

EDUCATION IN OLD FIELDS TOWNSHIP

The history of education in what is now the Town of Sims developed within the larger framework of Old Fields Township and Wilson County. Like much of North Carolina, local schooling followed separate White and Black institutional tracks during the era of segregation through Jim Crow Laws. Although North Carolina (and Wilson County) was comparatively more progressive than some neighboring areas in its support for public education, access remained unequal, especially for Black students in rural communities. Because surviving records specific to Sims are limited, this history must be reconstructed from county reports, local history sources, preservation records, and newspaper references.

In nineteenth-century records, the word *school* did not always mean a dedicated school building. A “school” could exist wherever a county-paid teacher was assigned, including churches or other borrowed spaces. This distinction matters in Old Fields Township, where many early schools were small. In the late 19th century and early 20th century, majority of White public schools had buildings, but only a handful of Black public schools had permanent buildings (until the Rosenwald fund of the early 20th century- which still had various roadblocks to construction/funding and poor conditions.)

Wilson County Background

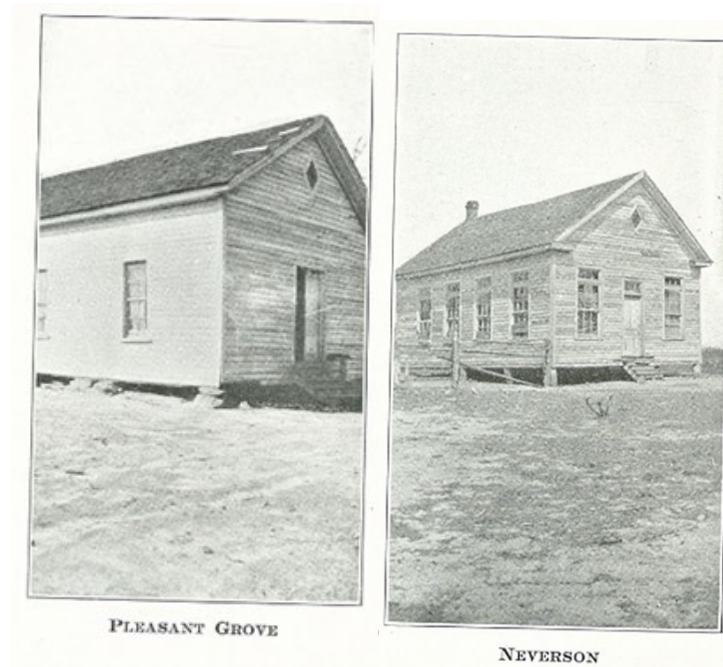
Charles L. Coon’s *Public Schools of Wilson County, North Carolina* (1924):

- In **1881**, Wilson established a **graded school for white children**, first funded through **private donations**.
- By **1883**, private fundraising was replaced with a **special school tax**, but tax money was split by race:
 - White taxpayers funded White schools
 - Black taxpayers funded Black schools
- In **1886**, the **North Carolina Supreme Court ruled this race-based tax system unconstitutional**.
- Even so, public support for Black education remained weak for a time, and the graded school model was abandoned for several years because many residents opposed funding schools for Black children through public taxation.
- In **1891**, local voters reversed course and approved **publicly funded schools for both white and Black children**.

room schools such as Simms, Boykin, Lodge, Boswell, and Wells. It also identifies Rock Ridge as the principal high school serving the township. The record is not entirely consistent regarding Sims or Simms: one section of the 1924 report refers to Sims as a one-room school of the Neverson type, while the 1917 white-school map appears to show “Simms” as a two-room school. It is possible that there was a change in buildings or a room added to the existing, though this would require more digging.

- **One Room Schools: Neverson and Pleasant Grove**

- Page 32 of *The Public Schools of Wilson County, North Carolina: Ten Years 1913-1914 to 1923-1924* by Charles L. Coon. Published by Board of Education Wilson County, 1924



65. Pleasant Grove Methodist Church

Pleasant Grove Methodist Church was built in the mid-nineteenth century on the site of an earlier log church called Winborne's Meeting House. In 1847 David Winborne deeded the land for the present church to the congregation. Tradition has it that the congregation was responsible for the construction of the church, so it was probably built shortly after 1847. The simple frame structure has been little altered over the years. The entrance in the gable end leads to a single room sanctuary with a polygonal apse behind the pulpit. A kitchen/Sunday school wing was added to the side of the building circa 1920.



Pleasant Grove Methodist Church, Old Fields Township, circa 1925.
Charles L. Coon Collection.

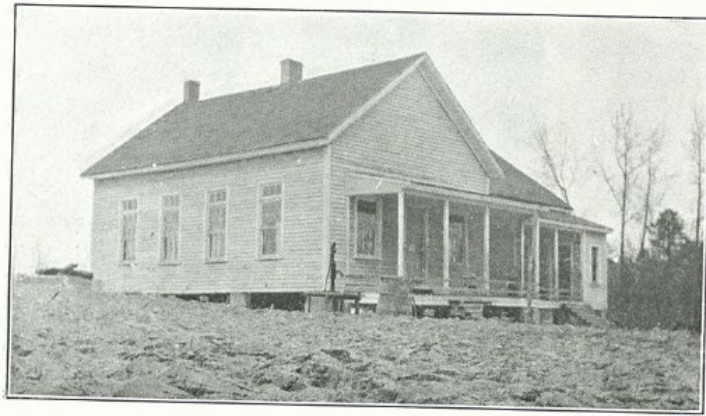


- **Two Room Schools: Simms, Boykin, Lodge, Boswell, Wells**

- Pages 30 and 31 of *The Public Schools of Wilson County, North Carolina: Ten Years 1913-1914 to 1923-1924* by Charles L. Coon. Published by Board of Education Wilson County, 1924



WELLS'



BOSWELL'S



BOYKIN'S

NOTE.—Sims was a one-room school of the Neverson type. Lodge was a two-room school of the type of Boykins.

- According to William A. Stott (1987), the Sims (wooden) school later became Sims Methodist Church: Organized the fourth Saturday in May 1920 and the building was used until July 1954. In that same document, Boykin's School also housed Nobel's Chapel Church in the early 1900s. (see *Sims Methodist Church in Old Fields Township Pictures and Articles Presented to the Town of Sims* by William A. Stott (1987))



Sims Methodist Church

- **Three Room Schools: Rock Hill**

- Page 30 of *The Public Schools of Wilson County, North Carolina: Ten Years 1913-1914 to 1923-1924* by Charles L. Coon. Published by Board of Education Wilson County, 1924



ROCK HILL

- **High Schools: Rock Ridge (1883-1932)**



ROCK RIDGE

picture from 1925

- Page 30 of *The Public Schools of Wilson County, North Carolina: Ten Years 1913-1914 to 1923-1924* by Charles L. Coon. Published by Board of Education Wilson County, 1924

- Under the leadership of Dr. M. J. Taylor, Wiley Deans, and Gary Williamson the first free school called Taylors school in Wilson County was opened in 1861 though had to close for a bit due to economic conditions resulting from the civil war. During the period from 1861-1863, 1887, 1891, 1893, a free subscription or academy operated in the community. In 1883, a building was completed and became Rock Ridge. In 1914, a new two story frame building served the community until 1923 when a new modern brick school was completed.

Rock Ridge

Rock Ridge is located just northwest of the junction of Contentnea Creek and Marsh Swamp. Although it has never been incorporated, it has been since the mid-nineteenth century an important religious, educational and medical center for Oldfields Township.

The beginnings of the Rock Ridge community can be said to date to the eighteenth century. In 1797 Henry Horn deeded "A track of land north of Contentnea Creek in Nash County adjoining the upper end of William Row Oldfield about the old mill on the Creek Bank" to his son, Thomas Horn.¹ "Horn's Mills", including both grist and saw mills, existed under the ownership of the Horn family as late as 1811.² By the late 1850s Moses Perkins owned and operated a sawmill on approximately the same site.³



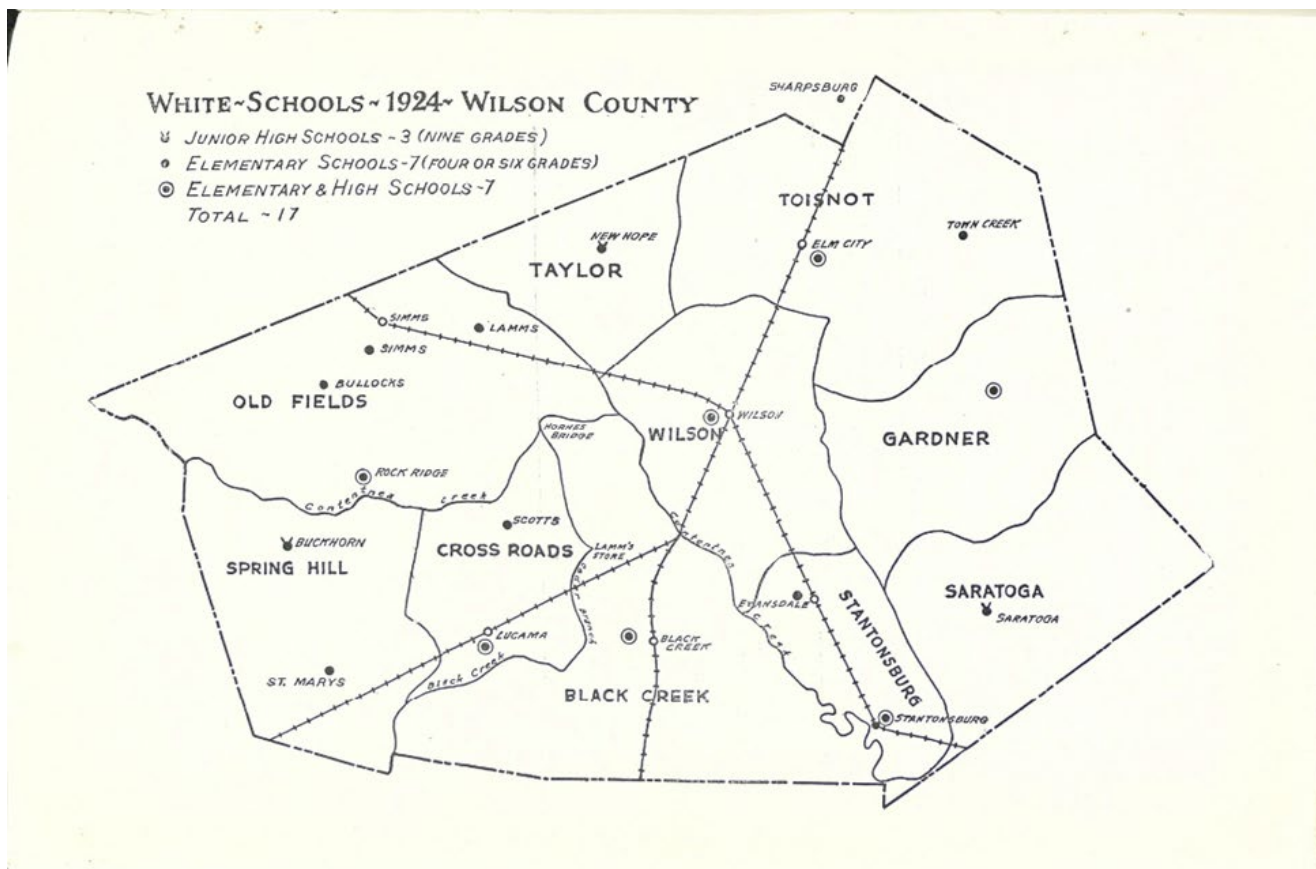
Rock Ridge School circa 1925.
Charles L. Coon Collection.

A Baptist congregation was organized during this period in the area and Perkins gave land on a knoll above Marsh Swamp where Glenn Flowers now lives for a church site. Perkins sawed the lumber for the first church building at his mill and donated the sawn lumber for the new sanctuary. The church was named Perkins Chapel after its benefactor. The exact date of construction of the building is unknown, but it was abandoned by the early 1870s when Marsh Swamp Free Will Baptist Church was established on higher ground a short distance west of the first church site.⁴

By 1861 the ownership of the mill which had traditionally been located near the junction of Contentnea Creek and Marsh Swamp was transferred to Dr. Joseph Marcellus Taylor.⁵ Taylor became a prominent figure in the area and the post office was later named for him. Taylor's philosophy of progressive education resulted in the establishment of one of the first "free schools" in the county.⁶ Wiley Deans, Garry Williamson and Dr. Taylor were the benefactors of the school which was built near the mill.⁷ This school was called Taylor's School and it was in operation from the early 1860s until a few years later when it had to close due to economic conditions resulting from the Civil War.⁸

80

Twenty years later, in 1882, the idea of building a school which would be open to all children was resurrected by Dr. Taylor and Wiley Deans. This school was built about a mile west of the first school near the site of the later principal's house. Built before the establishment of a county-wide school system, the school was eighteen by twenty-eight feet and it had a generous porch where plays and commencement exercises were held. The school was named "Rock Ridge" because of its location on a stoney ridge. The school opened in 1883 and Reverend J.H. Willoughby served as headmaster. The length of the school term was two months during the summer, this being the time of the year that children were most easily spared.⁹



page 12 (Coon, 1924)

White Schools of Wilson County (1924): Old Fields Township Schools- Consolidation

Due to growing state investment in public education, Wilson County school superintendent Charles L. Coon developed a model system of consolidated schools. Wilson gained commissions to design at least twelve school buildings between 1921 and 1926 in the Town of Wilson and in outlying communities, including those in Old Fields Township. During this consolidation, 4 new white schools were built: Rock Ridge (standard high), and three “alike” feeders: Lamm’s, Bullock’s, and Sims

Graded schools: Simms, Bullocks, Lamms (three alike; architect was Charles Coker Wilson)

- **Simms/Sims (New) (1923-1978)**
 - The new Simms/Sims (White) School was completed in 1923 on a five-acre site. It contained six rooms and served grades 1 through 6. Enrollment in 1923–1924 was reported at 232 students. The faculty for 1924–1925 included Rachel Sayers, Gertrude Melvin, Fannie Perry, Rosa Pridgen, Marietta Neece, and Louise McCain. Integration of Black students around 1970. Sims School continued to serve the community until it closed in 1978, after which its students were reassigned to Rock Ridge. The building itself appears to have been demolished sometime between 1978 and 1981.

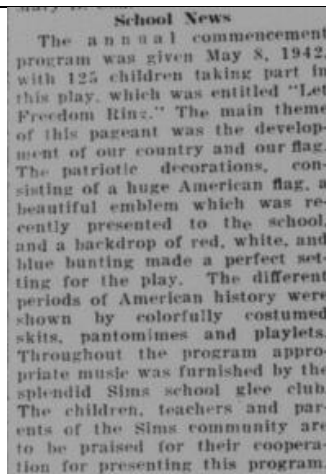


Sims White Elementary School from [DigitalNC](#)



*Sims School
in 1961*

Pictured is the Sims Elementary School class of 1961, submitted by Eunice Nichols. Front row, from left, are Carolyn Mercer, Bonnie Bunn, Lou Ferrell, Erma Deans and A.O. Falk, principal. Second row are Jeannie Lamm, Shirley Duke, William Etheridge, Larry Glover and Junior Boykin. In back are Rita Williams, Jo Ann Parker, C.H. Wells, Freddie Davis and Authur Peele.



Wilson Daily News Newspaper Archives May 19,
1942 Page 6

- **Bullocks (New) (1923-1964)**

- Bullocks School, also completed in 1923, was another six-room feeder school built on five acres. It served grades 1 through 6 and had an enrollment of 183 students in 1923–1924. Its 1924–1925 faculty included Bessie Freeman, Annie Frazier, Gladys Phillips, Mary L. Wilkerson, Agnes Credle, and Myrtie E. Morse. Bullocks remained in operation until 1964, when it closed and its students were reassigned to Rock Ridge. Later local history notes that the building was converted into a private club.



- (Page 29 of 1981 Kate Ohno's *Wilson County's Architectural Heritage*)

- Bullock's School has become a private club,



(listed as 7798 old Raleigh rd. Bailey) Google Street View Jan. 2023

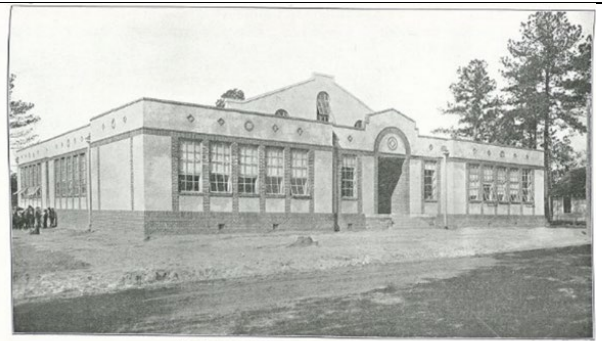


- **Lamms (New) (1923-1978)**

- Lamms School was built in the same 1923 campaign and followed a nearly identical plan: five acres, six rooms, and grades 1 through 6. Enrollment in 1923–1924 stood at 198 students. The faculty in 1924–1925 included Mary E. Outlaw, Mellie R. Davenport, Madge Porter, Lucy V. Outlaw, Emma Dunn, and Daisy Simpson. Lamms remained open until 1978, when it closed and its students were also assigned to Rock Ridge. Later accounts state that the building was eventually used as a flea market and that the site was later cleared for commercial redevelopment.



Images of Historic Wilson County N.C., Images of North Carolina, lib.digitalnc.org



OLD FIELDS (NEW) — BULLOCK'S, LAMM'S AND BULLOCK'S
(THREE AMERS)



- Lamm's School was converted into a flea market (page 29 of 1981 Kate Ohno's *Wilson County's Architectural Heritage*)

Creek, and Buckhorn have been phased out of operation. Lamm's School has been converted into a flea market on Rt. 264, the county's busiest east-west highway. Town Creek School has

- Lamm's School stood on Lamm Road just north of present-day U.S. 64. The building was recently demolished to make way for a Chick Fil A.



Google Street View April 2019, 5600 Lamm Rd Wilson, North Carolina

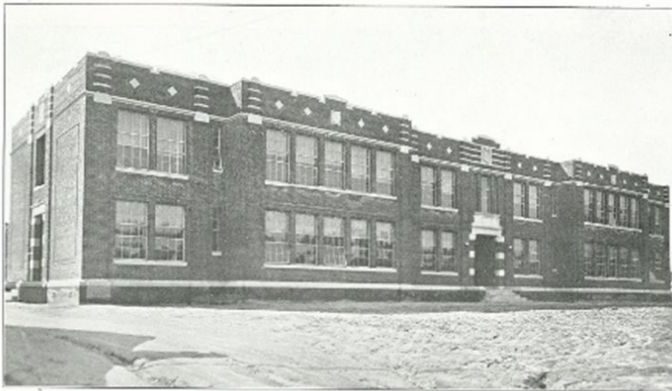
High school: Rock Ridge

• Rock Ridge (New)

- Rock Ridge was the principal secondary school for white students in Old Fields Township and had the longest educational history in the area. According to local historical notes, the first free school in the Rock Ridge community opened in 1861 under the leadership of Dr. M. J. Taylor, Wiley Deans, and Gary Williamson. This school, known as Taylor's School, was

reportedly disrupted by the economic conditions of the Civil War. A building completed in 1883 became Rock Ridge, and a new two-story frame school erected in 1914 served the community until the completion of a new brick school in 1923.

- The 1923 Rock Ridge school was built on nine acres and contained sixteen rooms. In 1923–1924 it served grades 1 through 11 and enrolled 424 students. The 1924–1925 faculty included George A. Short, Vanner Neece, Mrs. Elizabeth Moye, Agnes B. Jones, Nona Briggs, Blanche Moore, Fanny G. Lucas, Eugenia Brett, Georgia Tomlinson, Louise Winchester, Ethel Bradshaw, Sybil Brown, Elen Barefoot, and Jeanie Odom. It was described as the most modern rural school in the state at the time of its construction. It served as the high school for students from Bullocks, Buckhorne, Lamms, and Sims, all of which functioned as feeder schools. The building burned in 1938, and a replacement school was completed in 1941. Rock Ridge later became integrated in 1970. The last class graduated in 1978.
- Fun fact: Ava Gardener graduated from Rock Ridge High School in 1939. See more information here: <https://www.johnstoncountync.org/ava-gardner/blog/post/i-remember-ava/>
- Rock Ridge School 1951 Yearbook: <https://lib.digitalnc.org/record/36758?v=uv#?xywh=-439%2C0%2C3596%2C3767&cv=4>

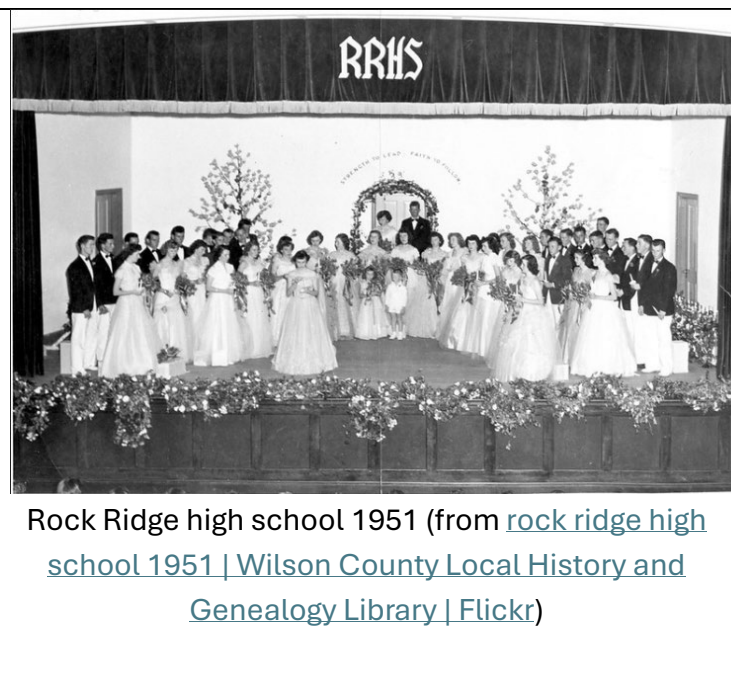


OLD FIELDS (NEW), ROCK RIDGE

Page 34 (Coon, 1924)



[Sallie Boswell shared this photo of the fifth-grade class of Rock Ridge School during the 1937-38 academic year. The teacher was Louise.](#)



Black/“Colored” Schools of Wilson County (1924): Old Fields Township Schools

3. Summary Colored School Property, 1924						
Townships and Number Buildings	Sites, Acres	Value Sites	School Rooms	Value Houses	Total	
1. Wilson.....	5	10	\$ 7,150	28	\$ 89,100	\$ 96,250
2. Toisnot.....	4	4	600	8	5,100	5,700
3. Cross Roads.....	3	4	400	5	3,700	4,100
4. Gardners.....	4	3	300	3	1,000	1,300
5. Old Fields.....	2	3	500	4	800	1,300
6. Spring Hill.....	3	3	400	7	5,600	6,000
7. Taylors.....	2	3	400	4	2,800	3,200
8. Black Creek.....	4	4	400	4	1,200	1,600
9. Stantonsburg.....	0	4	1,000	-----	-----	1,000
10. Saratoga.....	1	4	400	1	300	700
Totals.....	28	42	11,550	64	109,600	121,150

Page 17 (Coon, 1924)

No maps of 1917 or 1924 of “colored” schools in the 1924 Public schools of Wilson County, North Carolina, by Charles L. Coon Records

*Note: In the 1910s, Julius Rosenwald (a Chicago philanthropist and president of Sears, Roebuck and Co.) and Dr. Booker T. Washington (African American Educator, Author, or Orator) established a fund that provided architectural plans and matching grants after seeing the disheartening state of education

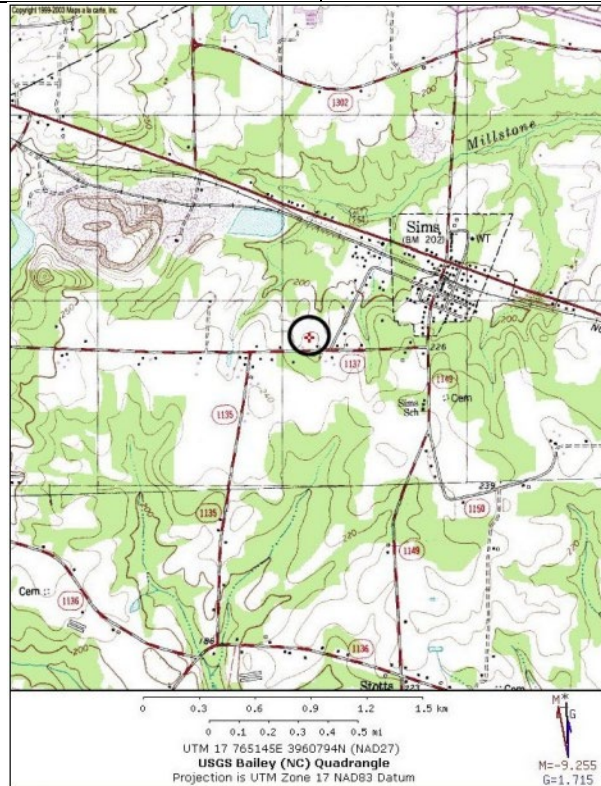
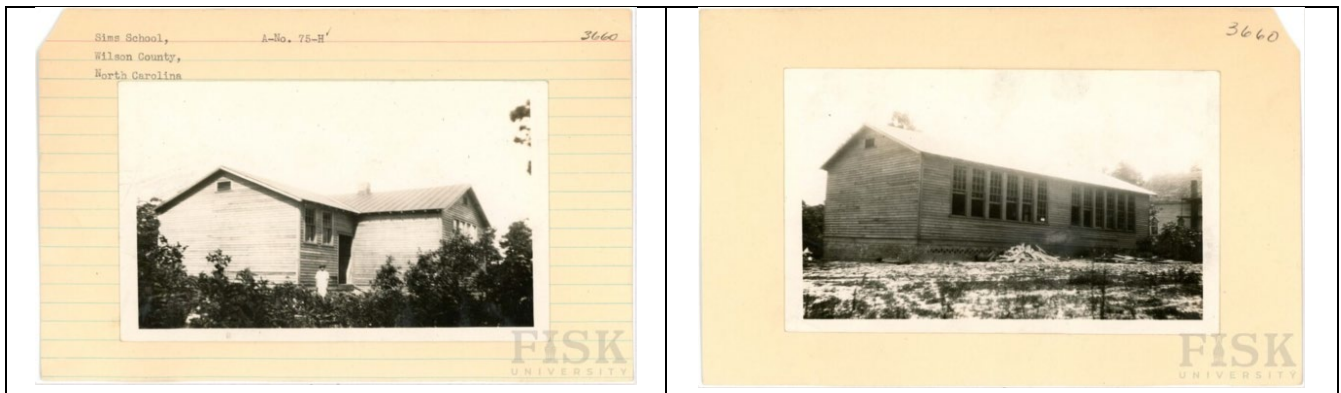
*among rural southern African Americans. Mr. Rosenwald was inspired by Dr. Washington's book "Up from Slavery", and they later met and shared their vision about the transformative power of education and self-determination for black students. This fund helped build more than 5,300 schools from Maryland to Texas between the late 1910s and 1932. North Carolina had more than 800 projects, more than any other state. Two schools within the Old Fields Township that became Rosenwald Schools were the Sims Colored School and Jones Hill School. **

There was a total of 3093 students in Wilson County Colored Schools from 1923-1924 (Coon, page 77, 1924)

Prior to the construction of the Rosenwald schools, there were no dedicated black school buildings in Old Fields township. According to Lisa Henderson (Black Wide Awake), when white schools closed due to consolidation or upgrade, their former buildings were sometimes reassigned for the education of Black students

- **Sims Colored School (Eventually a Rosenwald School 1929-1951)**
 - Sims Colored School was listed in the 1924 record as having "no house," suggesting that before a permanent building existed, classes likely met in a borrowed space, most likely a church. A two-room Rosenwald school building was erected in 1928–1929 with Rosenwald Fund assistance. As with several Wilson County Rosenwald schools, construction and equipping of the building proceeded slowly, and the school reportedly faced shortages of desks/seating and other equipment as well as problems with its well.
 - In November 1951, Sims Colored School was offered for sale as part of the disposal of former Black school properties. Many such buildings in the county were bought by white farmers and quickly demolished or repurposed, but Sims was one of the relatively few purchased by a Black owner. On November 19, 1951, Grover L. Jones made the high bid of \$800, which the Board of Education initially found inadequate. After he raised the bid to \$925, he and his wife, Allencia Jones, took possession of the property. (see below Sale of Rosenwald Schools)





Page 228: Sims School locator map (red cross in black circle).

- Location: Down dirt lane behind Flat Rock Church Disciples of Christ Church and mobile home on north side of Flat Rock Road (SR 1137), 0.5 miles west of junction with SR 1149, Sims vicinity
 - Unless the road pattern has shifted significantly, Sims School does not stand on its original site. It is located further from Flat Rock Road than a Rosenwald-funded school would have been located

LOCATED near the Town of Sims, and being Lots Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 in Block "H", as shown by map or plat recorded in Book 78, at page 125, Wilson County Registry, containing 1 5/8 acres, more or less. Also, the lot excepted from the deed of the Board of Education of Wilson County, to Ruben Peele, dated 14 March 1929, and of record in Book 179, at page 478, Wilson County Registry. See deeds recorded in Book 179, at pages 513 and 514, Wilson County Registry; and being known as Sims Colored School lot.

Sims Colored School. Deed book 463, page 92

- Black Students most likely went to Springfield until integration at Rock Ridge in the 70s

Following pictures from 2015 NCDNCR *Research report: tools for assessing the significance and integrity of North Carolina's Rosenwald schools and comprehensive investigation of Rosenwald schools in Edgecombe, Halifax, Johnston, Nash, Wayne, and Wilson counties.*



Page 223: Sims School: bank of window openings for west classroom at south rear elevation.



Page 224: Sims School: south rear elevation at left and east side elevation at right; Plymouths in foreground



Page 224: Sims School: east side elevation.



Page 225: Sims School: left-hand side of north front elevation; wall of industrial room at right, vestibule entry at center, and two cloakroom windows at left



Page 225: Sims School: left-hand side of north front elevation with industrial room's bank of windows.



Page 226: Sims School: north front elevation; industrial room in foreground, classrooms set back to either side.



Page 226: Sims School: interior of industrial room.



Page 227: Sims School: looking from fallen west side wall into west classroom and, at rear, east classroom; note absence of partition wall and damage to exterior walls.



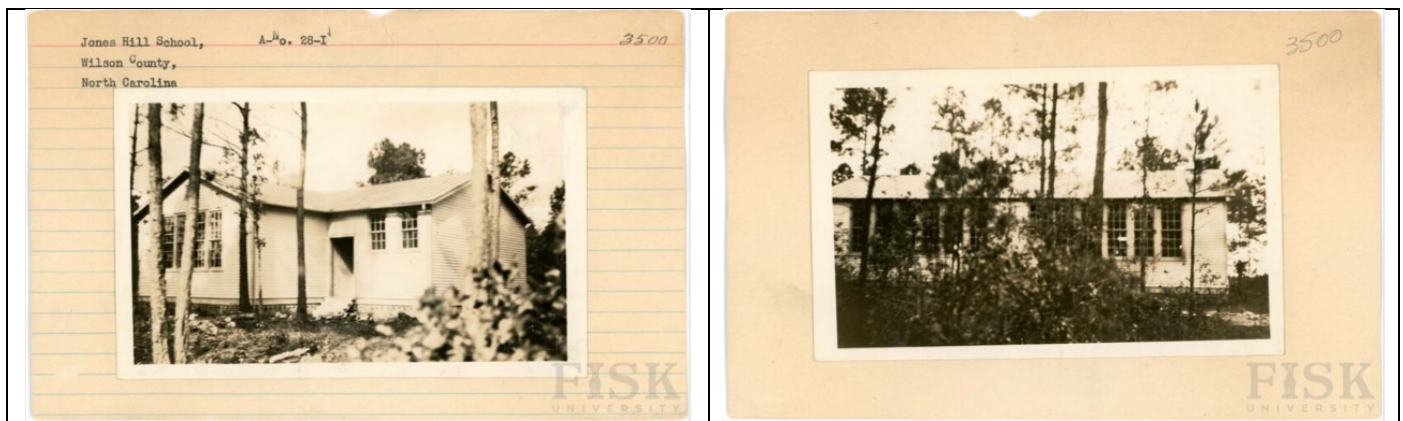
Page 227: Sims School: looking from fallen west side wall into west classroom; note loss of wall at west cloakroom and loss of beaded-board siding beyond.



Photos by Lisa Y. Henderson, March 2025.

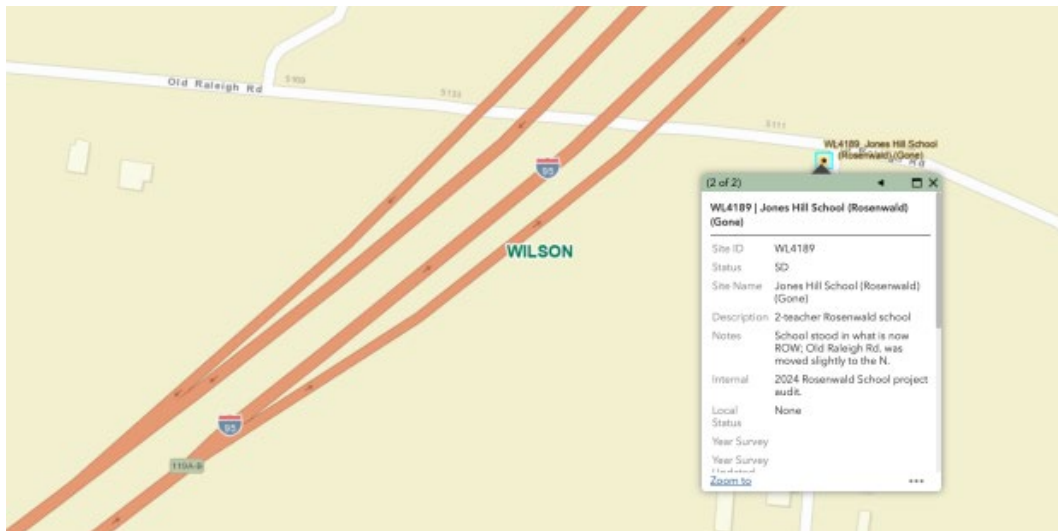
- **Jones Hill (1929-1951)**

- Jones Hill School was another Black school in Old Fields Township and, like Sims, was listed in 1924 as having “no house,” meaning that classes met in borrowed quarters before a permanent building was erected. Local tradition places these early classes at Jones Hill Primitive Baptist Church. A two-room Rosenwald school was constructed in 1929, with \$500 contributed during the Rosenwald budget year of 1929–1930. Like Sims School, Jones Hill lacked adequate desks and equipment. The school stood farther west on Old Raleigh Road, though the exact site was later altered when the road alignment shifted slightly north. Jones Hill closed in 1951. From [Additional evidence of Rosenwald school sites. | Black Wide-Awake](#))



BEGINNING at a point in the center of the Old Raleigh Road and in the Westerly line of Oscar Harrison, thence with the Old Raleigh Road North 72° 30' West 210 feet; cornering; thence North 17° 30' East 420 feet to a stake; cornering; thence South 72° 30' East 210 feet to a stake; cornering; thence South 17° 30' West 420 feet with Oscar Harrison's line to the point of beginning. Being the identical land described in judgment recorded in Orders and Decrees Book 17, at page 446, in the Office of the Clerk of Superior Court of Wilson County; and being known as Jones Hill Colored School lot.

Jones Hill Colored School. Deed book 445, page 322.



From [Additional evidence of Rosenwald school sites.](#) | [Black Wide-Awake](#)

- New Vester and Jones Hill graded students attended Williamson High School when it opened in 1942 (the Williamson School was a six-room high school that offered grades 9-12). Before the completion of this school, black students in the western part of the county had to attend school in surrounding areas, including Johnson County or Darden High School in Wilson, both of which long distances for students to travel. When Springfield High School opened in 1951, New Vester and Jones Hill closed, and the former Williamson High became an elementary school.



1945 at a Williamson School Parent-Teacher Association meeting.



TOWN OF WILSON—COLORED HIGH SCHOOL

Darden High School

Two of the largest consolidated schools in this section of the state are under construction in Wilson County. One of the units is being built near Saratoga. This plant, when completed, will provide for the consolidation of the colored schools; Farmers, Howards, Bynums, Holdens, Wilbanks, Evansdale, Stantonsburg, Saratoga, Brooks, Minshew and Yelverton schools.

The second unit is being built at the Williamson High school and will provide for the consolidation of the colored schools at New Vester, Jones Mill, Ruffin, Lofton, Rocky Branch, Calvin Level, Lucama, Williamson elementary and Williamson High school.

The two units are expected to be completed on or about May, 1951.

- **New Vester School (1920s-1951)**

- Note: In 1924, New Vester was listed as a colored school in the Old Fields Township but not listed as a Rosenwald school. However, other sources state that New Vester School was built in the early 1920s with money from the community and the Julius Rosenwald Fund.
- New Vester School had roots in the New Vester Missionary Baptist Church, which was one of the oldest black churches in the county. The congregation began to meet in the antebellum period, and the church was founded in 1866. Lisa Henderson has also suggested that the church likely established a school soon after emancipation.
- New Vester School was a 1925 2-room Rosenwald School (NC Historic Preservation Office).

- The 1925–1926 Wilson County school report ([*The Report on Schools in Wilson County, North Carolina 1925-26*](#)) criticized New Vester’s building conditions, especially the low window placement, limited equipment, and inadequate piers. These comments reflect Rosenwald standards for proper lighting, ventilation, and structural support, and they also reveal the gap between official school-building ideals and actual conditions in rural Black schools. According to Henderson, the school stood on the north side of New Vester Missionary Baptist Church, on what is now the church’s front parking lot. The school closed at the end of the 1950–1951 school year, and the property was auctioned in November 1951. Preservation records state that the school building was gone before 1993 and the church building by 2005 (NC Historic Preservation Office).



Sale of Rosenwald schools

Black students in western Wilson County had limited access to local high school education before the early 1940s. Williamson School opened in 1942 as a six-room high school serving grades 9 through 12. Before its completion, some students had to travel long distances to schools in Johnston County or to Darden High School in Wilson.

In May 1950, the Negro Citizens’ Committee paid to place an open letter in the Wilson Daily Times explaining the lawsuit it had filed against Wilson City Schools. Black parents were concerned about their children’s educations and the NCC was founded to advocate for improved schools for African-American children in each of Wilson County’s three educational administrative units — Wilson City, Wilson County, and Elm City Public Schools. The NCC discovered “shocking conditions” in each black school they visited, and appealed to the local school board and state to make improvements, none of which were made. The NCC assured that they were not seeking school desegregation, but sought to end discrimination against Black students in per-capita spending”. After they were ignored for two years, the

counties three school systems began posting notices of sales of colored schools. In the Old Fields Township, this included New Vester Colored School, Jones Hill Colored school, and Sims colored school. New Vester and Jones Hill students would've moved to Springfield in the fall of 1951. Black students from Sims most likely attended Springfield until full local integration at Rock Ridge in 1970.

3. SIMS COLORED SCHOOL in Oldfields Township, near the Town of Sims, and being Lots Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, in Block H as shown by map or plat recorded in Book 78, at page 125, Wilson County Registry, containing 1½ acres, more or less. Also the lot excepted from the deed from the Board of Education of Wilson County to Ruben Peele dated 14 March, 1929 and of Record in Book 179 at Page 478, Wilson County Registry. See deeds recorded in Book 179, at pages 513 and 514, Wilson County Registry. Wilson Daily Times Newspaper Archives November 6, 1951, Page 11	52. Legals NOTICE RESALE OF REAL ESTATE The bidding at a former sale made on November 19, 1951, pursuant to Chapter 115, Section 86, of the General Statutes of North Carolina, having been raised, the Board of Education of Wilson County will again offer for sale and sell to the highest bidder for cash, at public auction at the Court House door in Wilson County, North Carolina, at 12:00 o'clock noon on Monday, December 17, 1951, the following described school houses and school house sites, all situate in Wilson County, North Carolina:	1. SIMS COLORED SCHOOL in Old Fields Township, near the Town of Sims, and being Lots Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 in Block "H", as shown by map or plat recorded in Book 78, at page 125, Wilson County Registry, containing 1½ acres, more or less. Also, the lot excepted from the deed of the Board of Education of Wilson County, to Ruben Peele, dated 14 March, 1929 and of record in Book 179, at page 478, Wilson County Registry. See deeds recorded in Book 179, at pages 513 and 514, Wilson County Registry. Bidding on the above described lot will begin - at \$770.00 Wilson Daily Times Newspaper Archives December 11, 1951 Page 14
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Integration

The 1954 United States Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education declared racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional. Even so, actual integration in rural Wilson County was delayed for many years. Schools in Old Fields Township were not fully integrated until around 1970–1971. In Wilson City and County Schools, “Freedom of Choice” policies were implemented in the mid-1960s. This formally allowed students to select either White or Black schools, but in practice, the system remained largely segregated. In 1969, federal authorities reportedly threatened to withhold funding unless Wilson County submitted a final desegregation plan for implementation in September of that year. This broader pressure appears to have helped force the final transition to full integration in the township’s schools.

For 1969-'70 School Year

County Board Ok's Desegregation Plan

By GENE HURDLE

A desegregation plan increasing one-way integration to the first five grades in the 1969-70 school year while providing for elimination of the dual system a year later was adopted last night by the Wilson County Board of Education.

For the school year beginning Aug. 26, the first five grades would be integrated at predominately white schools and a minimum of 50 classroom teachers would be assigned across racial lines.

For the 1970-71 school year, the middle-school concept would be implemented as follows:

- 1. Integrate grades 1-5 at predominately white schools.
- 2. Organize grades 6-7-8 at Speight and Springfield schools for all students of both races.
- 3. Integrate all grades 9-12 at predominately white schools.

In discussing the plan, board members readily admitted the plan probably would not be acceptable to the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Dr. Robert D. Richards, chairman of the board, put it this way:

"In our opinion, this is the best method to achieve the smoothest transition, even though HEW may not approve it."

In joining to make adoption of the plan unanimous, Dr. Badie T. Clark said he was doing so "in the same way Lee surrendered his sword."

Richards said the "primary objective" of the county school board is "to improve education in Wilson County." He said the

proposed merger-bond issue referendum is the best way by which to get some comprehensive schools for all students in the county and the board felt adoption of this desegregation plan the best means to help convince county residents to support the merger proposal.

It was noted the entire board

See INTEGRATION Page 2

Tentatively

County School Budget Adopted

By GENE HURDLE

The Wilson County Board of Education tentatively adopted a 1969-70 budget last night requesting \$500,000 in capital improvements to supplement existing funds for construction of a high school "in the event that the bond issue fails in October."

than the amount earmarked for this fund in the fiscal year now near an end. The exact amount of debt service, which includes all three administrative units, has not been determined but it is approximately the same as the \$407,368.76 allocated last year.

The board emphasized it is asking for the half million

Wilson Daily Times Newspaper Archives May

30, 1969 Page 1

Conclusion

The history of schools connected to Sims reflects the larger history of rural education in eastern North Carolina: small early schools, the drive toward consolidation, the unequal realities of segregation, the significance of Rosenwald school construction, mid-century advocacy for Black students, and the slow arrival of meaningful integration. White students in Sims were served through a network that included the Sims elementary school and Rock Ridge High School, while Black students were educated through underfunded local schools such as Sims Colored School, Jones Hill, and New Vester before consolidation into larger Black secondary institutions and, eventually, desegregated county schools. Despite gaps in the surviving record, the available evidence makes clear that education in Sims was shaped both by local initiative and by the broader racial and institutional history of Wilson County.

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