

From Sara K. 9/27/14

Central High School, Franklin Parish, LA

Submitted by Thomas Moore

July 2001

Copyright. All rights reserved.
<http://usgwarchives.net/copyright.htm>
<http://usgwarchives.net/la/lafiles.htm>

HISTORY OF CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

In 1881 J.P. Trezevant erected the first one-roomed school to educate the children of Central Community and hired its first teacher Mr. S.W. Bearsford. Central's rich and colorful history revealed that Mr. Bearsford came from British nobility. After his death, a brother, Lord Bearsford, came to America to have the body of his brother moved to England for burial. In the late 1890's the first teacher officially hired by the Franklin Parish School Board for the Central Community was Miss Elizabeth Foster, who taught in the Trezevant School for \$25.00 per month.

Another one-roomed school was established in 1889 near the John Stout place. The community hired Mrs. Mollie Lowry to

teach 7 to 8 pupils in what came to be called the Stout School.

A third small school in the ward was the Ebenezer School.

In 1912, the School Board consolidated one and two roomed schools and erected a six room school building across the highway from the land currently owned by Harmony Church.

The first principal of the new Central School was nineteen year old Claire Lee Chennault, who later achieved fame as the general of the "Flying Tigers of China." The calibre of students who have graduated from Central High over the years was perhaps inspired by such leaders as Mr. Chennault.

Central High School's football team, coached by Claire Chennault, attained an undefeated record for four years, defeating larger schools such as Monroe and Vicksburg.

Claire Lee Chennault not only coached but played along side his students, some of whom were Frank and Marvin McEacharn, Henry and Luther Stout, Ben Chapman, Louis Griffin, Archie Baskin, and Howard Leslie.

Within the ward, other one roomed schools were still open, as roads were bad and transportation almost nonexistent. In 1918, "Goat Pen School," located across the road from the old Jimmy Loftin home, served students during the day and

housed goats at night. Another small school, the "Martin School," was established in 1920 on the W.P. Martin place. Both of these were consolidated with Central School.

Mule drawn wagons driven by Mr. Don Chapman and Mr. George Boyd provided the transportation for students in the early years of Central High. In 1921 Mr. John H. Baker purchased four school buses, the first horseless carriages in Central Community, placing them under the management of Mr. Curtis Dupree. In 1928, Curtis Dupree bought four buses and managed them for Central until 1946, when the buses were bought and managed by individual owners.

In the fall of 1926 a brick building with office upstairs and ceramic tile bathroom floors was constructed. The school was destroyed by fire on January 11, 1935. Students completed the year in a temporary building constructed along the south fence of the campus. Seniors went to Crowville to obtain their chemistry laboratory work. Mrs. Cleo Reynolds, first grade teacher that year, taught sixty pupils.

The Central High School was not completed before school was out. However, that year's graduating class, 1935, received their

deplomas in the new auditorium which accomidated 400 people people who sat on plank seats, as the auditorium seats had not been installed. Later, the gymnasium, lunchroom, agriculture shop, and other classrooms were added.

In 1969 the Louisiana Legislature passed the Integration Law. Waverly School (near Lamar) closed, and all the children of Ward 5 were sent to Central High School. Dropping enrollment led to the consolidation in the fall of 1974 of Central, Baskin, and Crowville. Redistricting followed, and Central High School as a community school closed its doors forever.