

In 1935, the great African-American writer W.E.B. DuBois wrote a book about the African-American response to emancipation. Entitled *Black Reconstruction in America*, the book captured the dreams and aspirations of the former slaves. “[T]hese black folk,” DuBois wrote, “wanted two things—first, land which they could own and work for their own crops Then, in addition to that, they wanted to know They were consumed with curiosity at the meaning of the world They were consumed with desire for schools.”ⁱ

This overarching desire for access to education was certainly true of African-Americans in Missouri. And no wonder. In 1847 the Missouri legislature passed a law prohibiting the education of African-Americans, slave or free. Anyone operating a school for “Negroes or mulattoes,” or teaching reading or writing to any black person in Missouri, could be punished with a fine of not less than five hundred dollars and sentenced for up to six months in jail. Slaveholders feared that literacy would lead to rebellion or, at the very least, increased dissatisfaction and restlessness among slaves.ⁱⁱ

Missouri freedmen who sought educational opportunities in the immediate post-Civil War era found help on several fronts. First and foremost, support came from State Superintendent of Schools Thomas A. Parker, a so-called “Radical Republican.” The Radical Republican party advocated the ending of slavery and the exercise of full political and civil rights for the former slaves. Other groups that tried to provide blacks with access to education included the Washington, D. C., based federal agency known as the Freedmen’s Bureau (“Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands”), the American Missionary Association, and the Western Sanitary Commission.ⁱⁱⁱ

Immediately following the war, Missourians adopted a new constitution that embodied many Radical Republican ideas. Article Nine of the new constitution mandated the establishment of free public schools for the education of all Missourians between the ages of five and twenty-one, without regard to race.^{iv}

In 1866, the Missouri legislature, still dominated by Radical Republicans, passed a law requiring townships to establish schools for African-Americans in areas where there were twenty or more black children of school age. The schools, however, were to be segregated, an obvious concession to the postwar conviction among most Missouri whites that blacks and whites should not attend school together.^v

It was one thing to pass a law calling for the establishment of black schools; it was quite another to try to enforce it. State Superintendent of Schools Thomas A. Parker, a Radical Republican, reported to the legislature in 1867 that there was no effective way of forcing whites to provide schools for blacks. Some counties, for example, refused to enumerate their African-American school-age children, reporting to the state superintendent that there were no such children in their counties.^{vi} Other communities resisted taxing themselves for the purpose of establishing schools for black children. The Jefferson City *People's Tribune* encouraged the city's residents to oppose the establishment of a property tax of two dollars on every one hundred dollars of assessed property valuation in the city. At least some of the proceeds were to be used "to educate Negro children." That was enough to arouse the ire of the editor of the *Tribune*. He tried to inflame the opposition of voters with the following call: "Look To Your Rights, White Man!" The tax measure failed by a vote of 226-16.^{vii}

In response, the Radicals strengthened the law. They gave the state superintendent the authority to establish and supervise schools for blacks in communities where local school boards refused to do so. Superintendent Parker, in turn, hired African-American leader James Milton Turner to travel throughout the state, seeking to determine where the law was being violated, and trying to persuade and pressure local school boards to comply with the law.^{viii}

Turner encountered some of his toughest cases and stiffest opposition in central Missouri. In Tipton, for example, Turner found school officials who were willing to open a school for blacks but undermined its effectiveness by hiring "an incompetent and very ignorant Negro man as teacher." Similarly, in Fulton, Turner found a propensity to employ less-than-competent teachers for black schools. The county superintendent of schools, Thomas A. Russell, told him he would employ as a teacher of blacks anyone who applied for the job and that, in his judgment, "any such colored person need not so far as He is concerned know the English Alphabet."^{ix}

Finding competent, qualified teachers for black schools was a major problem, especially given the fact that African-American parents preferred that their children be taught by blacks. In 1869, Turner summarized the situation as follows: "I find many localities in which Schools would be opened but for want of teachers."^x In an effort to solve this problem, Turner moved to gain state funds for Lincoln Institute, a black subscription school established in Jefferson City in 1866. Largely through Turner's

efforts, Lincoln received a \$5,000 appropriation in 1870 for the training of black teachers and continued to operate as a private school, but with some public funding, for several years.^{xi} The state superintendent of school's annual report in 1873 made clear that the problem had not been solved by that time: "The colored schools of the state demand more teachers than . . . [Lincoln] Institute can at present supply. The colored prefer teachers of their own race, and where such are well prepared, they succeed well [H]ow the colored common schools of the State are to be properly developed and increased, it is difficult to see, unless the State shall in some way make larger provision for the fitting of teachers for these schools."^{xii} Three years later, the state superintendent of schools noted again that "There is a prejudice among both whites and blacks, against white teachers for colored schools. This prejudice is natural, and in full accord with sound reason. Therefore there is being made an energetic effort to advocate colored men and women for the profession of teaching."^{xiii} One consequence of this "energetic effort" was that the state took total control of Lincoln Institute in 1879 and designated it as the state's publicly supported school for the training of African-American teachers. Lincoln Institute, renamed Lincoln University in 1921, continued to serve in that capacity throughout the Jim Crow era.^{xiv}

Despite white racism, manifested in opposition to black schools, and a shortage of black teachers, schools for African-Americans were established throughout the central Missouri area during the generation following emancipation. Sometimes schools for blacks were held in private homes. The first school for African Americans in Tipton (Moniteau County), for example, was held in the home of the Rev. Cal Shackelford, the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) pastor.^{xv} In Nelson (Saline County), Thornton Taylor's home was the school for a number of years following the Civil War.^{xvi} Boonville students met first in a house on the northwest corner of Fourth and Spruce Streets, called the Elias Buckner School. Later this school came to be known as the Sumner School, named for the famous abolitionist and Radical Republican, U. S. Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts.^{xvii} The Goode home outside of Moselle in southeastern Franklin County is believed to have been the site of the first school for African Americans in that community after the Civil War. Students apparently met in the dining room of the house.^{xviii}

More common was the holding of classes for black students in African-American churches. In Arrow Rock (Saline County), the first school for blacks was established in Brown's Chapel Freewill Baptist Church in 1869. The church was used as a school from 1870 to 1892, when the first school

building for African-Americans was erected out of lumber salvaged from the white school.^{xix} In Jefferson City, black students attended classes in the Second Baptist Church for some time.^{xx} In Columbia, the school established in John Lang, Sr.'s, home in 1866 moved the next year to the congregation's church. According to Boone County historian John Crighton, the Freedmen's Bureau contributed \$800 to the cost of erecting and equipping this structure. Columbia blacks raised \$1,000. Charles C. Cummings, "a well educated and experienced black teacher" from New Haven, Connecticut, taught at this school until his retirement in 1876. Despite its religious affiliation, this school was recognized as Columbia's *public* school for African-Americans, in response to a petition filed by "a portion of the Colord [sic] Citizens of Columbia" with the Missouri General Assembly in January 1869.^{xxi}

Sometimes, schools for African-Americans were established in buildings that had been discarded by the white community. A case in point was the so-called "House on Hobo Hill" on the outskirts of Jefferson City. Discarded by the white community as unfit for white students, the log structure became the school for African-Americans in 1868. Later, African-Americans went to school in a second building abandoned by white students. The Jefferson City Board of Education spent more than \$26,000 during the early 1870s to build a new, 3-story brick school building for white students known as the "Central School." When the white children moved into this new building in the Fall of 1871, that freed up the old white school (known as the "German-English Building"), located in the 200-block of West McCarty St. Initially, the old school was rented to the publisher of a local newspaper, who happened also to be a member of the board of education. In 1873, the school board tried to persuade the publisher to allow one room of the building to be used for a school for African Americans, but he refused. Finally, in the Fall of 1875, after the black student population had swelled to more than 150 students, and the printing office had moved to another location, the board of education established a school for African Americans in one room of the German-English Building. This building became known as the "Washington School" during the early 1890s and continued to serve the black students of Jefferson City throughout the remainder of the century.^{xxii}

Often, especially in rural communities of central Missouri, small, hastily built, inadequate single-pen frame structures were built to accommodate black students. State Superintendent of Schools Sam Baker took note of this problem in a 1922 report to the Missouri General Assembly: "The greatest defects

in Negro education are found in the rural schools. The buildings are often unsatisfactory, unsightly, and inaccessible. They, by no means, provide for the physical comfort and general welfare of the children. Many times the toilets are in bad condition and good teaching is exceedingly difficult on account of inadequate equipment.^{xxiii} Dozens of these small, inadequate structures still dot the landscape of central Missouri communities, although the majority of them have given way to the ravages of time and the inadequacies of their construction.^{xxiv}

Towns and small cities often boasted of slightly more substantial and larger buildings than those that could be found in rural areas and villages. Examples abounded in central Missouri. The Chamois community in eastern Osage County, which had a black population of roughly 400 during the last two decades of the 19th century, constructed a substantial one-room brick building for black students of the area during the early 1880s. This structure, known as the “Maceo School” was razed during the 1990s.^{xxv} In Warrensburg, a large frame structure was built in the heart of the black community during the late 1880s. The school was named for Oliver Otis Howard, head of the Freedmen’s Bureau, whose organization had first purchased the land upon which the school was built in 1869.^{xxvi} Likewise, a substantial brick schoolhouse for African-American students was erected in Tipton in 1890. Known as the Harrison School, this structure served the black community until it was closed in 1957.^{xxvii} One of the largest black schools of the era was built in Jefferson City in 1903. Built in 1903 on Elm Street between Lafayette and Cherry Streets, this new “Washington School” served the black population of Jefferson City until racial integration was completed in 1956.^{xxviii}

The era of World War I witnessed the building of a number of new, more substantial, and larger schools for black students in a number of central Missouri towns. A new Sumner Public School for African Americans was built in Boonville in 1915-1916, after the earlier Sumner had burned.^{xxix} In Columbia, a new school for the city’s black students was built in 1918, replacing an older structure that had been built in 1885. The new school carried the name of famed civil rights activist Frederick Douglass, for whom Columbia’s black school had been named since 1898.^{xxx}

Although the 1920s is usually thought of as a somewhat repressive time for African Americans in Missouri and the nation, at least some significant schools for blacks were built in central Missouri during

that decade. The Audrain County town of Vandalia got a large two-story brick school for the town's black students in 1927.^{xxxix}

No twentieth-century force contributed more to the building of schools for central Missouri's African-American students than the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Established in 1935 by executive order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the WPA put millions of unemployed American laborers to work building schools, hospitals, roads, and reservoirs. In 1939, WPA funds were used to build a third Sumner Public School in Boonville on the east side of town, near the railroad tracks, in the heart of the black community.^{xxxix} Fulton, Missouri, got a new school for its black students in 1937. Erected with WPA funds and workers, the new school was named for famous African-American scientist George Washington Carver, who spoke at the school's dedication. Ms. Billie Taylor was a second-grade student at the Carver School when Dr. Carver appeared there for the dedication ceremony. It was one of the high points of her elementary school career. In a January 2000 interview, she remembered that "on that night every possible space in the building was taken, including the aisles that were packed with people standing; they were elbow to elbow in that auditorium."^{xxxix} Yet another important black school built as a WPA project during the late 1930s was the Garfield School in Mexico, erected in 1937. This structure was built as an addition to an earlier school that stood on land donated by Mexico businessman A. P. Green for the purpose of building a black school.^{xxxix} One of the features of all of the WPA schools that had not been present in earlier black schools was the existence of a gymnasium. Indeed, WPA funds were used to add an auditorium and gymnasium to Jefferson City's Washington School in 1938.^{xxxix}

Regardless of how well built, or how large, a school for African-Americans was, the facility was always "inherently unequal." Interviews with individuals who attended and taught in central Missouri's segregated schools document just how unequal those schools were. The Rev. Dr. David O. Shipley attended the Harrison School in Tipton from 1931-1938. His father, Galveston L. Shipley, was principal there for many years. All eight elementary grades were in one room. The other room of the two-room schoolhouse was used for a two-year high school. The Rev. Dr. Shipley recalled that "All the books were [hand-me-downs] from the [white] school in Tipton. . . . Even the crayons were used." Shipley also remembered that in the high school, "there was no library, no science material, no chemistry—you had only the basics. We did not have geometry, so [if] you went on to college you were really not qualified."^{xxxix}

Nancy Huston Draffen and her husband Fielding Draffen both grew up in Saline County's Slater and recall that although they went to the all-black Alexander School, they often played with white friends after school. Fielding Draffen remembers shooting marbles with white children and listening to them talk about their school: "I especially remember hearing them talk about things that we did not have in our schools We did not have any organized programs at all. I would hear them talk about their athletic program . . . and also they talked about biology class. I had never even heard this word before." Nancy Draffen remembers that "we did not have a cafeteria or a gym, and the only outside play [equipment] we had was a seesaw."^{xxxvii}

Lela May was born in 1911 in the Moniteau County town of Clever, near California. She attended school for three years in a home rented by her uncle because there was no school available. Later, she went to the all-black Humboldt School in California, a school that she and others referred to as being "down in Egypt." The neighborhood was called Egypt "because most of the black people lived there across the [railroad] track." She remembers, also, that "When I was going to school there was no supplies given to us that I know of."^{xxxviii}

Lela May was only eighteen years old when she made the transition from being a student to being a teacher. She had just graduated from high school at Sumner in Boonville. The year was 1929: "I did not have any money to go to college and this elementary school [Bellaire] needed a teacher I remember one of the boys in that school was the same age as me." As a teacher, Lela May experienced the same discrimination that she had known as a student: "So many times the black schools would get the old used supplies and books." She discovered, also, that she was paid far less than white teachers. While teaching in the small Cooper County town of Speed during the 1940s, she learned that a white teacher in the white school who befriended her "got twice what I did for teaching, but what could I do about it?"^{xxxix}

Fannie Marie Tolson of Fayette also experienced the impact of segregated education as both a student and a teacher. Born on a farm near Fayette in 1911, Miss Tolson attended elementary school in the Lincoln School in Fayette through the tenth grade. She then moved to Jefferson City to finish high school at the Lincoln University Laboratory School. After graduation from high school, she attend Lincoln University, graduating in 1934. She returned to Fayette to teach adult students to read and write in a federal government program for one year. She then took a teaching job in a segregated school in Bowling

Green for one year. By 1936, she had moved to the Sumner School in Boonville and remained there until the early 1950s, when she came back to Fayette to teach in the same Lincoln School that she had attended more than twenty years before. In Fayette, she discovered that little had changed at her old school since she left there more than two decades earlier: “When I saw the condition of the school and the books, I thought I would have a stroke.”^{xl}

Awareness of the divide between educational facilities and opportunities for black and white students was becoming increasingly obvious to more and more Americans during the decade following World War II. Finally, of course, the United States Supreme Court handed down one of its most famous and far-reaching decisions, in the 1954 case of *Brown v. Board of Education*. In that case, the court ruled that segregated education in the United States was “inherently unequal,” and, as a consequence, a violation of “the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment.”^{xli}

In Missouri, the Supreme Court’s decision was followed by a ruling by the state’s attorney general, John M. Dalton, who declared on June 30, 1954, that Missouri’s laws requiring racially segregated schools were “null and void.” State Commissioner of Education Hubert Wheeler responded that the State Board of education would “do every thing that is expected of us in every way.”^{xlii}

Many parents of black students in central Missouri were elated at the news of the *Brown* decision. Speaking on behalf of black parents at a public forum sponsored by the West Central Division of the Missouri Association for Social Welfare on June 3, 1954, Mrs. C. C. Damel of Jefferson City commented that “I have additional pride in my country because of the decision of the Supreme Court It means an opportunity for my people to sit at America’s educational table, to join with others in an effort to prepare for our role in a democratic society.”^{xliii}

But integration would not always go smoothly or rapidly in central Missouri, nor would it always have immediate positive consequences. Young Sidney Reedy, III, had discovered the trauma of racial integration even before the *Brown* decision, when his father enrolled him as the only black student in Immaculate Conception Catholic School in Jefferson City in 1948. Catholic schools in central Missouri parishes under the jurisdiction of the archdiocese of St. Louis were ordered to accept black students in 1947 by Archbishop Joseph Ritter. But young Sidney Reedy found that the archbishop’s order did not soften the hostility of his classmates. Reminiscing about the experience in September 2000, Reedy recalled: “That

first year at IC School was especially difficult because several white children called me names and chased me to the end of the last `white' block, the 1000 block of E. Dunklin.” Returning to the black community, however, provided no solace for Reedy: “As I walked onto the east end of my block (800), the students from Washington School, the black public grade school, met me in large groups ready to fight or they chased me back into white territory.” His African-American peers were angry with Reedy for attending a white school.^{xliv}

Reedy’s experience may have been more pronounced because he was the only black student in an all-white school. Still, many black students were uncomfortable with leaving the comfort of the all-black school, where their teachers were almost always family friends, fellow church members, and even relatives. Betty Trout Washington Brown, who taught school in Wright City when segregation came to an end, remembered that “some [of the black students] were not happy to go [to white schools]” when integration came in 1955. Some high school students, she recalled, dropped out of school rather than go to the integrated school. Others found it hard to make friends with white students and never really felt comfortable in the new, integrated environment.^{xlv}

Teachers, also, had challenges and adjustments to make. Often, black teachers were suspected by white administrators of being inadequately prepared to teach in an integrated setting. Fannie Marie Tolson recalled that in Fayette, Missouri, “when integration arrived, they wanted to see if I could really teach, they just wanted to know what I knew.” Anxious over the prospect of teaching white and black students together, Tolson “made out a six week lesson plan and got in my car and drove down to Jefferson City to see Dr. [Lorenzo] Greene,” her mentor and friend, for advice. Dr. Greene told her to remember that she knew her history and that she should not doubt her abilities. “He told me . . . he did not want me to ask any white teacher even the time of day,” she recalled. He wanted her to be confident in her own abilities and to exude that confidence. More importantly, he told her, “you treat all of your students right, all colors, and don’t make no exceptions.” For Ms. Tolson, that first integrated class turned out to be “the best class I ever had.”^{xxlvi}

Some black teachers were not as fortunate as Ms. Tolson. Some lost their jobs or were reassigned to non-teaching duties, the stigma of the “inherently unequal” black school, ironically, following them and hurting them, even after segregation had been declared unconstitutional. Indeed, the legacy of segregation

has continued to plague Missourians down to the present, especially in the urban areas of Kansas City and St. Louis.^{xlvii}

Nearly a half century has passed since the United States Supreme Court declared segregated education to be in violation of the law of the land. This exhibit reminds Missourians of the obstacles placed in the paths of countless of the state's citizens for nearly a century. And yet, it reminds us, also, of the dignity and diligence with which African Americans sought to educate them selves, even in this system of "inherently unequal" schools. That they accomplished so much with so little, and in the face of such great odds, is something of which all Missourians should be proud.

ⁱ W.E. B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, rev. ed., Intro. By David Levering Lewis (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992), p. 234.

ⁱⁱ Gary R. Kremer and Antonio F. Holland, *Missouri's Black Heritage*. Rev. ed., (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1993), p. 38.

ⁱⁱⁱ Gary R. Kremer, *James Milton Turner and the Promise of America: The Public Life of a Post-Civil War Black Leader* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1991), pp. 25-39.

^{iv} Robert Brigham, "The Education of the Negro in Missouri," Ph. D. dissertation, University of Missouri-Columbia, 1946, p. 83.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} [Jefferson City] *People's Tribune* 1 August 1866; Jerena E. Giffen, *The House on Hobo Hill; The History of the Jefferson City Public Schools* (Jefferson City: Jefferson City Public Schools, 1964), p. 35.

^{viii} Kremer, *James Milton Turner*, pp. 28-29.

^{ix} Quoted in Ibid., pp. 30-31.

^x Ibid., p. 31.

^{xi} Ibid., p. 35.

^{xii} State Superintendent of Schools, Annual Report (1873).

^{xiii} State Superintendent of Schools, Annual Report (1876).

^{xiv} W. Sherman Savage, *The History of Lincoln University* (Jefferson City: The New Day Press, 1939), pp. 34-36.

^{xv} James Shipley, interview, 11 May 1998.

^{xvi} *History of Saline County, Missouri* (Marshall, Mo.: Saline County Historical Society, 1983), p. 127.

^{xvii} Robert L. Dyer, *Boonville: An Illustrated History* (Boonville, M.: Pekitanoui Press, 1987), p. 133.

^{xviii} Clyde Gennerly, interview, 14 February 1999.

^{xix} Gary R. Kremer, "African-American Community Life in Jim Crow Missouri: Arrow Rock, 1865-1954," unpublished manuscript.

^{xx} Jerena E. Giffen, *The House on Hobo Hill* (Jefferson City: Jefferson City Public Schools, 1968), p. 58.

^{xxi} John C. Crighton, *A History of Columbia and Boone County* (Columbia, Mo.: Boone County Historical Society, 1987), pp. 189-190.

^{xxii} Giffen, *The House on Hobo Hill*, pp. 58-59.

^{xxiii} Quoted in Brigham, p. 125.

^{xxiv} For more on such buildings that still stand, see Gary R. Kremer and Brett Rogers, "Separate But Equal?—Rural and Small Town African-American Schools in the Missouri River Valley," unpublished manuscript. The work of Kremer and Rogers is part of an ongoing project aimed at identifying and describing structures still standing in Missouri that once housed Jim Crow schools. The project is funded by a grant from the Historic Preservation Office, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, and William Woods University.

^{xxv} George Kishmar, *History of Chamois, Missouri* (Jefferson City, Mo.: Jeff-City Printing, Inc., 1975), p. 36.

^{xxvi} [Warrensburg] *Star-Journal*, 21 January 1938; Lucille Gress, *An Informal History of Black Families of the Warrensburg Area*, (Warrensburg, Mo.: The Mid-America Press, Inc., 1993), .pp. 23-24.

^{xxvii} *Tipton Times*, 30 August 1979; David Shipley, interview, 16 June 2000.

^{xxviii} Giffen, *The House on Hobo Hill*, p. 102.

^{xxix} Dyer, *Boonville: An Illustrated History*, p. 133.

-
- ^{xxx} “Social Institutions of Columbia’s Black Community,” National Register Nomination, 1980. Cultural Resources Inventory, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Jefferson City, Mo.
- ^{xxxⁱ} Lincoln School, National Register Nomination, 1995, Cultural Resources Inventory, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Jefferson City, Mo.
- ^{xxxⁱⁱ} Sumner Public School, National Register Nomination, 1989, Cultural Resources Inventory, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Jefferson City, Mo.
- ^{xxxⁱⁱⁱ} George Washington Carver School, National Register Nomination, 1996, Cultural Resources Inventory, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Jefferson City, Mo. ; Billie Taylor, interview, 17 January 2000.
- ^{xxx^{iv}} Charles Fry, interview, 1 February 2001.
- ^{xxx^v} Giffen, *The House on Hobo Hill*, p. 131.
- ^{xxx^{vi}} David Shipley, interview, 16 June 2000.
- ^{xxx^{vii}} Fielding and Nancy Draffen, interview, 15 June 2000.
- ^{xxx^{viii}} Lela May, interview, 21 July 2000.
- ^{xxx^{ix}} *Ibid.*
- ^{xl} Fannie Marie Tolson, interview, 17 May 2000.
- ^{xli} Quoted in Lorenzo J. Greene, “Report to the United States Commission on Civil Rights on Desegregation of Schools in Missouri by the Missouri Advisory Committee,” p. 1, unpublished report. Copy available in Page Library, Lincoln University, Jefferson City, Mo.
- ^{xlii} *Ibid.*, p. 29.
- ^{xliii} Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- ^{xliv} Sidney Reed to Gary R. Kremer, 12 November 2000.
- ^{xl^v} Betty Trout Washington Brown, interview, 6 June 2000.
- ^{xl^{vi}} Fannie Marie Tolson, interview, 17 May 2000.
- ^{xl^{vii}} Greene, “Report to the United States Commission on Civil Rights,” documents this problem.