Early Education in Bermuda

by Joy Wilson-Tucker
Author/Historian/Researcher

Many early schools were erected from 1724 until 1897. Several initiatives were made to operate schools including that of one-room missions such as the North Shore Mission under Mr. Rufus Stovell; the Cripple Gate School on St. John's AME property; the Temperance Hall School which accommodated 129 students; and the little St. David's school run by Ms. Eliza Armstrong Brangman. Around 1830, an Anglican day school was opened in Warwick and operated by an enslaved woman named Ms. Maria Tucker and she had 70 students in attendance. Other schools came to the fore and they were under the tutelage of such persons as Mr. Jarius Swan who taught at the Franklyn Lodge and Thomas Joell at the Lane School on East Broadway. Mr. Augustus H. Swan and Ms. Aretia Vesey of Pembroke were teachers at the first Pembroke School. In 1835 it was reported that the school had an enrollment of 165 pupils during the day and 50 at night. The school was erected on Glebe land in Pembroke for the black children of Devonshire and Pembroke.

Education was not free and the Bermuda Friendly Societies paid the fees for many children of their members. Attempts were made in 1774 to open a college here on the island but it never materialised because of lack of funding. By 1824, James C. Esten put forward an initiative for another college known as Devonshire College in 1829 but that also failed. In 1835 an attempt was made to establish another school to be known as the first Negro high school in Bermuda; again, securing funding was difficult. As a result, Rev. John Albert Johnson travelled to England and spent six months collecting monies for this institution. On the 8th of February 1892 the AME church opened the Bermuda Collegiate Institute in a small house on King Street in Hamilton, and its first headmaster was Mr. George A. DaCosta, a Jamaican.

When the AME School found itsself in financial difficulty and closed its doors, Mr. DaCosta made his way back to his home country but was later recruited by members of the Berkeley Educational Society. Consequently on the 6th of September 1897, The Berkeley Institute opened its doors in the Samaritan Victoria Lodge Room #12 on Court Street.

Because of the many little school houses about the island, teachers seemed to be in short supply. It was at the burial of Ms. Rosa Butterfield, a teacher at St. Alban's School in Pembroke, that the Bermuda Union of Teachers was formed in the St. John's Church yard. The four founding members were Ms. Mattie Crawford, head teacher at Tills Hill School; Rev. R.J. Stovell, an

AME minister; Ms. Edith Crawford, head of the Alaska Hall School; and Ms. Adele Tucker, head of the Paget School.

A small group of teachers struggled to keep the Union alive and they held many fundraisers. Out of this came the interschool contest. Attendance at further meetings was poor – sometimes not even enough to form a quorum – but they trudged on.

The people of Sandys parish were looking to have their own school for higher learning and on October 12th 1927, a resolution was adopted by members of Sandys Educational Association officially establishing a school of higher education in the west end of the island, which would be known as Sandys Secondary School. The founders who on many occasions use their own money to pay for salaries and rent were Nurse Alice Scott, Mrs. Elizabeth Swan, Mrs. Annie Simmons, Mrs. Frances Simmons, Mr. William Robinson, and Mr. Tommy Durrant.

The largest primary school existed as an amalgamation of three infant schools. One was operated by Ms. Edith Crawford in 1908 and was held at Alaska Hall; Ms. Louisa Williams who held school at Pond Road (now Parson's Road) started her school in 1931; and Mr. Rufus Stovell who held school at Heard Chapel Church (once known as the North Shore Mission) in 1929. Once amalgamated, these three schools took in students from St. Monica's Mission, the North Village Band Room where teachers were Ms. Dorothy Hughes and Mrs. Doris Corbin and the S Augustine Mission giving Central a vast total of over 1,000 students. The Central School officially opened on the 18th of May 1931.

<u>Summary of Credits</u>

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