

benton
county



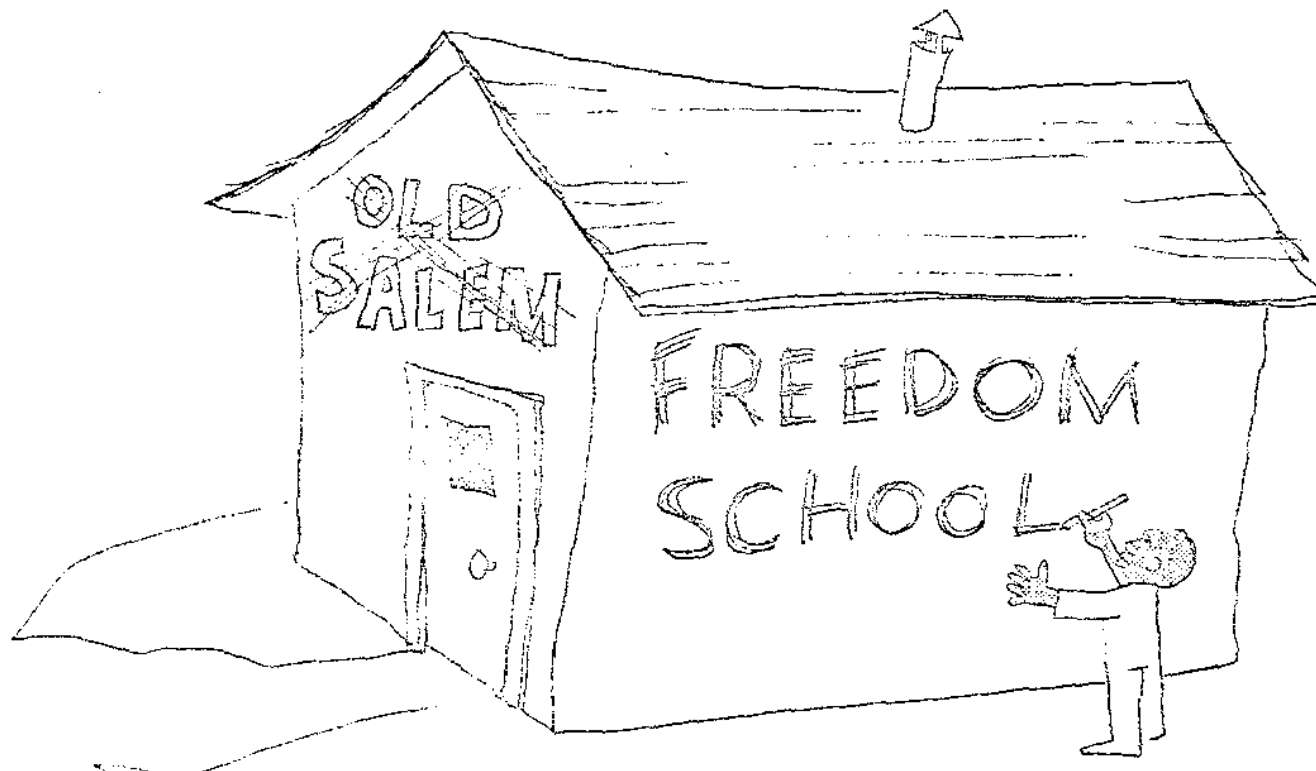
"It's that freedom train a comin'; get on board, bet on board."

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"I'm so glad--Old Salem's time has come"



SUCCESSFUL BOYCOTT TO CONTINUE

The boycott of Old Salem school began last Wednesday and will continue during the coming week. 90% of Old Salem have been staying away from school. The Citizens Club will meet this coming Tuesday night at SAMUELS chapel to decide on further strategy.

The following is a day-by-day report of events concerning the boycott:

TUESDAY, MARCH 9: Citizens Club meeting to decide whether or not to boycott the school. A report was presented by the school committee on its meeting the day before with the Board of Education. Mrs. Sarah Robinson wrote the following account of the meeting with the Board:

"We met the School Board on Monday morning. We assembled in the courtroom at 10:00. There were about 13 or 20 whites and 8 colored. The crowd was too large to meet in the superintendent's room. Attorneys John Farese, Tony Farese and Hamer McKenzie were present. Mr. John Farese conducted the meeting, aided by the other attorneys.

"We, the committee, went to the board merely to get a definite answer from the petition which had been put before them, but there were two issues that they brought up to tell us they wouldn't agree to: desegregating their school and desegregating their cafes. They then said the petition was ill legally drawn up and they couldn't okay it. So it was left up to the Citizens Club to make the next decision."

The report was discussed on Tuesday night. Many disturbing things were brought out. It was reported that Mr. Clabon Jackson and Mr. Frank Elmore were once

again present at the board meeting even though they were never chosen to represent the Negroes of the county. Mr. Jackson was asked which side he was on.

Someone asked why Mrs. Reaves had not been recommended as principal. Mrs. Reaves replied that she had refused the offer of the Citizens Club because she felt there were a few men working against her and she didn't want to split the movement.

There was anger over the fact that the board had stalled for so long and had changed its story so many times. People were particularly angry that the lawyers had tried to bring in the segregation question, as if they might have wanted to make a "deal." Finally, after 3 hours' discussion, a vote of 257 to 2 approved the immediate boycott of Old Salem as the only way to protest the actions of the Board. Locations of the freedom schools were then announced, and everyone went sleepily home at midnight.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10

The first day of the boycott was marked by overwhelming success: only about 130 students attended Old Salem, with 1070 students staying away. There were about 120 students at the five freedom schools.

Two parents had sent their children to school because they didn't know about the boycott. Later, when some neighbors told them about it, they drove over to Old Salem and took their children home.

Mr. Bennett accused one of the bus driver's of not allowing students to get on his bus. The bus driver denied this.

On Wednesday night there was a voters league meeting at Mt. Zion.

At the meeting, Mrs. Burne Alexander reported some shocking news concerning overhearing a conversation while she was sitting outside Hamer McKenzie's office. Mrs. Alexander wrote this account of what happened:

"On March 10, I was in Ashland and I found two rats in a hole eating cheese. Who were the rats? Mr. Clabon Jackson and Mr. Jack Elmore. Where were the rats? IN Mr. McKenzie's office. What were they doing there? Telling Mr. McKenzie what was said and done at the meeting at Samuels chapel. They mentioned the names of COFO staff, Mr. Henry Reaves, Mr. Walter Reaves, and Rev. John Beard. Mr. McKenzie asked them if the Negroes were cutting their throats and they told him, "Yessir, and they are cutting their own throat."

"I guess they think that made Mr. McKenzie think more of them, but it made him think even less of them: to know he can feed them as rats in his office with cheese."

Mr. Tom Foster summed up everyone's feelings when he said, "If you ain't gonna do anything, don't say anything!"

THURSDAY, MARCH 11

The boycott went into its second day even more successful than the day before. Only 120 students were at Old Salem, and over 200 at the freedom schools. Several Rust College students helped teach in the freedom schools.

Some teachers were asking students if the reason so many were absent was because they were afraid the school was going to be bombed. Sheriff Ward was seen driving around the school and, in the afternoon, at Lawrence James' house.

Another bus driver was threatened. Turner Carpenter accused him of charging students \$1.50 to get on his bus. This was denied.

FRIDAY, MARCH 12

Boycott continuing successfully, though freedom school enrollment dropped to 170 because of wet roads. More students from Rust helped out, and it was decided to open a 6th freedom school at Hebron if the deacons will give their permission.

Mr. Foster tried to intimidate a bus driver by telling him that the white folks were going to make all those who didn't send their children back to school move off their land.

There were repeated offers by lawyers from the white community to set up a bi-racial committee. First they tried to suggest a committee where they would select three of the Negroes. This was turned down. Then Mr. McKenzie had his two "stooges" set up a meeting on Sunday at Samuels. The citizens refused to accept any committee that wasn't elected by the Citizens Club.

There was some suspicion of what the purpose of a bi-racial committee would be. The only way Benton county can get money from the government's anti-poverty program is by forming bi-racial committees. So many thought that the only reason the lawyers wanted to form a bi-racial committee is to get government money.

At a section captain's meeting Friday night, it was decided to continue the boycott until our demands are met by the School Board in writing. It was felt that a bi-racial committee might be elected AFTER the Old Salem boycott was settled.

Another reason parents decided to continue the boycott was because it was giving their children an opportunity to learn at the freedom schools the things they weren't being taught at Old Salem.

FREEDOM SCHOOLS: a new experience in learning

There are five freedom schools now set up in the county: at Mt Zion, Hardaway, Sims, Palestine, and Greenwood. They are being supervised by students in the college prep class: Janevial Evans, Alberta Tipler, George Washington, Roy Nunnally, and Earnestyne Evans. They meet from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. on school days. After each day, the freedom school supervisors meet and discuss their schools, any problems, and suggestions for improvement.

All students are invited to attend. Everyone should bring pencils, notebooks to write in, their school books, and lunch. The students are being taught their regular school subjects together with Negro history and civil rights, and any new subjects they may be interested in learning.

The following report was written by Earnestyne Evans about Hardaway freedom school:

"A freedom school was set up at Hardaway church to teach the children who took part in the boycott. The school started Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. Students were divided into 4 groups, taught by high school students and a Rust student. The school textbooks were used in order to help the students get ahead of their work at Old Salem. 42 students were present.

"After talking over the school day with teachers from other freedom schools, we returned on Thursday with classes beginning at 10 a.m. with exercises and games and Bible verses. Then classes began with breaks every so often for smaller children. During lunch we played games and listened to records."

The freedom school "supervisors"

decided on a plan to raise money to donate to the churches whose facilities we are using and also to the Rust students for gas. A talent show will be put on with each freedom school participating. Each school now spends the hour from 2 until 3 p.m. rehearsing their skits for the show. The public will be invited and a small admission charged. Paintings that the children have done in school may also be auctioned off as a way of raising additional money.

Parents' committees are being formed in each freedom school area to help out with car pools, lunch for Rust students, and suggestions for improving the schools.

H.S. MARCH

A large protest demonstration was held yesterday in Holly Springs with over 500 Negroes participating. The demonstrators marched to protest racial discrimination in Holly Springs and in sympathy with the Selma, Alabama, demonstrators.

The marchers carried a petition to Mayor Coopwood and spoke to the mayor about 45 minutes, demanding that he make Holly Springs a decent place for Negro citizens to live. Then the marchers proceeded to the square around the courthouse where they sang.

Benton County was represented in the march by its young people who carried signs which said, "Benton County Wants Freedom," "W.B. Foster, Leave our County," and "We Support the Benton School Boycott." John Farese was seen taking pictures, and Johnny Duncan was seen on the outskirts of the crowd.

Freedom School is a Happy School

(The following stories were written by freedom school students concerning their opinions of freedom school. Unfortunately we did not have enough space to print all their stories):

I love freedom school. It makes me feel like a new boy. I feel like I can speak for my rights. I am tired of doing everything the white man tells me to do.

Freedom teachers give you some problems and if you don't know them, they will take time out and teach them to you.

by Willie Clardy

* * * *

And I know the Negro has slaved enough. Even in World War II, the white man put the Negro in front to fight; and there was nothing to fight for because the white man thought everything belonged to him.

I like to go to freedom school because the students who teach us want us to learn, and the teachers at Old Salem just want their pay checks. I'd rather go to freedom school than to Old Salem. I will continue to go to freedom school until Old Salem is a better school.

by Johnny F. Murdock

* * * *

And I want to stand up and speak up for my rights--I can't stop now.

Walter Lee Poplar

* * * *

I like my teacher at freedom school better than I do my teacher at Old Salem. My teacher at freedom school is Earnestyne and I like her very much. She is very nice to us.

I like freedom school because they teach you more than the teachers at Old Salem. I like my teacher. I like my teacher to teach us about great people. The freedom school teachers teach us spelling, arithmetic, language, and reading.

by Imogene Reaves

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Carolyn Bills

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I think freedom school is a great idea because the teachers teach us more and better. Thursday I paid a visit to Hardaway Chapel. My teacher there can teach very good.

I like to go to freedom school so much. I'd rather not go back to Old Salem anymore. I am so glad that Old Salem is boycotted, I could shout. My principal's name is Miss Evans. My teacher is Miss Nancy Mosby.

by Glance Rooks

* * * *

My teacher at Sims Chapel is Lillie Ree Nunnally. She taught us Negro history and she explains it to us very well, and I like them better than my teacher at Old Salem.

I like to go to freedom school because our teacher at Old Salem don't teach us anything, and I want to learn something.

by James Rooks

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Leon Watkins

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Freedom school teachers are better than Old Salem teachers because Old Salem teachers teach you problems and if you don't know them, they will skip it.

At freedom school we learn to write our lesson, to play games, and to sing freedom songs. I like my freedom school teacher too.

Joyce Hamer

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Some Freedom School opinions

Why I like Freedom

by Henry Louis Beard

I like freedom because the white people would not be able to run over the Negro, and the white people could not do what they want to. I like freedom so the Negro can go in the front door of the cafes. The Negro gets tired of going in the back of the cafes.

What Freedom means

by Annie Ruth Hunt

Freedom means a good job, better education, and better books, so we Negroes can learn more about the world we live in; also, better places to go to church where we can worship God; also, to vote like the white people do. Also, what freedom means to me is a better place to live.

Time to Fight

by Mardell Watkins

There are no Negroes in the white school, and we don't need any whites in our school.

Yet when we took the sugar vaccine there were whites giving it out at our school. It was said first if you did not have enough money to pay for the sugar, you could get it anyway. But the second time there was a lady with five children, and the lady said that she did not have enough money to pay for it. And the white man told her to get out and don't come back if she didn't get the money.

I don't think that was a nice way to tell her. And it made me feel bad to hear "Uncle Charley" say that to the lady. So if we are going to fight, it is time to fight and fight fast.

About Mr. Foster

by Joe Ray Rooks

We are boycotting the school to get Mr. Foster away and his wife. Mr. Foster is not the right kind of man for the principal. He won't let anyone have a meeting at Old Salem. Everytime we get ready to have something, he turns up and says that we can't have it. That's one reason we don't want him up there.

What is Foster trying to do?

by Walter Rooks

We have been trying to get Foster away from Old Salem for a long time. But I believe that Foster is trying his best to stay. But we can't stand for it any longer. We have got to do something.

Back in January he had Aviva arrested. I think if Foster was a man, he would not have called the law. He would have told Aviva and James that he didn't want them to come in at first.

But about Foster: he must be "playing" the board to let him stay at Old Salem because we have been trying to get him away for a very long time.

Some feet dragging

by Willie Chris

Some children's parents still let their children go to Old Salem. Some of them are the bus driver's children. They let their children go to Old Salem because they are scared they will lose their job driving the bus.