

THE HISTORY OF CLAFLIN SCHOOL

The last recorded battle of the Civil War was fought in Columbus, GA on April 16, 1865. In the years following emancipation, a group of Columbus citizens concerned about the welfare of former slaves organized the Claflin School Board of Trustees. This local group formed a partnership with the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, the Claflin Academy of Boston, MASS, from which Claflin got its name and the New England Freedmen's Aid Association. These four organizations acquired the land, built the buildings, provided the staff, paid them and established the original Claflin School in 1868. So, three years after emancipation Claflin became the first school built for Black students in Columbus, GA.

The original building was a two story wood framed structure with four class rooms and a winding stairs leading to the second floor. A two room building in the middle of the campus was occupied by the janitor and his wife. There was a spring which served as an oasis for passers-by and a long white fence enclosed the campus. In those years, Claflin was considered the finest school building in Columbus.

In 1880, the Trustees transferred the deeds to the City of Columbus and Claflin became a Public School. That year Mr. William H. Spencer became its principal.

In 1903, another wing with four rooms was added to the original building. The new, Brick Tile Claflin Building was erected in 1921 and was declared the most modern Black elementary school in the five major cities in GA by the Rosenwald Field Secretary. This new structure

faced 6th Avenue. By then, Professor J. D. Davis was principal of the original school and Professor Shadrack R. Marshall became principal of the new building. Claflin at that time was the only school with two principals.

The present, modern brick, building was completed in 1948 at a cost of \$300,000.00. Claflin became a part of the Pre-desegregation Equalization Movement while Mr. Samuel P. Charleston was principal.

The original wood framed Claflin was partially destroyed by fire of an unknown origin in 1958. After the Muscogee County Board of Education considered the expense of repairing the building, it was decided to have the structure demolished.

One hundred years after its establishment, in 1968 Claflin became one of the leading schools in Muscogee County to desegregate. In 1972, Claflin ended its public school service to this community and between then and 2006 served in different administrative and training capacities.

Once the educational, social, medical and spiritual hub of a community and for decades a symbol of educational progress for Columbus, GA, the now abandoned Claflin School is desolate and in ruins.

With the help of GOD and you, we will preserve Claflin School.

Revised by Rev. Richard Jessie, November 2014