



History

Bienville Parish Training School

The **Bienville Parish Training School** grew out of an urgent need for a place that would provide education for the students who had completed the eighth grade at the St. Duty Rosenwald School. This school had been built by Mr. Byrd Theron Crawford in 1916. Crawford came to Louisiana after he had graduated from Tuskegee Institute under two illustrious men, Dr. Booker T. Washington and Dr. George W. Carver. Crawford had been invited to Grambling to help his classmate and brother-in-law, Mr. Charles P. Adams who had started a school in Grambling.

After the Rosenwald School had been built, Crawford was assigned to do Extension Work in DeSoto during 1917-1920.

The Negro citizens of Arcadia who were members of the St. Duty C.M.E. Church, invited Crawford to return to Arcadia to build another school. These citizens were Rev. M. R. Ivey, Rev. J. D. Hodge, Mr. Richard Duty and Mr. Ike Wilson. Crawford returned in 1921 to begin making plans for the new school.

During the pre-Bienville Parish Training Schools, teachers who taught at the Rosenwald School were as follows: B.T. Crawford, Mrs. Holland Crawford, Miss Clara McGuire, Ms. Edma Heath, Mrs. Lilly Rochelle, Mrs. Willa Hawk and Mrs. Lula Henderson.

With the Help of the Arcadia Community, Rosenwald Foundation, the Slater Foundation and other philanthropic agencies, the school was built and opened in the fall of 1923, offering ten grades with courses in English, social studies, mathematics, agriculture and shop, home economics and teacher-training. Homes, churches and business grew up to build a school community.

Crawford later encouraged the community people to help build a dormitory so that students throughout Bienville Parish and adjoining parishes could get an education beyond the elementary grades.

The first graduating class (1924) consisted of five young ladies. Each received a teaching certificate and accepted teaching positions in Bienville and Claiborne Parishes.

The faculty of this first year at the new school were Mr. Crawford, Principal and teacher; Miss Iva White, Home Economics; Miss Ozenia Simmons, primary grades and Miss Clara McGuire, middle grades.

During the session 1926-1927, Crawford made the schedule for the students to follow during their practice-teaching period. This schedule was selected by the State Officials to be used by all of the schools in the state that were offering teacher-training.

The school was very fortunate to have had the following teachers: Mr. and Mrs. B. D. Augustine, Mrs. Marie Holland, Miss Claudie Gipson, and Mr. and Mrs. B. T. Crawford. These teachers represented such schools as Tuskegee, New Orleans University, Homer College, Spellman College and Grambling College.

The future classes graduated many teachers who made history by starting schools in the parish. Some became principals, assistant principals, counselors, supervisors and good teachers of elementary and secondary schools.

During this time all students were required to take a state test in order to graduate from high school. The tests were administered by the State Supervisors, from the State Department.

During these developmental years, the students not only received basic education, they also received training in dramatics, music, art, athletics, public speaking and others. These activities were called extra-curricular activities.

The school continued to progress under the leadership of Mr. B.T. Crawford through the decade of the thirties.

There was no graduation class in 1928. The eleventh grade was added in 1928-1929. These students were issued teaching certificates. The class of 1935 was the last class to be issued teaching certificates from this school.

The 1940's were lean and hard years for the Bienville Parish Training School. Professor Crawford did a tremendous job just to keep the school alive and running. With funds being meager, he used the wisdom and guidance of God to provide educational opportunities for black boys and girls of Bienville Parish. The struggle which Mr. Crawford endured, took its toll on his physical strength. In May, 1948, Mr. Crawford passed from labor to reward.

In August of 1948, A. R. Rollins was elected by the Bienville Parish School Board to the position of Principal of the Bienville Parish Training School. This made him the successor of the late founder and principal, B. T. Crawford. Principal Crawford left a well experienced faculty; therefore, this gave the new principal a springboard for forward progress.

The session of 1948-1949 was a challenge for the new principal. He found the school with 3 classroom buildings; the main one containing a small library and a small auditorium and 5 classrooms, an agriculture shop, a home economics building, a lunchroom building, a combination office and bookroom building and a principal's dwelling. The faculty consisted of 14 teachers, 478 students. An athletic coach was added. The grades were 1-12. The curriculum met the minimum standards for all grades, and the sports were mostly outdoor games.



During the 1950-1951, session, the Bienville Parish Training School became known as the **Arcadia Colored High School**. The faculty increased to 16 members. The lunch room personnel increased from 2 workers to 3 workers. There was no lunchroom manager, only a head cook. The home economics teacher took the place of a manager. Hot lunches were served to all children free for that session.

In 1950, music was added to the curriculum and the first high school band was organized. A formal music teacher was added to the staff, Miss Sally Thorne. A shop building was added and a band room was made out of the old shop building.

A high school choir was organized in 1951. Band and choir music was rendered in the school and throughout the area and the local churches. The student body increased; therefore, the faculty increased also. Another classroom building was added.

In 1951, the athletic department began competing in what was known as the LIALO , (Louisiana Interscholastic Athletic and Literary Association). This posed a problem for the school because of the lack of adequate transportation. This process continued through session 1952-1953.



The name of the school was changed in 1959 to **B. T. Crawford High School**, named for its founder B. T. Crawford. Also, in 1954, a fine gymnasium was built. This addition caused the financial status of the school to be improved and various departments made much progress by participating with other schools in LIALO competition.

An additional music teacher was employed, Mrs. Gloria Rushing, to work with elementary grades and direct the high school choir. Trade and Industrial Education (carpentry), was added to the curriculum. Students continued to win honors for the school.

In 1957 the school was placed on the Approved List of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. This was a signal honor for the school's curriculum improvement plan, which had been guided by the genius of Principal, A. R. Rollins. This meant that the school's offerings were recognized by colleges and universities throughout the nation. Other improvements and accomplishments were made during this period.

In 1969, Principal Rollins took a supervisory job in the School Board Office. Mr. James Crawley was elected to succeed him. Mr. Crawley served as principal for the 1969-1970 sessions. At this point, the effects of desegregation relegated the school to Junior High status, with Crawley continuing as principal. Crawford Junior High was reduced to a kindergarten through 6th grade, elementary school in 1976 with James Crawley as principal until 1981, at which point he moved to a position in the central office of the school board.

In October 1981 Edward Mason, Sr., a 1948 graduate (the last graduating class under the founder B.T. Crawford) was selected to succeed James Crawley. Mason served the school and continued its long and rich heritage of providing educational opportunities for children of the Arcadia and Bienville Parish District 1 and 2 areas.

Former assistant principals included Edwin Mason (son of Edward Mason, Sr). Former principals of Crawford Elementary include: Ray Robinson, Rosiland Russell, Flynn Ludley, Bill Collinsworth and Oswald Townsend, a 1974 graduate of Arcadia High School.

The grounds of the former Crawford High School continue to be used for community activities and school reunion events.

As of 1970, the public, racially integrated high school of Arcadia, is named **Arcadia High School**. Crawford Elementary and Arcadia High School are located on the same property and is called the Arcadia School Complex.