

J. A. Jackson

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Joyce Bishop
928-5723

BELFOREST SCHOOL

Belforest School played an important part in the educational progress of Baldwin County for a little over fifty years. According to the best information it seems the first school house was erected about 1896 on the site occupied by the present building. Since that time Belforest has ^{had} two other school buildings.

That little one-room school house, built by the patrons of the community, was perhaps typical of the average country school in Alabama at that time. It was of frame construction, with board roof, few windows, and one door. The desks were home-made affairs, and not too comfortable. A big wood stove stood in a conspicuous place near the center of the room. The water bucket and dipper was found on a shelf in the corner. The Blue Back Speller, and the Mc Guffey Readers were among the outstanding text books of that era. Miss Carrie Gregory, originally of Massachusetts, was the first teacher- in fact she and her father, Mr. E.E. Gregory and a neighbor, Mr. E.A. Brooks, formerly of Indiana, were largely responsible for the erection of this first little school building. She taught five grades. Other grades were added as the children advanced.

Among those attending this first school were the Marco, Lazzari, Burroughs, Trione, Stapleton, White, and Fender Children, Miss Gregory taught for perhaps three years, She, a devout Christian, and a registered nurse must have had a profound influence over her pupils.

Other capable teachers succeeding Miss Gregory made very definite contributions to the educational life of the community. Miss Essie Fields, a relation of the Garrett family, was the second teacher. In 1900 the Gluckstein sisters, Nina and Fannie came to Belforest. They taught two sessions of school, and were succeeded by Miss Katie Fields. In 1904-1905 a new room was added. The teachers that year were Miss Mazie Croker and Miss Hattie Lindsey. In 1905-1906 Misses Beatrice and Ada Partridge taught here. Mr. John Kendrick and Miss Ethel Davis were appointed to teach the 1906-1907 session of school. The storm of September 27th, partly demolished the building, and during that year school convened in the old Hemingway House - a large, unattractive two story building - located just in front of the old Garrett home. (on Co. Rd. 54)

At Hemingway House many adjustments had to be made. Boys and girls did continue to have separate play areas. An old ^{plow} sweep was substituted for the familiar bell, to call the children indoors. Desks were most uncomfortable, and conditions were crowded. Children attending school at this time included the Garrett, Grimes, Sirmon, McGill, Robinson, Myrick, Creamer, Mancini, Trione, Pintarelli, Marco, Rolando, Cometti, Langham, Allegri, Berga, Corte, Bertolla, ^{Lazzar} De Filippi, and Boni. At this time eight grades were taught. Base ball was the favorite game in those days. The boys cleared a place for a diamond in the nearby cotton patch. Mr. Kendrick lived in the extreme northern part of the community and walked all of four miles each way to school.

Thanks to the destructive storm of 1906 Belforest gained a new school building. This was a two story structure, consisting of two class rooms, with the upper room to be used as an auditorium. The county and school patrons cooperated in the erection of this project. Mr. Richard Rackley and his stepmother, Mrs. Lula Rackley were the first teachers to use the new building. In fact the second room was completed during that session of school.

Other teachers serving Belforest included the
following:

1908-1910 Miss Lilla Simmons

and

Miss Ella White

1910-1911 Mr. George Strong

Miss Lenora Strong

1911-1912 Miss Mable McDaniels

Miss Minnie McDaniels

1912-1913 Miss Maude Lowrey

Miss Cynthelia Lowrey

Miss Maude, as she was affectionately known, taught until 1918. That year she married Orlando Mancini, and went to live near Camp Gordon, Georgia, with her soldier husband. How well we remember that sad parting, and especially the fact that Viola Bertolla had to borrow a handkerchief from Gladys Robinson to cry in! Mr. Chandler was sent to fill the vacancy as a result of Miss Maude's resignation. In 1916 ^(Mrs. Tuveson) Mae McKenzie of Daphne, was sent to Belforest. This was the first time Belforest had three teachers. These were peak years for Belforest. The attendance reached 107 that year.

Miss McKenzie remained at Belforest two years, Misses Willie Grace Stewart, Miss Olive Wooster and Cynthelia Lowrey taught the 1918-1919 session of school. During that year Miss Lowrey was called to Washington, D.C. where she was engaged in Civil Service Work.

In the fall of 1919 Mr. Carlos Shriner, Miss Pauline Thompson and Mrs. Foreman were our teachers. That year the Ninth Grade was added. Mr. Shriner remained for the 1920-21 session. His assistants were Miss Ellen Harrison and Miss Marjorie Jewel. The Tenth Grade was added that year to accomodate the several pupils who had done Ninth Grade work the year before. It developed that only one pupil- Frances Penry - enrolled for the work.

In 1921 - 22 Mr. Walter Jones, Miss Marjorie Jewel and Miss Luverne Harris opened the new session of school. At Christmas Mr. Jones resigned, and Miss Harris was transferred to Silverhill. Mr. Teal succeeded Mr. Jones.

In the winter of 1937 - 38 the school building burned. This fire was the result of a faulty flue. For the remainder of that season and the following year, school was conducted in the Christian Church. That year Miss Sybil Davidson was assistant to Mrs. Robinson.

On February 14, 1939 Miss Ella suffered a stroke and on the 16th passed away. Her death was a severe blow to the school and community. She was loved by all who knew her. Miss Addie Stapleton was appointed to complete the 1938-39 term of school. She continued to serve as principal until 1942.

The County replaced our old building with a modern two-room structure of tile and concrete. It was ready for occupancy in the fall of 1939. Miss Stapleton and Miss Lillie B. Phillips were our teachers that year. In 1940 Mrs. Edna Sirmon was assistant to Miss Stapleton. Miss Stapleton resigned in 1942 and Miss Sudge Garrett became our new teacher. Miss Garrett served until the spring of 1946. At this time there was a very definite teacher shortage. Our community was asked to "find" a teacher to work with Mrs. Sirmon. *The PTA chose* Mrs. Bessie Robinson Penry, ^{she} continued to serve until the school was discontinued in 1950. In 1950 Belforest was consolidated with Daphne.

Trustees serving Belforest School through the years were as follows:

Mr. E.A. Brooks
Mr. J.W. Robinson
Mr. G.G. Miller

MR. E.E. MILLER

Mr. D.R. Grimes

Mr. W.L. Penry

Mr. E.P. Robinson

Mr. W.E. Penry

Mr. J.G. Sirmon

Mr. J.G. Garrett

Mr. B.E. Simms

Belforest School, with its many outstanding teachers, evidently was able to inspire many young people to a life of service. From our little community have gone eighteen teachers and five ministers of the Gospel.

Today ^{the} Belforest School building is serving as a civic center. The various organizations meet there regularly. Certain social functions are held there from time to time. It is our dream to establish a Public Library there in the near future. At present the grounds are being converted into a soft ball diamond with lighted field. Belforest Community is very proud of its school's past history, and the part it played in our community life.

Teachers at Belforest School from 1896 to 1922:

(Names and dates compiled from the written history of Belforest School by Joyce S Bishop, Fairhope, Al. Teachers from 1922 through 1950 are on a separate sheet.)

1896-99 Miss Carrie Gregory

1899-00 Miss Essie Fields

1900-02 Nina Gluckstein,

Fannie Gluckstein

1903-04 Miss Katie Fields

1904-05 Miss Mazie Croker,

Miss Hattie Lindsey

1905-06 Miss Beatrice Partridge,

Miss Ada Partridge

1906-07 Mr. John Kendrick,

Miss Ethel Davis

1907-08 Mr. Richard Rackley,

Mrs. Lula Rackley

1908-10 Miss Lilla Simmons,

Miss Ella White

1910-11 Mr. George Strong,

Miss Lenora Strong

1911-12 Miss Mable McDaniels ,

Miss Minnie McDaniels

1912-16 Miss Maude Lowrey,

Miss Cynthelia Lowrey

1916-18 Miss Maude Lowrey

(Married and left, Mr. Chandler succeeded her),

Miss Cynthelia Lowrey,

Miss Mae McKenzie (later married Hurley, who died, and then Rudolph Tuveson)

1918-19 Miss Willie Grace Stewart,

Miss Olive Wooster,

Cynthelia Lowrey

1919-20 Mr. Carlos Shriner,

Miss Pauline Thompson,

Mrs. Foreman

1920-21 Mr. Carlos Shriner,

Miss Ellen Harrison

Miss Marjorie Jewel

1921-22 Mr. Walter Jones

(resigned at Christmas, Mr. Teal took his place),

Miss Marjorie Jewel,

Miss Luverne Harris (transferred to Silverhill)

Other teachers were as follows:

1922-24 Mr. A.R. Smith
 1922-23 Miss Eulalie Bostick
 1922-23 Miss Frances Pollard
 1923-24 Mrs. Callie Conner
 1923-24 Miss Anne Killingsworth
 1924-26 Mrs. Ella White Robinson
 1924-26 Miss Frances Penry *Marice*
 1925-26 Miss Abbie Sherrill
 1926-27 Mr. R.J. Scott
 1926-27 Miss Alice Mannich
 1927-29 Miss Dottiezel Myrick
 1928-30 Miss Lillian Shambo
 1930-31 Miss Lillie Garrick
 1930-31 Miss Mary Ellen Johnson
 1932-33 Mrs. Ella White Robinson
 1933-36 Miss Frances Williamson
 1936-37 Miss Jean Yuille
 1937-38 Miss Jessie Mae Long
 1939 *Sybil Davidson Underwood*
 1940 *Lillie B. Phillips Robinson*
 1941 *Edna Simon Addie Stapleton*
 1942 *Edna Simon Addie Stapleton*
 1943 *Edna Simon, Lucyle Barrett*
 1944 *Edna Simon, Lucyle Barrett*
 1945 *Edna Simon, Lucyle Barrett*
 1946 *Edna Simon, Bessie Penry*
 1947 *Edna Simon, Bessie Penry*
 1948 *Edna Simon, Bessie Penry*
 1949 *Edna Simon, Bessie Penry*

Belforest Grammar School Lacks Cafeteria Facilities

**Lunchroom Said Greatest
Need; Children Eat
Cold Lunches**

(Editor's Note: This is another in a daily and Sunday series of illustrated articles on principals of public schools in Baldwin County).

By AUTRY GREER,
State News Editor

DAHPNE — Mrs. Edna Sirmon, principal of the Belforest Grammar School, Rt. 1, Daphne, said: "perhaps the greatest need at our school is a cafeteria."

"I believe every school child should have a hot lunch each day. It is essential for a child to be well nourished if he is to develop physically and also derive the greatest benefit from his studies."

Mrs. Sirmon said hot soup was served last year at the school but this has proved impossible this year.

"The Parent-Teachers Association is planning to build a pump house at the rear of the school building where an electric water pump was installed last year, and if possible we shall make it large enough to install a storeroom and kitchen as well. If this plan works out, I believe we will be able to provide hot meals for the pupils."

High Praise For P-TA

The principal has high praise for the P-TA. "So far, the P-TA has managed to get just about everything we have needed at the school. They have contributed library books and many other items of equipment, and each year they get the school grounds and building cleaned up for us before school starts."

Special studies for this year at the Belforest School will be in natural science with emphasis on entomology. "We plan to make field trips on which we will collect insects, study them in their natural habitat, and we shall also study their influence on Baldwin County crops," Mrs. Sirmon said.

The principal said the students are studying Mexico and South American countries this year. So far they have made a collection of pictures from magazines which show natives at work and play and reveal their colorful costumes.

Children Are Good

Mrs. Sirmon, who has had 12



MRS. EDNA SIRMON

years experience as a teacher, attended Daphne Normal College and Troy State Teachers College. She has also studied for one Summer term at the University of Alabama and plans to complete work toward a degree by taking other Summer and extension courses. She is the mother of six children, three of whom are still in school. Carolyn, a 10-year-old daughter, is now in the fifth grade at the Belforest School.

Mrs. Sirmon teaches the fourth through the sixth grades and her assistant, Mrs. Bessie R. Penry teaches the first through the third grades.

"I think this is an excellent school and community in which to teach," said Mrs. Sirmon. "The parents are especially co-operative and the children couldn't be better."

2 Veteran Daphne Teachers Retiring

DAPHNE, Ala. — The fulfillment of a dream often brings a large measure of satisfaction to the person who accomplishes this. Such is the case for two teachers at Daphne Junior High School here, because they have had full lives in rearing a family in addition to realizing earlier ambitions of being successful teachers and are retiring from their chosen profession at the end of this school year.

Mrs. Edna Sirmon of Bel-forest and Mrs. Maggie Carter of Daphne will call a halt to their long careers in instructing the children of this area when the last bell rings for Daphne Junior High School this spring. Together they have served their beloved profession for 50 years — Mrs. Sirmon 27 years and Mrs. Carter 23 years.

There is little, on the surface, to boast about in holding a position of this nature for that length of time, but when you look behind the scenes you find that in addition to these duties as teachers they also have spent much of their time in bringing up families. Mrs. Carter, whose husband is retired at present, is the mother of two, both of whom, a son and daughter, are married. She now no doubt has pangs of misgivings on the thought of leaving her long and often tedious routine of teaching fifth-graders and the much-looked-to state of retirement with her husband. There are many things which she no doubt has dreamed of to be done in this new state of life which will be undisciplined by the daily task of facing a class of inquisitive and energetic youngsters. But, she, as all good teachers know, will miss and be missed by those youngsters when school bells ring again next fall.

Mrs. Sirmon, much like her co-worker, has had a much different personal life. She is the mother of six and has had to shoulder the responsibility of rearing and providing for them since the death of her husband when the youngest was three years old.

Turning again to her profession of teaching, Mrs. Sirmon managed to keep her family together, educate her children and further educate herself through these years. This new life was

brought upon her after being out of touch with the teaching profession 18 years. So, naturally Mrs. Sirmon was obliged to do further study so as to be able to resume teaching. At first she attended Daphne Normal School here (which has long since been discontinued) to renew her teacher's certificate. Not satisfied with merely holding a certificate and being able to teach, Mrs. Sirmon extended and expanded her education when and where possible, often spending her summers in college until she accomplished her goal of graduating from college. This accomplishment came in the summer of 1955, at the same time one of her daughters also graduated from college.

With six youngsters of her own to feed, clothe and educate, not to mention the trying incidents from other aspects of life, Mrs. Sirmon doubtless has seen many dismal hours, but you would never suspect such from her constant smile and the adept manner in which she goes about instructing the boys and girls in her sixth grade class.

Not only has Mrs. Sirmon found time to do all these things and the many other routines imposed by daily life, but she has done considerable travelling for a person whose time appeared to have been totally consumed with youngsters — her own and those in the classroom.

When the husbands of two of her daughters were stationed in France with the U.S. Air Force, Mrs. Sirmon found the time and energy to make a three-month tour of Europe.

These two teachers who have given a large measure of their lives and energies to assisting our leaders of tomorrow are now on the threshold of a new era in their careers. Probably best summing up the situation is a statement made by one of Mrs. Sirmon's daughters: "The things that she has accomplished with the low salary of a school teacher, I think are amazing. All I can add is that I am extremely proud of my mother."

These sentiments are undoubtedly reflected many times over in varying ways by the hundreds of persons these two women have come in contact with over the years.

Belforest Civic Center Began As School 1

CHRIS CANE
Associate Editor

Belforest is one area in Baldwin County that has changed very little in the 80 years of this century.

Most residents of Belforest still farm their land and the countryside looks very much like it always has, beautiful pecan orchards, and vast open fields dotted with farm houses and stately barns.

One landmark, the Belforest Civic Center, is well known by everyone who has ever lived in Belforest, and most of them remember it as part of their school day memories.

The Belforest school had its beginning in 1896 when the first one room school house was built southeast of where the present Belforest Civic Center is now located. This school had six grades and ONE teacher.

Katie Fields was the teacher at that time and in 1904 progress hit Belforest and another building was built next to the one room school. Belforest then had two teachers, Mazie Coaker and Hattie Lindsey and the six grades were split up between the two teachers.

In 1906 these buildings were destroyed by the terrible hurricane of that year. For the next year, while the new school building was under construction, the classes met in the Hemmingway house.

The Hemmingway house was just down the road from the site of the old school and during this time the students and teacher alike had to make due with many make-shift substitutions.

One of these was the school bell. Mrs. Bessie Penry, a student and later a teacher at the Belforest School,

remembers the teacher coming out each morning and, walking to a nearby field, he would bang on a large farm sweep to call the children into school. "It didn't look much like a bell but it sure did the job of getting the kids into class," recalls Mrs. Penry. "You could hear it for miles!"

In 1907 the brand new school was completed and it was quite an improvement over the old one room school house. This new building had room for three classrooms and was considered quite modern for a community the size of Belforest. By 1916 there were over 109 pupils attending classes there.

If there were a school in Belforest now the class roll would read basically the same as the earlier ones did. Mail boxes throughout Belforest still carry the names of Marco, DeFillippi, Allegri, Corte, Lazzari, Bertolla, Trione, Berga, Penry, Creamer, Robinson, Sirmon, Robinson, Burroughs, and many others who were educated at the Belforest school.

Teaching school in a small farming community wasn't the most glamorous job in the early part of this century. The teacher usually had to room-in with one of the local families and teaching six grades at one time was no easy chore! Because of this the teachers changed quite frequently, usually from one year to the next.

In 1937 the community of Belforest once again lost its school to tragedy. On December 7, 1937 during the morning, a fire started around the chimney while classes were going on. The children were evacuated from the building and after everyone was safely outside Angelo Lazzari, a student and still a

resident of Belforest, ran back into the burning building and came out with everyone's lunches and many of the school books. People to this day still laugh about Angelo saving the lunches but fortunately the books that he saved allowed classes to continue the rest of the year. He saved just enough copies of each textbook so that the children could share books. Classes were held in the Belforest Christian Church the rest of that year.

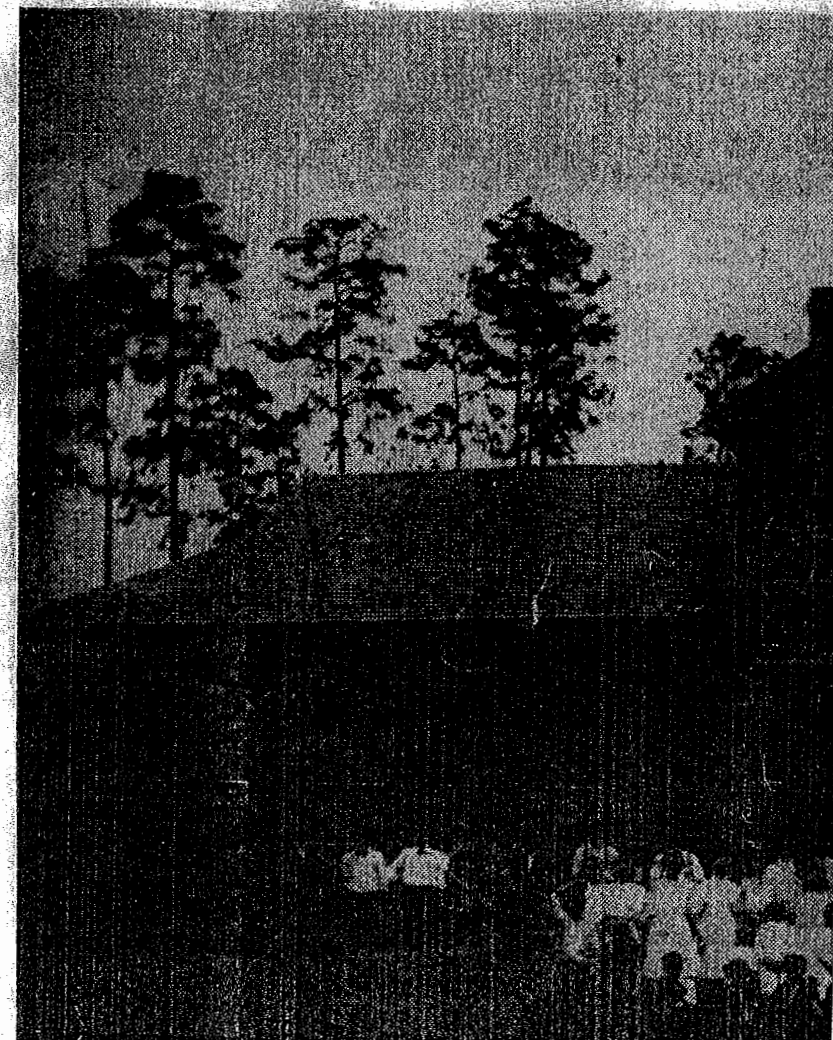
On May 14, 1952 the Belforest Civic League was formed and the group bought the old school from the state of Alabama for \$1.00. The conditions of the agreement with the state were that the building was to be used for civic and recreational purposes and when the building is no longer used for these purposes it automatically goes back to the state. The state still holds the mineral rights to the property.

Albert Corte, Sr. was the first president of the Belforest Civic League and Frances Marco, a one-time teacher at the school, was the first secretary.

The League has just recently named their new officers who are, president, Sara Lazzari; vice president, Nell Odom; secretary, Elgin Weller; and treasurer, Adele Corte.

Mrs. Bessie Penry and Joe Garrett were made honorary members for their outstanding years of leadership and service to the civic center.

Each year the Belforest Civic Center sponsors a George Washington's Birthday Bar-B-Que and this year it is set for Saturday, February 23 beginning at 6 p.m. at the center on County Road 54 in Belforest. The dinners will be \$2.50 each and you may get your tickets at the door.



1906 School

Pictured above is the brand new hurricane of 1906 destroyed the Belforest and a teacher at the school. This structure was last structure was built.

Belforest Civic Center Began As School In 1906

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1906 School

Pictured above is the brand new Belforest School when it was built in 1907 after the hurricane of 1906 destroyed the one room school house. Fannie Russ, a resident of Belforest and a teacher at the Belforest School, allowed us to use her picture of the old school. This structure was later destroyed in a fire in 1937 and then the present structure was built.

Joyce Bishop

Information on Belforest School

- Mother, Edna N. Simon was a teacher and former student at Belforest
- Graduated Belforest from 8th grade
- Began teaching at age 16
- Taught at the McGill School, last log school in county (Oct. 1916) — name changed to Good Hope because men that built school had "good hopes" that they would get a better building
- No teaching career until she had been teaching for a few years
- While at McGill lived w/ a family named McMillan
- the Hadley family was one of the names of students at the

school

- Eventually became principal at Belforest
- Taught at other schools including some in Escambia County - at Sabine, AL (Hardy School)
- Bishop's sister also attended Belforest School - maintained that the school was quarantined at one time due to student (Edward Simms) contracting Polio

B

M.F.H.

Department of the Interior,

General Land Office, Washington, D.C. May 23 1907,

I hereby certify that the annexed copy of patent is a true and literal exemplification from the record in this office.

In Testimony Whereof I have hereunto subscribed my name and caused the seal of this office to be affixed, at the city of Washington, on the day and year above written.

H. W. Sanford.

Recorder of the General Land Office.

The United States of America, To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting:

Homestead Certificate No 14664.)

Application 28428

Whereas There has been deposited in the General Land Office of the United States a Certificate of the Register of the Land Office at Montgomery Alabama whereby it appears that, pursuant to the Act of Congress approved 20th May, 1862, "To secure Homesteads to Actual Settlers on the Public Domain, and the acts supplemental thereto, the claim of Henry W. Betts has been established and duly consummated, in conformity to law, for the South East quarter of section twenty five in Township one north of range four east of St Stephens Meridian in Alabama containing one hundred and fifty nine acres and ninety two hundredths of an acre according to the Official Plat of the Survey of the said Land, returned to the General Land Office by the Surveyor General:

Now Know Ye, That there is, therefore granted by the United States unto the said Henry W. Betts the tract of Land above described; To Have And To Hold the said tract of Land, with the appurtenances thereof, unto the said Henry W. Betts and to his heirs and assigns forever. In Testimony Whereof I, William McKinley President of the United States of America, have caused these letters to be made Patent, and the seal of the General Land Office to be hereunto affixed.

Given under my hand, at the City of Washington, the twenty eight day of November in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and of the Independence of the United States the one hundred and twenty fifth,

(L.S.)

By The President: William McKinley

By F.M. McKean Secretary

C.H. Brush Recorder of the General Land Office.

Recorded Alabama Vol 496 Page 146

Filed for record May 28th 1907.

Recorded May 30th 1907.

J.H.H. Smith, Judge of Probate,

State of Alabama,)

Baldwin County.) Know all men by these Presents: That we Edwin E. Gregory, his wife Martha A. Gregory, A.G. Sirmon his wife E.C. Sirmon for and in consideration of the sum of five dollars to us in hand paid by the State of Alabama the receipt whereof we do hereby acknowledge, and for the further consideration of the ^{and} ~~said~~ be extended by the State of Alabama in the erection or repair of a rural school on the Land hereinafter described under the act of the Legislature of Alabama, approved March 2nd, 1907, have Granted, Bargained and Sold, and by these presents do hereby grant, bargain sell and convey unto the State of Alabama, for the benefit of school district No 54 of Baldwin County, Alabama, the following described Real Estate, situated in the County of Baldwin and State of Alabama, to-wit: Beginning at the south west corner of the north west quarter of section twenty four (24) township five (5) south range two (2) east and run north the distance of two acres thence east for the distance of one acre thence south for the distance of two acres thence west for distance of one acre to the beginning corner, being two (2) acres of land in the south west corner of the north west quarter of section twenty four (24) township five (5) south range (2) east.

To Have And To Hold, The aforegranted premises to the said State of Alabama for the benefit of said school district No 54 of Baldwin County, Alabama, forever. And we do covenant with the said State of Alabama for the benefit of said school district No 54 of Baldwin County, Alabama, that we are lawfully seized in fee of the aforegranted premises; that they are free from all encumbrance; that we have a good right to sell and convey the same to the said State of Alabama for the benefit of said school district No 54 of Baldwin County, Alabama, and that we will warrant and defend the said premises to the said State of Alabama for the benefit of said school district No 54 of Baldwin County, Alabama, forever, against the lawful claims and demands of all persons.

In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and seals this the 23rd day of May in the year of our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and 7

Signed, sealed and delivered in Presence of

B.L. Randall.

Edwin E. Gregory L.S.

Martha A. Gregory L.S.

A.G. Sirmon L.S.

E.C. Sirmon L.S.