

Memorandum

June 2, 1986



Executive Assistant

TO: Dorothy Nix, DeKalb Historical Society
FROM: Gretta M. Dewald, Executive Assistant
SUBJECT: History of Victoria Simmons School

Thank you so much for obtaining the information on the history of Victoria Simmons School for us. As you indicated, it was not in the best printed form as it came from the School System, so I asked Evelyn to decipher and retype. A copy is enclosed for your "easy" reading. It was typed with the same grammar/wording as it was received.

I am also going to share this with some of our people who I believe will be especially interested.



Gretta M. Dewald

GMD/ehh

Copies to: Manuel J. Maloof, Chief Executive Officer
Shirley Trussell, Director, Family & Children
Services
Mac Baggett, Director, Planning Department
George Salesky, Director, Physical Plant Manage-
ment
Billie Iazard, Commission Office Administrator
Members, Commission Office Staff

CHRONOLOGY OF VICTORIA SIMMONS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Location: Stone Mountain, Georgia

1. The original school was named after the mountain located in Stone Mountain, Georgia. The present school was named for Mrs. Victoria Simmons, an old citizen of Stone Mountain, Georgia.
2. Schools previously attended by pupils in the new school are Tucker and Clarkston Elementary Schools.
3. Date of occupancy in the new school was January, 1955.
4. The original size of the old school was a two room framed building on a site of two acres of land.
5. The original cost of the facility and property are not known, but the land was donated for the purpose of providing a school for the Negro children living in Stone Mountain, Georgia. (Negro?)
6. The architect for the new building was A. Thomas Bradbury and Associates and the contractor was Mr. W. H. Armstrong.

The Little Red School was built on two acres of land donated by the Venable family of Stone Mountain, Georgia, around 1880. The school was operated with funds donated by the Rosenwalds and the Jeanes.

The enrollment was small; the school was open three months a year. Records of the school were not available but the elder citizens believed that Miss Bessie Smith was the principal.

The Little Red School was relocated on a larger campus on four acres of land. During the period of 1889-1920 the school was renamed Stone Mountain, Public School. No records are available to show the data of the renaming of the school.

(1921)

These were progressive years with Stone Mountain Public School. A piano, shades for the classroom, and equipment for the kitchen were purchased. The first home making class was organized. The teachers were Miss Lula Harper and Mrs. Ora Woods. The president of the P.T.A. was Mrs. Willie Benefield with Mrs. Evelyn Wortham as the principal.

(1925)

The project for the year was to purchase shrubbery for the yard. The enrollment increased; the faculty consisted of three young ladies and the principal. The president of the P.T.A. was Mrs. Darling Weaver. Mrs. Frances Morris, the new teacher was a native of Stone Mountain, Georgia. The principal of the Stone Mountain Public School was Mrs. Ida Brittan.

(1930)

Stone Mountain Public School won first prize in DeKalb County's lawn beautification contest. The building was wired for lights; the interior and exterior of the building was painted; but the most important thing was the running of city water to the building. Mr. Donaldson organized an orchestra for the school. The faculty consisted of three teachers and the principal, Mr. Donaldson. The president of the P.T.A. was Mrs. Bessie Russel.

(1942)

Draperies for the classrooms were secured, also the second piano. This was the period during World War II. Miss Julia Johnson, the principal resigned in January. The school was without a principal for the second semester. The three teachers left on the faculty assumed the administrative responsibilities of the school.

(1943)

Mrs. Eugene Benefield increased the enrollment of the P.T.A. to sixty-five active members. A snack bar, an Opaque Projector, and Venetian blinds were purchased. The enrollment of the school was one hundred and fifty-two (152), the largest enrollment in the history of Stone Mountain Public School. There was an expansion of the extra-curricular activities for the combination school which was housed in the building. The addition to the program was the 4-H Club, Economic Club under the supervision of Mrs. Frances Maddox and Miss Lula Harper. Mr. Jackson organized the Mechanic's Club to do the handy work around the school. The Mechanic's Club completed the auditorium during the year and many other tasks.

For many years the school had progressed from the labor of far-sighted men and women. The period of 1943-1950 were years of growth under the leadership of Mr. Earl Jackson. The faculty consisted of three teachers and Mrs. Benefield was president of the Parents and Teachers Association.

(1950)

The faculty consisted of four teachers and principal. The program was expanded to provide richer experiences for the children. The enrollment was three hundred ten with the consolidation of two of the smaller schools. Grade Mothers were organized to assist with various phases of the program.

May 17, 1954 was ground-breaking for the new school. The program was held at three o'clock with members of DeKalb County Board of Education present. The new building was completed January 1955, under the supervision of the State Building Authority. The architect for the building was Mr. A. Thomas Bradbury and Associates, and the contractor was Mr. W. H. Armstrong. The cost of construction was \$233,440 dollars.

The new school consisted of seven classrooms, teacher's lounge, boy's and girls' restrooms, janitor's storage, two book storage rooms, cafeteria, library and a kitchen. The building is located on ten and one half acres of land. The selecting of an appropriate name for the school was given much consideration. In considering a name for the school, the name of Mrs. Victoria Simmons was the most prominent and the most often mentioned.

Mrs. Simmons was born March 6, 1866 Stone Mountain, Georgia. After graduating from high school she entered Spelman Seminary, now known as Spelman College. Her areas of concentration were Academic and Missionary training. Among her many accomplishments that she was proud of were the following:

1. Founder of the first Missionary Society
2. Organized and taught an adult night class in her home.
3. She secured food and clothing for needy families.

The decision was made by DeKalb County Board of Education that the new school would be named after this great lady. The school was named the Victoria Simmons Elementary School. The dedication service was held on December 11, 1955 with Mr. C. I. Harper as the guest speaker. Mrs. Simmons was present and gave the school a portrait of herself.

The faculty of the Victoria Simmons Elementary School did a self study of the school and community in 1957. As a follow-up of the study and the report of the committee many improvements were made and the school received its accreditation (1957 - to present) by the Georgia Accrediting Commission. The Board of Education employed a part time secretary, and a janitor for the school in 1957. A band was organized for grades five through seven in 1960. The faculty consisted of seven female teachers and one male teacher. A period of five years were utilized using the information from the study under the leadership of Mr. Edward Bouie.

The second study was conducted by the faculty of Victoria Simmons School in conjunction with the county in 1963-64. As a result of the study and the report of the Visiting Committee many improvements were made. There was expansion of the educational program.

DeKalb County Board of Education employed a speech therapist, and a series of readers were adopted for the county. In 1963 four rooms were added to the building using the same architect and contractor for the addition. The addition cost around \$64,239 dollars. The library is now utilized for reading experiences rather than as a classroom as it had been previously used.

It was after the second study that Victoria Simmons School became a member of the Southern Association of Accreditation.

The second study was under the leadership of Mr. E. L. Bouie. The faculty consisted of seven female teachers and one male teacher. Presidents of the P.T.A. during these progressive years were: Mrs. Ella Woodson, Mrs. Emma Maddox, Mrs. Cummings, and Mrs. Lucille Morris. Mr. Bouie was the principal until 1964. He was transferred to Robert Shaw Elementary School.

(1964-1965)

The state's summer-reading program was organized in our school. The Head Start program for first graders was organized. A full time librarian and full-time secretary were employed. More record players, projectors and books were secured during the present school term. The faculty consists of eleven teachers, and a supervising principal.

The Neighborhood Youth Corps and the Adult Education Classes have been organized for the purpose of preparing adults for improvement in status for earning a living and community participation. The principal of the school is Mr. Jesse Dixon, and the president of the P.T.A. is Mrs. Jonnell Perimeter.

These are some of the pertinent facts about the history of Victoria Simmons Elementary School. The information was obtained from older citizens of Stone Mountain, Georgia and school records.

NOTE: Victoria Simmons was closed as "a Black" school.
The records do not show that it was ever integrated.

Chronology of Victoria Simmons Elementary School

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