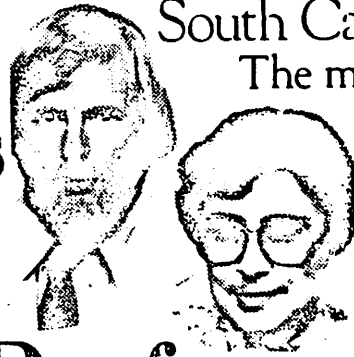


Cedar Springs Became Site Of School For Deaf



South Carolina's Story
The making of a state

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Five miles south of Spartanburg Court House is the site of a battlefield known during the Revolutionary War as Green Spring. Some time after the war, it was renamed Cedar Springs and a resort hotel was built on the hill overlooking a large gushing spring.

In 1849 the old hotel and 150 acres of surrounding land were purchased by a young Presbyterian minister, Newton Pinckney Walker, whose conscience had been stirred by the needs of three deaf children.

It was the first school for deaf children in South Carolina. Beginning in 1832, the state had accepted the responsibility to educate the deaf and had been sending the needy deaf, at state expense, to a school in Hartford, Conn.

In 1855 the Rev. Walker added a department for the blind. Two years later the state of South Carolina purchased the school and Walker became superintendent. It was the beginning of a long, unbroken string of Walker family involvement as superintendent and instructors as each generation took the reins from the previous one.

The early years were difficult. When Walker died in 1861, on the eve of the Civil War, his widow, Martha, took over the direction of the school. His eldest son, Newton Farmer Walker, became superintendent at age 27 and added a building for the colored deaf and blind.

The Republican Legislature of 1873 announced that it would appropriate money for Cedar Springs on condition that "the colored pupils must be domiciled in the same building, eat at the same table, be taught in the same classrooms and by the same teachers, and must receive the same attention and care and consideration as the white pupils." The superintendent, staff and teachers all resigned.

Cedar Springs School remained closed until the end of Reconstruction in 1876. The young Walker returned when Wade Hampton took office, and in 1883 the Negro students returned to separate buildings.

Walker had three sons who carried on his work. One headed the Tennessee School for the Deaf and one headed the Florida School for the Deaf. The third, William Laurens Walker, succeeded his father as superintendent of The Cedar Springs School for the Deaf and Blind.

The school grew steadily except for one setback in the year 1918. The flu epidemic hit Cedar Springs School hard with more than 140 cases. Luckily, not a single student died. After the flu siege the students were-unexplainable-so healthy that the superintendent was able to report fewer days of absences than in any previous year.

The school was divided into literary, industrial, music and physical training departments.

Music, interestingly, played a major role in the instruction of both deaf and blind students. The 1931 Annual Report listed

13 pianos. Every child received at least four years instruction in piano. Piano-tuning was taught to blind students. The piano aided the partially hearing deaf students in finding their natural speech tone.

The Walkers were convinced that music provided the best possible memory training and they taught arithmetic and reading along with the music lesson.

The Walkers found that the deaf and blind children came to them with "small powers of self-control and almost no ability to accept external restraint." Not believing in corporal punishment, they devised a system that rewarded good behavior and ignored bad behavior unless the transgression was severe.

The worse punishment, other than expulsion, was to deny attendance at the monthly social. Honor rolls were sent to parents and six gold coins were awarded each year to top students.

Work assignments, along with class assignments, were individualized through comprehensive record keeping that allowed supervisors to spot problem areas and to plan alternative learning episodes.

The children worked hard with 10 hours a day planned for work-either academic or in the shops-and one hour for recreation. The achievements of Cedar Springs School graduates have long been recognized as a tribute to the school and to the Walker family.