

HISTORY OF DOUGLASS SCHOOL

Manhattan, Kansas

Riley County

September 10, 1901: President of the Board of Education appointed a committee of three (3) to canvas the matter and ascertain the feelings of the colored people upon the question of an additional separate room for colored people.

The first reference to a separate school for colored children occurs in the minutes of July 6, 1903, when the clerk of the Board of Education, Mr. Robert B. Spilman recorded, Eli C. Freeman and Eli Cruise representing the American Club were present and presented views of that club regarding separate school for colored pupils, etc. On July 13, 1903, at a special meeting of the Board of Education "Called especially to consider the advisability of building a new school building of two rooms, suitably located to accommodate colored pupils of the city", several members of the American Club were present and the matter was discussed at length. At this meeting the Board of Education decide "To employ two persons to circulate petitions among the colored people with a view to ascertaining their desires regarding the new building."

At a second special meeting held on July 16, 1903, to consider the matter further, "A delegation of colored people was present and the matter was discussed pro and con by them, after which the Board went into secret discussion."

However, no decision on the subject was reached at this time. At the next regular meeting of the Board of Education held on August 3, 1903, a motion was made to build a two room building. The motion was lost but immediately it was reconsidered and prevailed by a vote of six to one.

Then "on motion the Buildings and Ground Committee together with The President of the Board was authorized to take preliminary steps towards the erection of building as voted." Apparently the action of

the Board did not meet with the unanimous approval of the colored people because at the regular meeting on September 7, 1903, "A committee of colored people was present and presented a remonstrance against the building of a separate building for the colored pupils." "On motion the remonstrance was received and filed" according to the records of the clerk. This remonstrance, however, did not deter the Board of Education from proceeding with its plans to construct a building for the colored pupils for a part of the minutes of the special meeting of the Board on September 16, 1903, states that:

"It was moved and seconded that the Board proceed with the building of a new school house according to specifications and that Smith and Correll be awarded the contract for the same."

This motion prevailed and the contract was awarded to the contractors named in the motion for the amount of \$2,828. It is interesting to note that at the same meeting when the contract was awarded for the construction of the building, Mr. Eli C. Freeman was employed as teacher at a salary of \$50 per month. His work was to begin when the new building would be ready for occupancy. About January 1904 in the minutes of the regular meeting of the Board of Education held on January 4, 1904 is recorded a motion providing that "the clerk was instructed to draw a warrant paying final claim of Smith and Correll when the Buildings and Grounds Committee certify the Douglass School Building to be completed.

History of Erection of the New Douglass School Building

In 1930-31, the gradually increasing of enrollment of pupils in the Douglass School caused the Board of Education to begin to consider the enlargement of the building several years ago. At a special meeting of the Board of Education held on September 4, 1935, the action requesting assistance from the Works Progress Administration on September 2, was rescinded and a motion was passed requesting a loan and a grant from the Public Works Administration for the enlargement of the Douglass Building in the belief that such a loan and grant would be more favorable to the Board of Education than

assistance from the Works Progress Administration.

In the spring of 1936 the Public Works Administration finally advised that the Board's request for a loan and grant could not be granted at least not within the near future. Therefore, on June 19, 1936, the Board again petitioned the Works Progress Administration to assist in improving the Douglass School Building. On August 19, 1936, the Works Progress Administration advised that the request had been granted.

Work on the building was begun and sufficiently completed to be occupied when the school opened September 13, 1937.

Description of the New Douglass School Building

It is a one story structure with native stone exterior walls and wood joist construction in the interior. The class room floors are of oak and the corridor floors of maple. The interior finish is southern pine. The building contains four class rooms, a principals office, a library, a kitchen, and cloak rooms adajacent to each class room.

Two class rooms face the west and two the east. The two west are separate by rolling partition. These rooms, one of which has a small stage, can be combined into an auditorium with a seating capacity of approximately 175. A vacuum-vapor heating system supplies heat for the building, and the class rooms are ventilated by an installation of Johnson Heat Regulating System. Total cost of building improvements was \$9,253.

Description of the Orginal Douglass School

The Douglass School Building for Negro children of grades First-Sixth was originally constructed in 1903. It contained two class rooms a principals office, cloak rooms for each class room and toilets for boys and girls respectively. The original entrance was on the east side of the building.

The year 1961-62 was the last year that any schooling was held in the Douglass School.

The orginal enrollment was 38. In the years 1947-48 the enrollment was 69, and in 1957-58 it was 131.