

THE FAIRFIELD INSTITUTE AND THE RICHARDSON GRADED SCHOOL

The Fairfield Institute was established by the Northern Presbyterian church during Reconstruction for the education of African-Americans. In February 1869 The Presbyterian Committee of Home Missions Inc. of the State of New York purchased land in Winnsboro for the school. This land fronted both Congress and Vanderhorst streets. Also in 1869 The Reverend Willard Richardson arrived in Winnsboro to organize the school. He remained here as minister, principal and teacher for almost twenty years. The location of the school on Vanderhorst Street and its frame structure is verified both by later remembrances of the school and late 19th century insurance maps of Winnsboro. Over the years several buildings for student boarders were added to the school and parsonage.

The school soon had a growing number of students. The Charleston Republican reported in the spring of 1870 that a large school for Black children had been established in Winnsboro "under the superintendence of Mr. Richardson, a gentleman from the North, and great praise is due him for the pains he takes with the children." During the 1870s, activities at the school were sporadically noted in the local newspaper. Stories usually concerned programs and recitations held at Calvary Presbyterian Church on Vanderhorst Street across the street from the school. One newspaper account says Rev. Richardson employed the Kindergarden System, which stressed teaching children ideas, and to think before taking up books. Five and six year olds could locate and identify all of the countries and capitals of the Eastern and Western hemispheres.

In 1879, the Peabody Fund of Staunton Virginia awarded a grant of \$450 to the Fairfield Institute. To qualify for Peabody funds each recipient had to be a free common school, have an enrollment of at least 100 students, operating funds at least twice the amount of the Peabody grant, and a minimum of one teacher for each fifty students. In 1880, there were approximately 200 students at Fairfield Institute, 100 were studying to become teachers and 20 were preparing to enter the ministry. In May of 1887, Rev Richardson resigned as head of the school. The News and Herald reported that closing exercises for the year were conducted at Calvary Presbyterian Church. The Institute moved to the western part of Fairfield County before it closed at the end of the school term in 1888, merging with the Brainard Institute in Chester, S.C.

In his book *Black History-Past and Present*, Dr. James Egert Allen said his parents attended the Fairfield Institute. The training of men for the ministry was a high priority with Rev. Richardson. He instilled a love of learning into his students and a remarkable spirit of brotherhood. The term "Fairfield boy" became one of respect and appreciation for the attributes of males who sat at the feet of the great mentor. As a child Dr. Allen had the opportunity of knowing many of the Fairfield boys. Many of them visited the Allen home, and in the late hours he heard the story of sacrifice and struggle by black men to get an education in a hostile society.

Dr. Allen stated that Kelly Miller, a former dean at Howard University, George W. Dillard, who like Dean Miller attended Howard; H. L. McCrorey, Daniel J. Sanders and Robert L. Douglas, who along with Dr. Allen's father, Edward W. Allen, graduated from

Bittle University, now J. C. Smith University. Dr. Sanders became the first black president of the institution, and Dr. McCrorey succeeded him. Hugh L. Harry, Jacob Tillman, Timothy R. Veal and A. U. Frierson, all ministers, were products of the Fairfield Institute.

The Richardson Graded School, located on Vanderhorst Street across the street from Calvary Presbyterian Church, was an important part of the educational life of Fairfield County. School records show that before a student could graduate he or she must pass satisfactorily the required examinations in Reading, Writing, Spelling, Arithmetic, Geography, Grammar, U.S. History, History of S.C., English History, Physiology and Elements of Latin and Algebra.

The Richardson Graded School

Winnsboro, South Carolina

Under The Care And Control Of The National Board

of

Missions Dept. for Colored People of The Presbyterian Church
in United States of America

This Certifies That Herbert A. McDowell

while a student of Richardson Graded School has sustained a good moral character, has been well-behaved and diligent in his studies, and that he has passed satisfactorily the required examinations in the following, to wit:

Reading, Writing, Spelling, Arithmetic, Geography, Grammar, U. S. History, History of S. C., English History, Physiology and the Elements of Latin and Algebra.

Given at Winnsboro, So. Ca., this 26th day of

April A. D., 1926

A. H. Benson

Principal

Carrie B. Henry

Clirita L. McRae