

Esther Toombs High School

SCHOOL HISTORY

The B. B. & O. Society, a Baptist Organization donated land in the St. John community for the purpose of providing an educational building for the individuals in the community. In 1920 the B. B. & O. along with the Richland Parish School Board founded the Richland Parish Training School.

The Richland Parish Training School had as its first principal, Professor Parker. Mr. L. A. Byrd, Mr. Henry Adams and Mr. Herbert Nash followed as principals.

Until 1938 the Richland Parish Training School was the only high school in the parish.

In 1951, in order to keep pace with the changing times and the changing the needs of the community, the school was moved to its present location.

In response to the community and the wishes expressed by the community, the name was changed from Richland Parish Training School to Esther Toombs High School. This was done in honor of an outstanding teacher, Mrs. Esther Toombs, who had taught in the Richland Parish school for forty five years. Mrs. Toombs taught generations of many families during her teaching career. Her husband was also an educator.

During its many years of existence, Esther Toombs High School has been many things for many people. It helped in feeding the hungry children. There was no federal free lunch program, however because of a caring administration, children who were unable to pay, on occasion did eat free. The last day of school before the Christmas break was always an exciting time for the children. This was the day that fruit and candy was issued to all of the students.

There was a close relationship between the school and the community. How many of us had teachers who visited our homes. How many of us, when we got into trouble at school, were also in trouble as home when our parents found out that we had gotten in trouble at school. Those were the times when the parents supported the teachers and the teachers supported and could depend on the parents.

During the first six weeks of the school year, school was held for only half a day in order that the children could go home early to help gather the cotton crops; again school and community working together. Today each time we pick up a paper or listen to the news we hear that there is a need for Home-School-Community Partnerships. Isn't it ironic how we prospered under what today is supposedly new trends in education.

The school had only four school buses. These buses were individually owned and operated. The bus drivers were Mr. Ben Robinson, Mr. P. A. Williams, Mr. K. Ford Johnson and Mr. Elex Kelly.

The first and only principal of Esther Toombs High School was Mr. Herbert D. Nash. From 1945-1952 he served at the Richland Parish Training School. Then from 1952 to 1972 he was here at Esther Toombs at the new location.

The basic reading, writing and arithmetic subjects were taught at Esther Toombs. Each student was required to successfully completed each of the basic education courses before being promoted to the next grade level, thus new classrooms were added to accommodate the growing number of students. Each high school student was required to

take 4 years of Home Economics or Shop. Typing, Bookkeeping, and Clerical Practice were not offered until the 1962-63 School Year.

The smallest graduating class was the class of 1952 with eleven members. The largest class was the class of 1964 with 38 members.

Chapel programs were held on Wednesday afternoon during which aspiring actresses and actors had an opportunity to put their talent on display and provide entertainment for the school. Plays were also presented at night so that parents and students could attend. Some of the plays that were presented were "No More Homework," "Spring Fever," "The Headless Horseman," and "The Womanless Wedding."

The Junior-Senior proms were held in the gym each year. All the decorations were done by the students. Each class was allowed to choose their own theme for the prom, and to choose decorations centered around that theme. Some memorable themes include "A Night In Hawaii," "A Night To Remember," "An Evening In Paradise." And I'm sure we all remember what Monday morning following the prom was like. Everybody trying to get caught up on what happened.

The community looked forward to the school closing activities. In addition to the proms, there were Operettas, Baccalaureate, Commencement Exercises, and there was also the Spring Concert, put on by the Best Band In The Land, the marching Esther Toombs High School Rams. We also had the Coronation Ball during which our school Queen was crowned, and our first Miss Esther Toombs was from the Class of 1963 Erma Anderson.

During the Esther Toombs High School years, it was traditional for each class to leave a gift for the school. The gifts over the years included the flag pole, clocks in the hall & gym a portable P.A. system, a podium for the stage and a microphone for the stage. The community and school worked together to purchase an organ for the school which I understand we still have.

Esther Toombs has been blessed to have a faculty and administrators who were genuinely interested in the students. Not just academically but interested in all around development of the whole student. Teachers who cared enough to tell you if they felt you were heading in the wrong direction and by doing so, touched many lives.

Esther Toombs has progressed from the "Little Red School House" to the present modern school that it is today; from a frame building to a modern brick structure; from five teachers to 28 plus teachers; from less than 200 students to over 700 students. We've come a long ways.

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