

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

The Dry Ridge Consolidated Colored School

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"It has been found that there are not enough children in the colored schools of the county to maintain more than one school and to this end the county board has decided to build one school house to accommodate all of them. It was the intention of the county board to locate this school at Dry Ridge as the most central part of the county's colored population, but an effort to buy a lot for that purpose disclosed the fact they would have to pay a price which they did not think reasonable. Therefore, it is probable that the school will be located at Crittenden, the lot owned for colored school purposes at that place being ample. It was their intention to build the school house this year but the matter has been postponed until next year. In the meantime it is the purpose of the board to use the school building at Crittenden this year, although it has been condemned. Williamstown and Dry Ridge children will be conveyed to Crittenden in busses.

The falling off in the colored population in the county during the last 20 years is evidenced by the small number of school children in the three districts. Twenty years ago Williamstown had between 70 and 80 children, Dry Ridge had about 40 and Crittenden about 75. Today there are only about 50 colored children in the three districts.

In March, 1923, the Grant County Board of Education purchased 2 3/10 acres from Mr. W.T.S. Blackburn on the old Lexington Pike north of Dry Ridge. "

The Dry Ridge Consolidated School was built in 1924-25 with matching funds provided by Julius Rosenwald, CEO of Sears, Roebuck & Company. Mr. Rosenwald in conjunction with Booker T. Washington built school from 1906 – 1932 for African Americans during segregation. The purpose of the school "was to have a dramatic impact on the face of the rural South and in the lives of its African-American residents." At the time the school was built, it cost \$5,700 to build. \$5300 came from the community and \$400 came from the Rosenwald fund. There also was \$120 allocated for an elementary library to be in the school.

In 1925, when the Rosenwald School was built, schools in Sherman, Williamstown, Corinth, and Dry Ridge were consolidated and all the black students attended the Dry Ridge Consolidated School. The school was located in the area referred to as "Bucktown in that time. This was one of the poorest areas in town. According to former students, the school was located here because no one wanted the school near them. There were no buses so the students had to walk or catch a ride to school. Many students in Williamstown would walk down the railroad tracks from Williamstown to attend school. During part of the time the school operated, Williamstown did provide some bus service for their students, but not all the time. Miss Zadah Thompson, the teacher, would pick up the students in Dry Ridge, Sherman and Crittenden in her car and transport them to and from school.

The school was constructed in a modest fashion with one door and several windows. The windows on the building were fashioned in a way to be a magnet for the most sun light. The typical furniture that adorned school was rough wooden slabs, pews, and benches eventually replaced with modern patent desks. Many times used furniture was transferred from the white schools to the black schools but all Rosenwald schools refused to accept the used furniture. Therefore, the colored school had new wooden desks, which attached to each other and sat in rows. The black board was on the south wall with letters

above the board for teaching writing. There was a bookshelf that housed approximately fifty books among the books were Robinson Crusoe, Little Women, Gulliver's Travels and essays by Shakespeare.



As shown in the picture at the left, the side yard was used for a lively game of softball that even included the teachers. Ted Huley, a former student of the school vividly remembers these games. According to Mrs. Ailene Butler, the school day would begin with the raising of the American Flag outside and then the singing of "Lift Every Voice and Sing" as the sun shone through the windows.

At left: Dry Ridge colored School Pre 1950's

After integration the colored school was sold and used as a church for a short time and then as a place to store hay. It gradually deteriorated until 2005 when the Northern Kentucky African American Task Force began the project to restore the school. Fund raising began and a grant was obtained from Lowe's and the National Historic Preservation Society and donations were sought to begin work. At that time, the building was owned by Mr. & Mrs. Arlis Robinson, who donated the building to the county. In 2007, the building was moved to the Grant County Park, Crittenden, Kentucky. It was located next to the Rice Chapel, a old Colored Christian Church that had been restored and moved to the park.

The restoration was completed in 2011. Due to the generous contributions of papers and pictures by the estate of Mrs. Della Jones, a lifelong resident of Grant County, which depicted the experiences of the Black community, the decision was made to house this material and pictures as exhibits and the Grant County Black History Museum was born.

The museum is open every 2nd and 4th Saturday from 1PM – 5 Pm during the spring and summer beginning March 24th and ending the 4th Saturday in October. It is also open by appointment for school groups, community groups or private tours. For an appointment, call Connie Taylor H-(859) 903-2253 or Cell (859) 866-4723.