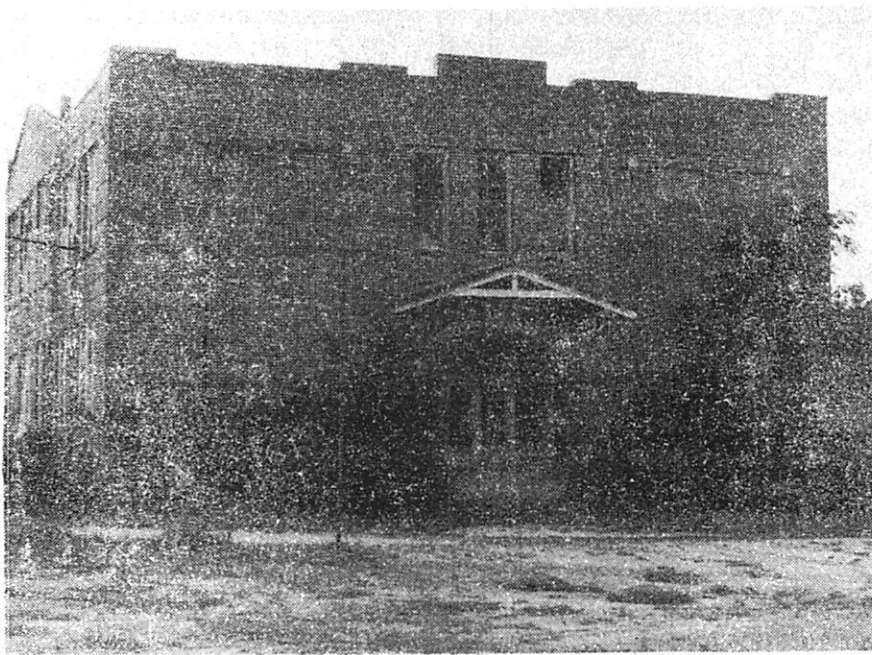


Blackstock School Coming Down



By Faye Johnson
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Eighteen years have passed since the sound of children's footsteps were heard treading the halls of Blackstock Elementary School, and twenty-six since high school students attended classes there.

But if one listens closely on a quiet fall day, whispers of those earlier, busy years still linger in the air.

Not for long, however; the two-story school building is being torn down, clearing out an area for those who attended it from 1923 until the door closed for good in 1963. A victim of old age, the building's roof collapsed recently, making it a safety hazard for anyone who might enter.

Blackstock School, the gym and another building, are owned by Young Farmer's Organization of Blackstock, and the group meets now in the old gym. Only the school building itself is being taken down.

Robert Shannon, who lives just across the street from the school, remembers when it was built. On Monday he sat on his front porch and reminisced about those earlier days, when the Georgia red brick used for the building cost just over eight dollars a thousand. The roof, he recalled always presented a

problem.

Before the 1922-23 building was finished, Blackstock children attended classes in a two-room, two-teacher frame schoolhouse. Each teacher was in charge of five grades.

Then several small school districts were consolidated and a large facility was needed. Blackstock School sits just a few yards from the Fairfield-Chester line, and Fairfield picked up the cost for the building and Chester helped with other expenses, and children from both counties were enrolled there.

For a number of years, children from the White Oak area attended the school. Ivor Patrick Stephenson and her twin sister, Hannah Phillips, rode the bus from White Oak to Blackstock for five years before transferring to Mount Zion in Winnsboro for the sixth grade.

Ivor recalls that in her first grade class 50 percent of the students were twins, as she and Hannah and another set of twins made up half the class of eight, taught by Miss Sue White Mills, "the best teacher in the world". Miss Mills taught both the first and second grades, and Ivor says while the teacher worked with the second grade, the first graders played in a sandpile in a corner of the big classroom.

"I enjoyed my five years there."

Ivor says now, "and I thought my life had changed when we came to Mount Zion".

At the time the Patrick children attended Blackstock School, there were perhaps 25 to 30 children from White Oak enrolled there, and the principal was B.R. Geddings, known as "Professor" Geddings.

Miss Kathleen Lemmon remembers even further back at Blackstock School, where she taught in the high school for two years. Miss Lemmon says she was forever getting up plays to raise money for indoor plumbing! Mr. Shannon says the school was built without electricity, which came to Blackstock in the late 'thirties, and without plumbing facilities.

Another person who remembers the halcyon years at Blackstock School is Mrs. Kitty Shannon, whose husband, Edward M. Shannon, was superintendent there from 1947 until the school was closed. Two of the Shannon's children graduated at Blackstock and the third at Chester High School.

On Monday, Mrs. Shannon displayed a scrapbook with names of those who attended school reunions. Among the names were Banks, McKeown, Beam, Weir, Knox, McCauley, Campbell, Traylor, Sanders, Montgomery, Bigham, Shirley, Mills, McDonald, Bankhead, Shannon, DeHart, Cassels, Fries, Durham, Lewis, Jeter, Cornwell, Hail and Kennedy - a virtual roll call of the inhabitants of that section of Fairfield County.

The list included two former sheriffs of Fairfield County - Leroy Montgomery and Fred Robinson - a deputy sheriff, Jimmy McDonald, and a pianist with the Syracuse, N.Y., symphony orchestra, Mary Shannon Boyd.

The reunion records included one person who graduated from the old two-room school, Kenneth Kennedy of the Class of 1916. Edward Shannon, Blackstock School's last superintendent, was also an alumnus of the earlier school.