

A Tale of Two Schools

An Exhibit Series

Carver: An Enduring Legacy

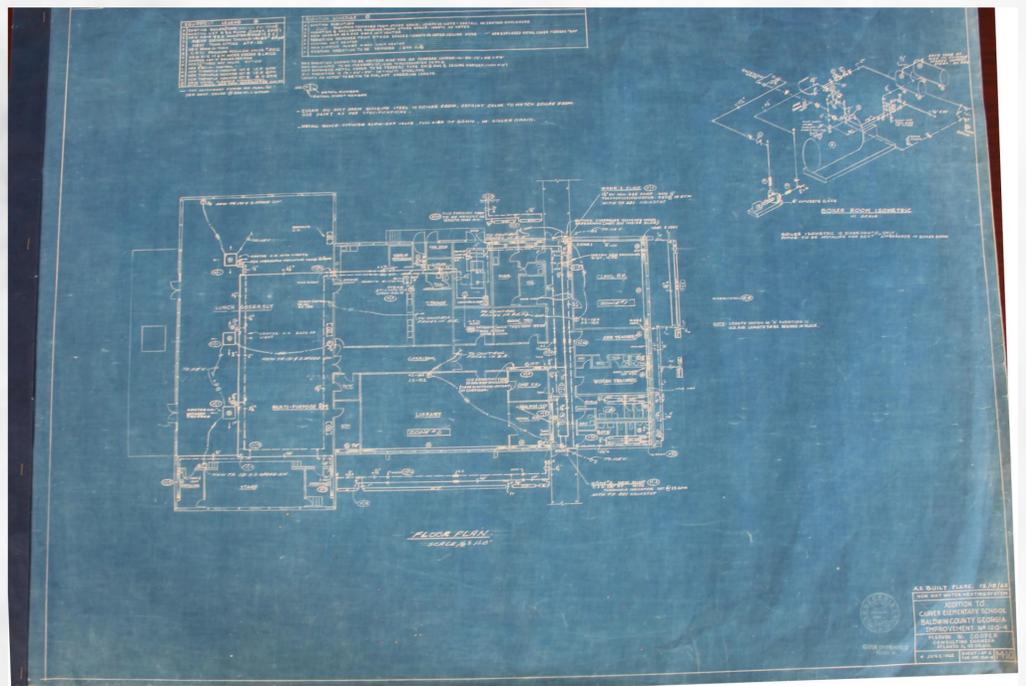


The First Carver School: Baldwin County Baptist College

Carver School was established as the African American high school in Baldwin County, following the loss of the Eddy School in 1947. Junior high and high school students from Eddy were moved to the former Baldwin County Baptist College, for ministers, which was turned over to the Board of Education and turned into a high school.

Naomi Brannon remembered the facilities as lacking a gym and cafeteria. Students played sports outside and brought lunch from home, or bought sandwiches and drinks from the home economics class. Brannon remembered being put in charge of selling the lunch by her teacher, and knowing that if any food went missing, she'd have to pay for it out of her own pocket money.

The Baptist college burned down after an accident with the pot bellied stoves and Carver was moved. The new location of Carver was built in 1949 on an East Walton Street lot and in 1955, became an elementary school. Boddie High School then opened as the African American high school. Carver stood on Walton Street until its 2018 demolition.



These blueprints are of the 1962 addition to Carver, a building that housed its first lunchroom and library. On loan from the Baldwin County Board of Education.

Equalization Schools in Georgia

Carver was rebuilt during Georgia's era of equalization schools. Equalization schools were a popular tactic in the south at the beginning of integration as a way to uphold segregation by creating new schools for African Americans that complied with the 'separate but equal' doctrine of Plessy v. Ferguson.

In Georgia, Governor Talmadge started the 1949 Minimum Foundation Program for Education, meant to decrease disparities in education through better curricula, more training for teachers, and a set nine month school term. When Talmadge left office in 1954, 53 percent of the State of Georgia's budget went towards public schools.

Toney Elementary School in Dekalb County became the model for schools built in Georgia. Pictured in 1953, courtesy of Photographic Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University Library.



This spending was used to build equalization schools and maintain a two-race school system. Schools were built in the International Style, emphasizing clean lines, a lack of ornamentation, modern materials and technology. This style used cheaper materials than previous schools and was more cost effective. Later, costs of \$7.50 per square foot were required to receive Program grants.

Georgia's Response to Integration

Public school systems in Georgia resisted the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling. In response to the 1964 Civil Rights movement, rural counties adopted freedom of choice systems, allowing students to choose their schools. The result was that threats kept African American students out of white schools and no white students attended African American schools.



Harrison High School in West Point, Georgia, composed of two wings, similar to Carver's construction. From *Stevens and Wilkinson, Selected Works* (Atlanta), [1958], 113.

This system was deemed unconstitutional in 1968 and in the 1969-1970 school year Georgia's segregated public school systems officially integrated. Many white students were removed from public school systems by their parents following integration and enrolled in private academies. In three years (1967-1970) the number of students enrolled in private elementary and secondary schools reached 50,000, five times more than in 1967.

Carver Before Integration

Baldwin County started integration by integrating teaching staffs in the 1969-1970 school year. Carver was a K-2 school and in January of 1970, Becky Brock, a white teacher in Baldwin County, was hired to teach first grade. Mrs. Brock had a class of African American students, many of whom had never been taught by a white person.



Eastview Elementary, located in Americus, Georgia, when still segregated. The large windows let in light and were opened to promote airflow. From *Stevens and Wilkinson, Selected Works* (Atlanta), [1958], 106.

“...I hope I didn’t damage that class too bad, cause like I said, I wasn’t a first grade teacher, it was middle school I loved, I could do anything with them....”

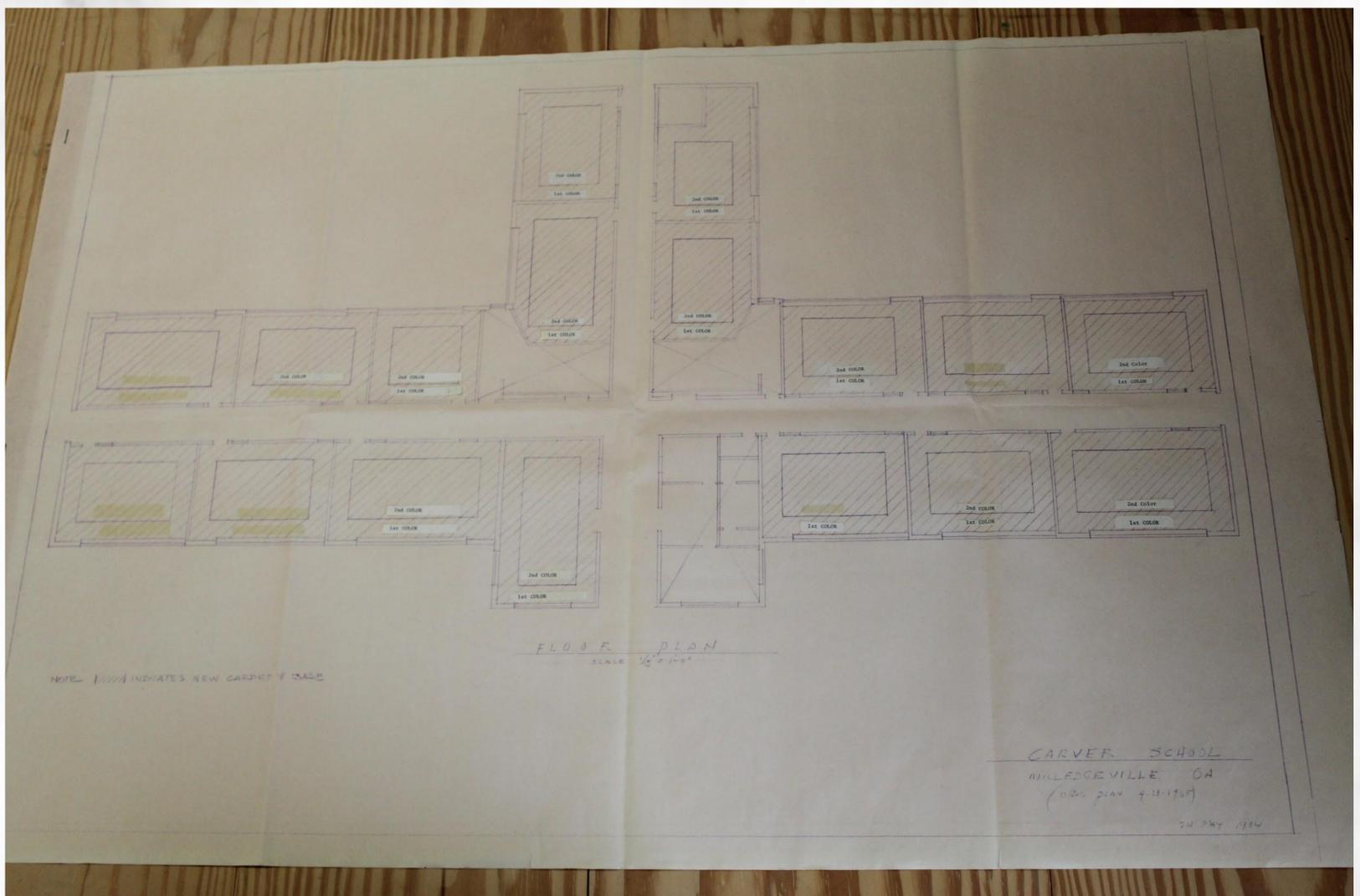
~Becky Brock

Mrs. Brock remembers her students as sweet children, though as a middle school teacher, she was uncertain about teaching first grade. In August 1970, Baldwin County completely integrated, and Carver became a fifth and sixth grade school. Mrs. Brock remembers John Milledge Academy opening that same year to become, along with Georgia Military College Prep School, an alternate option to traditional public education.

Effects of Integration in Georgia

During integration, formerly African American high schools, that were over ten years old, were demoted to middle schools or closed during reorganizations of the school systems. Equalization had created more schools than needed and in many cases, schools in African American neighborhoods were closed to avoid sending white students there.

Across the state, many African American principals were demoted to assistant principals or teachers. Principal was one of the highest paying jobs available to African Americans and the overall decrease in the job's availability led to a general decrease of capital circulating in black business districts of small communities.



Plans of Carver from 1984 showing the addition of new carpet in the classrooms. On loan from the Baldwin County Board of Education.

Integration at Carver



A class at Carver after integration with student teacher Lisa Kirby. Ms. Kirby was later employed on the faculty at Carver. Courtesy of Becky Brock.

After Carver became a fifth and sixth grade school, Mrs. Brock remembers most of the faculty leaving. Mr. Cowart, who was the principal, took a job in Florida, and the new principal was Mr. Harold Watson. Mr. Watson remained principal until Carver closed and was then principal of Boddie Middle.

For two years, Mrs. Brock taught fifth grade, before she moved to Tallahassee, Florida in 1972. She moved back to Milledgeville in 1978 and returned to teaching sixth grade at Carver.

The same year Jannie White started teaching sixth grade, later teaching the Operation Explorers (OE) students, which were part of the gifted program in Baldwin County at the time.

The Buildings that Held Carver

Carver consisted of three buildings; the first housed most of the classrooms and was the oldest. The teachers remember a center and cross hall of classrooms. The main hall had double doors and ended in steps, Mrs. White remembers six, leading down to a breezeway which connected a second building to the first.

This building, built as an addition, housed the library, lunchroom, more classrooms, and a counselor's office. According to Mrs. Brock, Carver had been built before lunchrooms were in schools, and when the lunchroom was built a stage was included so that classes could put on programs.



Carver class pictured outside. Courtesy of Becky Brock.

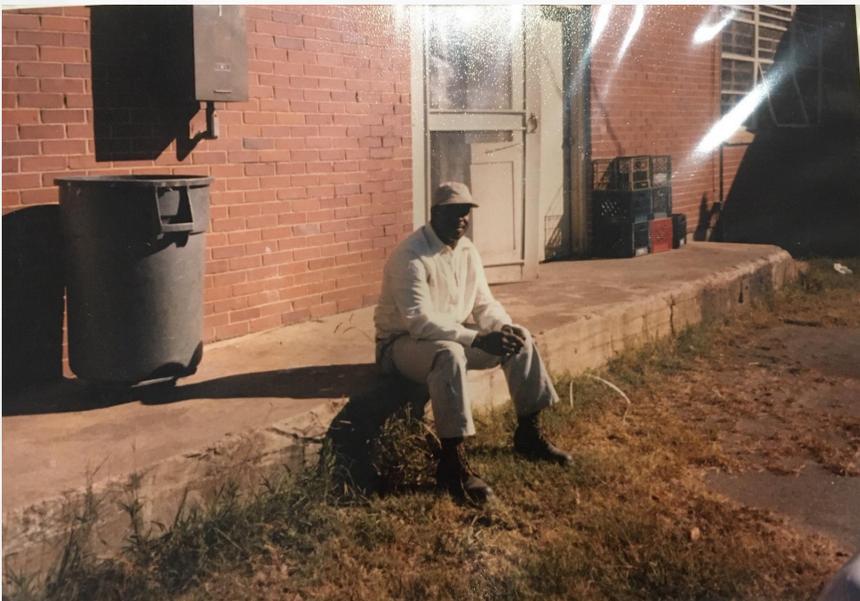
Another breezeway led to the last building, with steps down to it because of the slope of the land. Teachers remember that this building was often wet and in a poor state of repair. There was no gymnasium and as Carver housed only fifth and sixth graders there were no formal sports.

Conditions at Carver

Even after integration, there was no air conditioning at Carver. Each classroom had a wall of windows, and teachers remember opening them and the doors to create air flow. There were electric fans for the classrooms, and Mrs. Brock recalls having a hoarse voice at the end of the day after straining to be heard over the fan.

*“There was nothing like teaching and hearing *cluck cluck* and it was a rooster or some chickens coming in the back door...”*

~Jannie White



Willie Fleming, the only janitor for Carver School. Aside from bad plumbing and no A/C, Mr. Fleming also had to deal with the animals that found their way into Carver, including bats in the ceilings. Courtesy of Becky Brock.

Just behind Carver was a house that raised chickens. Doors to the school buildings themselves were opened to promote airflow, and chickens often ran through the halls or into classroom. Mrs. Brock remembers catching chickens to put out in the yard, and Mrs. White remembers dogs running through the halls.

Once, there was a bat hanging from a hole in Mrs. White's ceiling. She sent a student up to Principal Watson, to tell him that he better come down and get rid of it. The exposure to the elements from keeping the doors open led to the deterioration of cheap building materials. Carver was never remodeled.

Education at Carver: Math, Science, and OE

Teachers were provided textbooks to teach from, but they created the lessons. Mrs. Brock's curriculum changed the order of science lessons to be chronological, from earth to space science, and plants to animals. She had a big cardboard box full of materials for her rock lesson and another for the human body lesson.



One of Becky Brock's classes at Carver. Courtesy of Becky Brock.

In math Mrs. Brock started the year by discovering what skills her students knew to plan her curriculum. After teaching the main lesson she would take children who were confused to the chalkboard and work through problems with them until they all understood. Students who understood the lesson helped the others.

Mrs. White taught mainly sixth grade Operation Explorers (OE) students during her time at Carver. Mrs. White taught science and math, preparing her students for the IOWA Test of Basic Skills, in which Carver students scored in the upper percentile.

“We got books and anything else you made yourself and so every teacher had files and boxes...”

~Becky Brock

Education at Carver: Exploratories

Principal Watson allowed teachers to experiment within their classes. Joane Williams and Elizabeth Kenyon taught a six week home economics course of basic cooking, sewing, and a class play. The play was based on Carver's history, and the students interviewed the community. The class also made a quilt to coincide with the play, helping with the binding and the batting, to present to Mr. Watson.



Mr. Watson also brought the first computers to Carver. Mrs. Williams taught sixth grade math, science, and social studies, and was given the computer because of her large room. In teaching technology, Mrs. Williams taught the students how to turn it on, insert a floppy disk, and how to type.

The computer that Mrs. Williams's class had was an Apple, and would have looked like the one pictured in this 1977 advertisement.

Carver: A Place of Community Support

Carver was a neighborhood school, and generally had strong support from the parents. Teachers sent notes home or called about academic issues or discipline and parents would respond. Mrs. White remembers that parents supported teachers, instead of trying to defend their children by claiming their children wouldn't act badly.

“So you had parental support then, it wasn't any blab, blab, blab, my child won't do this or that or that, it was community support.”

~Jannie White



Carver classes and teachers. Teacher to the far left: Gladys Madison, teacher in center: Becky Brock, teacher to far right: Marysue Coleman. Courtesy of Becky Brock.

When parents did disagree with discipline or academic decisions, the teachers and parents met. The teachers taught in pairs and would meet together, sometimes bringing in the counselor, Mrs. Martin, or Principal Watson. The teachers knew that they had the support of their principal, and these disagreements were solved.

Carver: A Place of Fun

Mrs. White remembers that teachers had “the most fun” at Carver. There was time for them to do their jobs and also give the students fun experiences. At the end of the year Carver held field day, and each class was a team, Mrs. White’s was “White’s Dynamites” and Mrs. Williams’s were “Williams’s Warriors.”



Carver playground and gym teacher.
Courtesy of Becky Brock

Carver was important not only to its teachers, but its students. One of Mrs. White’s classes left a time capsule on the grounds of Carver. Unfortunately, the time capsule was not recovered before the 2018 demolition of Carver. Mrs. Williams’s class made a quilt, and teachers like Mrs. Williams and Laura Johnson wrote poetry for fellow faculty.

The events took place at the playground where different stations were set up, including Dizzy Izzy, the egg on the spoon, and tug-of-war. The big event was the softball tournament, classes would compete against each other in brackets until the last two teams standing faced off.

*“... it was a ball field,
and we had ball
tournaments every
spring, every teacher
had a ball team and we
competed and it was a
big deal...”*

~Becky Brock

Memories from Carver's Teachers

Mrs. White remembers that teachers all truly enjoyed their jobs while working at Carver. According to Mrs. Brock, Carver was a good school, and she enjoyed every minute of it. Part of what made Carver so enjoyable was Principal Watson and that he allowed teachers to teach without interference.



Carver teacher
Mary Hill.
Courtesy of
Becky Brock

“We talked about it, he was really a fantastic, Mr. Watson, was a fantastic principal.”

~Jannie White

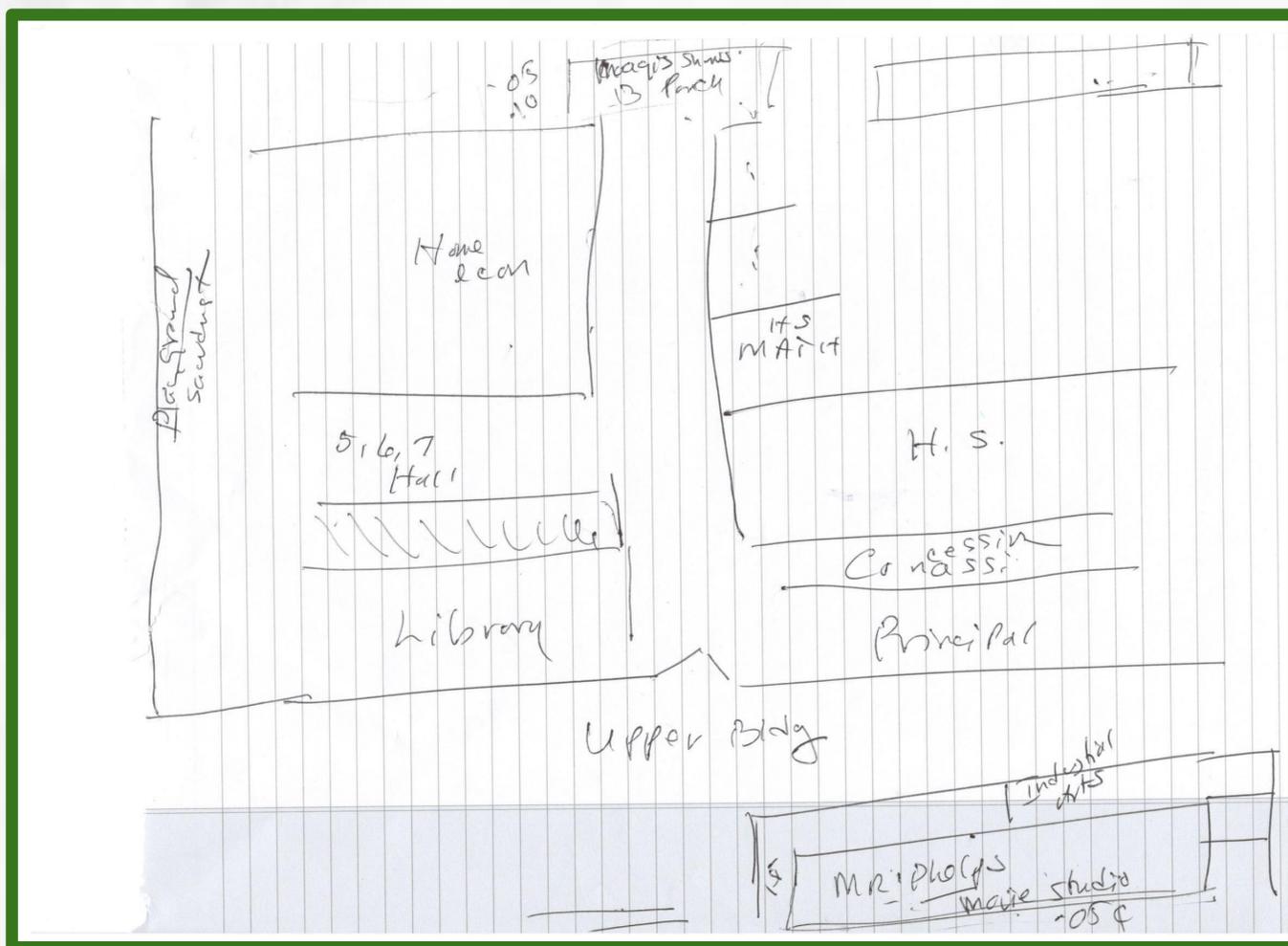
Mrs. White remembers a strong academic ethic at Carver which allowed Mr. Watson let teachers teach. Mrs. Martin, the counselor, was a resource to help teachers with any problems children faced. Mrs. Williams remembers that Mrs. Martin and Mr. Watson held the school together.

Carver During Segregation

A Student's Memories

During segregation, Carver did not receive many supplies from the school board. Benjamin Lewis, a student at Carver in the 1950s remembers teachers receiving mimeographed copies of tests and having to write on the back of them because reams of paper were not provided. The texts books were second hand from the white schools, with graffiti and pages missing.

Teachers bought supplies with their own money, and the home economics teacher sold sandwiches and hot dogs for lunch – Carver's lunchroom was built in 1962 – to use the money to purchase supplies. Despite these obstacles, Mr. Lewis remembers the teachers prepared the students for the rest of their lives, and provided them a basis for loving education.



A diagram drawn by Mr. Lewis, of the Carver School. The main drawing is the upper building, which housed the elementary and high school. The lower building, located the right bottom corner, housed the GI program and later the elementary school along with the industrial arts program. The middle building is shown in the upper right corner.

As important as the educational impact was the community impact. Plays the home ec class put on were attended by the whole community, the football team was the Carver Rattlers played at Baldwin High's football field, and Carver's homecoming parades started at Carver before traveling downtown.

The End of Carver: As “We” Knew It

The end of Carver in the late 1980s was painful for its teachers; Mrs. White remembers being told in the last year of Carver’s operation that the school would be closed. Mrs. Williams remembers that the entire staff was sad at the news. Baldwin County was transitioning from a junior high system to a middle school system, and Mrs. Brock remembers planning Boddie Middle at what was then Boddie High.



Principal Harold Watson and Secretary Echo Nibblet. Courtesy of Becky Brock.

After Carver closed in 1988, Mr. Watson went to Boddie to be principal and most teachers went with him, though some chose to go to Baldwin Middle. According to Mrs. White the staff of Carver was told that the building was too old to remodel. At that time, the building was about forty years old.

Carver had been built in the center of a predominantly African-American neighborhood by a school board that never thought white students would attend the school. Like many other African American schools in Georgia, Carver and Boddie were demoted from high schools, and Carver was finally closed altogether.