

# A Tale of Two Schools

An Exhibit Series

*Eddy School: The Foundation of a  
Community*



# The Eddy School and Sallie Ellis Davis

The Eddy School was the first school for African Americans in Baldwin County, and was the only African American public school in Milledgeville until the 1940s. Dedicated to keeping education accessible for their children, a strong community formed around the Eddy School and the neighborhood it was located in.

Sallie Ellis Davis was the owner of this house from 1910 until her death in 1950. She was a teacher and principal at the Eddy School for over five decades, and was a respected community member. Dedicated to her students, Davis opened her home as a boarding house for students from rural areas who could not commute and would otherwise not have attended school.



Sallie Ellis Davis House. Courtesy of Sallie Ellis Davis Archives, GCSU.



Milledgeville's movie theater segregation stairs located to right of main entrance. Courtesy of Sallie Ellis Davis Archives, GCSU.

Milledgeville was a segregated community at the time of the Eddy School's founding and throughout its lifetime. The movie theater in town had a segregated stair entrance, shown above, for African Americans which is to the right of the main entrance. This is just one of the instances of segregation that students of the Eddy School faced every day.

# Knowledge is Power

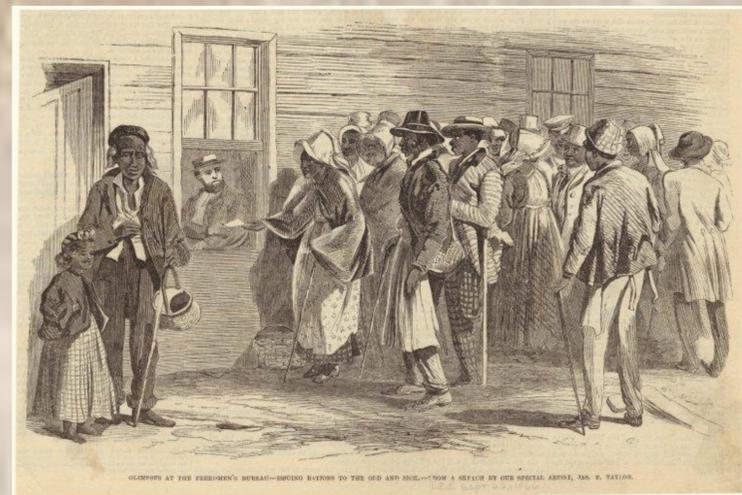
After the Civil War the African American community of Milledgeville worked to form a school. The American Missionary Association (AMA) provided monetary support, along with the Freedmen's Bureau, an organization set up through the Department of War to support the recently freed in the south.



Flagg Chapel circa 1873. Courtesy of *Milledgeville Then and Now*, GCSU Special Collections

The Freedmen's Bureau listed Wilkes Flagg, a former slave and an educational leader in the African American community, as a "colored member" and through funding from the AMA the Eddy School started in Flagg Chapel. Flagg donated church land for the school which was built in 1869, with classes continuing in the church through 1870.

The Freedmen's Bureau's full name was the United States Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned lands and was run by the war department. The Bureau was created to help implement reconstruction and aid the 4 million freed slaves transition from enslaved to free. The Bureau also aided hundreds of thousands of impoverished whites.



This sketch details a Freedmen's bureau location handing out rations to the 'old and sick' Courtesy of New York Public Library Digital Collections.

# Community Importance of Education

Though the Eddy School provided classes through eleventh grade, many students left after seventh to help their families or start working. However, each generation wanted to support the next in furthering their education. African American families in the city would board rural students, as transportation was not available.

*My daddy - when I was going to Ft. Valley, we didn't have a car, and I would be late sometimes, he would hold the bus up... the bus driver told me... say "when you get your diploma, your B.S., you come hand it to me, say, cause I helped you get it." They were very nice though, and most of the time I wouldn't be bout five minutes...*

-Naomi Brannon, Tales from the Back Stoop. Courtesy of GCSU Special Archives.

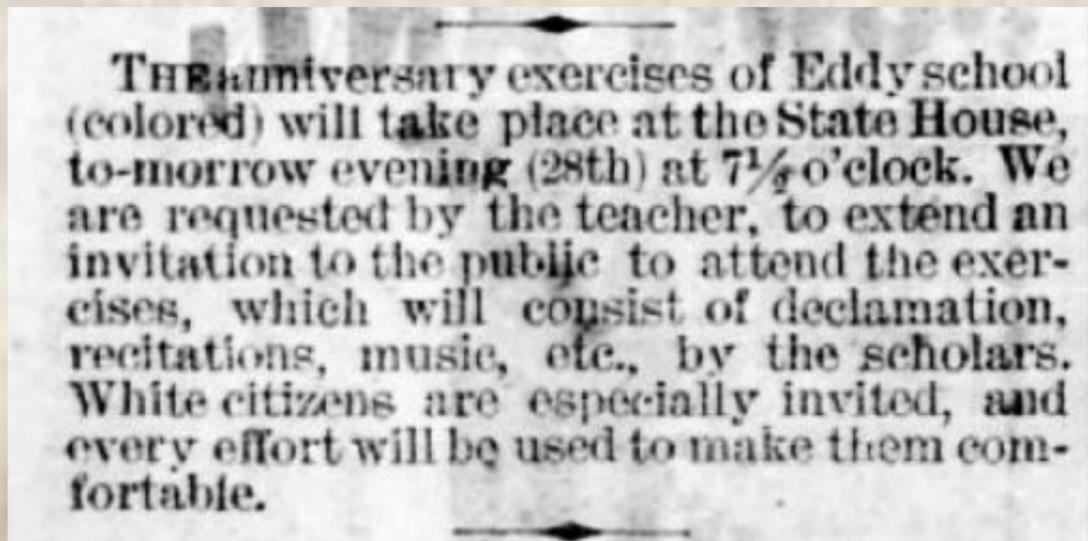


Davis and the students she housed would have gathered in her parlor, they often listened to boxing matches on the radio. Courtesy of GCSU.

Sallie Ellis Davis often boarded so many students that cots were brought into the hall of her house. Testimonies from the Sallie Ellis Davis Archives remember Davis supporting her students any way they needed; she brought lunch for one of her students, Mrs. L. W. Lane, every day and provided clothes for those who needed them.

# Church School: The Creation of Eddy School

The Freedmen's Bureau sent five white teachers who started the Eddy School by teaching in Flagg Chapel. These teachers gave monthly reports to the Bureau including data on the number of students enrolled, average attendance and punctuality, how many students were over sixteen, and the public sentiment regarding the school. The reports from three teachers Jeannie G. Warner, Mary E. Lands, and S. Wells's reveal the changes in their classes and students from 1867 to 1868.



This article is from the May 27, 1879 edition of the Union and Recorder. Courtesy of Digital Libraries of Georgia.

Their records show that boys and girls were almost equally likely to attend school, with girls sometimes attending more. Those who did attend past the age of sixteen were severely outnumbered by younger students. In reoccurring months, the teachers listed only one or no students over sixteen.

The school was also always listed as a primary school, as higher education was still largely inaccessible to the African American community. These teachers never listed the sentiment surrounding the school as negative. However, they often said the sentiment was “not unfavorable” instead of “favorable” and in April 1868 each teacher claimed to know nothing about the public sentiment.



This image is of the Misses Cooke's School Room, started by the Freedmen's Bureau in Richmond, VA. it was published in 1866 in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

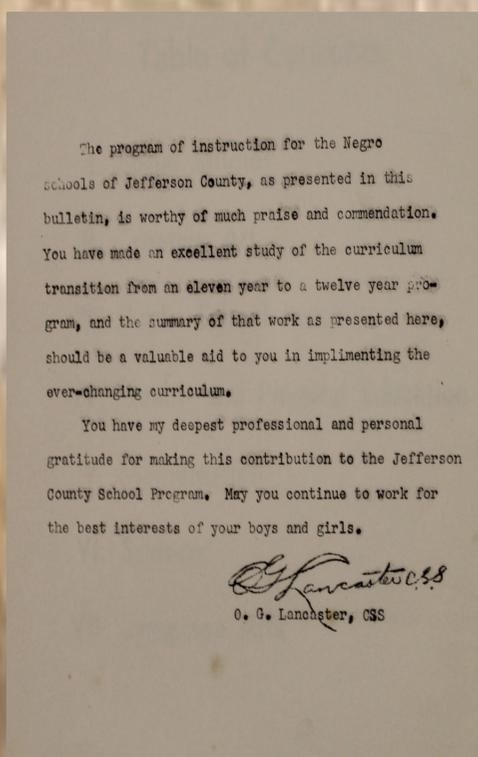
# City School: Conditions at Eddy



The Eddy School stood from 1869 to 1947 on the land donated by Wilkes Flagg. By 1874 an African American man, Mr. O. L. Chatters was principal of the school and in 1899, the year Sallie Ellis Davis earned her master's degree, the school was enlarged to a total of six rooms.

The Eddy School circa 1940 at the end of Davis's teaching career. Courtesy of Sallie Ellis Davis archives, GCSU.

Frances Wingfield started teaching at Eddy in 1946 and remembers it as a wooden building. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, Naomi Brannon was a student and remembers that they ate lunch outside because there was no lunchroom. According to her, the bathrooms were also outside and in bad condition.



The forward to the Program detailing the transfer of the Jefferson county schools from an 11- year to a 12-year program. Courtesy of Sallie Ellis Davis archives, GCSU.

*So we went there at the door, and she went in and used the restroom. The bell rang, and the floor gave away... I looked over and I saw a limb. I grabbed the limb and I hand it to her and I pulled her up... My mother... said, "Well she did save a girl today, say cause that girl would have drowned in all that mess.*

-Naomi Brannon, Tales from the Back Stoop, courtesy of GCSU Special Collections

# City School: Classes at Eddy

The Georgia State Department of Education 1936 manual "Improvement in Instruction in the Negro Schools," states that the aim of education was to create "good citizen[s] in a democratic society." The manual continues by stating that school should focus on "the fundamental needs of the peasants and less to the need of making them literate."

Right: This period sewing machine is of the type that would have been used to teach sewing. Courtesy of the Sallie Ellis Davis archives, GCSU.

Below: These period books show what subjects would have been taught. Titles include *Comparative Physiology* and *Virgil's Aeneid*. Courtesy of the Sallie Ellis Davis archives, GCSU.

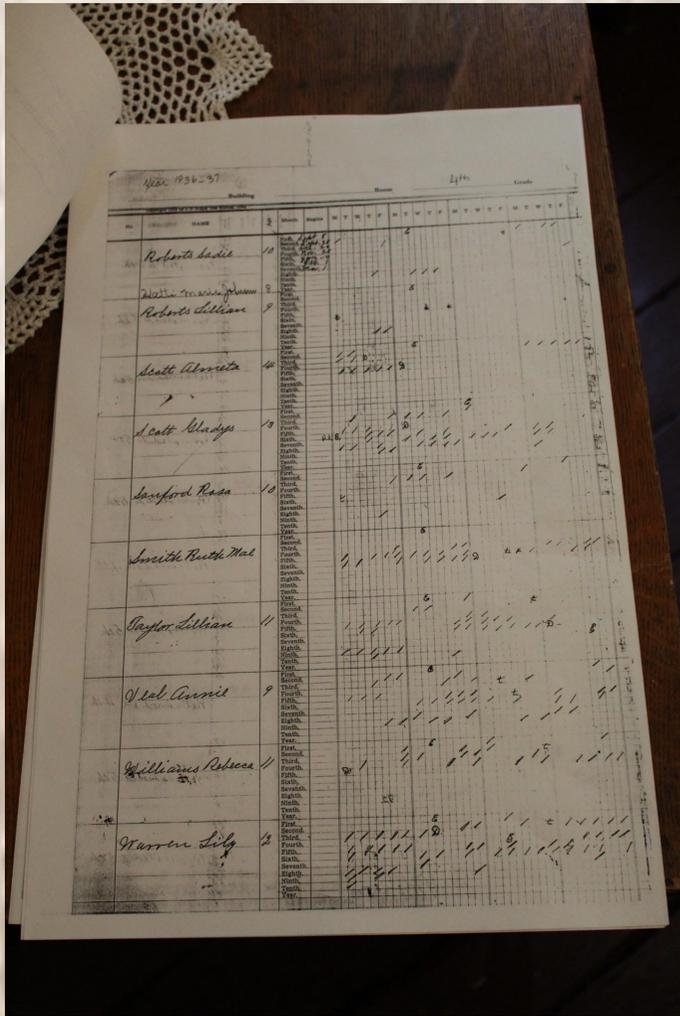


**EDDY SCHOOL EXHIBITION.**  
**MESSRS. EDITORS:**  
I thank you and appreciate very highly the opportunity of saying to the friends of education, that next Thursday night, October 6th, (at the Eddy School house) a spelling match will be conducted by the teacher and scholars of the Eddy School. The selection will be difficult words in common use. White friends wishing to attend the exercises will be treated with all due courtesy, in order that their visit may be an agreeable one. The exercises, beginning at 8 o'clock, will be attended with suitable singing, &c.

This article is from the October 4, 1881 edition of the Union and Recorder. Courtesy of Digital Libraries of Georgia.

Despite this, the Eddy School's curriculum was originally focused on literacy. In addition, Sillie Ellis Davis was remembered as a strict arithmetic teacher, who was so intimidating that Naomi Brannon would forget her lessons. Vocational subjects like sewing and agriculture were taught, and Frances Wingfield remembered the devotional services where first grade students recited the Lord's Prayer and sang hymns.

# A Different Time: African American Teachers in the 20th Century



The image shows a handwritten grade book for the 1936-1937 school year. The book is open to a page with a grid of columns for months (March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December) and rows for students. The students listed include Roberts Lillian, Scott Abner, Scott Madge, Sanford Rosa, Smith Ruth Mae, Taylor Lillian, Neal Annie, Williams Rebecca, and Warren Lily. The grid contains handwritten marks, likely indicating attendance or grades.

Sallie Ellis Davis's grade book for the 1936-1937 school year. Courtesy of the Sallie Ellis Davis archives, GCSU.

Teachers were also held to a very high standard within the community. They were not allowed to go out at night, with the exception being occasional movie attendance, but never a nightclub or social gathering. They had a very strict dress code that required minimal makeup. Brannon remembered that it was preferable for teachers to wear no makeup at all.

Teachers were as important and respected as the elders in the community because of the importance placed on education. There was an understanding between parents and teachers about classroom material and discipline and children were raised to respect and follow the instruction of all of their elders, especially teachers. Naomi Brannon remembered that if an adult had to leave a classroom and told the students not to move, none of them would.



Left: While Davis wore black to school, this picture of her shows the decorum expected of teachers. Courtesy of the Sallie Ellis Davis Archives, GCSU.

These rules were never official, but teachers were told them when they signed their contracts, and sometimes were given a list. These regulations continued into the 1950s. The state of Georgia also saw the teachers' responsibilities as improving the communities, as the 1936 manual states, "as the community advances it will sweep the students along."

# First Burn

## HELP EDDY HIGH SCHOOL

To our white and colored friends:

On December 3, 1925 the Eddy High school building was completely destroyed by fire. Since that date the classroom work has been carried on in two of the local churches. This is very inconvenient. Because **four teachers are attempting to conduct classes at the same time in each church, and because we have no blackboards nor desks, the efficiency of instruction is lessened.**

It is our desire to begin rebuilding at the earliest possible moment. We take this method of appealing to our friends for financial aid. Money, building material and labor are acceptable. Whatever is contributed will be appreciated and rightly applied. For the sake of our children and for the elevation of citizens of Milledgeville, please be as liberal as possible. Unless requested by the donors not to, we shall publish their names and the amount of their donations. Donations will be received at the following places:

S. C. McComb's Tailor Shop.

J. A. Davis Meat Market.

This appeal is made by order of the County Board of Education and the Board of Trustees of Eddy High school.

H. J. Myrick, Chmn. Board Trustees

J. A. Davis, Secretary.

S. C. McComb, Treasurer.

After fires in 1925 and 1947, Eddy's classes were held in various churches, including Flagg Chapel, in order to keep students in school. When Eddy burned in 1925, African American laborers and businesses rebuilt the school at half price; the community bought seats and books, and raised \$3000 for a sewage system and canning factory that were never installed.



The Eddy Site in 2019. Courtesy of Sallie Ellis Davis archives, GCSU.

This Article is from the January 7, 1926 edition of the Union Recorder. It details the school burning and includes a call for help. Courtesy of Digital Libraries of Georgia.

Teachers' salaries were lowered and Sallie Ellis Davis donated her entire salary for a year. Due to expenses, the Eddy School was transferred to the white Board of Education as a public school.

# Life After Eddy

After the second fire in 1947, 150,000 bricks slated to rebuild the school were stolen. The site then sat vacant for several years before being turned in to a bus depot and then later abandoned. Carver School accepted many students from Eddy and carried on its legacy.

Carver had been a high school housed in an old Baptist College, but after a fire at that site, was rebuilt as a school for African American students. Over its lifetime, Carver served as a high school and elementary school.



Courtesy of *Union Recorder*, "Carver School Building to be demolished," May 12, 2018.



Carver High School was demolished during the summer of 2018. The site is currently vacant and for sale. Courtesy of Sallie Ellis Davis archives, GCSU.