

LOOKING BACK AT DOUGLASS HIGH SCHOOL

Patricia A. DeWitt

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**DOUGLASS
HIGH SCHOOL**

and Our Notable Educators
Tabor City, North Carolina
Columbus County



MIGHTY MIGHTY EAGLES

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*This book is dedicated to my daughter, Sheinea,
and grandson, Anthony, for giving me the space,
love, and support to pursue this project.*

This book is in honor of my loving parents,

*Earnest Galloway DeWitt
and
Myrtice Lucille (Hickman) DeWitt.*

*They nurtured me and gave me
a solid foundation of strong spiritual,
social, and moral values.*

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Preface

Douglass High School was my alma mater. I was the fifth child of the twelve DeWitt children to attend this school. Six of us graduated from Douglass High School. Graduating as the salutatorian of the Class of 1966 was an honor for me. Douglass High, formerly Tabor City Negro School, truly was a beacon to the Black community of Tabor City and is forever to be remembered.

I was inspired to collect any material from digital records that I could find to gather together historical records as a tribute to Douglass High School and Black history in Tabor City, North Carolina. The stay-in-place time during the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic period afforded me the time to do this work to contribute to our school's memory. The material included here is from digital newspapers to 1963 and *North Carolina Educational Directory* records in addition to information gathered from other various sources.

Our alma mater holds a profound meaning for its past students, for the Black community, and for the history of Tabor City.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge these individuals who contributed information about Douglass High School as my research was primarily limited to digital resources:

- Sarah DeWitt Crenshaw
- Ronnie Ray and Verlene C. DeWitt
- Milton E. McNeil
- Estelle Todd
- Helen D. (DeWitt) and Roy L. Smith

Part One

**A Brief History of
Douglass High School**

1915 - 1970

Tabor City and Douglass High School

Tabor City, North Carolina, the home of Douglass High School, is the southernmost town in Columbus County, one of North Carolina's largest counties by land area. The town, only about 30 miles from the Atlantic ocean, has the distinction of being known as the Yam Capital of the World. It was originally named Mt. Tabor after Mount Tabor Baptist Church. The town adopted its current name of Tabor City after postal authorities often confused it with Tarboro, North Carolina. The church became Tabor City Baptist Church.¹

According to the United States Census Bureau, the town has a total area of a little more than 3 square miles and a population of 4,135 was reported in 2021. Though still a small town, Tabor City has grown over the decades. The population was 2,511 in the 2010 census; 2,028 in April of 1950; and 1,552 in April 1940.²

The campus for what became Douglass High School is located at 701 West Sixth Street, formerly known as Old Tram Road, in the Black community of Tabor City. The school began as Tabor City Negro School in small wooden buildings that were often overcrowded

1 www.taborcity.com

2 <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1950/pc-02>, "1950 Census of Population," U.S. Department of Commerce

and unsanitary. In the 1950s, work was done to improve the school's indoor and outdoor conditions. Renovations included developing new classrooms, building a combination auditorium and gymnasium, creating a vocational agriculture department, and adding a cafeteria and a library. These new buildings were brick structures, replacing the deteriorating wooden buildings. The dirt road to the school was paved, and the water system was upgraded to eliminate the unsanitary conditions that had plagued the school. These upgrades were welcomed by the students, faculty, and the community at large. Until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, Black students were bussed from Nakina, Clarendon, Iron Hill, and surrounding areas to attend this school.

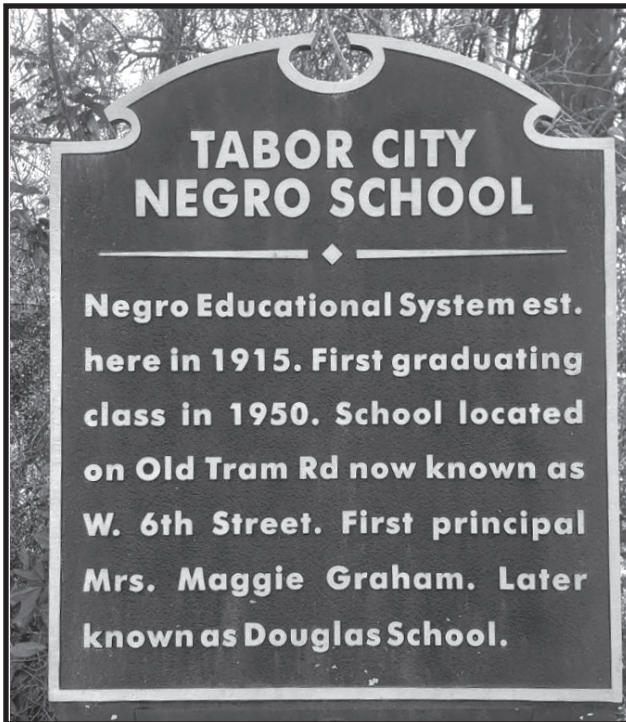
The school was finally given a meaningful name in 1959 under the leadership of Principal W. A. Ware. Tabor City Negro School was renamed Douglass High School in honor of Frederick Douglass, a former slave who became a civil rights advocate and famed orator.

A Douglass High School History

Collected from Digitized
Historical News Records

1915

Principal: Maggie Graham



1916-1937 School Years

No digital documentation found for these years.

1938-1939 School Year

Principal: John H. Jones

In the Annual Principal's Report for Tabor City Negro School, dated 4/21/1939, there were four elementary teachers and one high school teacher. The high school teacher was Myrtle Lennon, who held a Bachelor of Arts degree from Bennett College in Raleigh, North Carolina. The school year began on September 1, 1938, and ended April 21, 1939. There were seventeen students enrolled in the eighth grade. This was the only grade required to be reported.³

1939-1940 School Year

Principal: John H. Jones

The 1939-1940 school year began on August 31, 1939, and ended on April 19, 1940. There were six teachers: one high school teacher and five elementary teachers. The high school teacher was William Burns, a college graduate with four years of teaching experience. He also served as the advisor to the boys while Francis Jones was the advisor for the girls. The school was required to report enrollment numbers for grades

3 Annual Principal's Report, 1938/1939, page 46, Box_10_Folder 4_046-African American Education, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov>

eight through eleven; however, the eighth grade was the only one reported. There was a total enrollment of fourteen students in that class. The chairman of the school board was C. G. Reece and the secretary was Coy Gerald.⁴

1940-1941 School Year

Principal: Lillian Murfree

The 1940-1941 school year opened on August 29, 1940, and concluded on April 22, 1941. Tabor City Negro School was classified as a Junior High School serving students up to grade nine. Principal Murfree's High School Principal's Report for the 1940-1941 school year, dated 4/22/1941, reported a total of sixty students enrolled in grades seven through nine:

- Grade 7 22
- Grade 8 23
- Grade 9 15

There were six elementary teachers with William H. Burns remaining the only high school teacher. The chairman of the school board was G.E. Greene and the secretary was Coy Gerald.⁵

4 John H. Jones' Annual High School Principal's report 1939/1940 dated 4/19/1940, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov>

5 High School Principal's Annual Report 1940/1941, Tabor City Negro School, Cleveland County to Currituck County, NC Digital Collections, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov>

1941-1942 School Year

Principal: Lillian Murfree

The 1941-1942 school year began on September 4, 1941, and ended on April 24, 1942. There were forty-six students enrolled in grades eight through ten, which were required to be reported:

- ▶ Grade 8 13
- ▶ Grade 9 14
- ▶ Grade 10 19

Of the forty-six students reported, eleven were male and thirty-five were female. There were nine faculty members: two high school teachers and seven elementary school teachers. The high school teachers were Leonard G. Muldrow and Laura Pierce, both college graduates. The school board members were G. E. Greene, chairman and Coy Gerald.⁶

1942-1943 School Year

Principal: Lillian Murfree

The school year started on September 3, 1942, and ended on April 23, 1943. There were eight faculty members: two high school teachers and six elementary school teachers. The two high school teachers were Leonard Muldrow and Laura Pierce. The number of students that were required to be reported for

6 Lillian Murfree Annual High School Principal's Report 1941/1942 dated 4/24/1942, Tabor City Negro School, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov>

enrollment (grades 8 and above) totaled twenty-one. The school board chairman was C. M. Gerald and the secretary was George Stevenson.⁷

1943-1944 School Year

Principal: Henry Powell

The school year began on August 30, 1943, and ended on May 16, 1944. The total enrollment number for high school students reported was seventeen:

- 1st year 12
- 2nd year 5

There were eight faculty members: two high school teachers and six elementary school teachers. The two high school teachers were Laura Pierce and Esther F. Lard Pridgen.⁸

1944-1945 School Year

Principal: John D. Pridgen

The school year began on September 18, 1944, and ended on May 31, 1945. There were twenty-nine students enrolled in high school during this reporting period:

7 Lillian Murfree Annual High School Principal's Report 1942/1943 dated 4/23/1943, Tabor City Negro School, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov>

8 Henry Powell Annual High School Principal's Report 1943/1944 dated 5/16/1944, Tabor City Negro School, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/collections>

- 1st year 17
- 2nd year 12

There were three high school teachers: Laura Pierce, Esther F. Pridgen, and John D. Pridgen, who also was the principal. There were eight elementary teachers.⁹

1945-1946 School Year

Principal: John D. Pridgen

The 1945-1946 school year started on August 30, 1945, and ended on May 17, 1946. The total enrollment reported for high school students was thirty-six. The number of students enrolled in each grade was as follows:

- 1st year 12
- 2nd year 13
- 3rd year 11

There were eight elementary teachers and one high school teacher according to the Educational Directory of NC 1945-1946.¹⁰ Principal Pridgen was the high school teacher.¹¹

9 Annual High School Principal's Report 1944/1945, Columbus County Negro schools, Tabor City; <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/collections>

10 The Educational Directory of NC 1945/1946, page 43, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/collections>

11 John David Pridgen Annual High School Principal's Report 1945/1946 dated May 17, 1946, Tabor City Negro School, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov>

1946-1947 School Year

Principal: John D. Pridgen

The 1946-1947 school year opened on August 29, 1946, with a record enrollment of two hundred forty-six students in the elementary school and forty-three in the high school. The total faculty included eight elementary teachers and two high school teachers.

There were two new teachers this school year. Mildred Ruth Moore was a graduate of Fayetteville State Teachers College in Fayetteville, North Carolina, with a Bachelor of Science in Primary Education. She accepted a position in the elementary school and was also in charge of the music department for the elementary school.

Madeline Bridges Best joined the high school faculty roster. She was a graduate of Columbia University in New York, New York, and received a Master of Arts Degree in Guidance-Student Personnel Administration. In addition, she was assigned to manage the high school Glee Club.¹²

The total high school enrollment reported for the 1946-1947 school year was forty-seven students and was listed according to grade level as follows:¹³

12 *Tabor City Tribune* article “New Teachers 1946 –1947, School Year;” *Tabor City Tribune* “Negro News,” 09/13/1946, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>

13 John David Pridgen Annual High School Principal’s Report 1946/1947 dated May 16, 1947, Tabor City Negro School, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov>

- 1st year 26
- 2nd year 13
- 3rd year 8

The Tabor City Negro School Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) held its first meeting for the 1946-1947 term on Monday, September 9, 1946. W. Horace Carter, editor and owner of the *Tabor City Tribune*, was the guest speaker. The PTA organization for the year was as follows:

- **Rev. Albert Gause**—President
- **Miss M. R. Moore**—Secretary
- **Mrs. Edyth Chestnut**—Assistant Secretary
- **Ms. Alyce R. Hines**—Chairman of Attendance Committee
- **Mr. Willie Graham**—Chairman of Beautification Committee

A representative of the Negro Civic League presented a list of resolutions to the PTA members that they subsequently approved for implementation.¹⁴

14 *Tabor City Tribune*, “Negro News,” 09/13/1946, image 8, <https://chroncilingamerica.loc.gov>



EIGHTH GRADE GRADUATION

The eighth grade held its Class Night in the school auditorium on May 8, 1947.¹⁵

There were no high school graduates. The school year ended on May 16, 1947.¹⁶

1947-1948 School Year

Principal: John D. Pridgen

The 1947-48 school year opened on August 28, 1947, and the year ended on May 28, 1948. Members of the high school faculty were James C. Riddick and Principal John D. Pridgen. There were fifty-four students enrolled in the high school grades to be reported. Note: The school was not yet accredited. The total enrollment of the fifty-four high school students was represented according to grade as follows:

- 1st year 26
- 2nd year 20
- 3rd year 8

There were no high school graduates during the 1947-1948 school year.¹⁷

15 *Tabor City Tribune*, “Negro News,” May 9, 1947, page 6, <https://chroncilingamerica.loc.gov>

16 North Carolina Educational Directory, High School Principal’s Annual Report, Tabor City Negro School, 1946-1947, J.G. Pridgen, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov>

17 SR_DPL_DNE_HSPincipalsRPT_Box20_Folder10_025-African American Education, North Carolina Digital Collections, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov>

1948-1949 School Year

Principal: John D. Pridgen

This school year the faculty totaled ten members: eight elementary teachers and two high school teachers.¹⁸

The two high school teachers were James C. Riddick and Principal John D. Pridgen. The school year began on September 16, 1948, and ended on June 3, 1949. There were sixty-two students enrolled in the high school:

- 1st year 32
- 2nd year 13
- 3rd year 17

There were no high school graduates during this school year.¹⁹

On Sunday, April 3, 1949, a Benefit Show for the Negro Gym was held in the Tabor City Negro School auditorium as a fundraiser for constructing a gymnasium. Mrs. Sam Moultrie oversaw the program that featured as many as forty participants, including several junior church choirs. Several citizens, including members of the white community, were slated to speak on behalf of this cause.²⁰

18 NC Educational Directory 1948-1949, publication #268;
<https://digital.ncdcr.gov>

19 Principal's Annual Report dated June 3, 1949, SR_ DPL_ DNE_ Box20_Folder 10_061-African American Education, NC Digital Collections,
https://digital.ncdcr.gov/digital/collection/p16062_coll13/id/61676

20 *Tabor City Tribune*, March 30, 1949, page 1, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

1949-1950 School Year

Principal: John D. Pridgen

The school year began on September 1, 1949, and ended May 19, 1950. There were eighty-six students enrolled in the high school:

- 1st year 29
- 2nd year 33
- 3rd year 15
- 4th year 9

Two new teachers, Alice J. Sanders and Kenneth L. Rogers, both college graduates, joined the high school faculty.²¹



EIGHTH GRADE GRADUATION

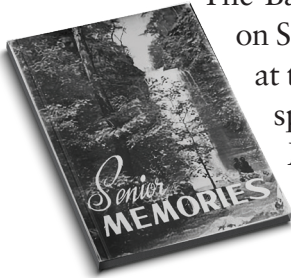
The elementary school play was held on Thursday, May 4, 1950, at 7:30 p.m. in the school auditorium. The eighth grade Commencement Exercises were held on May 11, 1950, at 7:30 p.m. in the school auditorium.

21 John D. Pridgen High School Principal's Annual Report, 1947-1950, dated 05/19/1950, Columbus County, SR_DPI_DNE_HSPincipalsRpt_Box20_Folder10_105-African American Education; <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/digital/collections/p16062coll13/id/61719/rec/5>

SENIOR GRADUATION



The Class of 1950 was the first graduating class of Tabor City Negro School. The Senior Play was held on May 8, 1950, at 7:30 p.m. in the school auditorium.



The Baccalaureate Ceremony was held on Sunday, May 14, 1950, at 4:00 p.m. at the First Baptist Church. The guest speaker was Rev. E. S. Hassell. On Monday, May 15, 1950, Class Night was held at 7:30 p.m., and at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 18, 1950, Commencement

Exercises were held at the First Baptist Church. There were seven graduates:²²

- Lear Bellamy
- McCullen Farmer
- Paul Faulk
- Oline Manning
- Nathaniel McNeill
- Ethelrine White
- John C. Williams

²² *Tabor City Tribune*, "Commencement Program for Colored School," May 03, 1950, Image 1, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>

1950-1951 School Year

Principal: John D. Pridgen

School opened on August 30, 1950.²³ Members of the faculty included:

- **J. D. Pridgen**—Principal
- **M. R. Moore**—1st Grade and Glee Club
Director
- **G. McLean Gillis**—2nd Grade
- **R. C. Hassell**—3rd Grade and Girls' Basketball
Coach
- **E. J. Spaulding**—4th Grade
- **M. M. Williams**—4th Grade
- **M. M. McKoy**—5th Grade
- **M. McNeil**—6th Grade
- **J. P. Troy**—7th Grade
- **S. G. Ward**—8th Grade
- **M. C. Hart**—Mathematics and Science
- **J. L. Walker**—Science and Physical Education/
Boys Basketball Coach
- **A. J. Sanders**—English and French/Director of
Dramatics²⁴

²³ *Tabor City Tribune*, August 23, 1950, Vol. V, Number 6, front page,
<https://newspaperarchive.com>

²⁴ *Tabor City Tribune*, "Principal Pridgen Urges School Attendance," September
13, 1950, front page, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

On October 4, 1950, the *Tabor City Tribune* newspaper wrote an article titled “Pridgen Asks Citizenry to Back Drive” that covered a funding request made to provide dinner for the fifty-four members of the Williston Negro High School Band traveling from Wilmington, North Carolina, to participate in the Tabor City Yam Festival. This would be the first ever representation of Negroes in the Festival.²⁵

In January 1951, the *Tabor City Tribune* reported requests were made to the community for funds to support the educational development of Negro students. Many contributions were made by individuals and local businesses. The senior class, which included **Annie Bellamy, Frances Graham, Christine Johnson, Eula Robinson, Mamie Williams, John Cogdell, and Willie Joe Conyers** solicited for this drive.²⁶

In February 1951, at a County Education Board meeting, the Tabor City Negro School was allotted \$110,000.00 for erecting buildings as well as purchasing furniture and equipment, according to J.W. (Buck) Peay, County Board of Education Chairman. The allocation was made as Tabor City Negro School was in poor and deteriorating condition with totally inadequate sanitary facilities.²⁷

25 *Tabor City Tribune*, “Pridgen Asks Citizenry to Back Drive,” 10/04/1950, page 1, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

26 *Tabor City Tribune*, January 31, 1951, Vol. V, Number 28, front page, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

27 *Tabor City Tribune* (Tabor City, North Carolina), “Negro School is Allotted \$110,000,” 2/21/1951; *Tabor City Tribune* Statement of James W. (Buck) Peay on School Situation, 2/21/1951, <https://chronclingeramerica.loc.gov>

***Tabor City Tribune* Editorial**

The plight of the local-colored school is such that it would be good propaganda material for a communist agency. To learn funds have tentatively been set aside for doing something about this deplorable condition is encouraging and indicative of Mr. Peay's efforts to ensure the school receives its just right for safe educational facilities.

— *Tabor City Tribune* [Tabor City, North Carolina],
“Editorial: In Regards to the School Both Sides Are Right,”
2/21/1951, <https://newspaperarchive.com>



EIGHTH GRADE GRADUATION

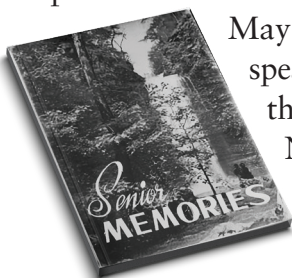
The eighth grade Commencement was held on May 10, 1951, at 8:00 p.m. The Parents' Day event was scheduled at Tabor City Negro School on May 11, 1951, at 9:00 p.m. The speaker for the event was W. Horace Carter, editor of the *Tabor City Tribune* newspaper. The event also included a health talk, dinner, and a movie screening.²⁸

²⁸ *Tabor City Tribune*, Wednesday, May 9, 1951, Vol. V, Number 42,
<https://newspaperarchive.com>

SENIOR GRADUATION



The Baccalaureate Ceremony for Tabor City Negro School, Class of 1951 was Sunday, May 13, 1951, at 4:00 p.m. The guest speaker was Rev. H. P. Billips. Senior Class Night was on Tuesday, May 15 at 7:30 p.m. Commencement was scheduled for Thursday, May 17, 1951, at 8:00 p.m. The guest speaker was Willard G. Cole, editor of the *News Reporter* of Whiteville, North Carolina, and former Secretary of the Tabor City Merchants Association.²⁹



On May 30, 1951, the County Board of Education issued contracts for Tabor City Negro School, including \$93,177.00 for structures. For \$74,420, A.G. Carter of Whiteville was made the Tabor City school building general contractor. The electric contract went to the Mace Electric Company of Sanford for \$3,450, and the plumbing contract went to Sanford Plumbing and Heating Company for \$3,770. In addition, the heating was contracted with Robeson Sales Corporation, Lumberton, North Carolina, for \$7,100.00; architect fees and other incidentals brought the total cost to \$93,177.00.³⁰

²⁹ *Tabor City Tribune* "Negro News," Wednesday 5/2/1951, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

³⁰ *Tabor City Tribune*, Wednesday, May 30, 1951, Volume V., Number 45, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

1951-1952 School Year

Principal: John D. Pridgen

School opened on Wednesday, August 29, 1951, at 8:30 a.m. with fourteen teachers and approximately five hundred enrolled students. School rooms were being readied by Mr. Henry Bryant, janitor. Since the new school building would not be completed at the opening of school, arrangements were made with area churches to supplement the shortage of room space in the interim.

Members of the school faculty for the 1951-1952 school year were as follows:

Elementary and Middle Grade Teachers:

- Mildred R. Moore—1st Grade
- Geneva Gillis—2nd Grade
- Mabel McNeil—2nd Grade
- Ruth C. Hassell—3rd Grade
- Edythe J. Spaulding—4th Grade
- Minnie L. Williams—4th Grade
- Betty H. Lennon—5th Grade
- Mary M. McCoy—6th Grade
- Clara L. Mack—7th Grade
- J. P. Troy—8th Grade

High School Teachers:

- Mattie C. Hart
- J. L. Walker
- Alice J. Sanders
- John D. Pridgen, Principal³¹

Band Members and Band Leaders

The Grammar School Band of the Tabor City Negro School, whose picture was featured in the *Tabor City Tribune*, was comprised of the following students:

- Carolyn Chestnut
- Frances Chestnut
- Mable Dewitt
- Betsy Dinkins
- Taylor Graham
- Eunice Hayes
- Essie Ruth Jones
- Norman McNeil
- Betty Lou Shaw
- D. Shaw
- Ollie Shaw
- Shirley Small
- Beulah Singletary
- Jessie Thompson
- James Williams
- Opal Pearl Williams
- Carolyn Wilson

The band instructor was Ms. Clara Mack, and her assistant was Mrs. M.M. Williams.³²

31 *Tabor City Tribune*, "Negro School Expecting 500 Students," August 22, 1951, Page 1, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

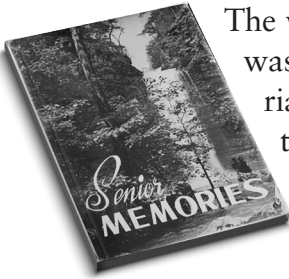
32 *Tabor City Tribune*, Grammar School Band Picture, Tabor City Negro School, May 21, 1952, page 10, <https://newspaperarchive.com>



EIGHTH GRADE GRADUATION

In 1952, there were thirty-one graduates from the Elementary School.³³

SENIOR GRADUATION



The valedictorian of the Class of 1952 was Fred Myers, Jr. and the salutatorian was George Bryant. There were thirteen graduates in the Class of 1952. A class photo was featured in the *Tabor City Tribune*. These were the graduates:

- George Bryant
- Rosetta Chapman
- Element Codgell
- Elizabeth DeWitt
- Marion Garrell
- Catherine Gause
- Oddie Belle Gause
- Maecell Hazelton
- Rosa Mae London
- Fred Myers, Jr.
- Clarence Austin Richardson
- Esther Stephens
- Zettie Belle Smith

³³ *Tabor City Tribune*, 5/21/1952, page 6, <https://chroncilingamerica.loc.gov>

The class officers were:

- **Fred Myers, Jr.**—President
- **Clarence Austin Richardson**—Vice-President
- **Elizabeth DeWitt**—Secretary
- **Maecell Hazelton**—Treasurer³⁴

The keynote speaker for the Commencement Exercises was A. C. Caviness, principal of the Brunswick County Training School in Southport, North Carolina. The program was held at the St. Matthew A.M.E. Church on Monday evening, May 19, 1952. Special music was performed by the Girl's Chorus and the Glee Club. Awards were presented to:

- **Fred Myers, Jr.**—“Citizenship” by the Citizenship Department of the Tabor City Woman's Club
- **Catherine Gause**—“Best Womanhood” by the Pama Lou Club of Whiteville, North Carolina
- **David Smith** (driver of one year); **Catherine Gause** (driver of two years); **Zillia Mae Stevenson** (driver of three years)—The North Carolina State Vehicle Safety bus driver awards³⁵

34 *Tabor City Tribune* 1946 - 1991, May 21, 1952, image 7, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>

35 *Tabor City Tribune*, “Commencement Exercises Held at Negro School,” May 21, 1952, page 6, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>

1952-1953 School Year

Principal: John D. Pridgen

In an article in the *Tabor City Tribune* titled “Negro School Has Additional Teachers Here,”³⁶ it reported the school would get two additional teachers, bringing the total faculty to sixteen. The new hires were Burnett Collins, who would teach Agriculture and Ruth Mae Brown Jefferson, who would teach Home Economics. Pridgen also added, “We are hoping the new school building will be completed by August 27, opening day of school, and that the road leading to the school will be concreted by that time in order to facilitate transportation of the children.”

The faculty totaled eleven elementary teachers and five high school teachers.³⁷

During the beginning of the 1952-1953 school term, school enrollment was approximately 400 students including all grades. Since it was still tobacco season, it was expected that the number of students enrolling would increase significantly once the season was over.

Principal Pridgen, who wrote the following article, summarized the progress that the Tabor City Negro School had made over the years:

36 *Tabor City Tribune*, “Negro School Has Additional Teachers Here,” 8/06/1952, page 7, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

37 Educational Directory of North Carolina, 1952/1953, Tabor City Negro School, page 52, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov>

LARGE ENROLLMENT AT NEGRO SCHOOL

by J. D. Pridgen

On Wednesday, August 27, the Tabor City Negro School opened for the 1952-1953 school term. During the week over 400 students registered and there is a possibility of securing a total enrollment of 600 after the tobacco boom is over.

A modern building has become a part of our school plant and the entire Negro community as well as the white shows signs of gratitude for the kind hospitality of the Columbus County Board of Education who in their fine judgement saw fit to take us out of the churches. Even though we do not have all of the facilities for a progressive educational setup, we are indeed uplifted in hoping that we will soon be out of the condemned building entirely so we can have a place for physical educational training and a place to assemble.

We have five buses, which are giving good service. There are sixteen teachers in the school, including Home Economics and Vocational Agriculture.

Thirty-six members constitute the Boy Scout troop and twenty the school patrol. At present we are organizing a Girl Scout Troop. Our

school activities consist of a school paper staff, athletics, glee club, and dramatics.

Mr. George Stephens, Mr. M.C. Gerald and Mr. Isaac White, the school committee, have done an excellent job in maintaining cooperation and success.

For his work and usefulness around the school, Mr. Henry Bryant has done equally as well.

The parents of Tabor City wish to express their appreciation and gratitude to Mr. T. Ward Guy, the Superintendent of County Schools, Mr. James W. Peay, Mr. S. Smith, Mr. Clarence Harrison, the father of our high school, and all others who cooperated with us constructively to build this school.

The principal of this school can say with pride that there has never been a request made to the citizens of Tabor City to help the school when it was not granted. The success of the school has not been to one person but rather to the knowledge of the citizens of Tabor City to see needs of Negro education and the results it will obtain.

Mr. A. C. Edwards says good relationship makes good Christians break down the practices of individualism and sectionalism. It introduces human relationship, human rights, brotherly love and moral as well as spiritual values in citizenship.

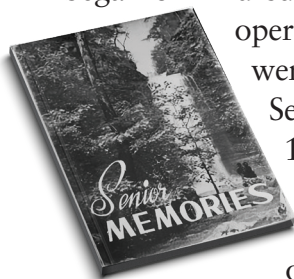
Columbus County has grown tremendously in the past twenty years. We, the citizens of Tabor City, are proud to be active members of this movement.

—*Tabor City Tribune*, “Large Enrollment at Negro School,” 9/10/1952, front page, <https://chroncilingamerica.loc.gov>

SENIOR GRADUATION



The Commencement Exercises for the Class of 1953 began on Thursday, April 30, 1953, with a primary operetta at 7:30 p.m. The final exercises were held on May 18 at 8:00 p.m. The Senior Class Play was held on May 7, 1953, at 7:30 p.m., and Class Night was on May 11 at 8:00 p.m. The Baccalaureate Ceremony was held on May 17 at 3:00 p.m. The guest speaker was Dr. A. A. Thomason, a professor at Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina.³⁸



³⁸ *Tabor City Tribune*, “Negro School Commencement,” 4/29/1953, page 1, <https://chroncilingamerica.loc.gov>

1953-1954 School Year

Principal: John D. Pridgen

For the 1953-1954 term, school resumed on August 26, 1953. Additional teachers were added because of increased enrollment, and two new courses were added. These were the members of the Tabor City Negro School faculty:³⁹

- **John David Pridgen**—Principal/Physical Education and History
- **Mildred Moore**—1st Grade
- **Ruth C. Hassell**—1st Grade
- **Edythe J. Spaulding**—2nd Grade
- **Geneva Gillis**—2nd Grade
- **Minnie M. Williams**—3rd Grade
- **Mary M. McKoy**—4th Grade
- **Helen Wooten**—4th Grade
- **Hazel McNeil**—5th Grade
- **Mable McNeil**—6th Grade
- **James Troy**—7th Grade
- **Elizabeth Lennon**—7th Grade
- **Ruth Jefferson**—8th Grade and Home Economics (High School)
- **Alice J. Sanders**—English and French

39 “Negro School Gains Teacher,” *Tabor City Tribune*, 8/19/1953, page 2, <https://newspaperarchive.com>)

- **Mattie C. Hort**—Math
- **Willie J. Walls**—Agriculture
- **John I. Walker**—Science

The driver education training course became part of the school curriculum this year, adding courses for commercial and driver's education.

Prince Motor Company, Tabor City Chevrolet, and the Columbus County Automobile Dealers' Association provided automobiles without cost for the program to Tabor City Negro School. Tabor City Negro School was one of eight Columbus County schools that would include driver's education as part of its curriculum.⁴⁰

NEGRO CAGERS EXPECT GOOD 1953 SEASON

by William Norman Chestnut

Coach Walker of the Tabor City Negro School feels that he will have the best basketball team he has ever coached in Tabor City. With six veterans and a good group of freshmen, barring injury, he is hoping for an undefeated season. The players include Bill (Doc) Chestnut, the highest scorer in the conference last season, Lindenary Stephen, a very durable center and co-captain, Ned Graham, a four year veteran, hoping for a good season, Thurman (Crying in

⁴⁰ *Tabor City Tribune*, "Eight Schools Add Driver Training Program to 1953-'54 Curriculum," 08/19/1953, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

the Chapel) Myers, one of the most improved players on the team and with the possibility of being the best guard in the conference and Harold Chestnut who was injured last year, but has hit his stride this year.

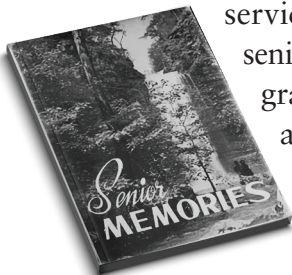
These players round out the first five. There is a good crop of substitutes in the likes of: John L. Todd, Oscar (Pipe) Williams, Edward Cogdell, Larion McNeil, and Frank Rogers.

— *Tabor City Tribune*, “Negro Cagers Expect Good 1953 Season,” 12/9/1953, page 28, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

SENIOR GRADUATION



Senior Class Night for the Class of 1954 was held on Thursday, May 20, at 8:00 p.m. in the elementary auditorium. The Baccalaureate Ceremony, a religious service that celebrates the graduating senior class scheduled the Sunday before graduation, was held on May 23, 1954, at 4 p.m. at First Baptist Church. The guest speaker was Rev. H. P. Billops. Commencement Exercises were held on the following day, May 24, in the elementary auditorium.⁴¹



⁴¹ *Tabor City Tribune*, “Negro School Finals Set,” May 19, 1954, Page 10; <https://newspaperarchive.com>

1954-1955 School Year

Principal: John D. Pridgen

Tabor City Tribune article: “Classrooms Will Be Constructed At Negro School”

A step to alleviate the acute shortage of classrooms at the Tabor City Negro School was taken early this week when plans were announced to construct 12 additional classrooms.

T. Ward Guy, Superintendent of Columbus County Schools, said today that actual construction would probably begin sometime in August prior to the opening of school. At a Tuesday morning meeting of the County Board of Education, authorization was given for placing advertisements asking for bids for the construction.

“We expect to have the bids in by the end of the month then we will have some idea as to when the actual construction will begin,” said Mr. Guy.

Placement of the advertisement will be made within the next 10 days.

—*Tabor City Tribune*, July 07, 1954, “Classrooms Will Be Constructed At Negro School,” page 1,
<https://www.newspapers.com>

School for the 1954-1955 term was scheduled to begin on Wednesday, August 25, 1954, at 8:00 a.m. It was anticipated that there would be an enrollment of approximately 600 students.⁴²

A new teacher, Mr. R.L. Gerald, was introduced by Principal Pridgen at the P.T.A. meeting held on September 14, 1954. The P.T.A. officers elected were as follows:⁴³

- Fred Myers—President
- Tillman Gerald—Vice President
- Mrs. Goldie Johnson—Secretary
- Mrs. Alease Todd—Assistant Secretary
- George Stephens—Treasurer
- Mrs. A.S. Robinson—Reporter

The following were members of the attendance committee:

- Tillman Gerald—West Tabor
- Mrs. Alleyn Stanley—Sixth Street
- George Stephens—New Town
- Willie Stanley—New Town
- Jimmy Dantzler—Mill Quarters

42 *Tabor City Tribune*, August 18, 1954, “Negro School Opens Aug. 25,” page 3, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>

43 *Tabor City Tribune* article “Negro School P.T.A Holds Meeting,” October 13, 1954, page 3, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

- **Harvey Bellamy**—Sandy Plain
- **Mrs. Alease Todd**—Clarendon
(Roseland Section)
- **Mrs. Ruby Stephens**—Clarendon
(East Section)

On 12/29/1954, in the *Tabor City Tribune* article “Commissioners Approve \$750,000 School Bonds; Tabor City Building Largest Single Project Under Consideration by Board,” it was announced that funds would be allocated to bring the Tabor City Negro School up to standard. These improvements included construction of a gymnasium and more classrooms for the Negro elementary school, which they recognized were badly needed.⁴⁴

In April 1955, Mrs. Bessie Johnson was selected as a member of the local board of the Tabor City Negro School. This was the first time a woman was named by the County Board of Education to serve in this role. Other members of the Tabor City Negro School Board were Rev. V. S. Singletary, George Stevens, D. Todd, and Brinkley Long.⁴⁵

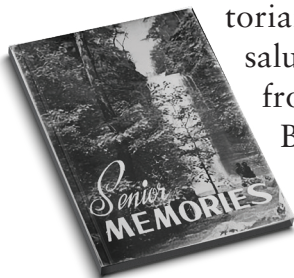
44 *Tabor City Tribune*, 12/29/1954, Image 1, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>

45 *Tabor City Tribune*, April 20, 1955, page 1, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

SENIOR GRADUATION



In the Class of 1955, there were eighteen graduating seniors at Tabor City Negro School. The class valedictorian was Esterlene Smith and the salutatorian was Blanchie Smith, both from Nakina, North Carolina. The Baccalaureate Ceremony speaker was Rev. V. S. Singletary, and the ceremony was held at St. Matthew Methodist Church at 3 p.m. on May 18, 1955.



Members of the graduating class were:⁴⁶

- Mildred Bellamy
- Harold Chestnut
- Pink Cogdell
- Levon Dewitt
- Dewey Farmer
- Mary Frink
- Emager Gerald
- Eunice Graham
- Carrie Greggs
- Larion McNeil
- Hilda Myers
- Frances Riggins
- Magdalene Shaw
- Blanchie Smith
- Della Smith
- Esterlene Smith
- Magdalene Vereen
- Oscar Williams

⁴⁶ *Tabor City Tribune*, "18 Seniors Graduate at Tabor City Negro School," 06/01/1955, page 1, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

Mayor W. Horace Carter delivered the Commencement Address on Monday, May 19, 1955, in the Tabor City Negro School grammar building.⁴⁷

1955-1956 School Year

Principal: John D. Pridgen

During the 1955-1956 school term, the members of the faculty were as follows:⁴⁸

Elementary Department

- Mildred Moore
- Clara B. Pailin
- Edythe J. Spaulding
- Geneva M. Gillis
- Ruth C. Hassell
- Mable McNeil
- Minnie M. Williams
- Hazel McNeil

Middle School Grades

- Helen P. Wooten
- Elizabeth Lennon
- Mattie C. Hart
- Mary M. McKoy
- James P. Troy

47 *Tabor City Tribune*, "Eighteen Seniors Graduate at Tabor City Negro School," 06/01/1955, page 6, <https://chronicilingamerica.loc.gov>

48 *Tabor City Tribune*, "Teacher Shortages, Housing Problems Loom As Local Schools Open Monday," 08/24/1955, page 25, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

High School Department

- John D. Pridgen,
Principal
- Alyce S. Robinson
- J. L. Walker
- Ruthie B. Jefferson
- Willie J. Walls

In addition, the local school board members were as follows:

- **Rev. V. S. Singletary**—Chairman-Tabor City
- **Mrs. Bessie Johnson**—Tabor City
- **Brinkley Long**—Iron Hill
- **Joe Bellamy**—Clarendon
- **Fred Myers**—Tabor City

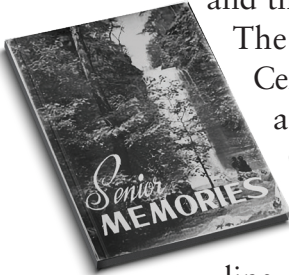
During May, the Superintendent of Columbus County Schools announced that advertisements had been made for bids on construction of two gyms, one of which was for the Tabor City Negro School, and a classroom building.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ *Tabor City Tribune*, 05/16/1956, "Bids Sought For Gymtorium At Tabor City Negro School," page 1, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>

SENIOR GRADUATION



The 1956 class valedictorian was Dresser C. Smith and the salutatorian was Ethel B. Smith.



The Class of 1956 Baccalaureate Ceremony was held on May 20, 1956, at 8:00 p.m. at the First Baptist Church, Tabor City. The guest speaker was Elder E. S. Hassels from Wilmington, North Carolina. Graduation was held on Monday,

May 21 at 8:00 p.m. at the First Baptist Church. The keynote speaker was Dr. H. D. Brown of Goldsboro, North Carolina.

There were sixteen graduates in the senior class. Their class theme was “What Way Shall I Go?” Music was provided by the High School Glee Club.⁵⁰

1956-1957 School Year

Principal: W. A. Ware

In 1956, the Tabor City Negro School was slated for an upgrade to include a combination auditorium and gymnasium. This facility would serve the dual purpose of being a place for holding school assembly and for athletic events. The upgrade to the school’s facilities

⁵⁰ <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>, *Tabor City Tribune*, “Commencement Plans Released by Pridgen,” May 16, 1956, page 1

had been needed for many years and was welcomed by the faculty and the community at large. This year there was a change in school administrative leadership. Mr. W. A. Ware followed Mr. John D. Pridgen as principal of Tabor City Negro School.

Mr. Ware was born in North Carolina and matriculated at both Lincoln University and the University of Pennsylvania. He also served as the former principal at Proctorville Negro School in Robeson County, North Carolina, having held that post for 22 years.⁵¹

The school board members and the town in which they resided that year were as follows:

- **Rev. V. S. Singletary**—Tabor City; Chairman
- **Mrs. Bessie Johnson**—Tabor City
- **Fred Myers**—Tabor City
- **Brinkley Long**—Iron Hill
- **Joe Bellamy**—Clarendon

51 *Tabor City Tribune*, 13 Jun 1956, Badly Needed Tabor City Negro School Gets Its Combination Auditorium and Gym, page 6, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

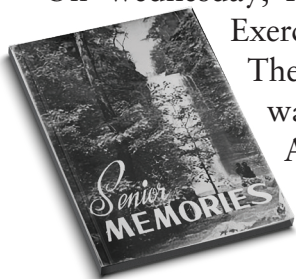
These were members of the school faculty gleaned from fundraiser donations. There was no formal report filed this year.⁵²

- Mr. W. A. Ware—Principal
- Mrs. Gillis
- Miss Moore
- Miss Palmer
- Miss Davis
- Miss Tolson
- Miss Taylor
- Miss George
- Mr. House
- Mr. Gerald
- Mr. Troy
- Mrs. Stanley
- Mrs. Broome
- Miss McKoy
- Mrs. Williams
- Mrs. Cochran
- Mr. Pailin

SENIOR GRADUATION



On Wednesday, May 22, 1957, Commencement Exercises were held for the 1957 Class. The theme of the graduating class was “The Tree—The Strength of America.” The valedictorian was Betsy Dinkins and the salutatorian was Mary Dantzler.



⁵² *Tabor City Tribune*, “Negro School Completes Drive For Polio Funds,” 2/13/1957, page 2, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

Members of the graduating class were:⁵³

- Annie Pearl Bellamy
- Daniel James Bellamy
- McElwee Bellamy
- Carolyn Chestnut
- Mary Dantzler
- Betsy Dinkins
- Ruby Lee Ford
- Taylor Graham
- Ilie V. Greggs
- Ethel Lee Hardy
- Essie Ruth Jones
- Oliver Myers
- Shirley Small
- Jessie Thompson
- Inez Todd
- Lillian Todd
- James Williams

The class colors were pink and green with the carnation as their flower.

Ms. Edythe J. Spaulding, Supervisor of Columbus County Schools, presented the diplomas.

1957-1958 School Year

Principal: W. A. Ware

The 1957-1958 school year began with an increase of twenty-three students over the previous year within the first ten days. Items purchased at the beginning of the term included curtains, an activity bus, and an

⁵³ *Tabor City Tribune*, "Negro Students To Give Program," 05/22/1957, page 2, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

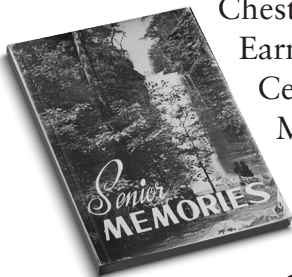
automatic score board. The PTA had consented to underwrite the \$860.00 for the cost of the curtains.

The school term's first PTA meeting was scheduled on September 23, 1957, at 8:00 p.m. in the gymnasium.⁵⁴

SENIOR GRADUATION



The valedictorian of the Class of 1958 was Frances Chestnut and the salutatorian was Earnestyne Farmer. The Baccalaureate Ceremony was held on Sunday, May 25, 1958, at 4 p.m. in the school gymnasium. The keynote speaker was Rev. I. W. Keel of Clarendon, North Carolina. Commencement was scheduled on Monday, May 26, 1958, at 8 p.m. in the school gymnasium. The Commencement Exercise theme was “Educational Principles and Life.”⁵⁵



54 *Tabor City Tribune*, “Tabor City Negro School News,” 09/18/1957, page 2, <https://chronicilingamerica.loc.gov>

55 *Tabor City Tribune*, “Commencement Set for Negro School,” 05/21/1958, <https://chronicilingamerica.loc.gov>

1958-1959 School Year

Principal: W. A. Ware

The 1958-1959 faculty members were:

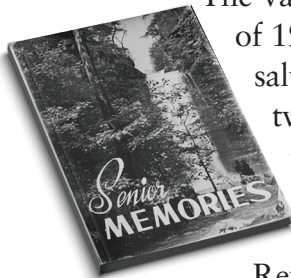
- M. R. Moore—1st Grade
- R. Tolson—1st Grade
- C. B. Pailin—1st Grade
- S. L. George—2nd Grade
- M. C. Palmer—2nd Grade
- E. F. Stanley—3rd Grade
- G. M. Gillis—3rd Grade
- M. M. McKoy—4th Grade
- J. E. Pailin—4th and 5th Grades
- P. R. Gerald—5th Grade
- J. P. Troy—6th Grade
- J. C. Johnson—6th and 7th Grades
- C. V. Williams—7th and 8th Grades
- J. House—9th Grade
- W. A. Ware—10th Grade/Principal
- E. Davis—11th Grade
- E. Taylor—12th Grade

Mr. John C. Johnson was added to the faculty. Further, Miss E. Taylor, who formerly taught eighth grade, replaced Mrs. L. R. Cochran, who resigned.

During the summer prior to the school year, Mrs. C. B. Pailin and Mr. J. E. Pailin, both teachers at Tabor City Negro School, received their master's degrees at the Agricultural and Technical College (A&T) in Greensboro, North Carolina. In addition, Miss Mildred R. Moore and Miss Everlene Davis, both teachers at Tabor City Negro School and college graduates, attended North Carolina College in Durham, North Carolina, for their continuing education credits to maintain their teaching accreditation status which was a requirement for all teachers. Miss Davis also completed the requirements for a vocational home economics teacher.⁵⁶

The 1959 winning girls' basketball team was comprised of thirteen members; they were coached by Mrs. Christyne Williams and Mr. John C. Johnson.

SENIOR GRADUATION



The valedictorian of the graduating Class of 1959 was Maggie Jo Johnson and the salutatorian was Doris Katrina Johnson, two sisters. The annual Baccalaureate Ceremony convened on Sunday, May 24, 1959, in the school gymnasium. The keynote speaker was Rev. J. Franklin Bowden, an assistant

⁵⁶ *Tabor City Tribune*, "Negro School has Successful Opening," 9/3/1958, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>

pastor of the Trinity A.M.E. Zion Church in Greensboro, North Carolina. Commencement Exercises were held on Monday, May 25, 1959, at 8:00 p.m. in the gymnasium.⁵⁷

1959-1960 School Year

Principal: W. A. Ware

A significant change was made this year to Tabor City Negro School. The name of Tabor City Negro School was changed to **Douglass High School**, and it was so fitting!

Douglass High School was named after the famous abolitionist, Frederick Douglass. Frederick Douglass was an escaped slave who became a prominent activist, author, and orator. He was a leader in the abolitionist movement, which sought to end the practice of slavery. In 1889, Douglass was appointed Minister Resident and Consul General to Haiti for the United States. After the Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation of 1862, Douglass continued to advocate for equality and human rights until his death in 1895. His life's work still serves as an inspiration to those who seek equality and a more just society.

An announcement of the Douglass High name change was highlighted in the *Tabor City Tribune*.⁵⁸

57 *Tabor City Tribune*, "Negro School Finals Set," 5/20/1959, page 1, newspaperarchive.com

58 *Tabor City Tribune*. newspaper article "Splendid Registration Noted at Douglass High School Here" on September 9, 1959, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

Subsequently, the school adopted an anthem, school colors, and a school mascot.

Douglass Alma Mater

Oh, Douglass High School, we love thee tender.
Thy lofty ideals will live in splendor.
You are an emblem, that'll live forever.
No matter where we go, we'll find no other.
Dear Douglass High School,
You'll live in our hearts.
The memory of you,
Will ne'er from us part.
Our tongues will proclaim,
In pride and glory,
The fearless courage that we gain,
From your dear name.

Refrain

All that we long,
But fail to do.
Our beacon shines and helps us through.
Our voices
We raise them high,
To sing our praises,
Both far and nigh.

- **School Colors**—Blue and White
- **School Mascot**—Eagle



The Eagle symbolizes courage, freedom, power, and strength. Eagles soar higher in the sky than any other bird.

These were the faculty members for the **1959-1960** school term:

- **Mildred Moore**—1st Grade
- **Roberta Tolson**—1st Grade
- **Elsie F. Alston**—1st and 2nd Grades
- **Mary Palmer**—2nd Grade
- **Sarah Towns**—2nd Grade
- **Geneva Gillis**—3rd Grade
- **Edna Stanley**—3rd Grade
- **Mary McKoy**—4th Grade
- **Ruth T. Marshall**—4th Grade

- James Pailin—5th Grade
- James P. Troy—5th and 6th Grades
- John C. Johnson—6th Grade
- John C. Williams—7th Grade
- Christyne Williams—8th Grade
- Blanchie Smith—Business Education
- Jonathan House—Math and Science
- Everlene Davis—Home Economics
- Elizabeth Taylor—French and English
- Willie J. Walls—Agriculture
- W. A. Ware—Principal/Social Studies

The elementary, middle, and high school all saw some new faculty additions. Elsie F. Alston, a Hallsboro, North Carolina, native and a former teacher at Artesia High School, was assigned to first and second grade in the elementary school.

Ruth T. Marshall was added as an elementary teacher in a section of the fourth grade. She was a native of Pulaski, Virginia, and a graduate of Bluefield State Teachers College in Bluefield, West Virginia.

The middle school hired John C. Williams to teach the seventh grade. Mr. Williams was a native of Tabor City and a graduate of Tabor City Negro High School. He also attended Fayetteville State Teachers College. It is noteworthy that Mr. Williams was a graduate in the

first graduating class of the Tabor City Negro School in the Class of 1950.

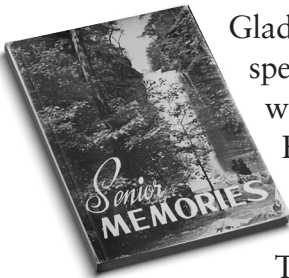
In addition, the high school received Blanchie Smith, a native of Nakina, North Carolina, and a Class of 1955 graduate of Tabor City Negro School. She attended A&T College. She was assigned as the Business Education teacher.

In 1960, Douglass High School received its accreditation under the administration of Principal Ware.⁵⁹

SENIOR GRADUATION



The Class of 1960 valedictorian was Roberta Marshall and the co-salutatorians were Patricia Tiabo and Gladys Stanley. The Class of 1960 guest speaker for the Baccalaureate Ceremony was Rev. E. B. Turner, a pastor for the First Baptist Church in Lumberton, North Carolina. The Commencement theme was “In This Our Time.” The Senior Class Night theme was “Of Footprints and Time.”⁶⁰



59 NC Educational Directory, 1959/1960 (<https://digital.ncdcr.gov/digital/collections>)

60 *Tabor City Tribune*, May 18, 1960, page 2, “Douglass Class Night Thursday,” <https://chronclingingamerica.loc.gov>

1960-1961 School Year

Principal: W. A. Ware

The 1960/1961 school faculty members were:

- **M. R. Moore**—1st Grade
- **R. T. Vereen**—1st Grade
- **S. C. Towson**—2nd Grade
- **M. C. Palmer**—2nd Grade
- **E. F. Alston**—2nd Grade
- **G. Gillis**—3rd Grade
- **C. B. Pailin**—3rd Grade
- **M. M. McKoy**—4th Grade
- **E. F. Stanley**—4th Grade
- **J. E. Pailin**—5th Grade
- **R. T. Marshall**—5th Grade
- **J. P. Troy**—6th Grade
- **J. C. Johnson**—7th Grade
- **J. C. Williams**—8th Grade
- **B. Smith**—Business Education
- **C. Williams**—Social Studies
- **J. House**—Mathematics and Science
- **E. Davis**—Home Economics and Health
- **E. Taylor**—French and English
- **W. J. Walls**—Agriculture
- **W. A. Ware**—Economics and Sociology/
Principal

Douglass High's enrollment number for the elementary school was four hundred twenty-six students and one hundred seventeen high school students for the 1960-1961 school year. Due to increased enrollment, the eighth grade teacher, Mrs. Christyne Williams, was transferred to the Social Studies Department. Mrs. Williams was a resident of Tabor City and a graduate of Tabor City Negro School.⁶¹

DHS Popular Teacher Award

The home economics teacher, Miss Everlene Davis, was named Douglass High School's winner of the "Most Popular Teacher" contest, which concluded during the school's Halloween carnival. Miss Davis, a native of Whiteville and a graduate of Central High School and A&T College, had taught at Tabor City Negro School/Douglass High School for the past four years. Principal Ware had this to say about Miss Davis, commending her for winning the title: "Miss Davis is very reliable, resourceful and energetic. Besides her regular classroom assignment, she performs extra duties such as senior 4-H advisor, dean of girls, and cafeteria coordinator. The entire faculty and student body congratulate Miss Davis for her recent honor."⁶²

61 *Tabor City Tribune*, "Douglass High Increases Staff," 09/21/1960, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

62 *Tabor City Tribune*, (Tabor City, N.C.), 1946-1991, November 09, 1960, page 5, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>

National Exam High Scorers

Lerrie Johnson, Douglass High School and We Rene Stevens, Tabor City High School, earned honors among the high schools in this area. The two were named the 1961 Betty Crocker Homemakers of Tomorrow. Both girls received the highest scores in a written examination on homemaking knowledge and attitudes. This test was taken by graduating seniors in their school. Both girls became candidates for the state Homemaker of Tomorrow award which would be announced in March. Each school Homemaker of Tomorrow would receive an award pin manufactured by Jostens and representing the slogan “Home Is Where the Heart Is.” The examination papers of school Homemakers of Tomorrow would be entered in competition to name the state’s Homemaker of Tomorrow.⁶³

DHS Wins Basketball Tournament

This article was published in the *Tabor City Tribune*:

The Douglass Eagles at Tabor City swept through the Southeastern Athletic Association Tournament by first downing the Central Hornets of Whiteville in the quarter round, 55-40. On Friday night, March 10, the Eagles defeated top [seeded], Westside High of Chadbourn 48-41 in the semi-finals with Wallace

⁶³ *Tabor City Tribune* (Tabor City, North Carolina), February 08, 1961, page 9, www.newspapers.com

Riggins, Jr. and James Graham, Jr. doing most of the shooting and jumping with Jimmy White controlling the boards. The win over Westside brought the Eagles to their first tournament finals Monday night. The Eagles, [seeded] No. 3 in the tournament bracket, met Spaulding-Monroe of Bladenboro, [seeded] No. 2, and soundly trounced them by an overwhelming score of 48-27 to become the S. E. A. A. “61” Champions.

The Eagles’ coach, Jonathan House, attributed defense as the major factor in winning the tournament. Roger Williams, Senior, Team Captain and playmaker, Jimmy White, Senior, James Graham, Senior, played very good ball throughout the tournament and will be missed by the other team members since they are graduating.

– Raeford Gerald and Wallace B. Riggins, Jr., Reporters
Tabor City Tribune article “Douglass Wins Tourney Finals,”
March 15, 1961, Page 1, www.newspapers.com

1961 Southeastern Athletic Association Tournament Champions Team Roster

A team photo with trophy was featured in the *Tabor City Tribune*.

- John Collins
- Kenneth Cox
- Raeford Gerald
- James Graham, Jr.
- Hampton Holt
- Willie Holt
- Wallace Briscoe Riggins, Jr.
- Jimmie White
- Alphonzo Williams
- Robert Williams

In 1961, Principal Ware highlighted the progress made at Douglass High School, which included the building of a combination auditorium and gymnasium that was completed in June 1956 prior to the beginning of school. In an interview by the *Tabor City Tribune*, Mr. Ware cited the school's progress and identified ongoing needs:

Until a few years ago, the Tabor City School for Negroes was comprised of a collection of termite-infested wooden buildings. Today, these—with the exception of one building—have been replaced by clean limed brick structures containing 20 classrooms, a gymnasium, agricultural department and library.

Now additional construction is for a classroom

unit which is scheduled for occupancy before the end of the school year. This additional space will eliminate the use of the agricultural shop and library as classrooms.

Another unit of two rooms is in the planning process and will be needed direly because of the growth of the student body. While there are only 22 seniors this year, there are now 48 pupils in the eighth grade of which the bulk will remain in the school, plus 20 students of the Oak Forest School who will need high school accommodations at Douglass. This explains the principal's thought that by the time they reach the 12th grade in four years, the present facilities will be crowded.

The interest of the parents in the Douglass Community in seeing their children finish high school continues to grow, according to Ware, and simultaneously, the rate of illiteracy is diminishing. The realization that job competition requires more and more learning is counted one of the chief reasons for an increasing number of graduates each year.

The school's present Principal came to Tabor City having taught in Robeson County for 22 years. He prepared for his career by attending Lincoln University and the University of Pennsylvania. He holds A.B. and M.A. degrees.

Ware brought with him to Tabor City an

infectious curiosity about his peoples' problems and their parents, and the ability to help the men and women of his community with many of their varied problems. There are graduates of his classes who would not have gone further with their schooling had he not insisted that they make the best of their opportunities to seek scholarships, . . . among the ranks [of those is] a woman who now holds an enviable position in a famed Negro institution.

But naturally he must face new problems each day. "Shoes are among the main problem here," he admits. "Although one Tabor City merchant usually gives us several big boxes of shoes, there are not enough to go around. So, it is often the self-imposed responsibility of the faculty to buy the barefoot youngster some."

Excerpt: *Tabor City Tribune*: "Douglass School Progresses, New Unit Rising," Page 7, Tabor City, N.C., 22 March 1961, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>

This interview illustrates the caliber of the principal, as well as the faculty staff, that we had at Douglass High school in influencing us for success!

Board of Education

On May 3, the newly elected local Board of Education held its first meeting in the school library. The newly elected members were:

- Rev. Samuel Stanley—Nakina; chairman
- Rev. Clayton Chestnut—Tabor City; secretary

The returning board members were:

- Mr. Joe Bellamy—Clarendon
- Mr. Vernon Long—Iron Hill
- Mr. William E. Shipman—Iron Hill
- Mr. L.D. Melvin—Tabor City
- Rev. V. S. Singletary—Tabor City

Mr. Ware was unanimously elected to continue as principal of Douglass High School for the 1961–1962 school term.

Douglass Community News:⁶⁴

Student Awards

Briscoe Riggins, an honor student in the eleventh grade, was elected by A&T College to participate in the Science and Mathematics program for high school juniors and seniors during the summer of 1961. The program was sponsored by the National Science Foundation.

Addie Louise Bellamy and Bobby Carr were recipients of the Brunswick Rural Electric Cooperation Essay Awards. Addie Louise

⁶⁴ *Tabor City Tribune* (Tabor City, N.C.) 1946 – 1991, “Douglass Community News,” May 10, 1961, page 5; <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>.

received the first prize of ten dollars and Bobby received the second prize of five dollars.

Baseball

Coach J. C. Williams' baseball squad compiled a record of four wins and no losses to date. The victims of Coach Williams' charges were Mt. Olive (the final score being 7-6), Chadbourn (the final score being 7-2), Mt. Olive (the final score being 10-2), and Westside (the final score being 20-2). Pitcher Roger Williams' win record was three wins and no losses, and Bobby Vereen has hurled one win and no defeats. Jimmy White continued to murder the opposition with his hitting. White hit two circuit blows in yesterday's game with Westside.

MIGHTY MIGHTY EAGLES

Senior Play

The Senior Class presents the show of shows, the shower of stars, *The Senior TV Spectacular* – featuring many new personalities, products, and programs. Don't miss the Class Night program Wednesday night, at eight o'clock, on May 17, in the school gymnasium. Everyone has a cordial invitation to come out and enjoy an evening of free entertainment.



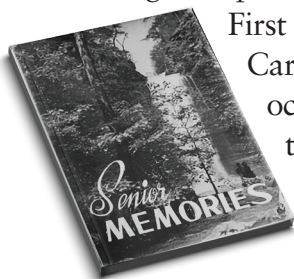
EIGHTH GRADE GRADUATION

On May 19, 1961, the eighth grade held its Graduation Ceremony at 8 p.m. There were 40 students expected to be awarded certificates. The valedictorian was Betty Bellamy; the co-salutatorians were Peggy Holt and Joyce Stackhouse. The class motto was “We have tried from the beginning and will struggle to the end.” Mr. John C. Williams was the home room teacher.⁶⁵

SENIOR GRADUATION



The Class of 1961 Baccalaureate Ceremony occurred on May 21, 1961, at 4:00 p.m. in the gymnasium. The guest speaker was Rev. A. C. Jones, a pastor for First Baptist Church in Bladenboro, North Carolina. The Commencement Exercises occurred on May 23, 1961, at 8 p.m. in the school gymnasium. The theme was “Bridges to the Moon.” The top honor students for the class were Willie Lee Shaw and Addie Louise Bellamy, named co-valedictorians and Roger Williams as the salutatorian.⁶⁶



65 *Tabor City Tribune*, Tabor City, North Carolina, “Douglass Community News,” 5/17/1961, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

66 *Tabor City Tribune* (Tabor City, North Carolina), “CoValedictorians For Douglass Hi,” 5/17/1961, page 10; <https://chroncilingamerica.loc.gov>, digitized newspapers 1777-1963

1961-1962 School Year

Principal: W. A. Ware

DOUGLASS PRESS BOX by Raeford Gerald⁶⁷

The Douglass Eagles and Eaglettes will swing into action once again as they open their 1961-62 basketball season Friday night, November 3 at Douglass High gymnasium.

The home teams will play host to the Southside Bulldogs of Rowland. This will also be the first game of the season for the Bulldogs. Coach John Williams of the Eaglettes states that the team has looked very good during its practice sessions. However, he feels that there are many things to be improved on. The Eaglettes will be composed this year of eight varsity players and five freshmen. The freshmen are Joyce Cox, Peggie Holt, Linda Reaves, Brenda Wilson, and Jacquelyn Stewart. The varsity players: Peggy Dantzler, Mary Johnson, Celestine Madison, Gwendolyn Riggins, Louella Brown, Peggy Butler, and Shelby Stephens.

Coach J. House of the Eagles says that with six varsity players as nucleus, and if he can get good sound play from the big men, the team should be as good or better than last year's Southeastern Champions. Returning varsity players include Wallace Riggins, John Collins, Raeford Gerald, Kenneth Cox, Willie Holt, and Hampton Holt. Big

⁶⁷ November 01, 1961, *Tabor City Tribune*, <https://chroncilingamerica.loc.gov>

men this year are Jimmy Jones and Herb Hayes. Other members include Creston Pearse, Donald Stanley, J.C. Stanley, Tommy Stanley, Tony Vereen and Robert Williams. Game time will be 7:30 p.m. Admission for students without season tickets is 25 cents and for adults without season tickets is 40 cents. Season tickets are on sale at \$3.00 each for adults by any member of the faculty or any basketball player. Come out and support the team.

DOUGLASS PRESS BOX by Raeford Gerald

NEW FARMERS OF AMERICA NEWS⁶⁸

The Douglass Chapter of New Farmers of America held its regular meeting in the agriculture building which was called to order by Vice President, Briscoe Riggins, Jr. in the absence of President, Archie Smith. The purpose of the meeting was to elect candidates for the various contests for the R.R. Taylor Federation to be held in April. Contestants were selected for the following: live-stock judging, public speaking, quiz, talent, and quartet. Raeford Gerald made the report of officers' meeting held at Artesia High, January 10, 1962. The Douglass chapter was asked to raise \$66 by 03/01/1962 for the cost of a swimming pool to be constructed at S. B. Simmons, N.F.A. Camp, Swansboro, North Carolina. [The NFA] advisor, [is] Willie J. Walls.

⁶⁸ *Tabor City Tribune*, Douglass Press Box Excerpt, February 7, 1962, page 9, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

Big “Chatter Party” – 02/10/1962 at Douglass High – 7:30 p.m. \$.50 admission

Homecoming – Friday night – 02/16 at the school. The Eagle Boys and Girls will play host to the Artesia High School of Hallsboro, North Carolina. \$1.00 admission.

The senior class is sponsoring a talent show at Douglass on Wednesday night, 01/31/1962. There will be talent from all over the community. Talent/Talent/Talent at Douglass, Monday 02/05/1962 at 7:30 p.m. Persons from other schools in the county will participate. Admission \$.15 students and \$.25 adults.

BASKETBALL – EAGLES DEFEAT BEARS

The Eagles played their best all-around game of the season last Friday night by defeating Hayswood High School Bears of Lumberton, North Carolina. The Eagles got fine shooting from the Holt brothers, Willie and Hampton, to pull away from the Bears. The score was 24-19. During the second half, the Bears made a bid for the lead but the margin was too much. The Eagles had too much depth and fire power for Hayswood and led all the way. The Eagles’ attack was paced by Briscoe Riggins, Jr. who connected for 32 points; second high scorer for the Eagles was John Collins with eight points. Final score: Eagles 56, Bears 28. The Eagles will be on

the road this week, playing one of the top rivals of the SEAA, the Whiteville Hornets, for their Homecoming February 2, 1962. Come on Eagle fans and let's follow the Eagles to Whiteville!

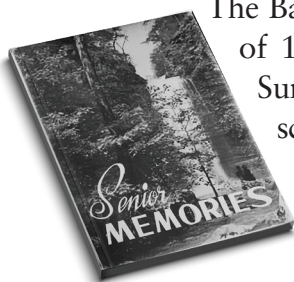
The Eaglettes took an easy victory over the Hayswood Lady Bears by the score of 41 to 22. The Eaglettes attack was led by Peggy Butler and Gwendolyn Riggins. They connected for 10 and 23 points, respectively. The score at half time was 24 to 14. Eaglettes leading.

MIGHTY MIGHTY EAGLES

SENIOR GRADUATION

The Class of 1962 valedictorian was Wallace Briscoe Riggins, Jr. and the salutatorian was Raeford Gerald.

The Baccalaureate Ceremony for the Class of 1962 at Douglass High School was Sunday, May 27, 1962, at 4 p.m. in the school gymnasium. Rev. E. B. Turner, pastor of First Baptist Church of Lumberton, North Carolina, was the guest speaker. The Commencement was Monday, May 28 at 8 p.m. in the school gymnasium. The class theme was "Faith of Our Fathers."⁶⁹



⁶⁹ *Tabor City Tribune* (Tabor City, North Carolina), "Douglass School Exercises Set Sunday, Monday," May 23, 1962, page 1, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

1962-1963 School Year

Principal: W. A. WARE

The 1962-1963 faculty members were:⁷⁰

- Mildred Moore—1st Grade
- Elsie Alston—1st Grade
- Mary C. Palmer—2nd Grade
- Ada McKee—2nd Grade
- Geneva Gillis—3rd Grade
- Clara Pailin—3rd Grade
- Callie A. Davis—4th Grade
- Mary M. McKoy—4th Grade
- James E. Pailin—5th Grade
- Ruth T. Marshall—5th Grade
- James P. Troy—6th Grade
- Marian Boone—6th Grade
- John C. Johnson—7th Grade
- Lucille Monroe—7th Grade
- John C. Williams—8th Grade
- Everlene Davis—Home Economic and Health
- Helene Buck—French and Social Studies
- Irene Maultsby—Librarian and 8th Grade

⁷⁰ "Teachers are announced at Douglass High School," (*Tabor City Tribune*, Tabor City, North Carolina, 08/29/1962, page 1, <https://chronicilingamerica.loc.gov>, digitized newspapers 1777-1963)

- James B. Brown—Agriculture
- Jonathan House—Math
- Henrietta J. Westley—Science
- Elizabeth Taylor—English
- W. A. Ware—Principal

The New Homemakers of America (N.H.A.) Chapter of Douglass High School elected their officers on September 17, 1962. The following officers were elected:

- Bobbie Carr—President
- Betty Myers—Vice President
- Gwendolyn Riggins—Secretary
- Dorothy Smith—Assistant
- Shelby Stephens—Treasurer
- Jacquelyn Stewart—Song Leader
- Chellie Vereen—Song Leader

Miss Everlene Davis was the advisor.

Freshman girls were initiated during the week of 9/22/62. They were initiated by wearing clothing suited for church wear, school wear, party wear, and sportswear.

On Saturday, October 6, 1962, eleven girls and Miss Davis attended the N.H.A. District Rally in Laurinburg, North Carolina. The girls attending the rally were Peggy Bellamy, Bobbie Carr, Gwendolyn

Riggins, Carolyn Nealy, Peggie Butler, Gladys Haynes, Willie Van McNeil, Jacqueline Stewart, Brenda Wilson, Patricia DeWitt, and Dorothy Bellamy. Jacqueline Stewart, who campaigned for State Song Leader, won second place in the preliminary voting. Willie Van McNeil participated in the talent program and rated among the highest contestants. The Rally was enjoyed by all attendees.⁷¹

1963 Douglass Basketball Teams

(photos were featured in the *Tabor City Tribune*)⁷²

Eagles team roster:

- Kenneth Cox,
 Captain
- Wesley Chestnut,
 Co-Captain
- Jimmy Butler
- Roy Elliott
- Hampton Holt
- Harold Riggins
- Don Stanley
- Tommy Stanley
- J. C. Stanley
- Tony Vereen

Mr. J. C. Williams was the coach for the Eaglettes.

71 Douglass N.H.A. Attends District Meet Laurinburg, *Tabor City Tribune*, Wednesday, October 17, 1962, p.5, <https://chroncilingamerica.loc.gov>, digitized newspapers 1777-1963

72 *Tabor City Tribune*, "Douglass Eagles," team picture, "Douglass Eaglettes," team picture, 12/19/1962, page 5, <https://chroncilingamerica.loc.gov>

Eaglettes team roster:

- Mae Lois Bellamy
- JoAnn Bellamy
- Louella Brown
- Rita Bryant
- Joyce Cox
- Peggy Holt
- Willie Van McNeil
- Betty Myers
- Linda Reaves
- Verda Smith
- Shelby Stephens
- Jacqueline Stewart
- Bobby Tiabo
- Brenda Williams
- Brenda Wilson

Douglass News⁷³

Douglass High School is in the peak of performance at this time of the year. The second grade class, under the direction of Mrs. Ada McKee, presented a short skit entitled “Welcome Spring” for a chapel program March 29. Since Winter is gone and refreshing Spring is here, the skit was enjoyed by the whole student body.

The Douglass High School Library Club was organized on March 22. The officers elected were:

- **Dennis Chestnut**—President
- **Lizzie Todd**—Vice President
- **Peggy Holt**—Secretary

⁷³ Excerpts for events reported by Dennis Chestnut for the *Tabor City Tribune* (Tabor City, North Carolina), April 03, 1963, Page 5; www.newspapers.com

- **Brenda Wilson**—Asst. Secretary
- **Shirley Johnson**—Reporter
- **Jacquelyn Stewart**—Reporter

Members of the club looked forward to attending the State Convention of North Carolina High School Library Clubs being held in Durham, North Carolina at Hillside High School. The various school members of the Library State Convention meet at designated locations each year for their annual conference to increase awareness of the importance of school libraries, their educational offering, and their impact as well as to offer support for librarians.

The club members would also tour North Carolina College in Durham. Dennis Chestnut would represent the club by running for State Vice President. Mrs. Irene Maultsby, school librarian, was the supervisor.

On Saturday, March 30, twenty-five students who were members of the Douglass Chapter of the New Homemakers of America attended the State Convention along with their advisor, Miss Everlene Davis, at War Memorial Auditorium in Greensboro, North Carolina. There were over 2,000 participants at the convention. One of the outstanding features of the afternoon session was the presentation by the N.H.A. Chapter members of Caswell County Training School in

Yanceyville, North Carolina. Several of the high school boys also went along on the trip and were guests at A&T in Greensboro. The trip was thrilling as well as educational. Everyone seemed to enjoy the trip, even the courteous and faithful bus driver, Mr. Jonathan House. Following the convention was the beginning of National N.H.A. Week. Activities would continue from Sunday, March 31 through Saturday, April 6.

On April 18, 1963, the Girl Scouts (Troops #277 and #25) at Douglass High held their pin ceremony in the Douglass High gymnasium with fifteen Brownie and thirteen Intermediate Scouts receiving pins. The troops were organized in October 1962 by Mrs. Ada McKee, a second grade teacher at Douglass High School and a graduate of Fayetteville State Teacher's College. They also received assistance from Mrs. G. M. Gillis, third grade teacher, and were under the direction of Ms. Janice Lanston, District Supervisor. Mrs. McKee reasoned that Girl Scouting in the Tabor City community would be beneficial in helping girls become well-rounded adults.⁷⁴

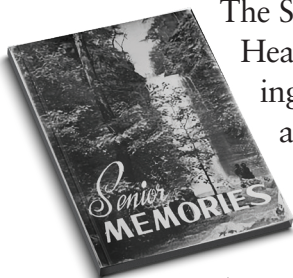


EIGHTH GRADE GRADUATION

The eighth grade class graduation was held on May 24, 1963 at 10:00 a.m. in the gymnasium.

⁷⁴ *Tabor City Tribune*, "Girl Scouts Give Program at Douglass," 5/01/1963, page 1, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>

SENIOR GRADUATION



The Senior Night program entitled “One Heavenly Night” for the 1963 graduating class occurred on May 22, 1963, at 8:00 p.m. The Baccalaureate Ceremony occurred on Sunday, May 26, 1963, at 4:00 p.m. in the school gymnasium. The Class of 1963 valedictorian was Bobbie Carr and the salutatorian was Thurman Archie Smith. Sarah DeWitt was the third ranking senior.

The guest speaker was Rev. Robert W. Jenken, a pastor of Garder’s Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Commencement was held on Monday, May 27, 1963. The theme for the program was titled “A Backward Glance.”⁷⁵

Members of the graduating class included:⁷⁶

- Richard Andrews
- Jack Batten
- Louella Brown
- Peggy Butler
- Wesley Chestnut
- Thomas Clarida
- John D. Cogdell
- John Collins

⁷⁵ *Tabor City Tribune*, “Douglass Commencement,” 5/15/1963, page 12; <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>

⁷⁶ Source: 1963 graduating class courtesy of Sarah DeWitt, Maggie Todd and Estelle Todd

- Kenneth Cox
- Barbara Deese
- Edwin E. DeWitt
- Sarah M. DeWitt
- Johnny Ford
- Rayton Gerald
- Martha Givens
- LeRoy Griffin
- Kenneth Henry
- Gladys Hayes
- Edward Lewis
- L. D. Long
- Anna V. McKvian
- Marvella Myers
- Garland Nealy
- James D. Piggott
- J. W. Price
- Johnnie Reaves
- Gwendolyn Riggins
- Willie Rouse
- Robert Soles
- George Stackhouse
- Bernis Stanley
- Wendy Stanley
- Albert Stevenson
- Maggie Todd
- Vance Todd
- Sharon Vereen
- Eula Mae White
- Peggy Williams
- Levi Wilson

Nineteen sixty-three was a culminating year of turbulence and unrest in the United States as it related to social justice and civil rights for Blacks. On August 28, 1963, the historic March on Washington, known for Martin Luther King, Jr. delivering the famous “I Have a Dream Speech,” was held at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., to advocate for civil, social, and economic rights for Blacks.

An estimated 250,000 people attended. This author was very fortunate as a high school sophomore to be one of them. The trip was sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which allowed for six youths, one of which was JoAnn Gerald, my future sister-in-law, to attend from Tabor City and the Loris, South Carolina, areas.

We were under the leadership of Rev. Calbert Stanley.

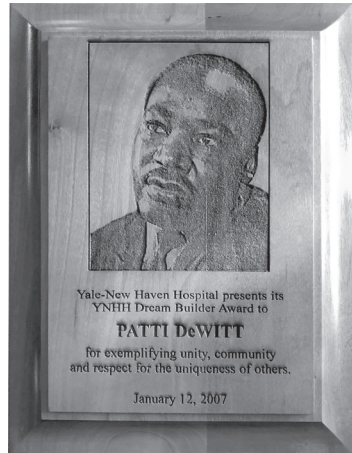


COURTESY OF PATRICIA A. DEWITT

Reverend Stanley, a local civil rights leader and a member of the NAACP, resided in Flag Patch, South Carolina. We boarded the Trailways bus on Tuesday to attend the March on Washington that Wednesday. It was my first overnight trip from home. Little did I know that I would be a part of making American history. The March was one of the largest political rallies for human rights in United States history. It would be the impetus for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 later signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson.

I have kept and treasured the button I received at the March all those years ago.

The values and doctrines that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. espoused were instilled in me and practiced in my everyday living. On January 12, 2007, I was honored to be awarded the Yale-New Haven Hospital Dream Builder Award for exemplifying unity, community, and respect for the uniqueness of others.



COURTESY OF PATRICIA A. DEWITT

1963-1964 SCHOOL YEAR

Principal: W. A. WARE

The 1963-64 faculty members at Douglass High were as follows:⁷⁷

- E. Alston and M. Moore—1st Grade
- M. Palmer and A. McKee—2nd Grade
- G. Gillis and C. B. Pailin—3rd Grade
- C. Davis and M. McKoy—4th Grade
- R. Smith and J. E. Pailin—5th Grade
- M. Boone and J. Troy—6th Grade

⁷⁷ *Tabor City Tribune*, "Faculty Announced at Douglass," 09/04/1963, page 3, <https://chronclingingamerica.loc.gov>

- E. Shepard and L. George—7th Grade
- L. G. Gore—8th Grade
- J. C. Williams—8th Grade
- I. Maultsby—Librarian
- L. Monroe—Business Education
- C. Williams—Social Studies and English
- E. Taylor—French and English
- R. Neal—Science
- J. House—Mathematics
- E. Davis—Home Economics
- J. Boyce Brown—Agriculture
- W. A. Ware—Principal

There were several staff and faculty changes that occurred, namely, Mr. John C. Johnson, who taught the seventh grade for five years, left to teach at Oak Forest School. Mrs. Helene Buck Walker, who taught French and Social Studies for two years, left to teach in Georgia with her husband. Mrs. Ruth T. Marshall, a fourth and fifth grade teacher for four years at Douglas High and Ms. Henrietta Westley, a science teacher for one year, left to teach in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg City school system.

Mrs. R. M. Smith, resident of Fayetteville, North Carolina, replaced Mrs. Marshall. Mrs. Lubertha George, resident of Clarkton, North Carolina, replaced Mr. J. C. Johnson. Mr. Randall A. Neal, resident of Elizabethtown, North Carolina, was assigned to head the science department. Mrs. Christyne Williams, a

Douglass alum, was assigned to replace Mrs. Walker and teach social studies. Mrs. Williams had previously taught at Douglass for several years.

Several other new teachers joined the faculty as well. Mrs. R. M. Mitchell, formerly of Carver School in Fair Bluff, North Carolina, would be one of the three first-grade teachers. Mr. L. B. Gore of Ocean Drive Beach, who taught for three years at the Ralph Bunch School in Edgehill, Virginia, would teach a section of the eighth grade. Mrs. Lucille Monroe, who taught a section of the seventh grade, was transferred to the high school where she would work full-time teaching business education. Mrs. E. W. Shipheard, a resident of Raleigh, North Carolina, would teach a section of the seventh grade

Additionally, Mrs. Dresser S. Farmer, a former Douglas High student, resigned as school secretary to enroll at Fayetteville State Teachers College. Mrs. Farmer would be replaced by Mrs. Magdalene Piggott, who was also a Douglass High graduate.

This year Principal Ware was notified by County Superintendent T. Ward Guy that the Home Economics department was vocationalized, which meant providing applied educational instruction and training for a home economics' profession or occupation. Miss Davis, who already taught home economics, would assume the duties of the vocational home economics teacher.

Many improvements were being made to the school's physical plant and, due to the increase in enrollment, two new classrooms were being added.⁷⁸

The faculty members at Douglass for the school year totaled eighteen elementary and eight high school teachers.⁷⁹

DOUGLASS PRESS BOX by Dennis Chestnut⁸⁰

The Eagles of Douglass High School thrilled basketball viewers in the past week with two exciting double victories. The first double victory was scored on the Eagles home floor Tuesday night December 3, 1963 when the Eagles versed the Trojans of Proctorville High School, Proctorville, North Carolina. The Eaglettes and Lady Trojans had a furious battle, but the Eaglettes proved to be the better team by winning the game 28-23. Shelby Stephens was the highest scorer for the Eaglettes with 14 points. The Eagles and Trojans played a game that will long be remembered by most viewers. At the time when it looked as though the Trojans would have a sure victory, the Eagles with their professional-like skills, lowered the boom on the Trojans to win the game

78 *Tabor City Tribune*, "Douglass High School News," 09/04/1963, page 6, <https://chronicilingamerica.loc.gov>

79 North Carolina Educational Directory 1963/1964, page 52, <https://digital/ncdcr.gov>

80 Excerpts for events reported by Dennis Chestnut for the *Tabor City Tribune* (Tabor City, NC), 12/11/1963, page 9, <https://newspaperarchive.com>

69-60. Donald Stanley looped in 27 points as highest scorer for the Eagles. On December 6, 1963, the Eagles scored their second victory at Westside High School, Chadbourn. If excitement had been fatal, many of the spectators would have collapsed during the boys' game. Competition was so keen until the gym was exploding with excitement. Even though the Tigers were leading several times during the game, the Eagles under the excellent coaching of Mr. J. House, managed to be victors at the end. High scorers for the Eagles were Hampton Holt (17 points) and Donald Stanley (19 points).

The Eaglettes had little trouble winning this game and loomed a 32 - 12 victory over the Tigeresses. Shelby Stephens was highest scorer for the Eaglettes with 21 points.

The students and faculty at Douglass High have high hopes for the Eagles and Eaglettes this year. Listed below is the season's record thus far:

EAGLETTES

Douglass	44	—	Clarkton	27
Douglass	28	—	Proctorville	23
Douglass	43	—	Proctorville	23
Douglass	41	—	Fairmont	43
Douglass	32	—	Chadbourn	12

EAGLES

Douglass	44	—	Clarkton	60
Douglass	43	—	East Arcadia	41
Douglass	63	—	Fairmount	53
Douglass	69	—	Proctorville	60
Douglass	52	—	Chadbourn	46

MIGHTY MIGHTY EAGLES**President Kennedy**

President John F. Kennedy served as the 35th President of the United States from January 20, 1961, until his assassination on Friday, November 22, 1963, at 12:30 p.m. in Dallas, Texas. That is a day I will forever remember. Douglas High students were notified to assemble in the gymnasium. There, we were told that our president had been assassinated. That news was a terrible shock to me, as it was for the nation and the world. His vice president, Lyndon B. Johnson, was now the president of the United States.

“A Sad Day” is a poem written by Louvenia Wheeler, a fifth-grade student at Douglass High School, following the death of President John F. Kennedy. The poem was published in the *Tabor City Tribune*.⁸¹

81 Local Pupil Writes Poem on Kennedy” *Tabor City Tribune*, Dec. 11, 1963, page 5, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>

A Sad Day

It was a Friday afternoon when the world
heard a gun go boom.

It was then a policeman said,

“Our famous President Kennedy is dead.”

All the people began to cry.

As they watched the hearse carry him by.

The streets were crowded with many people,

As his widow, Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy, was left
a weeper.

Both Caroline and John John were left so sad.

They wanted to play in the White House with
their dad.

Our President was such a good man, he needed
to be crowned

But a man named Oswald shot him down.

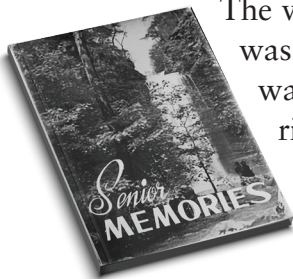
I think Oswald was a bad bad man

But now he is dead and off our hands.

All we could hear were words and cries,

But in the Arlington National Cemetery, a great
man lies.

SENIOR GRADUATION



The valedictorian for the Class of 1964 was Betty Myers and the salutatorian was Bobbie Tiabo. The class historian was Sherlene Smith. Some of the seniors graduating in the Class of 1964 included (complete list not available):⁸²

- Peggy Bellamy
- Margie Chestnut
- Dorothy Daniels
- Earlene Cogdell
- William Graham
- Beulah M. Griffin
- Hampton Holt
- Edward Lewis
- Willie Van McNeil
- Betty Myers
- Joann Nealy
- Bobby Shaw
- Jean Tatum
- Bobby Tiabo
- George Todd
- Sherlene Smith
- Shelby Stephens
- Lizzie Todd
- Margie Vereen

⁸² Tabor City Negro School, <https://www.classmates.com>, and Sherlene Smith, a 1964 graduate

1964-1965 School Year

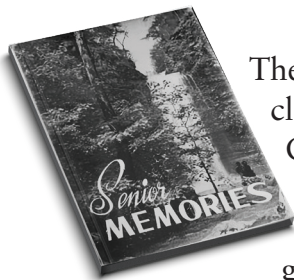
Principal: W. A. Ware

The year 1964 included pivotal changes, not only for Douglass High school, but for the entire United States. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 on July 2, 1964. Essentially, this act prohibited various forms of discrimination in public places and provided for racial integration in schools and other public facilities. It made employment discrimination illegal. In other words, this landmark legislation outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin. This was the most sweeping civil rights legislation since the Reconstruction. The March on Washington, August 28, 1963, is credited with aiding in the Civil Rights Act of 1964's success.

As a result of President Johnson signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964, preparation was underway to consolidate and integrate the various schools in North Carolina. If state and county school administrations did not move forward with desegregating the schools as the law required, then they would potentially be ineligible for federal funding. This transition would happen over several years for Columbus County, where Douglass High resided. Students formerly attending Douglass High as well as prospective students of Douglass High could now attend any public school in Columbus County. This was significant for students from Nakina who graduated from Oak Forest Negro Elementary School because they were bussed to Douglass High

for their high school education some 20 miles but now they had a choice to attend a local high school.

SENIOR GRADUATION



The Class of 1965 valedictorian and class vice president was Dennis Earl Chestnut. The salutatorian and class president was Helen Deloris DeWitt.⁸³ There were fifty-one graduates in the class:⁸⁴

- Barbara Andrews
- Betty Bellamy
- Donald Bellamy
- Emma Bellamy
- Dennis E. Chestnut
- Addie Clarida
- Clifton Clarida
- LaRue Conyers
- Joyce Cox
- Margaret Dantzler
- Helen DeWitt
- Henry Faulk
- Brenda F. Frazier
- Jessie Graham
- Sarah Graham
- Randolph Hill
- Peggy Holt
- Levern Jackson
- Carolyn Johnson
- Nathaniel Long

83 Baccalaureate Program Booklet, Class of 1965, Douglass High School, Tabor City, North Carolina, May 30, 1965

84 Source: 1965 graduating class picture courtesy of Helen DeWitt

- Terrie McNeil
- Richard Mitchell
- Sherman Mixon
- Creston Pierce, Jr.
- Jessie Pierce
- Mary Scarbrough
- Henry Shaw
- Shirley Shipman
- Dorothy Smith
- Janie Smith
- Lennie Smith
- Linda Smith
- Mable Smith
- Roy Smith
- Willie Smith
- Ernest Soles
- Joyce Stackhouse
- Donald Stanley
- Estella Stanley
- James Stanley
- Tommy Stanley
- John Stevenson
- Jacquelyn Stewart
- Joe Todd
- Tony Vereen
- Verily Vereen
- Queenie White
- Barbara A. Williams
- Robert Williams
- Brenda Wilson
- James Wyman

The Class Motto was “The Doors to Education Are Not Locked but We Must Open Them.” The class colors were yellow and blue, and the class flower was the chrysanthemum.

The Baccalaureate Ceremony was held on May 30, 1965, at 4:00 p. m. The theme was “Seven Ships to Success.” The guest speaker was Rev. Joy J. Johnson, a pastor at First Baptist Church in Fairmont, North Carolina. The senior ushers were Patricia DeWitt and Barbara Stewart. The Commencement Program

was held on June 2 at 8:00 p.m. in the Douglass High School gymnasium.

The Class of 1965 had the distinction of being the largest class ever to graduate from Douglass High School.

1965-1966 School Year

Principal: Donnie W. Graham

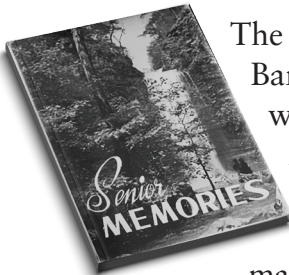
The 1965-1966 school year was a pivotal year of change for our small community as it related to the integration of the educational system in Columbus County where Douglass High School resided. Current and prospective students had the opportunity to go to predominantly white schools and did so. William Myers, who had attended Douglass High and was a Tabor City resident, transferred to Tabor City High School under the Freedom of Choice Program in his junior year (1965-1966). The Freedom of Choice or free transfer plan developed in the United States during 1965-1970, targeted integration of schools in states that had a segregated educational system as was the case in Columbus County. Myers was the first Black student to graduate from Tabor City High School. He was in the Class of 1967.

James Mobley, a middle school student, also transferred to Tabor City High School during the 1965-1966 school year. He was the only Black student in the eighth grade. He graduated from Tabor City High School in the Class of 1970.

In addition, during the 1965-1966 school year, two students from Nakina, Clara V. Smith, who had attended Douglass High for two years of high school and her younger sister, Evelyn F. Smith, a high school freshman, who would have been bussed to Douglass High, were the first students to attend the segregated school of Nakina High. Nakina was approximately twenty miles from Tabor City, so this school was much closer to their home.

These students were trailblazers and, effectively, change agents.

SENIOR GRADUATION



The Class of 1966 valedictorian was Barbara Stewart and the salutatorian was Patricia A. DeWitt. They were featured in the *Tabor City Tribune* in recognition of their scholastic achievement. There were approximately thirty-five graduates:

- Phil Batten
- JoAnn Bellamy
- Mae Lois Bellamy
- Jimmy Butler
- Rita Jo Bryant
- Linda DeWitt
- Patricia A. DeWitt
- Roy Lee Elliott
- Thurlow Ford
- Harry Fulmore
- Billy M. Garner
- Orea Jackson

- Shirley Johnson
- Mary Lou Long
- Tyson Long
- Milton E. McNeil
- Ronnie McNeil
- Wade Moore
- Carolyn Nealy
- Weldon Nealy
- David E. Reaves
- David Lee Riggins
- Harold Riggins
- Bonnie Rouse
- Paul Shaw
- Rudolph Smith
- Verda Mae Smith
- Winston Soles
- Neamon Stanley
- William (Tuck) Stanley
- James Stephens, Jr.
- Barbara Stewart
- Sylvia Tatum
- Josh Oliver Todd
- Brenda Williams

The guest speaker for the May 29, 1966, Baccalaureate Ceremony was Dr. J. Ray Butler, a pastor for Ebenezer Baptist Church in Wilmington, North Carolina. The class motto was “People Sitting on Top of the World Usually Arrive There Standing Up.” The class play was titled *Flight to New Horizons*. The leading man in the class play was Harold Riggins, and the cast was Mary Lou Long, David Reaves, Milton McNeil, David Riggins, Roy Elliot, and Tyson Long.

On Wednesday, June 1, 1966, Commencement was held in the school gymnasium.⁸⁵

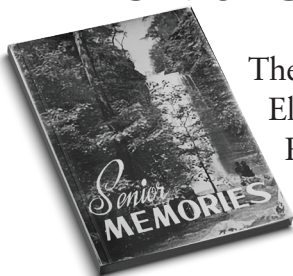
⁸⁵ Source: The author’s Senior Memories book. Digital records not available.

1966-1967 School Year

Principal: Donnie W. Graham

The consolidation and transitioning of the Tabor City Area schools was ongoing in view of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This process occurred over several years. This meant that some Douglass High students transferred to Tabor City High School, and students from Nakina and nearby areas, formerly bussed to Douglass High, were attending Nakina High School instead. Douglass was still serving students in grades one through twelve. However, by the 1966-1967 school year, the majority of students attending Douglass High were primarily from the communities of Clarendon, Iron Hill, and Tabor City proper. There were few, if any, students attending from Nakina.

SENIOR GRADUATION



The Class of 1967's valedictorian was Elton Stanley and the salutatorian was Retha Mae Pierce. Some graduates were as follows:⁸⁶

- Harvey Barnes
- Lizzie Bellamy
- Tony Bellamy
- Olden Bryant

⁸⁶ Tabor City Negro School, <https://www.classmates.com> and Eddie Todd's Class of 1967 Senior Memories book

- Tony Bryant
- Beatrice Deese
- Bertell Graham
- Louvenior Daniels
- Walter Hayes
- James Jackson
- Elvira McClain
- Emma Ruth Mixon
- Priscilla Nealy
- Retha Mae Pierce
- Linda Shipman
- Charles Smith
- Doris Jean Smith
- Woodrow Smith
- Elton Stanley
- Betty Stevens
- Donald Todd
- Eddie Todd

The Class of 1967 Baccalaureate and Commencement Exercises were held on Sunday, May 28 at 4:00 p.m. in the school gymnasium. The guest speaker was Rev. Joy J. Johnson, a pastor at First Baptist Church in Fairmont, North Carolina. The Class Motto was “The Best Place to Find a Helping Hand Is at the End of One’s Arm.” The Senior Class advisor was Miss Elizabeth Taylor.

1967-1968 School Year

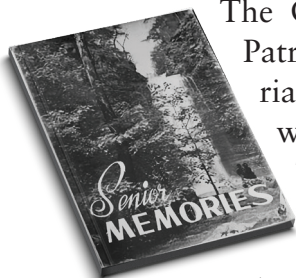
Principal: Donnie W. Graham



EIGHTH GRADE GRADUATION

The eighth grade graduation was held at 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, May 30, 1968.

SENIOR GRADUATION



The Class of 1968 valedictorian was Patricia Hemingway and the salutatorian was Ronnie Ray DeWitt. They were featured in the *Tabor City Tribune* newspaper for their honorary scholarship achievement. There were twenty-two members of the graduating class:⁸⁷

- Donda L. Bellamy
- Alice Brown
- Wilson Butler
- Velma Deese
- Ronnie R. DeWitt
- Beula Graham
- Patricia Hemingway
- Eliouse Jenrette
- Wanda Johnson
- Lizzie Long
- Linda McNeil
- Alice Mixon
- Ida P. Prince
- Carolyn Simmons
- Carolyn Soles
- Sylvia Stephens
- Michael Stewart
- Nina M. Tatum
- Doris Thomas
- Sadie Todd
- Sally Vereen
- Phyllis Williams

The Senior Class Night for the Class of 1968 was held on Wednesday, May 29, at 8 p.m. in the school gymnasium.

⁸⁷ Source: Class of 1968 graduating class photo courtesy of Ronnie DeWitt

The class play, *The Orphanage Home*, was directed by Mrs. Christyne Williams with Beula Graham as the leading lady and Ronnie DeWitt as the leading man.

The Class of 1968 Baccalaureate and Commencement Exercises were held on Sunday, June 2 at 4:00 p.m. in the school gymnasium. The guest speaker was Rev. E. B. Turner, D.D., a pastor of the First Baptist Church in Lumberton, North Carolina. The Class motto was “There Are Many Paths to the Top of the Mountain but the View Is Always the Same.”

Class of 1968 Scholars

Featured in the *Tabor City Tribune* newspaper, Patricia Hemingway, the valedictorian, and Ronnie Ray DeWitt, salutatorian, both received scholarships to attend North Carolina Central University in Durham, North Carolina. In addition, their classmate, Wanda Johnson, received



COURTESY OF RONNIE R. DEWITT

Patricia Hemingway and Ronnie Ray DeWitt

an educational grant to attend North Carolina Central University and classmate Lizzie Long received a grant to attend Fayetteville State Teacher’s College.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Source: 1968 grant and scholarship awards information courtesy of Ronnie Ray DeWitt



COURTESY OF RONNIE R. DEWITT

Ronnie DeWitt was the sixth and last of his siblings to graduate from Douglass High.

Ronnie Ray DeWitt, salutatorian, with his sister, Patricia DeWitt, and class advisor, Miss Elizabeth Taylor



COURTESY OF RONNIE R. DEWITT

Ronnie Ray DeWitt, salutatorian, with his sister, Helen DeWitt

1968-1969 School Year

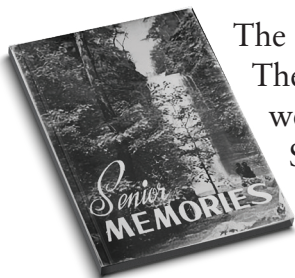
Principal: Donnie W. Graham

The Tabor City schools' transition for consolidating would be completed during the 1968-1969 school year. Douglass High School continued enrolling students from grades one through twelve, having a total of twenty-two teachers. The number of students in the elementary school totaled 371 while there were 132 students enrolled in the high school section.⁸⁹ Other than those seniors graduating this year, the remaining high school students would transfer to Tabor City High School the next school year. Nakina High was now serving students in grades nine through twelve from Nakina.⁹⁰

89 Directory of Public Elementary and Secondary Day Schools, 1968-1969, Volume III, Southeast Region, page 182, Douglass Elementary and Douglass High School, Tabor City, <https://files.eric.ed.gov>

90 North Carolina Educational Directory, 1968-1969, page 58, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov>

SENIOR GRADUATION



The Class of 1969 valedictorian was Thelma Vereen. The co-salutatorians were Wilhelmenia Newkirk and Eric Stewart. There were eighteen members of the graduating class:

- Louise Allston
- Ruby Bellamy
- Mable Bryant
- Frances Garner
- Janie Hickman
- Varlyn Nealy
- Wilhelmenia Newkirk
- Gloria Reaves
- Von Reaves, Jr.
- Brinda Smith
- Eloice Smith
- Patricia Smith
- Patricia Stephens
- Eric Stewart
- Donnis Thomas
- Estelle Todd
- Thelma Vereen
- Marvin White⁹¹

The Baccalaureate and Commencement Exercises were held on Sunday, June 1, 1969. Rev. E. H. Baskerville delivered the graduation address. The Class Motto was “The Wind of Anger Blows Out the Lamp of Intelligence.”

The Class of 1969 was the last graduating class from Douglass High School. School consolidations were now complete, and Tabor City schools were fully integrated.

91 Source: 1969 graduating class photo and Senior Memories courtesy of Estelle Todd

1969-1970 School Year Transition and Consolidation of Schools Complete

Columbus County schools, which included Tabor City schools where Douglass resided, were fully integrated this school year. Their integration was a relatively peaceful process. That is not to say that during the integration there weren't glaring looks, some name calling, and unwelcomed expressions and behaviors, but there was no violence. The Douglass High campus was now the site for Tabor City West Elementary School. The school taught first through eighth grade under twenty-two teachers. The principal was Mr. Donnie W. Graham, who held this position from 1969 to 1975.

Former Douglass High School students were now attending Tabor City High School. Schools were no longer identified as White, Negro, or Indian in North Carolina. They were instead given identifiable codes in the North Carolina Educational Directory of Schools.

Principal Graham was succeeded in 1975 by Dr. John C. Williams, Sr., who was a Tabor City Negro School alumnus and then teacher. The name of the school subsequently changed from Tabor City West Elementary to Tabor City Middle School, which was put into effect during the 1992-1993 school year. Dr. Williams remained the principal until 1995-1996.⁹²

92 NC Educational Directory 1995-1996, page 95, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov>

Part Two

NOTABLE EDUCATORS

We Salute You!

The educators at Douglass High School, formerly Tabor City Negro School, have been invaluable to the lives of the many students who attended and graduated from the school. Our educators were pioneers. They were dedicated to a cause: to ensure that Black students attending Douglass High School not only learned in the classroom but would become successful and engaged citizens in the United States and elsewhere. They nurtured every student. As my classmate Milton McNeil so eloquently stated, “We soar high, reaching for the stars. Taught and mentored by the best. Forever proud to be an “Eagle” for life.”

It was not only a mission but a ministry for our educators. They built relationships with parents and ensured that students had support and opportunities. We salute our teachers and celebrate them for their commitment and dedication to helping us achieve our educational pursuits. They helped us learn about our environment and the struggle for equality that Black Americans faced. They made an indelible impact on our lives. The following is a small collection of notable Douglass High educators who have embodied some of the highest ideals of academic learning and achievement. This list is not exhaustive by any means.

MISS EVERLENE DAVIS

Miss Everlene Davis is a native of Whiteville, North Carolina, and a graduate of Central High School. She graduated from A&T College. Miss Davis began her career at Tabor City Negro School in 1956 under the administrative leadership of Principal Ware. During her time as a teacher, Miss Davis also attended North Carolina College in Durham, North Carolina, where she completed the requirements to be a vocational home economics teacher. This led to her heading the Vocational Home Economics Department at Douglass High School.

Since the desegregation and consolidation of Tabor City Schools in 1969-1970, she has taught over the years at Tabor City High School, South Tabor City High School, and South Columbus High School. Miss Davis currently instructs Family and Consumer Sciences Education at South Columbus High School. Miss Davis has long served as a scorekeeper during basketball games. She has been awarded well deserved recognition and many accolades during her teaching tenure. Some are mentioned below:

- **2020 Black History Month Honoree**—NC African American Heritage Commission.
- **Two-time honoree**—Sandhills/South Central Regional Teacher of the Year award.
- **“Most Popular Teacher”**—November 1960, Douglass High School.

Miss Davis is a National Board-Certified Teacher with over sixty years of teaching experience in Columbus County, North Carolina.

MRS. MARY PALMER GODWIN

Mrs. Mary Palmer (Godwin) attended the public schools of Columbus County, receiving her high school diploma from Artesia Negro High School in Hallsboro, North Carolina. She received her Bachelor's in Elementary Education from Fayetteville State University. After graduating, she began her teaching career in the elementary school at Tabor City Negro School during the 1956-1957 school year and continued teaching there when the name changed to Douglass High School and beyond. She taught at Douglass High for many years and later transferred to Artesia Elementary School. She remained at this school until her retirement on August 1, 1994. In total, Mrs. Palmer (Godwin) served thirty-eight years in public education in Columbus County.

PRINCIPAL DONNIE W. GRAHAM

Mr. Donnie W. Graham followed Mr. Ware as principal of Douglass High in the fall of 1965. Prior to this, Mr. Graham worked as the principal for other Columbus County elementary schools as early as the 1938-1939 school year, including Bug Hill Elementary Negro School and Oak Forest Elementary Negro School, both of which were located in Nakina, North

Carolina. Oak Forest Elementary School was a feeder school for sending students to Douglass High.

Mr. Graham remained the principal through the desegregation and consolidation of schools in Tabor City. Douglass High became the site of Tabor City West Elementary School. Mr. Graham remained at the school as principal until 1975. He was succeeded by Dr. John C. Williams as principal of Tabor City West Elementary School. The name of West Elementary eventually changed to Tabor City Middle School beginning with the 1992-1993 school term.

FELTON I. GRAINGER

Mr. Felton Irvin Grainger, a native and resident of Chabourn, North Carolina, was a First Lieutenant in the United States Army in the 82nd Airborne Division from 1952 to 1958. During this period, he served in the Korean War. After leaving the Army, he taught in the Columbus County Public Schools from 1960 to 1991, approximately 31 years. He taught driver's education at Douglass High School which consisted of 30 hours of classroom instruction, 12 hours of observation in the car, and 6 hours behind the wheel in driver training.

JONATHAN HOUSE

Mr. Jonathan House was a Greenville, North Carolina, native and graduated from the public school system of Greenville. Upon completing high school, he entered

the United States Navy to serve his country during World War II. After receiving an honorable discharge in July of 1946, he pursued a teaching degree at A&T College, graduating in 1950.

Mr. House began teaching high school math in 1956 when Douglass High School was still Tabor City Negro School. He also coached the men's high school basketball team. The team won the Southeastern Athletic Association Tournament, which made them the 1961 champions.

After the integration of schools in 1969, he taught at Tabor City High School until his retirement in July of 1987. Mr. House often received recognition for his devotion, dedication, volunteer work, and community activities, and received many awards for his service.

Mr. House was a member of the Tabor City/Douglass Alumni Association, Inc.

JOHN CLARK JOHNSON

Born in Tabor City, North Carolina, Mr. John C. Johnson was educated in the Columbus County Public Schools in Whiteville, North Carolina. Mr. Johnson was a veteran of the U.S. Army who served during the Korean Conflict (June 1950 – July 1953). He received his Bachelor's in Early Childhood Education from Fayetteville State University. Mr. Johnson also received a Master's in Highway Safety from A&T College.

His teaching career began during the fall 1958 at Tabor City Negro School, renamed Douglass High School, where he taught sixth and later, seventh grade. He also served as a basketball coach and referee. Mr. Johnson left Douglass High in 1963 to teach at Oak Forest school, following which he transitioned as a faculty member in the Charlotte Mecklenburg School System. He retired from West Charlotte Senior High, after thirty years of service in the Charlotte Mecklenburg School System. Mr. Johnson continued to maintain close ties with the Douglass High community.

He was the President of the Charlotte chapter of the Tabor City/Douglass Alumni Association, Inc. and was the keynote speaker of the Tabor City/Douglass Alumni Reunion in 2009 held at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

MISS MILDRED RUTH MOORE

Miss Mildred Ruth Moore was a resident of Whiteville, North Carolina. She attended Albion Academy in Franklinton, North Carolina. Miss Moore graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education at Fayetteville State Teachers College. Miss Moore joined the faculty of Douglass High School when it was known as Tabor City Negro School as a first grade elementary teacher during the 1946-1947 school term. In addition to her duties as an educator, she was the director of the school's glee club.

Miss Moore taught for three decades at Douglass High

School. She was well-known for her musical contribution to school programs and activities.

JAMES EDWARD PAILIN

Mr. James Edward Pailin, a member of the Masonic Lodge, was a resident of Tabor City, North Carolina. He matriculated with a master's degree from A&T College. He was a fifth grade teacher and basketball coach at Tabor City Negro School, which would later become Douglass High School. He began his teaching career during the 1956-1957 school year and was a longtime faculty member until transitioning to Oak Forest Elementary School in Nakina as principal in 1965. He succeeded Mr. Donnie W. Graham who transferred to Douglass High School as principal.

Mr. Pailin was a member of the Tabor City/Douglass Alumni Association, Inc.

PRINCIPAL JOHN DAVID PRIDGEN

Mr. John D. Pridgen was a resident of Armour, North Carolina, and the former principal of Armour Negro School. He graduated with a bachelor of arts degree from Johnson C. Smith College, a historically black college and university (HBCU) in Charlotte, North Carolina. Mr. Pridgen joined Tabor City Negro School as the principal during the 1944-1945 school year.

Under his administration much needed improvements

began to take shape at the school. In 1951, significant funding was allotted to the school to upgrade its building facilities and classroom space and address the inadequate water system. In 1953, twelve new classrooms were completed, thereby helping to alleviate some of the overcrowding that existed. Mr. Pridgen, a civic and spiritual leader, remained the principal until the end of the 1955-1956 school term. It is noteworthy that the gymnasium was completed in June 1956, just after the completion of his final school year at Douglass. He was followed by Mr. W. A. Ware for the 1956-1957 school year.

MISS ELIZABETH TAYLOR

Miss Elizabeth Taylor graduated from the Randolph County public schools in North Carolina. After graduating, she attended A&T College, earning a Bachelor of Science and a Master's in Science. She was a member of the Alpha Gamma Mu Honor Society. She later did advanced studies at Indiana State University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Virginia Union University, and Methodist College.

Miss Taylor began her extraordinary teaching career at Tabor City Negro School in 1957 under Principal Ware's leadership. The school was renamed Douglass High School in the 1959-60 school year. Miss Taylor taught high school English and French at Douglass High and was the twelfth-grade advisor. Miss Taylor remained at Douglass High until the completion of the

school consolidation and desegregation in Tabor City in 1969. She continued teaching at the consolidated Tabor City High School and later at South Columbus High until her retirement in 1998. She taught in the Columbus County School System for more than four decades. Miss Taylor took pride in her work and was a passionate educator who encouraged students to continue beyond their high school education. Miss Taylor did so by providing support to help them complete college and scholarship applications as well as providing guidance and counsel to them. This author was fortunate enough to be one of the many students she had a profound impact on.

Miss Taylor was a member of and the advisor to the Tabor City/Douglass High Alumni Association, Inc.

WILLIE JOE WALLS

Mr. Willie Joe Walls was reared in the Grist Community of Chadbourn, North Carolina, and served in the United States Army after graduating high school. He graduated with a master's degree from A&T College. In 1953, he joined the faculty at Douglass High School where he taught vocational agriculture until leaving this position in 1963.

Mr. Walls worked in various positions with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction from 1979 until his retirement in 1989. His positions included that of vocational director and that of assistant superintendent for Columbus County Schools.

Mr. Walls had the distinction of becoming the first African American to serve as the assistant superintendent for the Columbus County schools. He was well-known in the community as president of the Westside Alumni Association, Gospel DJ, and General Manager of WVOE radio.

Mr. Walls was the recipient of the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, presented by the governor of North Carolina. He was a member of the Tabor City/Douglass High Alumni Association, Inc. and was the keynote speaker at the Tabor City/Douglass High Alumni Reunion in 1987 held at the Landmark Hotel Resort in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

PRINCIPAL W. A. WARE

Mr. W. A. Ware was born in Ware Shoals, North Carolina, but he grew up in Pleasantville, New Jersey, graduating from high school there. He received a bachelor of arts degree from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, a historically black college and university (HBCU). He was awarded a Master's of Science from the University of Pennsylvania. Mr. Ware became the principal of Tabor City Negro School for the 1956-1957 school term. He was previously the principal of Proctorville Negro School, a Robeson County Negro school in North Carolina. He came to Tabor City Negro School with twenty-two years of experience and numerous recommendations, according to T. Ward Guy, the county superintendent.

Mr. Ware was at the helm when Tabor City Negro School became Douglass High School during the 1959-1960 school year when the school anthem was created and school colors and a mascot were chosen. The eagle was named the school mascot. In addition, Douglass High School was accredited by the State Department of Education that same year.

It was during his tenure that the physical plant of the school was upgraded with brick structures containing more classroom buildings and a gymnasium. The construction of the gymnasium was completed June of the year that he first joined Tabor City Negro School and became operational in his first year.

Mr. Ware was an advocate for children and engaged with the community to help the needy secure clothing, receive welfare aid, and pursue scholarships for college. Mr. Ware's civic involvement included being an advocate for reasonable parole sentences.

Mr. Ware remained principal of Douglass High School until the end of the 1964-1965 school year.

MRS. CHRISTYNE V. JOHNSON WILLIAMS

Mrs. Christyne V. Williams, a native of Tabor City, North Carolina, was a 1951 graduate of Tabor City Negro School. After graduation, she attended Fayetteville State Teachers College where she made the Dean's list for the first and second quarters. She

received her bachelor's and master's degrees from North Carolina Central University.

After graduating college, she was hired as a faculty member for the 1956-1957 school term at Tabor City Negro School. She began her career by teaching seventh and eighth grade and later taught social studies for the high school. She remained a teacher at Douglass High, formerly Tabor City Negro School, through the consolidation of schools in 1969 and continued to teach in the Columbus County school system. Mrs. Williams taught in the Columbus County school system for thirty years.

In addition to her educational duties, she coached the girls' basketball team and engaged in civic activities.

She was a member of the Tabor City/Douglass Alumni Association, Inc., and was the Mistress of Ceremony for the Tabor City/Douglass High Alumni Reunion in 1987 held at the Landmark Hotel Resort in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

JOHN C. WILLIAMS, SR., EDD, DHL, THD

Dr. John C. Williams was a U. S. Air Force veteran and a native of Tabor City, North Carolina. He was one of the seven high school graduates belonging to Tabor City Negro School's first graduating class, the Class of 1950. He graduated from Fayetteville State Teachers College and went on to receive a Master of Art and Master of Education from North Carolina

Central University. He continued his education at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina, graduating with an education specialist degree. Dr. Williams received a Doctorate in Education from Nova University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. In addition, he earned a Bachelor of Science in Theology and a Doctor of Biblical Studies. He was given Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Bread of Life Bible College in Whiteville, North Carolina.

Dr. Williams began his career at Douglass High School as a seventh grade teacher in 1959-1960 and later taught eighth grade as well as twelfth grade sociology and economics. Dr. Williams was the girls' basketball coach as well as the boys' baseball coach at Douglass High.

After the integration of Tabor City schools, he continued teaching and served as the Tabor City High School boys' basketball coach. The team was state runner-up in 1972 and again in 1973.

Later, in 1975, he succeeded Mr. Donnie Graham with the distinction of being principal of Tabor City West Elementary School in the building formerly known as Douglass High School. Subsequently, Tabor City West Elementary School was named Tabor City Middle School during the 1992-1993 school term. Dr. Williams remained the principal through the 1995-1996 school year.

In addition to his educational commitments and

coaching, he engaged in civic duties. He was a member of the Tabor City/Douglass Alumni Association, Inc. and was the keynote speaker at the 2005 Tabor City/Douglass High Alumni Reunion in New Haven, Connecticut, where his speech was about the history of the school.

**OTHER NOTABLE MEMBERS INCLUDE
BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:**

- Elsie F. Alston
- James Dean
- Geneva M. Gillis
- Maggie Graham
- Ruth T. Marshall
Johnson
- Irene Maultsby
- Mary M. Mckoy
- Lucille Monroe
- Randall Neal
- Clara Pailin
- James P. Troy

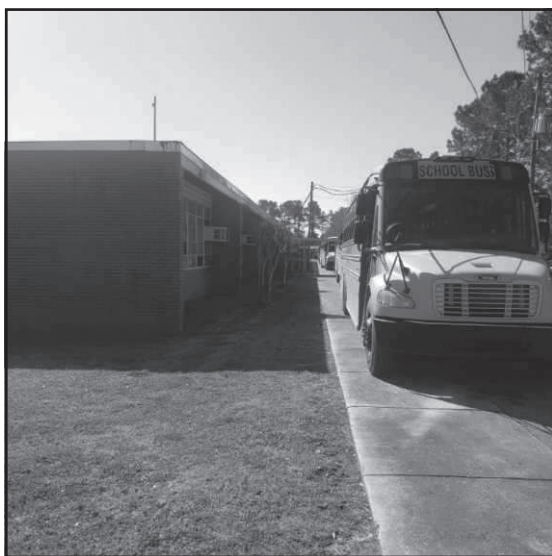
Appendix A

PHOTOS OF DOUGLASS HIGH (now Tabor City Middle School)

MIGHTY MIGHTY EAGLES

— photos courtesy of Ronnie R. DeWitt © 2021 —







Appendix B

THE NATIONAL TABOR CITY/ DOUGLASS HIGH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, INC.

In 1985, The National Tabor City/Douglass High Alumni Association, Inc. was established by Douglass High faculty and students. The association established specific overarching goals. Two important goals were to preserve the school's heritage and to remember its history. The association also sought to remember the school's contributions to the community. Finally, the association sought to honor Douglass High's emphasis on educational achievement and its impact on successful livelihoods for its students. The organization awards scholarships to students of Douglass alumni pursuing college education.

The first Tabor City/Douglass High Alumni Reunion was held in 1987 at the Landmark Resort Hotel, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, hosted by the Philadelphia Chapter. Tony Vereen, Class of 1965, is the 2021 president of the National Tabor City/Douglass Alumni Association. He is a resident of Tabor City.

Customarily, the national organization holds a reunion every two years. The organization consists of the following chapters:

- Charlotte, North Carolina
- New Haven, Connecticut
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- New York - New Jersey
- Tabor City, North Carolina
- Washington, D.C.- Maryland



COURTESY ESTELLE TODD



COURTESY PATRICIA A. DEWITT



COURTESY PATRICIA A. DEWITT



COURTESY ESTELLE TODD

Appendix C

Columbus County Schools Serving

TABOR CITY TODAY

— Beginning the school year of 1992-1993 —

SOUTH COLUMBUS HIGH

a 4-year public school established in 1992
by the consolidation of Tabor City High,
Nakina High, and William Township Schools

*<https://www.southcolumbushigh.com>
40 Stallion Drive, Tabor City, NC
Grades 9 - 12*

TABOR CITY MIDDLE

(formerly Douglass High School)

*<https://www2.columbus.k12.nc.us>
701 W. Sixth Street, Tabor City, NC
Grades 6 - 8*

TABOR CITY ELEMENTARY

*<https://www2.columbus.k12.nc.us>
203 Stake Rd., Tabor City, NC
Grades K-5*

Appendix D

School Spirit

DOUGLAS HIGH SCHOOL ANTHEM

Oh, Douglass High School, we love thee tender.
Thy lofty ideals will live in splendor.
You are an emblem, that'll live forever.
No matter where we go, we'll find no other.
Dear Douglass High School,
You'll live in our hearts.
The memory of you,
Will ne'er from us part.
Our tongues will proclaim,
In pride and glory,
The fearless courage that we gain,
From your dear name.

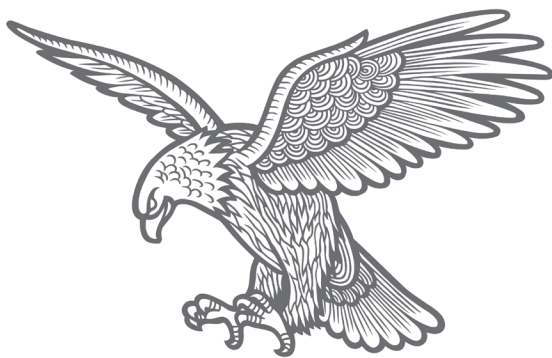
Refrain

All that we long,
But fail to do.
Our beacon shines and helps us through.
Our voices
We raise them high,
To sing our praises,
Both far and nigh.

EAGLE CHEER

Everywhere we go,
people want to know,
who we are,
so we tell them,
we are the Eagles, the

MIGHTY MIGHTY EAGLES



Eagle Pride Amplified

Appendix E — References

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www.taborcity.com

www.worldpopulationreview.com

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygYBQjNIFfQ>, Tabor City High School Class of 1970 50-year reunion - YouTube.

1965 Class Baccalaureate Program Booklet, Douglass High School

About the Author

Patricia A. DeWitt is a native of Tabor City, North Carolina, and the daughter of Earnest Galloway DeWitt and Myrtice L. Hickman DeWitt. She is a 1966 graduate of Douglass High School and a past president and secretary of the National Tabor City/Douglass High Alumni Association, Inc.

She grew up in the Iron Hill Community of Tabor City, North Carolina, and is the fifth child of twelve children. Her siblings are:

Larry Gene DeWitt	Cynthia Gale DeWitt
Edwin Eugene DeWitt	Jimmie Randolph DeWitt
Sarah Marilyn DeWitt	Gregory Dale DeWitt
Helen Deloris DeWitt	Timothy Wayne DeWitt
Ronnie Ray DeWitt	Samuel Leverne DeWitt
Janet Lounell DeWitt	

All twelve DeWitt children began their educational journey at Tabor City Negro School and six graduated from Douglass High.

Ms. DeWitt holds a Master's in Public Health from Southern Connecticut State University, a Master's in Industrial Relations, and a Bachelor of Science Degree (Magna Cum Laude) in Management Science from the University of New Haven in West Haven, Connecticut. In addition, she graduated from Durham Business College, located in Durham,

North Carolina, with honors in computer programming. She completed the Urban Community Fellowship program at Yale University's Department of Epidemiology and Public Health and is a graduate of the Greater New Haven Leadership Center. Ms. DeWitt is also a Certified Service Excellence Coach.

Ms. DeWitt is a retired Director, Community Health Programs and Grants Administration, Yale-New Haven Hospital, New Haven, Connecticut. She is also a volunteer Find-A-Grave photographer.

Ms. DeWitt is the proud mom of a beloved daughter, Sheinea, and grandmother to a precious grandson, Anthony. She is an active member of Union Temple Freewill Baptist Church.

LOOKING BACK AT
DOUGLASS HIGH SCHOOL

and Our Notable Educators
Tabor City, North Carolina • Columbus County

Douglass High School salutatorian, Class of 1966, Patricia A. DeWitt, has curated historical records capturing glimpses of school year histories for what began as Tabor City Negro School. Established in 1915, school year records began with the 1938-1939 school year. The school was later renamed Douglass High School after the esteemed abolitionist and orator Frederick Douglass.

This book was created as a tribute to this school and to its educators that affected so broadly and stood so proudly in the Black community of Tabor City, Columbus County, North Carolina. Ms. DeWitt collected information from digital records, old documents, and classmates to create glimpses into school and student school year achievements. From humble beginnings through school consolidation following the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Douglass High School was deeply embedded in its community, and roots in the form of alumni are now spread coast to coast. **EAGLE PRIDE AMPLIFIED!**



Patricia A. DeWitt, MS, MPH is a native of Tabor City, North Carolina, now living in Connecticut. She is a retired Director, Community Health Programs and Grants Administration, Yale-New Haven Hospital, New Haven, Connecticut. She is also a volunteer Find-A-Grave photographer.