

Education



Although there are isolated instances of slave owners allowing education for their bondspople, the vast majority of slaves were illiterate. For them, opportunities for formal education did not begin until after the Civil War. In 1868 the American Missionary Association started the first school in the county for blacks in Swansboro. The school cost \$397.20 to build and was financially supported by the Freedmen's Bureau and other interested private donors. The AMA's local efforts were short lived but gave black churches the impetus to continue the drive for education by setting up classes within Sabbath schools. In spite of these new opportunities, inequality in teacher pay and school facilities persisted throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. Most black children attended small elementary schools scattered throughout the county. These schools were usually one teacher, one room facilities with woefully inadequate supplies and furnishings.

The Trent River Oakey Grove Missionary Baptist Association was responsible for the founding of Onslow County's only black high school. Classes were started in 1908, and the charter for the school, the Trent River Oakey Grove Collegiate and Industrial Training School, was announced on December 6, 1909. The non sectarian private school encompassed grades 1-11 and was supported by tuition and contributions from teachers, PTA groups, and other donors such as Dr. William Sharpe, who at the time owned Hammocks Beach. By May, 1919, school officials had decided to deed the buildings and two and a half acres of land in Jacksonville to the county "for the purposes of education of the children of the colored race and for that purpose alone." By the early 1930s, the need for a high school was evident; funds were received from the Federal Government and the new Georgetown High School was constructed for \$30,000. John W. Broadhurst became principal in 1937 and led the school through nearly three decades of growth and excellence. The school prospered, becoming the first civilian high school to be accredited in Onslow county. Court ordered desegregation was set to close the school in 1966; on May 30, 1966, a fire destroyed the gymnasium and seriously damaged the rest of the school, thus ending Georgetown's long and illustrious history.

