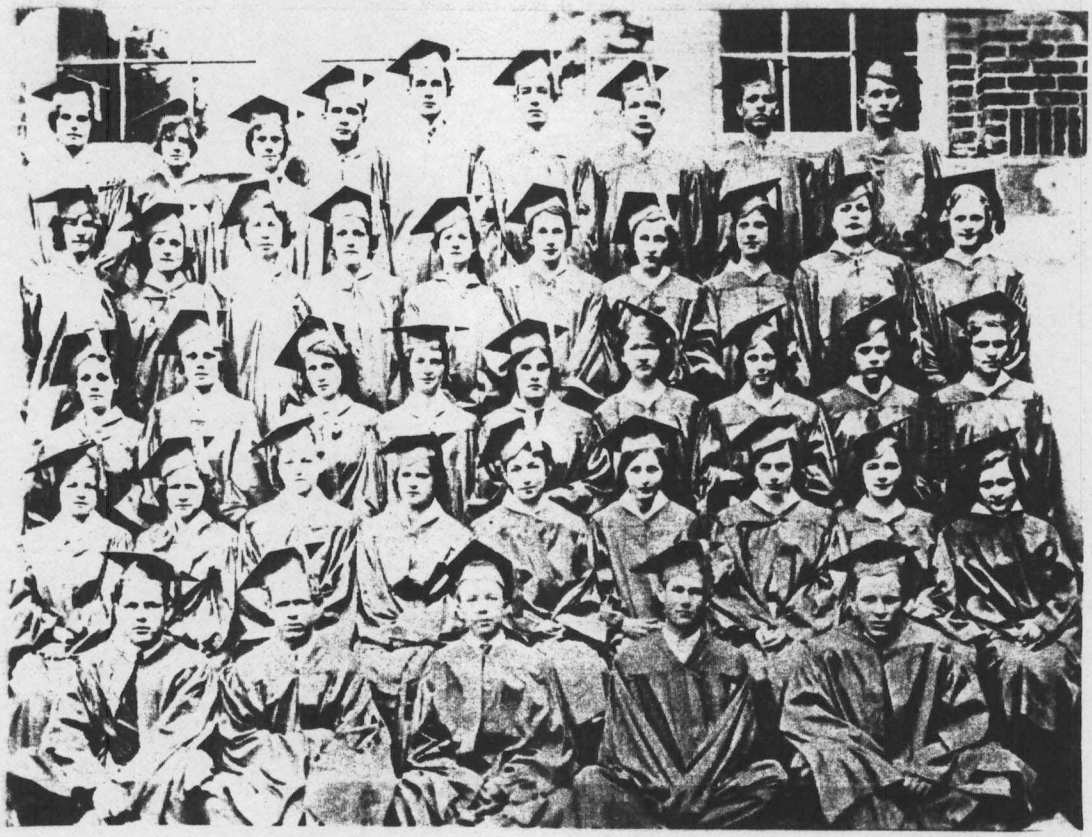
Bank Holiday

President Franklin D. Roosevelt seized the moment of his Inaugural to assure America that "it had nothing to fear but fear itself." Two days later, he ordered every bank in the nation shut for a "holiday." Students in McMinn County were immediately affected. For many months the senior class of McMinn County High School (Figure 19) had been saving money to pay for their class rings. As fate would have it, the rings arrived the same day that FDR closed the banks. The class waited along with the rest of

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[8]Athens Daily Post-Athenian, 22 April 1932; 20 July 1932; 12 August 1932, as quoted by Tullock, 16.

[9]Daily Post-Athenian, 9 November 1932.



Courtesy of Marie Milligan

Figure 19. Class of 1933, McMinn County High School

the nation for the bank holiday order to be lifted. Fortunately, they had not deposited their savings in one of the three banks in McMinn County that failed. When the order was lifted, they withdrew their money from the solvent bank, paid for the rings, and never forgot the Depression delay.[10]

Civilian Conservation Corps

During his one-hundred day "honeymoon" period with Congress FDR moved to conservation, an area that had long interested him. The result was the creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), an agency that took unmarried young men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five from the job market and provided them with work in reforestation and other conservation projects.[11] Frank McKinney said that the CCC workers received $30 a month in pay; $25 of it was sent home to parents.[12] Robert S. McElvaine concluded that the accomplishments

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[10]Marie Orr Milligan, letter to author, 13 April 1983.

[11]Robert S. McElvaine, The Great Depression (New York: Random House, Inc., 1984), 154.

[12]R. Frank McKinney, "The National Government to the Rescue: 1933-1940," Hard Times Remembered, A Study of the Depression in McMinn County, Bill Akins and Genevieve Wiggins, eds., (Athens: McMinn County Historical Society, 1983), 34.

> of the CCC were vast in protecting and restoring forests, beaches, rivers, and parks; providing flood control and disaster relief; and helping some 2.5 million young men survive the Depression with some degree of self-respect. The CCC, after some criticism at its inception, was the most widely praised of the New Deal programs. Roosevelt took justified personal pride in it.[13]

Years later legislators remembered these accomplishments and the technique of education through work.[14]

Lack of jobs had been a problem for out-of-school McMinn youth. Since most were already accustomed to farm work, the idea of working on CCC conservation projects for pay was too good an opportunity to miss. Therefore, in May 1933, there was much excitement when 300 young men signed up for work. The first contingent of twenty-four youth went to Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, for two weeks of conditioning and conservation training.[15]

In 1935 McMinn County was selected for a CCC camp. The site, located about two miles south of Athens and nicknamed Bill Goat Hill, was selected after TVA engineers surveyed it. The camp was made up of approximately 200

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[13]McElvaine, 155.

[14]Joel Spring noted that in order to solve the youth unemployment of the 1960s, legislators used the successful CCC model. Part A of Title I of the Economic Act of 1964 was the establishment of the Job Corps. Joel Spring, The Sorting Machine, National Educational Policy Since 1945 (New York: Longman, Inc., 1976), 204-207.

[15]McKinney, 34.

young men; their work in McMinn County concentrated on soil erosion control and reforestation. According to McKinney:

> McMinn Countians were elated over the county's selection for the CCC camp and with good cause. The CCC estimated that it would spend approximately $3,000 a month locally for feeding and caring for the enrollees and an additional $3,000 was expected to be spent by the men.[16]

The Athens camp consisted of four ventilated barracks, each accomodating fifty men, a dining hall, recreational hall, kitchen, school, hospital, barber shop, laundry, canteen, officer quarters and general offices. Provisions were made for teaching and a Sunday School class was set up. A baseball field was laid out, tennis courts were built, and a football field was leveled.[17]

The Army and the Forestry Service shared administrative duties in the CCC camps. While at work in the field, the men were under the control of the Forestry Service. In camp, they were under the disciplined routine of the Army which had the responsibility of feeding and housing the men. Army clothing items issued included shoes, shirts, khaki trousers, underwear, and toilet articles. The schedule began with reveille at 6:00 a.m. The work crew of twenty

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Daily Post-Athenian, 9 September 1935, as quoted by McKinney, 35.

to twenty-five men began work at 7:00 a.m. and ended in the afternoon at 3:30 p.m.[18]

McKinney praised the CCC's years of operation in McMinn County from July 1935 to June 1942 and the important benefits to the county. He found that over 4,500,000 tree seedlings were planted in the county. Farmers appreciated the work done in stopping soil erosion on McMinn farms and businessmen agreed that the CCC projects were most helpful. In addition, several men married local girls and made their homes in the county. Many of the young men commented that the CCC did much for them personally; most agreed that it was the best thing that happened to young men without jobs during the 1930s. Most were able to improve their education through the camp's various schools. The young men's families benefitted from the money sent home.[19]

The educational program helped fill the leisure hours when the young men returned to the camp. As Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot noted from the CCC's own, Camp Life Reader and Workbook, reading selections included:

> lessons on appearance (one was to have clean, pressed clothes and shined shoes), on learning ("every hour misspent is lost forever"), on courtesy ("a gentleman is no sissy"), on thrift ("everyone

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[18]McKinney, 36.

[19]Ibid, 40.

> should train himself to use money wisely"), and on the flag. It also included lessons on how to fell trees and build a house and get a job.[20]

Topics for camp classes were divided into three major groups: remedial courses, vocational courses, and avocational instruction.[21] In McMinn County the following classes were taught: reading, writing, and arithmetic; business and commercial subjects (typing, shorthand, and bookkeeping), and surveying, photography, electrical work, engineering, mechanics, woodworking, masonry, and soil conservation.[22] Since the corpsmen were mostly dropouts from the public school system, there was no attempt in McMinn County to make the camp training the same as instruction in the public schools. Because of the varied assortment of classes, teachers were recruited from many professions. Nevertheless, some CCC teachers were unemployed public school teachers from the TERA and WPA rolls.[23] Undoubtedly, those teachers learned beneficial lessons from the students. A valuable lesson was how to reach students who were ready to drop out of school.

The local newspaper stated that local residents

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[20]Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 117.

[21]Ibid, 120.

[22]Daily Post-Athenian, 15 October 1935; 26 March 1936.

[23]Ibid, 26 March 1936.

welcomed the CCC camp in Athens and a nearby camp in Polk County as being good for local business. However, one group in McMinn County, the local law enforcement unit, saw the young men as an opportunity for them to make a "quick buck." For several years, through both Republican and Democratic administrations, McMinn County had earned the bad reputation for being one of the worst "fee grabbing" counties in East Tennessee.[24]

McKinney described the harassment in Hard Times Remembered. On Tuesday and Saturday nights the CCC young men were allowed a recreational pass into town. A few months after the CCC camp started in Athens a group of them got into trouble with the Athens police when some were arrested on charges of public drunkeness. The arrest of the young men brought on a confrontation between the camp commander and law enforcement officers. The commander threatened that if the harassment did not stop, that he would buy his supplies elsewhere and would bar Athens as a recreational place. Business leaders made a plea for cooperation between the Athens police and CCC personnel. They stated that on the whole, the young men were a fine lot, and they appreciated their business. After more arrests, the camp commander sent the young men

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[24]Ibid, 23 September 1935.

to Etowah and Cleveland for recreation and moved his accounts from Athens.[25] An editorial in the local newspaper expressed the dissatisfaction of many local residents.

> We think that fee grabbing around Athens has been exercised as a racket now for some months. The jail is kept full of supposed offenders of the law no doubt for the fees they bring to those who are getting rich off this blood money. Fee grabbing did not start with the arrest of the CCC boys. Gun toting deputies, and there are plenty of them, and constables are jumping every poor cuss who is supposed to be drunk whether he is or not. Bonds for the CCC boys are excessive. Athens needs protection against the injustice of the fee racket done in the name of law enforcement.[26]

McKinney concluded that the "arrest of CCC boys was a major factor in the abandonment of the camp."[27] It was announced that twelve Tennessee camps would close by October 31 and Athens was closed. The men were transferred to other camps. Later, in January 1936, a temporary CCC camp was opened and it only lasted a few months. A permanent camp was finally established in September 1936 with approximately 200 young men (Figure 20). This camp lasted until June 1942 when Congress abolished the CCC.[28]

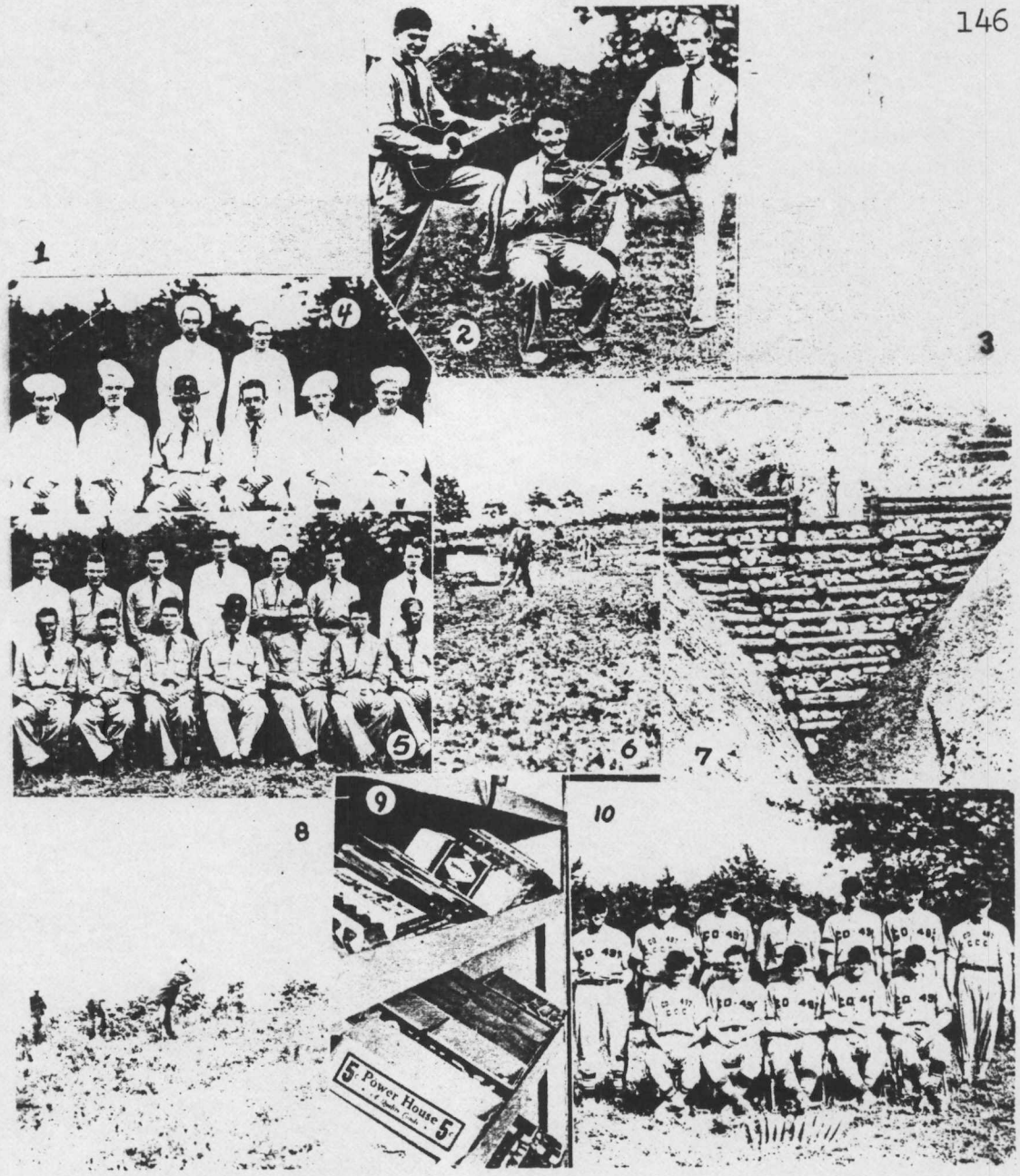
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[25]McKinney, 36-37.

[26]Daily Post-Athenian, 23 September 1935.

[27]McKinney, 37.

[28]Ibid, 37-40.



1. Drilling holes for dynamiting in gully, also showing completed dams.
2. The Hill Billy Band — Colvin, guitar; Mullins, violin; and Steed, guitar.
3. The entrance.
4. Cooks and K. P.'s.
5. Camp overhead.
6. Enrollees Pate and Joynes chase the cow.
7. A 26-foot crib dam, rock filled, in 32-foot gulley.
8. The surveying crew at work.
9. The canteen.
10. The baseball team.

497TH COMPANY, ATHENS, TENNESSEE

Courtesy of Bill Akins

Figure 20. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)

GRAVES CREST

The CCC camp in Polk County, just across the McMinn County line, was very much appreciated by Etowah residents. Supplies were purchased from the hard pressed Etowah merchants and the town was designated as a recreational place for the CCC men. One Etowah reporter belatedly learned that the CCC camp was composed of rural, southern young men along with urban youth from the large metropolitan cities in New York and New Jersey. Years later this same reporter won many awards for his journalistic ability while writing for the Knoxville News-Sentinel, but his Depression lesson was never forgotten.

> The Etowah Enterprise, still a weekly, was at hand. To me, the boiler-plate inserts passed off as news did not please my insatiable hunger for news. So I was permitted to write a column which I labeled "Take It or Leave It." A source informed me of a riot that occurred at a Civilian Conservation Corps encampment near the Hiwassee River--you know, a place where unemployed men and youths went to make $30 a month clearing the forests and sending most of it home to support their families.
>
> How was a young provincial to know that a "Wop" was a deprecating name for an Italian--much less deprecating--who had come to Tennessee from Manhattan? Anyway, my column's gory details of the fray brought retribution. The camp commander immediately boycotted Etowah--cutting off food and drink purchases from the hard-bitten local merchants.
>
> At the time I delivered the Chattanooga Times. When I stopped to collect at a soft drink bottler, the austere owner-manager chewed me out more severely than my father ever did. The bottler stopped taking the Times, as restitution. I had lost a 15¢ per week customer and my pride was hurt. My editor, Captain Peck, was more understanding. He smiled at the column and merely advised me to be more careful. It was a Depression lesson never forgotten.[29]

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[29]Willard Yarbrough, letter to author, 14 January 1983.

During its years of existence, from April 1933 through June 30, 1942, the CCC planted trees, improved acres of land, constructed miles of roads, and built erosion control dams. These young men helped reclaim the country's natural resources. Of importance to educators, many illiterates were taught to read and write, many received eighth-grade certificates and a few received high school diplomas. Many teachers took part in the enterprise. Individual lives were enriched in camps such as the one located inside McMinn County and the Polk County camp just across the county line.

National Youth Administration

The National Youth Administration (NYA), part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), became effective in Tennessee in September of 1935 in time for the school year.[30] It provided aid for unemployed young people who had already left school and gave assistance to those who required aid to remain in school.

One proposed NYA project in McMinn County never materialized because of lack of interest according to the local

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[30]Stanley J. Folmsbee, Robert E. Corlew, and Enoch L. Mitchell, Tennessee, A Short History (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 500.

newspaper. A large fish pond was to be built on land donated by a resident to the county. NYA workers were to build a concrete dam and a runway. The pond was to produce fish to restock McMinn County streams. The 132 workers allotted to the project were to work forty-six hours per month and be paid from $6 to $11. Even though transportation was furnished, only fourteen applied and the project was discontinued.[31]

In Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot's comparison of 1965 educational programs for poor students with the NYA program, they stated that

> . . . In Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the funds were allocated to schools according to the number of children from poor families; in the NYA case, the quota of work-study grants was initially 7 percent of the number of youth on relief in the district.[32]

Initially, McMinn County's quota was for forty-three persons.[33] McKinney explained how the NYA program began.

> As soon as the program was understood locally, the county superintendent of schools, Will J. Swafford, called a meeting of all principals and outlined the the program. High School students sixteen years of age and over from families on relief rolls, in return for work which would not interfere with class, were eligible to receive $6.00 a month from the federal

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[31] Daily Post-Athenian, 21 January 1936, as quoted by McKinney, 40.

[32] Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 126.

[33] Daily Post-Athenian, 1 October 1935.

> government. The work was to include tasks such as beautifying school grounds, clerical and library work, and janitorial services.[34]

The $6 a month kept some McMinn County students from dropping out of high school. Aubrey Williams, national director of the NYA, and his boss, Harry Hopkins, had hoped to create genuine equality of opportunity in American education. Rural people in McMinn County hoped for the same thing. According to Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot:

> . . . Although Hopkins's dream of equality of opportunity in higher education has yet to be realized, subsequent federal legislation ranging from the G.I. Bill to work-study programs to opportunity grants for poor youths in college eventually did move in the directions he urged.[35]

In McMinn County in the 1930s few students were able to continue their education in college; a high school education was a dream of many local students.

A long-time resident of McMinn County points with pride to a NYA project that produced lasting results. In Etowah the youth built the Boy Scout Lodge on the grounds of the junior high school. It has served as headquarters

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[34]McKinney, 40.

[35]Harry Zeitlin, "Federal Relations in American Education, 1933-1943: A Study of New Deal Efforts and Innovation" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1958), 313, as quoted by Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 127.

of the Etowah Boy Scouts since July 1937 and is one of the most imposing buildings in town.[36]

Education through work was regarded by some educators as a new technique in education. Interestingly enough, Cremin observed that:

> By the thirties the CCC and the NYA could touch the lives of millions and yet draw only passing comment from the Progressive Education Association (PEA). They were progressivism to be sure; but they were not really "progressive education."[37]

National Recovery Administration

The National Recovery Administration (NRA), established in June 1933, was called by FDR in his second fireside chat " 'a partnership in planning' between business and government."[38] McKinney writes that "the Blue Eagle, with the slogan NRA, WE DO OUR PART, was displayed in business places and industries in McMinn County."[39] Parents of school children looked forward to re-employment. McElvaine noted that "specific codes called for a forty-hour maximum workweek and a 30 cents per hour minimum wage."[40]

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[36]Kenneth Barker, interview by Bill Akins, 18 November 1982.

[37]Lawrence A. Cremin, The Transformation of the School (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1961), 272.

[38]McElvaine, 158-159.

[39]McKinney, 25.

[40]McElvaine, 159.

While the NRA attempted to stimulate business in the county, other efforts were made to put people back to work.

Repeal of Prohibition

The end of Prohibition unexpectedly brought a financial boom to certain McMinn County families. In 1933 when the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States was repealed, one woodworking factory experienced a business rush. Students were delighted when some of their fathers were put back to work. The Athens Table Company had an unprecedented demand for utility tables. Orders came from coast-to-coast for the special tables at which to drink beer.[41]

Civil Works Administration

Conceived as an emergency agency in 1933, the Civil Works Administration (CWA) helped the people of McMinn County along with the rest of the nation survive the worst winter of the Depression. Newspaper editor Fred Wankan, who already was the McMinn County Relief Director, was appointed by Governor Hill McAlister as CWA Administrator

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[41] Daily-Post Athenian, 2 May 1933.

for McMinn County.[42] More local information was available about the CWA than other New Deal agencies because Wankan kept all his records and in 1984 told his own story in a typescript.

On November 18, 1933, Wankan and the other ninety-four Tennessee county administrators met in Nashville. He was given a blank form upon which CWA projects were to be submitted. Back in Athens, he invited various county and city officials, among them the school board members and the superintendents, to a meeting to discuss projects. On November 22, 1933, more than sixty projects were approved by the Advisory Relief Committee; this was the same committee of prominent citizens who earlier had served on the Relief Advisory Committee. On November 23, 1933, Wankan, with three other individuals, the Superintendent of the McMinn County Schools, E. R. Lingerfelt, an advisory board member from Etowah, and a man whose son-in-law was the Tennessee CWA Administrator, drove to Nashville to submit in person the McMinn County projects.[43]

The State Committee met November 26, 1933, and due to the tremendous volume of submitted projects from the

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[42]Frederick Edward Wankan, "Echoes from the Great Depression" (Typescript, Athens, 1984), 25.

[43]Ibid, 25-26.

ninety-five counties, decided to give blanket approval, not individual approval, to all projects submitted. Workers had to come from relief rolls. At this time only the destitute, those without property or any means of support, were eligible for relief work. There were 755 workers allotted to McMinn County with Athens drawing only 150 due to the small relief load--which spoke well for the town industries.[44] A staggered work week was implemented in order to give jobs to more of the unemployed. Two crews of 755 each were established with a crew working every other week, resulting in 1,510 unemployed persons working two weeks a month. By December 20, the CWA weekly payroll had reached $9,300.[45]

Wankan asked about how to proceed with the work on projects and was told

> that there was no guide book. I was advised to use my head and do the best I could. I immediately began the purchase of material for the repair of some of the smaller schools on the first of December, 1933. We were putting the people back to work. Every rural school house in the county was repaired and some new ones built.[46]

In 1933 the McMinn County Board of Education built several consolidated schools using labor and materials

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[44]Wankan, 27.

[45]Daily Post-Athenian, 28 December 1933, as quoted by McKinney, 27.

[46]Wankan, 28.

provided by the CWA. Duggan and Conasauga Schools were consolidated with the school board furnishing a small amount of material that the CWA could not provide. A suitable site was secured and Mount Cumberland and Moore's Chapel Schools were consolidated with small amounts of material paid for from the regular elementary fund. Stipulation was made by the School Board that the communities had to be agreeable to this consolidation since McMinn County would not furnish transportation to get the children to the new school. A two-room addition authorized for Hillsview School provided that the major portions of both labor and materials were to be borne by the CWA. CWA labor was used by the Englewood City Board of Education to build an addition to that school.[47]

The CWA director, Wankan, was approached by the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) of Forrest Hill School in Athens and asked about providing a hot lunch program for underprivileged children since they had learned of a similar program in Knoxville and Chattanooga. Before supporting this project, Wankan offered to provide cracked wheat to the school, at cost, since he was accepting it at his newspaper as payment for subscriptions. Wankan

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[47] Minutes of the McMinn County Board of Education, 14 December 1933, 85.

related that the women had their doubts as to whether the children would eat it. He asked

> for the privilege of demonstrating with two meals. They agreed to let me bring the cracked wheat and prepare the meal but they had no large cooking pots. I purchased two large cooking pots from the hardware store. . . . I also bought some chuck roast and had it cut up into stew pieces, and went to school. I cooked the meal and fed all the underprivileged. They all liked it and many wanted seconds. When they were through, all the privileged children were brought in and served.[48]

The next week he went back and cooked the cracked wheat and served it with raisins and sugar, and again fed the students. The women did not think that the children would like the cracked wheat over a long period of time. Since he could not convince them, Wankan "okayed the free lunch program and went back to my work and left the feeding of the children to the good ladies."[49]

Though its life span was short, the CWA left a legacy of many projects, finished and unfinished, in McMinn County. It had built schools; it had repaired leaky roofs and repainted schools that had had no appreciable maintenance for many years. Beside its school projects, the CWA improved many miles of existing roads. The agency paved streets and put down sidewalks. These useful projects

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[48]Wankan, 34.

[49]Ibid, 35.

helped students get to school. It benefitted the county in many ways even though most of the money was spent on wages rather than materials. It came to an end in the spring of 1934; it filled a gap before the PWA began its massive works program. It had emphasized work over relief; it provided experience toward administering the WPA programs later in the decade.

The CWA was not without its problems in the county. There was political sniping; Wankan, a life-long Democrat, administered the program in a Republican county. He was paid $129 a month for his services and headaches. There was much dissatisfaction because everyone who wanted a job could not be employed. Wankan asserted that the Democrats complained that only Republicans were favored for jobs; the Republicans complained that only Democrats were being favored. The American Legion complained that veterans were not getting their share of jobs. Blacks complained that because of their Republican affiliation, they could not get work as Democrats were handling relief. A few weeks after the CWA work began, Wankan received a large envelope of complaints from the White House saying that the President wanted an answer on each complaint. An ombudsman was hired to investigate. It took about two weeks to find all the gripers; the investigations revealed that all the embittered complainers had good farms, did not meet

the guidelines, and were not eligible for work. The White House was given an answer on each complaint. Every few days another letter would be received from Washington or Nashville and investigations were continuously made.[50]

The CWA programs encountered additional difficulties. Business had been slow in the county and greed influenced many people. Wankan tried to spread the purchases around among all the suppliers, but some would not advertise in his newspaper because the CWA was not using their brand of paint. The worst disagreement over CWA projects came in February 1934 over an unfinished Athens street project. An Athens street commissioner was so angry that he assaulted Wankan in the newspaper office. Wankan's secretary came into the office carrying a sawed-off pick handle to put an end to the fight, but both men were out of breath and had to quit. A full story about the fight was written by the desk editor and in March 1934, a complete account of CWA projects was published. All materials regarding the street project were sent to the State TERA Administrator and he congratulated Wankan on the way the street project was handled. Tempers in Athens were so hot at this time that Wankan was compelled to hire a man with a shotgun to

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[50]Daily Post-Athenian, 8 February 1934; Wankan, 31-34.

guard his newspaper plant at night. He also kept the sawed-off pick handle on top of the counter behind which he stood to hear complaints. One intoxicated young man fractured the editor's jaw as Wankan was throwing the man out of the building. After that, the police or sheriff were called to take care of the violent.[51]

Wankan's tenure as head of relief for McMinn County from 1932 to 1934 was difficult. In May 1934 he had surgery for throat cancer and resigned. During his tenure, seventy-eight CWA projects were prepared and most were completed. The majority of county schools were greatly improved with CWA labor.[52]

Tennessee Emergency Relief Administration

Federal relief came to the states with the creation of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA). States administered the grants.[53] The Tennessee Emergency Relief Administration (TERA) projects were similar to CWA projects. According to McKinney, one of the first projects under TERA in McMinn County was the planting of community

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[51] Daily Post-Athenian, 14 March 1934; Wankan, 29-31.

[52] Daily Post-Athenian, 23 May 1934, as quoted by McKinney, 29.

[53] McElvaine, 151.

gardens. Individuals on work relief rolls were required to plant a garden to qualify for assistance. The federal government furnished seeds and fertilizer. Two agriculture teachers from the four-year high schools were employed to give instructions. As a result of these measures, gardening increased with between 400 to 500 plots cultivated by the families on relief rolls. Canning centers were opened in four communities where produce could be preserved for the winter months.[54]

The local newspaper listed other TERA projects which helped the needy. They included: sewing projects where women made garments for distribution to needy children, sanitation projects where men were employed to build outdoor toilets, and a mattress project. TERA set up a mattress factory to employ 100 women and a few men, with the goal of producing 800 mattresses per month to be distributed to the needy in McMinn and seven other counties. The bedding replaced corn shucks or old straw in sacks of the coarsest material.[55] Some black women were employed to work on the mattress project. Except for one brief time when black women were employed at one factory in Athens,

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[54]Daily Post-Athenian, 31 May 1934, as quoted by McKinney, 30.

[55]Daily Post-Athenian, 24 January 1935, as quoted by McKinney, 30.

this was the only time during the Depression years that they were able to find employment at a job other than working as domestic maids.[56]

A relief program in the winter of 1933 helped both unemployed teachers and illiterate adults. As the local newspaper reported, a 1933 survey of McMinn County, conducted by unemployed teachers, reported that 1,600 residents were unable to read or write. Adult schools were set up using federal relief money, and twenty-seven unemployed teachers were hired to teach reading, arithmetic, writing, spelling, English, handicrafts, and health. The objective was to raise the standard of living of the students and the communities. By December 1933 over 300 were enrolled in twenty-seven adult schools located throughout the county with class size ranging from ten to twenty students. Students ranged from sixteen to sixty years of age and both men and women attended grades one through eight. Some schools had both day and night schedules.[57] Adult classes continued throughout the 1930s.

One former teacher recalled teaching adult classes.

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[56]W. E. Nash, interview by Bill Akins, n.d.

[57]Daily Post-Athenian, 16 November 1933, 20 December 1933, as quoted by Sally DeWitt Ealy, "The Depression Goes to School," Hard Times Remembered, A Study of the Depression in McMinn County, Bill Akins and Genevieve Wiggins, eds., (Athens: McMinn County Historical Society, 1983), 76.

Sessions lasted five months and teachers were paid $12 per week which she considered good wages for the Depression. Classes met five nights per week, four hours each night with a break for "supper." Program requirements stated that each teacher had to keep an average of ten students each night. More men enrolled than women, although she recalled that one woman brought her nursing baby each night. Since adults were reluctant to admit that they were illiterate, she found the recruitment of students to be the hardest part of the job. When ten students were enrolled, the teacher had to find a place to meet and furnish all supplies. Her class met in a Sunday School room at the North Athens Methodist Church. The room was heated with a wood-burning stove in the winter, and she suspected that some of her students came just to keep warm. The goal of the program was to teach adults to read and write. All work was done on an individual basis and students progressed at their own rate. Teachers developed methods and materials adapted to the needs of students.[58]

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[58]Violet Plank Riggs, interview by Jo Clift, 9 August 1984.

Works Progress Administration

The creation of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) marked the transition between what historians have called the first and the second New Deals. Of all the alphabet agencies, the WPA attracted the most attention, the most praise, and the most damnation.

After operating in McMinn County for four years, the local WPA director reported through the newspaper that McMinn County had benefitted to the extent of $564,303. WPA expenses for labor and materials amounted to $389,397 with local government supplying the balance. The varied projects included improved farm-to-market roads, street improvements; malaria control in Etowah and elsewhere; sewing projects; sanitation improvements; and adult education classes. Schools were renovated by the WPA. Repair work on leaky roofs helped and a new coat of paint brightened the inside of many schools. Playgrounds were sodded so they no longer washed away and football practice fields were leveled.[59] Also, McKinney praised the work done on the roads. The WPA spent $233,833 in combination with $97,691 from McMinn County to improve every county road not in the state system. The deplorable condition of the

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[59]Daily Post-Athenian, 9 January 1939, as quoted by McKinney, 32.

roads had made it most difficult for children to get to school in the winter.[60] In many parts of the United States the building of outdoor toilets would not have been heralded as progress. However, in rural McMinn County where many homes and schools had no sanitary facilities, it was a measure of progress.

The most popular WPA activities in McMinn County were the permanent improvements such as the building of the National Guard Armory. Next to permanent improvements, the most popular programs were the school lunch programs and the sewing projects. Sewing projects resulted in many garments being distributed to underprivileged children.

According to Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, one of the WPA's most far-reaching and successful efforts was using surplus food to feed hot lunches to needy children. They state that "this was not a new idea . . . but the WPA succeeded in institutionalizing the practice."[61] Utilizing the government surplus commodities, the free lunch program provided a balanced meal for the needy students.

The Superintendent reported to the newspaper that there was a notable increase in school attendance as a result of the free lunches. In one month's time, from

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[60]McKinney, 31.

[61]Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 132.

December 1935 to January 1936, fifteen county schools initiated free lunch programs. Included were two of the four-year high schools, six of the two-year high schools, one three-teacher school, and four two-teacher schools. Two of the black two-teacher schools in Etowah had the free lunch program. Only one of the fifteen schools had a cafeteria. The WPA paid for a supervisor at each school to prepare and serve lunch; the county had to furnish the stove.[62]

Blacks were also employed by the WPA. The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) had a program of cleaning up the Tennessee River from the Watts Bar Dam site to the Hales Bar Dam site and men could work for the WPA for 30 cents per hour. In order for a black to be employed, he had to pass an examination administered by the principal of the local black high school, W. E. Nash. Before long so many wanted to take the examination that Saturday sessions were set up. Once he had two men with large families who were in great need. Although they had difficulty, Nash saw to it that the two men passed and got WPA jobs.[63] Nash

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[62]Daily Post-Athenian, 19, 27 December 1935; 22 January 1936, as quoted by Ealy, 79.

[63]W. E. Nash, interview with author, 28 December 1982.

stated that "I would never recommend a poor worker but all my students passed because I knew they were hungry."[64]

In spite of all the good it did for McMinn County and for the "forgotten men," the WPA was made the butt of many jokes. It was bitterly criticized and charges of political favoritism were leveled at the WPA just as similar charges had been made against the CWA several years earlier. Nationwide criticism was leveled at the WPA. McElvaine explains some of the reasons for the criticism.

> The requirement that 90 percent of those hired must come from the relief rolls . . . served both to discriminate against those who had held out longest against going on the dole and to prevent the employment of skilled workers needed to undertake many "useful" projects. . . . a WPA rule allowing only one member of a family to be employed discriminated against women and large families.[65]

Public Works Administration

To this day many McMinn County residents associate work relief with the WPA. However, it was the Public Works Administration (PWA) which executed the most substantial projects. In January 1935, a sewage system for the city of Etowah received $115,000; 30 percent of the money was a grant and 70 percent was a loan to be repaid over a

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[64]Fran Ellers, "Professor Nash," Daily Post-Athenian, 19 July 1985.

[65]McElvaine, 267-268.

thirty year period. The PWA approved $63,635 for a water-works loan for the city of Englewood. The Athens City School System was suffering from overcrowded conditions. With help from the PWA a new elementary school, Ingleside School, was constructed with PWA funds.[66] Ealy found that an expanded sports program was one of the things that came out of the 1930s. Athens and Etowah received $100,000 from the PWA; $45,000 was a grant and $55,000 was secured with a bond issue. The money was earmarked for the schools. The first gymnasiums in the county were constructed at McMinn County High School and Etowah High School using these funds. Also, two additional classrooms were built and equipment was purchased.[67]

The former principal of one of the high schools where a gymnasium was built explained the difference in workers for WPA and PWA projects. In his opinion,

> The WPA hired anybody who needed work with no particular emphasis put on skills. Our PWA gymnasium was built with a contractor who picked people who wanted to do good work. He wanted to be known as a contractor who built good buildings.[68]

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[66] Etowah Enterprise, 17 January 1935; Daily Post-Athenian, 9 October 1935, 12 October 1936; 23 November 1936 as quoted by McKinney, 32.

[67] Etowah Enterprise, 22 August 1935, as quoted by Ealy, 87.

[68] B. L. Hale, interview with author, 29 December 1982.

Tennessee Valley Authority

Measured in terms of its impact on McMinn County, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) had the greatest impact of all the New Deal programs. Created by Congress on May 18, 1933, it was designed as President Roosevelt pointed out, as an experiment in national planning. Architects of the New Deal designed TVA to provide employment and to raise the living standards of the impoverished Tennessee Valley area. A TVA publication estimates that "only three out of 100 farms had electricity in 1933," therefore, "the most dramatic impact on the people came in the form of the electric light bulb--something that today is taken for granted."[69] By 1936 some thirty-five miles of power lines were strung in McMinn County. Farms and schools in the western part of the county were the first to receive electrical power. On September 28, 1936 the switch was thrown that turned on electricity in McMinn County.[70]

McElvaine concluded that TVA was very popular in the areas it served. Critics called the TVA "socialism." The

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[69]Tennessee Valley Authority, "A Student History of TVA," 7.

[70]Daily Post-Athenian, 28 September 1936, as quoted by McKinney, 42.

McMinn Countians did not like socialism, but they did like the benefits that TVA brought to the valley. As McElvaine put it, "The main reason the TVA was not replicated was not that it failed, but that it worked so well."[71] TVA worked so well that its critics, particularly, private interests, lobbied successfully to prevent similar experiments elsewhere. McElvaine continued:

> The government-produced electricity made available a "yardstick" whereby private power rates could be judged. It also provided power for farms that had previously been without it and made possible the development of industry in the region. The dams used in flood control, and comprehensive land-use programs were developed to reclaim the soil of the valley. Other programs provided for the education and "betterment" of the region's inhabitants. Remarkably, this was accomplished largely through "grass roots democracy," with many decisions made by local residents.[72]

David E. Lilienthal, Chairman of TVA, in his book, TVA, Democracy on the March, elaborated on "grass roots democracy." He said that

> In the TVA the merging of planning and responsibility for carrying out of those plans forces our technicians to make them a part of the main stream of living in the region or community; this it is that breathes into the plans the breath of life. For in the Tennessee Valley the expert cannot escape from the consequences of his planning, as he can and usually does where it is divorced from

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[71] McElvaine, 156.

[72] Ibid, 155.

> execution. Where planning is conceived of in this way, the necessity that experts should be close to the problems with which they are dealing is evident.[73]

Lilienthal continued by saying that TVA had put into practice what seemed to him the most profound utterances on the problem of freedom through democracy. He quoted the words of John Dewey. Dewey wrote:

> Democratic ends demand democratic methods for their realization. . . . Our first defense is to realize that democracy can be served only by the slow day-by-day adoption and contagious diffusion in every phase of our common life of methods that are identical with the ends to be reached . . . An American democracy can serve the world only as it demonstrates in the conduct of its own life the efficacy of plural, partial, and experimental methods in securing and maintaining an ever-increasing release of the powers of human nature, in service of a freedom which is co-operative and a co-operation which is voluntary.[74]

Rural cooperatives were set up and Lilienthal wrote about the emotional overtones evidenced in the business meetings as rural people spoke with pride about the benefits of modern energy.[75] McKinney said that "the Volunteer Electric Cooperative with headquarters at Decatur, Tennessee,

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[73]David E. Lilienthal, TVA, Democracy on the March (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944), 200.

[74]John Dewey, Freedom and Culture (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1939), 175-176, as quoted by Lilienthal, 201.

[75]Lilienthal, 19-20.

served rural McMinn, Polk, and Meigs counties."[76] Lilienthal listed the changes this power brought. One change was

> refrigerators in the kitchens. The water is carried by an electric pump instead of by women, young and old, with their water pails. There are hay driers in barns, freezing lockers in the crossroads stores. There are community food dehydrators, small motors to grind feed, cut the wood, turn a small lathe. Power is curing hams, processing sweet potatoes, cooling milk in the new dairies.[77]

Since McMinn County was an agricultural county it benefitted greatly from TVA's emphasis on soil-building agriculture. The knowledge gained through TVA's fertilizer research, agricultural programs, and forestry development helped individual farmers use their farms wisely. The TVA demonstration farms were called by Lilienthal "the schoolrooms of the valley."[78] The valley land was deficient in phosphate. TVA reduced the cost by producing this phosphate fertilizer in highly concentrated form. The resulting granules of one form were nearly four times as concentrated as what had previously been in use.[79] A measure of

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[76]McKinney, 42.

[77]Lilienthal, 19.

[78]Ibid, 79.

[79]Ibid, 81.

prosperity settled on McMinn County as farm products were being sold again in large quantities.

TVA's "blessings" to McMinn County escalated. According to McKinney:

> McMinn County received its "second blessing" from TVA in the announcement that Watts Bar Dam would be built on the Tennessee River in adjoining Meigs and Rhea counties, and that 400 McMinn Countians would be employed at the dam site: . . . there was more rejoicing of the people who saw brighter days ahead.
>
> The TVA dam near Spring City was just the beginning of a series of TVA dams and hydro-electric power plants on the Tennessee River and its tributaries, the Hiwassee, Ocoee, Holston, and Tellico Rivers, all of which played their part in giving McMinn County the highest standard of living the people had ever seen or hoped for.[80]

Besides building dams, making and selling electricity, promoting flood control and conservation, promoting local industries and creating navigable waterways, TVA had a multifaceted education section. Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot noted that TVA had an adult education program for those workers on the dams who worked only five and a half hours a day on a five-day week. Some of the classes they listed were

> courses to prepare adults to become foremen. . . to learn skilled trades such as carpentry, electrical work, or auto mechanics; to become engineers' assistants; and to study scientific agriculture. Some workers attended discussions

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[80]McKinney, 42-43.

> of current economic issues such as rural rehabilitation, cooperative farming, and community organization.[81]

In McMinn County the most enduring educational program was the creation of the regional library system. Library service to rural areas was a locally financed outgrowth of TVA's service to construction workers. In 1985 the Fort Loudoun Regional Library, headquartered in Athens, serves nine counties; it took its beginning with TVA. The Regional Director said, "This successful program has served as a prototype for other states to emulate."[82] Lilienthal underscored the fact that TVA "deliberately tried to 'start something' that local forces might later carry on on their own."[83] At Watts Bar Dam the grassroots approach was tried.

> The TVA contracted with the Tennessee Division of Libraries and the City Library Board of Knoxville, to provide this service at an expense to us that did not exceed what direct TVA library service would have cost. These two agencies knew the people of the localities, knew whom to turn to for local leadership. This contract then became the nucleus for the development of local interest in library service, and regional library service grew naturally out of this beginning.[84]

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[81]Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 116.

[82]Marie Middleton, informal conversation with author, 15 July 1985.

[83]Lilienthal, 127.

[84]Ibid, 128.

By the autumn of 1942 Watts Bar Dam was nearly completed and TVA's contribution would be terminated. One of the local leaders was Mary Shadow, a 1985 resident of McMinn County, who in the late 1930s represented Meigs County on the thirteen county library board. Lilienthal quotes her:

> The bookmobile and the grapevine are the only means of communication. If we lose the library bookmobile, how will we know what is going on in the world? What chance have we to improve standards of health or living except through reading! . . . There is not a family in the county that the library doesn't touch.[85]

Board members who had been reluctant a year or two before to ask for a few hundred dollars' contribution to the regional library now agreed to ask the Tennessee State Legislature for an annual appropriation. Shadow remembered lobbying for the appropriation. She recalled that "On February 9, 1943, the Governor of Tennessee signed a measure setting up an East Tennessee Regional Library office. The initial appropriation was $20,000."[86]

In 1985 the two bookmobiles make regular visits to rural regions of nine counties. In addition, schools in McMinn and other counties supplement their own libraries

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[85] Ibid, 129.

[86] Mary Shadow, informal conversation with author, 14 July 1985.

by filmstrips from the Fort Loudoun Regional Library. As citizens, teachers use other library resources such as video cassettes, books, etc. by requesting them through a branch of the regional library system.

TVA brought much improvement to the Tennessee Valley. Although the region continues to have a per capita income below the national average, the TVA was successful in raising the living standards of people in the impoverished Tennessee Valley area.

Conclusion

Tennesseans participated in practically all of the New Deal agencies. Folmsbee, Corlew, and Mitchell concluded that "the program was the economic salvation for the state."[87] Even in so small a county as McMinn, the New Deal was omnipresent. The total contribution of the New Deal to school systems in counties such as McMinn is hard to assess. Instead of money coming directly to the schools, the funds were included in relief budgets. Many rural people will be forever grateful for the help received during the 1930s.

Permanent improvements came to the schools. Badly needed school buildings were constructed, additions were

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[87]Folmsbee, Corlew, and Mitchell, 500.

made to existing buildings and repairs were made by the short-lived New Deal alphabet agencies.

Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot described the broad concept of education that FDR and the New Dealers had. According to them, there was a wide variation in the New Deal programs of education. Specifically, learning by doing was stressed in the CCC camps and in other programs for out-of-school youth. The TVA's educational program was multi-faceted.[88] However, they conclude that the New Deal

> supplemented regular systems of educational service rather than supplanted regular systems of educational service; they were temporary programs rather than elaborations of existing bureaucracies. That became both their greatest strength, for it permitted flexibility and experimentation in reaching the most underprivileged, and their greatest weakness, for with the death of New Deal relief programs many of the most promising innovations failed to become incorporated into the established educational system.[89]

For all the good it did, the New Deal did not end the Depression; only wartime spending brought a return to prosperity. The demand for labor and troops in World War II ended the unemployment problem. It ended the youth problem by eliminating the gap between school and work. However, during the 1930s the New Deal had extended relief to the needy and achieved a limited recovery.

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[88]Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 106.

[89]Ibid, 113.

One abiding impact of the New Deal on the subsequent course of American education was a legacy of concern. Cremin perceived that

> Teachers emerged from the depression sensitized as never before to the educational predicament of out-of-school youth and to the public's responibility for contending with it.[90]

The chief impact of the Great Depression was it made the American people face up to the necessity of cooperative action. Values of compassion reached a peak during the 1930s. With the problems facing public education in the 1980s, there is a need to regain the values of Depression-era Americans.

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[90]Cremin, 324.

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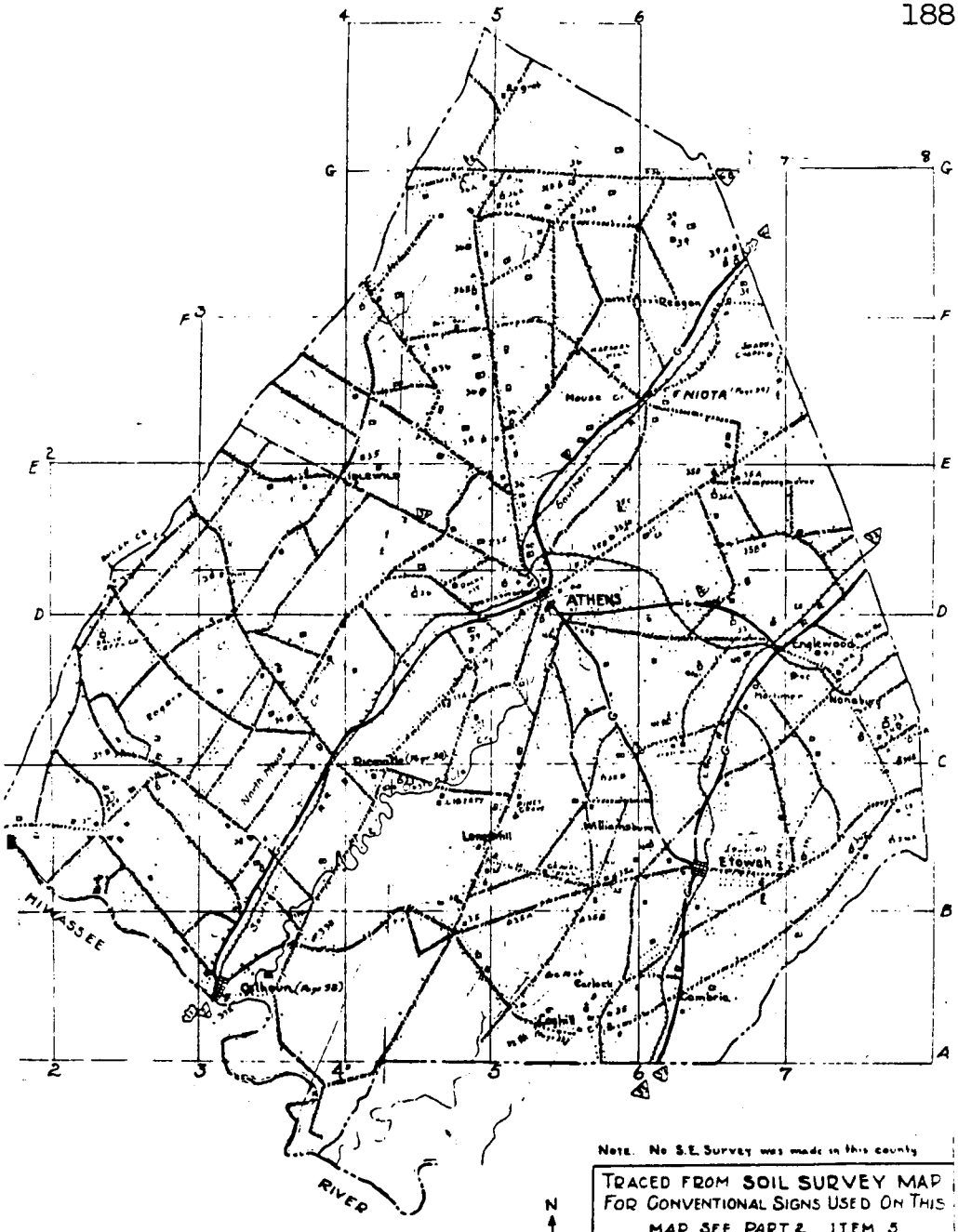
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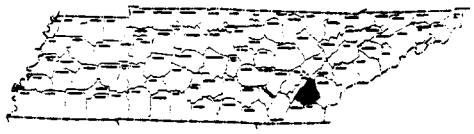
APPENDIX



Note. No S.E. Survey was made in this county

TRACED FROM SOIL SURVEY MAP
FOR CONVENTIONAL SIGNS USED ON THIS MAP SEE PART 2 ITEM 5

INDUSTRIAL & AGRICULTURAL SURVEY
T.V.A. C.W.A
PROJECT 12601
MAP OF McMINN COUNTY
STATE OF TENNESSEE
DRAWN BY O.V.D
CHECKED BY
REFERENCE PAGE NUMBERS BY O.V.D
REFERENCE PART NOS CHECKED BY D.N.S
DATE JULY 18 1934
SCALE 1" = 2 MILES
ENGINEERING SERVICE DIVISION - FILES



Map of McMinn County

AGRICULTURAL - INDUSTRIAL SURVEY

CONVENTIONAL SIGNS USED ON MAPS

● Farm home without conveniences, receiving water from spring, well, or creek, by bucket or hand pump.

o Rural home without conveniences, receiving water from spring, well or creek.

Farm and rural homes with conveniences are designated on the map by the standard conventional sign plus the page number. In some cases farm and rural homes without any other conveniences have the suffixes "T" or "E". These indicate the presence of telephones or electric lights.

△ Retail store
▲ Wholesale store
× Store with filling station
⊓ Church
■ School
Industry
↑ Mines
⊥ Minerals
VV Woodlands
▭ Places of amusement or recreation, parks, etc., airports and anything not covered by other conventional signs.

——·——·——Dirt Road
××××××××××Hard Surface Road
═══════Paved Roads
M Road in medium condition
P Road in poor condition
G Road in good condition

—EE— — — —EE—Double circuit tower line
—E— — — —E—Single circuit tower line
—E— — — —EE—Single circuit on double circuit towers
—E— — — —P—Single circuit pole line
—EE— — — —P—Double circuit pole line
—T— — — —T—Telephone line
—TE— — — —TE—Telegraph line
+++++++++++++++++Railroads
—SES——·——SES—Soil erosion survey line
—SC———·——SC—Combined sanitary and storm sewer
—SS——·——SS—Sanitary sewer
—SN——·——SN—Industrial sewer
N Not washing
S Sheet erosion
G Gullying (not too much for cultivation)
B Beyond cultivation

AGRICULTURAL - INDUSTRIAL SURVEY

A-5: Cog Hill has 20 houses within a quarter mile radius, 1 store and a custom mill for grinding wheat and corn. Grinds 5,000 bushels of wheat and 3,000 bushels of corn.

A-5: Sawmill. Does custom sawing.

A-3:(A) Small rock quarry. Limestone for roads.

A-3:(B) Riverside Mills. Grinds 10,000 bushels of wheat a day, custom grinding and own. Grinds 10,000 bushels of corn per annum. Has 1-175 H.P. water turbine, 1-100 H.P. water turbine, 2-50 H.P. water turbines. Power from Eastanaula Creek. 17' head.

A-3: Abandoned factory building.

B-4: Eastanaula Baptist Church.

C-4: (A-B) Andrews Chapel Methodist Church, and Methodist Church.

C-6: Small limestone quarry. Rock stone.

C-7: Church of Christ.

B-7: (A) Stevenson Baptist Church. Four farm houses and 1 school within 1,000' radius.

From Englewood to Nonaburg there are 3 farms to the crossing of L. & N. R.R.

C-7: Farm homes. Eight farm homes in the hills from Nonaburg to Liberty Hill.

C-7: (A) Nonaburg School. There are 62 students enrolled. Frame building, with 2 rooms and 2 teachers.

C-7: (B) Liberty Hill School. There are 49 students enrolled. Building, frame, with 2 rooms and 2 teachers.

B-7: Mecca School. There are 29 students enrolled. Frame building, with 1 room and 1 teacher.

C-7: Farm homes. There are 11 farm homes within ½ mile radius of Liberty Hill. Also 1 store.

Located on the road from Liberty Hill to Mecca there are 3 farm houses, with 4 houses at Mecca.

C-7: (A) Church of Christ. Located at Liberty Hill.

C-7: (B) Baptist Church. Located at Mecca, known as "Stevensville", with 42 members.

The region from Englewood to Mecca is in the hills with narrow valleys and steep ridges. 60% of houses are painted. No improvements.

B-7: Farm homes. Located on the road from Mecca to Etowah there are 10 farm houses within 1½ miles of Mecca. In the next ¾ of a mile there are 11 farms all on the left except one. In all there are 30 farm houses between Mecca and Pleasant Grove on the outskirts of Etowah.

B-7: (B) Conasauga Baptist Church. Located 2 miles from Mecca on the south. Has 116 members.

B-7: (C) Church. Located 3.2 miles on right. Could not get data.

B-6: (A) Church. Located 4.2 miles on right.

B-6: (B) Pleasant Grove Methodist Church. Located 0.5 out of Etowah on south side of road.

Pleasant Grove merges with Etowah but is not incorporated with it. There are approximately 200 houses, mostly built within ten years.

A-4: The school at Claxton from the first to tenth grades and is called a "four year" or Junior High . It has 269 students, 5 teachers and 7 rooms. Brick building.

B-4: Store. Located ¾ mile north of Claxton, on west side of road. also Church located on east side of road.

B-4: School. School at Good Springs has 86 students enrolled. The building is frame, with 2 rooms and 2 teachers.

B-5: (A) Church. Good Springs Baptist Church. Has 315 members.

B-5: School. Located at Piney Grove. Elementary school.

B-5: (B) Church. Frame building, 2 rooms, 2 teachers and 53 students.

D-5: D-6: Filling station. Located about .2 miles beyond Athens City limits. Texaco Oil Station.

D-5: (A) Mayfield Dairy. Located 1.3 miles farther from Athens City limits.

D-5: (B) Dairy.

D-6: (A) Mt. Harmony Elementary School. A frame building, with 2 rooms, 2 teachers and 70 students.

D-6: (A-B) Two Baptist Churches with 35 and 46 members, respectively.

D-6: (B) Manilla Elementary School. One room, one teacher and 75 students.

A-5:(AB)Two stores.

A-5: School. Frame building with 4 rooms, 4 teachers and 149 students. Elementary.

D-5: D-4: Filling station and store.

E-4: Idlewild School. Junior High. One to 10 grades. Brick building, with 5 rooms, 6 teachers, 129 students. Bus covers radius of 6 miles. 15% of pupils travel over 3 miles. Water from well by hand pump. Outside toilets.

E-4: Church. Baptist Church, 97 members.

* Quarry. Located 6.1 miles out from Athens. Rock used for road stone.

D-3: Pine Hill School. Frame building, with one room, one teacher and 38 students.

* Not on Map.

C-3: Dogwood School. Frame building, with 1 room, 1 teacher and 63 students.

D-5: School. House is brick, 2 rooms, 2 teachers and 82 students.

E-4: Clearwater School. House is brick, 2 rooms, 2 teachers and 81 students.

D-4: Church. Methodist. Store. Located at Tranquillity. School. Brick building with 2 rooms, 2 teachers and 71 students.

F-4: (A) Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church, with 100 members. Store.

F-5: (A) School. Brick building with 2 rooms, 2 teachers and 60 students.

F-5: (A) Beulah Chapel Church, Nazarene.

F-5: (B) Baptist Church, with 108 members.

F-5: (B) Junior High School. Brick building with 7 rooms, 5 teachers and 191 students. Water supply, cistern, pumped by gravity to school. Outside toilets.

E-5: Methodist Church, located at North Liberty. School. Brick building with 2 rooms, 2 teachers and 68 students.

E-4: Grist Mill. The mill has a 22' steel wheel with buckets on the perimeter. It is said to be 20 H.P. Moved by water from a spring, flowing 700 gallons per minute with a temperature of 58°, and air of 73°F. No records arekept and the estimate is that the mill grinds 4,000 bushels of corn and 2,000 bushels wheat per annum. All custom grinding.

F-4: (B) Baptist Church, with 117 members.

F-4: School. Located at Piney Grove, brick building, with 2 rooms, 2 teachers and 38 students.

B-2: The Barite mine is owned by the son of L. A. Wood of Sweetwater, and is financed by his father. The plant consists of a low tipple with screen, log washer 16' long, a crusher and vibratory homemade screen to clean the fine ore passing through main screen; ½ yard Erie steam shovel and 2 trucks. The plant is driven by a coal oil engine of 45H.P. Here some of the ore adheres to the chert and needs to be crushed to make separation which is made in a 3 cell Davis jig.

The ore is excellent, alanyzing 98% barium sulphate, and with little iron adhering to ore. The output is 15 tons daily.

I estimate 17,000 tons on area are prospected.

B-2: Located at Lamontville, there are 3 rural homes, one store and Baptist Church with 112 members.

B-2: Lamontville School. Frame building, with 2 rooms; 2 teachers and 86 students.

C-2: Hillview Junior High School. The school is brick, with 2 rooms; 8 teachers and 177 students. Sewage disposal. Water pumped from well, Delco system. Outside toilets. Five buses cover 6 mile radius, 50% of pupils travel over 3 miles.

Plat 1

A-3: Town of Calhoun. See map on following page for location of houses, stores, filling station, industry, etc.

(1) Industry. The only industry at Calhoun is the Hiwassee Milling Company that grinds only for customers, average production 3,000 bushels wheat and 2,000 bushels of corn.

Water supply. 12 stores and houses get water from a well privately owned. Cisterns and wells are private supply. All homes have outside toilets.

(2) School. Junior High or as it is locally called "2 year high", is a 3-story, brick building, with 9 rooms, 8 teachers and 235 pupils or students. Septic tanks. Water supply from well. Five buses cover an 8 mile radius. 60% of pupils travel over 3 miles.

(3) Baptist Church. Has 240 members.

(4) Methodist Church. Has 60 members.

(5) Christian Church.

B-3: Town of Sanford.

Road crosses at 141 plus 40. On the left 360' is the owners' home; 500' farther west and 200' south is the dairy barn; across the road from owners home are 3 tobacco barns. The Southern Railway is 50' from Highway and a street or road runs south, parallel with railway for 300' and then turns west. Right opposite the railway station are 2 houses and post office.

B-3: Dairy farm. The dairy farm employs 18 men to milk and care for 100 live stock. Forty-two cows are milked dairy by hand. All milk is sold to Chattanooga trade as whole milk. One silo. One tractor. Farm contains 450 acres. Raise own feed for stock. 10 horses. Raised 30,000 pounds tobacco last year. One truck. Trucks come daily for the milk.

Plat 2

D-3: Town of Riceville. See following page for diagram, for location of houses, churches, stores, etc.

Industry. There are no industries in Riceville.

Water supply. Cisterns and wells.

(1) School. Brick building. Eight rooms. Six teachers. 163 students. Septic tank. Water from well. Three buses cover 6 mile radius. 20% of pupils travel over 3 miles. School is called "2 year", or Junior High. Teachers salaries are determined by Tennessee State Schedule, see page 30.

(2) Colored Church. Has 9 members.

(3) Colored Church. Has 10 members.

(4) Baptist Church. Has 117 members.

(5) Christian Church. Has 20 members.

C-4: Repair shop and accessories.

F-6: (A-B) Two churches. One Baptist and one Methodist Church.

F-6: Howell Nursery.

F-6: Barite Mill and Plant, L. H. Wood.

F-6: High School.

Plat 3

F-5: Town of Niota See following page for diagram.

(1) Niota has only one industry, the Crescent Hosiery Co. Mill. It employs 140 people, 75% women. Has 150 ribbers and 91 footers. Makes 1,000 dozen per day. Has expanding market. Before the code went into effect, the average wage was $1.20 a day of 8 hours, now it is $2.60.

Taxes are $660.00 per annum for State, County and village.

Consumes 250,000 lbs. of yarn. Cost for yarn is from 28 cents to 36 cents a lb. Return on finished goods, $1.00, a lb. Estimate of value added by manufacture, 50%.

Primary horse power used, 75.

* Water supply. The water system for the village is from a spring. The water is pumped to reservoir which holds 50,000 gallons. The water company is owned by the Tennessee Electric Power Co. No sewers.

(2) High School with elementary school included. Two-story brick building, with 12 rooms, 11 teachers, 346 students. City water. Indoor toilets, and septic tanks. Four busses cover radius of 6 miles; 25% of pupils travel over 3 miles.

(3) Baptist Church. Substantial building.

(4) Methodist Church. Substantial building.

(5) Dunker Church.

(6) Church of Christ.

(7) Bank.

* Not on map.

This village should widen the streets. It has a good water supply, and could have sewers, but the streets are too narrow to afford any notable growth.

D-5: Pumping station. Athens water supply.

D-5: A. M. Brown Packing Plant.

C-5: Store.

C-5: Two stores with filling stations.

C-6: Town of Englewood

C-6: The Eureka Cotton Mills. Employs 200 people, 70% of whom are women. Estimated annual wage is $70,000.00. Taxes: City, County and State, $3,000.00 per annum. Value of products, $400,000.00. Product, underwear. Value added by manufacture, 75%. Garment weighing one lb. is sold for $0.60. Yarn is worth $0.30 Capacity, 250 dozen garments per day. Primary horse power, 300. Water supply from wells and creek. Labor, plentiful. Electric power, from Tennessee Electric Power Co.

C-7: Englewood Manufacturing Co. Employs 120 people; 50%, women. Makes 800 dozen anklets and misses hosiery per day. "Engle-Knit" hosiery. Estimated annual wage, $50,000.00. Taxes: city, county and state, $760.00. Primary horse power, 60. Boiler. Burned last year. $1428.78 worth of slack coal. Value of products, $175,000.00. Value added by manufacture, 66%. Water supply from well and creek.

C-7: Water supply, from wells and cisterns.

C-7: Englewood High School. On the east side of the railroad. Has 13 rooms, 12 teachers, and 373 students. One bus covers 6 mile radius, 5% of pupils travel over 3 miles. Sewage disposal, water in building.

C-6:(A,B) Two churches. One, Northern Methodist, and one Baptist.

B-6: Williamsburg Non-denominational Church.

B-6: Town of Etowah

The Louisville & Nashville Railroad Shop is the only industry in Etowah. In normal times, the shops employed upward of 2,000 men, now only 100. In all, 230 men employed.

The town is in sad need of assistance to employ the idle men and women. It has applied to the PWA for $115,000 to put in general sewage. It thinks it will surely get this money.

* Water supply. The Etowah Water & Light Co., has a fine system of good water supply for the town. In good times, it had 1400 connections. For the business part, it has 8 inch main and for the residence section, 6 inch. About 80% of homes have septic tanks. The water is from a spring and wells. A reservoir holds 1,100,000 gallons, and the average head is 65 lbs. Can supply 300,000 gallons per day.

Etowah High School was build by public subscription at a cost of $50,000. It has 16 rooms, 12 teachers, 383 students. City water, sewage disposal. One bus covers 6 mile radius, 5% of pupils travel over 3 miles.

Etowah Junior High, of 2 year school, cost $50,000 to build.

Etowah Grammar School, cost $40,000.

Churches. There are 8 churches; 2 Baptist, 2 Methodist, 2 Christian, 1 Presbyterian and 2 colored.

Schools. 1. Wesleyan College is the most prominent school in McMinn County. It was founded in 1866 as the East Tennessee Wesleyan College. The name was changed to "Grant University", in 1886. In 1906 it was named the Athens School of the University of Chattanooga. In 1925 it took an independent status with the original name revised to "Tennessee Wesleyan College".

It is a co-educational, junior college, offering two years of regular college work and giving special courses in teacher training, business, music, art, expression and home economics.

The campus embraces 20 acres, with 4 buildings for class rooms, and Administration Building, containing an auditorium, with a seating capacity of 1,000 persons, gymnasium, offices and lecture hall. Banfield Hall houses the Science Department and Library. The Observation and Practice School, operated as a co-operative enterprise with the College and the McMinn County School system. The College operates the Petty-Manker Hall, a 4-story, brick building, as a dormitory for men, and Bennett Hall, as a dormitory for women. The Elizabeth Ritter Hall is maintained as a dormitory for women by the Women's Home Missionary Society of the M.E. Church. Four buildings house the faculty members.

It is supported by endowment, by the M. E. Church and student tuition. Total number of college students, 251. Fifty-seven students of the various Arts, and the Practice School bring the grand total to 453. City water supply.

2. The Athens High School is a brick building with 15 rooms, 9 teachers and 302 students. Buses cover a 12 mile radius with 10% of the pupils coming over 3 miles. City water supply. Sewerage.

3. The Etowah High School, is a brick building, with 16 rooms, 12 teachers and 373 students. Buses cover 6 mile radius and 5% of the pupils come over 3 miles. City water supply. Sewerage.

4. The Englewood High School , is a brick building, with 13 rooms, 12 teachers and 325 students. No bus. Sewage disposal. Water supply.

5. The Hillview High School is a brick building, with 11 rooms, 8 teachers, including elementary and 204 students. Sewage disposal. Delco system, water supply pumped from well. Five buses cover 6 mile radius, 50% of the pupils come over 3 miles. Outside toilets.

6. The Calhoun High School is a brick building, with 9 rooms, 8 teachers and 235 students. Sewage disposal; septic tank. Water supply from well in building. Five buses cover 8 mile radius, 60% of the pupils come over 3 miles.

7. Riceville High School, is a brick building with 8 rooms, 6 teachers and 163 students. Three buses cover 6 mile radius, 20% of the pupils come over 3 miles. Sewage disposal; septic tank. Water supply by automatic pump from well.

8. Niota High School, is a brick building with 12 rooms, 11 teachers and 346 students. Sewerage. City water supply. Indoor toilets. Septic tank. Buses cover 6 mile radius, 25% of the pupils come over 3 miles.

9. The Union Grove High School, is a brick building with 7 rooms, 6 teachers and 186 students. Water supply by gravity from cistern. Three buses cover 6 mile radius, 60% of the pupils come over 3 miles. Outside toilets.

10. The Idlewild High School, is a brick building, with 6 rooms, 4 teachers and 126 students. 1 bus covers 6 mile radius, 15% of the pupils come over 3 miles. Water supply by hand pump from well. Outside toilets.

11. The Claxton High School, is a brick building with 9 rooms, 9 teachers and 226 students. Six buses cover 8 mile radius, with 65% of the pupils coming over 3 miles. Water supply by hand pump from well. Outside toilets.

12. Elementary Schools: there are 51 elementary schools, besides 10 included in the High and Junior High Schools. The total number of students is 6,176.

Rating of teachers, as follows:

Class	A	requires	Bachelor's Degree.
"	B	"	a four years course.
"	C	"	4 professional examinations.
"	D		4 years night school.
"	E		4 " High School or the equivalent.

Salaries of teachers:

Class	A	receives	$85.00	a	month	for	9	months.
"	B	"	70.00	"	"	"	"	"
"	C	"	60.00	"	"	"	"	"
"	D	"	50.00	"	"	"	"	"
"	E	"	35.00	"	"	"	"	"

An additional $2.50 a month may be allowed for each year of experience up to the maximum of 6 years. Thus no teacher can receive over $100.00 a month.

Source: Tennessee Valley Authority, Agricultural-Industrial Survey of McMinn County, Tennessee, 1934.

VITA

Sally DeWitt Ealy was born on May 6, 1940. She attended Niota Elementary School and graduated from McMinn County High School. She entered Tennessee Wesleyan College and in June 1961, she received the Bachelor of Arts degree with majors in History and Secondary Education.

In June 1961 she was married to Dwain C. Ealy. She became the mother of Ellen Elizabeth Ealy and Dwain Carlton Ealy, Jr.

In August 1975, she began teaching Tennessee History and American History to seventh and eighth grade students at Englewood School in the McMinn County School System. At present she continues in that position.

Always interested in local history, she wrote the chapter on education in the book Hard Times Remembered, A Study of the Depression in McMinn County, Tennessee. She also was a co-author of the book, A History of Keith Memorial United Methodist Church, 1824-1984.