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Dr. Susie Weems Wheeler: A Narrative Case Study of a Philanthropic Educator During the Civil Rights Era

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DR. SUSIE WEEMS WHEELER: A NARRATIVE CASE STUDY OF A PHILANTHROPIC EDUCATOR DURING THE CIVIL RIGHTS ERA

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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this narrative case study was to explore the life experiences and contributions of Dr. Susie Weems Wheeler (1917- 2007), a pioneer African American early childhood educator and administrator during and after the Civil Rights Era. There is limited research on Dr. Wheeler's life and other African American women who were pioneers in Early Childhood Education during the Civil Rights Era. This study is significant because it focused on the contributions of a pioneer who is missing from the available literature. Data was collected using interviews and review historical documents. The researcher implemented thematic analysis and *restorying* to analyze the data. The major findings of this study were divided into four themes about Dr. Wheeler that were generated during data analysis. The themes included: (1) community, (2) philanthropy, (3) advocacy, and (4) leadership and post-graduate studies. Implications of this study are (a) teacher preparation programs should include the study of the life of Dr. Susie Wheeler's and her contributions to the early childhood curriculum, (b) include stories of Dr. Susie Wheeler and other marginalized populations to mainstream children's literature, (c) families should provide their children with early childhood education opportunities.

Keywords: Susie Wheeler, pioneer, African American, educators, Civil Rights era, Rosenwald Schools

DEDICATION

I am so thankful to have been able to tell this story of an amazing educator and activist, and my grandmother, Dr. Susie Weems Wheeler. I miss her immensely, and I hope this work has made her proud.

This dissertation is dedicated to my entire family. To my daughter, Ella Grace. I love you so much, my sweet girl. I know I was always behind my laptop working when you wanted to play, but I hope that you saw Mommy persevere through extremely tough work. Thank you for teaching me how to live in the moment and enjoy life. You are the very best part of my day, every day. To my mom, Clovia. Thank you for your constant encouragement and for keeping Ella Grace for days and nights so that I could complete my dissertation. I will forever be grateful. Thank you for being an example of a strong and hardworking woman. To my father, Daniel Wheeler, Jr. Thank you, Dad, for pushing me to finish this endeavor and for spending time with me so that I could learn more about your mom. Giselle, my sweet niece, Auntie Lisha loves you! Thanks for your hugs, love, and infectious smiles. To my brother Derrick, thanks for always having my back. I will always love you and respect you, and I will always have your back.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Women of color are underrepresented in historical literature on the pioneers of early childhood and elementary education. The issue is problematic because women of marginalized groups are rarely recognized for their contributions to society as a whole. A plethora of documented history is centered around men and their contributions to early childhood and elementary education. Jean Piaget, Lev Vygostky, and Eric Erikson are among the numerous "dead white men" (Aldridge & Christensen, 2013) who are focused upon in undergraduate classes for preservice teachers (Aldridge & Christensen, 2013). Piaget, a Swiss psychologist, is most well-known for his theory of constructivism, which holds that children construct their own knowledge from within. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory states that children develop and learn through their social interactions. The stories of women and, more specifically, women of color should be documented in the literature as well.

There is a paucity of research on the efforts of African American women who were early childhood educators prior to and during the Civil Rights Era and their impact on society. Research shows that the life works of some pioneer women such as Lucy Craft Laney, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Nannie Helen Burroughs have been documented. These pioneers in education started their own schools and advocated for the equal treatment of African Americans at the national level. However, the work of Dr.

Susie Weems Wheeler, a long-time educator and dedicated community member, has not been fully explored. This study aims to explore Dr. Wheeler's indelible impact on the children, and subsequently, adults in her community and the state of Georgia.

To properly explain Dr. Wheeler's experiences as a child and as an adult, the historical periods which frame when she entered school, obtained multiple degrees, and entered the workforce as an educator were described. Dr. Wheeler began school at the age of six, during a time when African American communities were tasked with building their own schools due to segregation.

Following slavery and during Reconstruction in the United States, African Americans began to lobby for equal treatment under the law, specifically in the field of education (Walker, 2005). In the South, however, a "separate but equal" mindset evolved following the *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court ruling, and children of different races were no longer allowed to attend the same schools (Hoffer, 2014). The lack of funding for African American schools made it necessary for community members to organize and band together to ensure their children would receive the education needed to be successful (Anderson, 1988; Walker, 2005). Many African American educators played an integral role in the education of youth in their communities, as well as in civil rights activism.

African American families were being taxed to pay for public schools but did not have schools for their children to attend (Feiler, 2021). "School segregation is a deeply entrenched social practice grounded in the racial subordination of minority students and White race privilege" (Powers, 2017, p. 252). Rosenwald schools, built by African American communities that banded together to establish educational opportunities for the

children in their community during segregation, provided a place for African American children to learn (Klugh, 2005). Klugh (2005) noted that Julius Rosenwald, a businessman and philanthropist, worked alongside the incomparable Booker T. Washington. He heard of the efforts to build schools for African American children in the southern states. He empathized and sympathized with the struggles of African Americans and the injustices withstood by members of the race, because as a Jewish man, he had experienced prejudices against his own people (Klugh, 2005). He felt that African Americans deserved equal treatment in all aspects of life, and especially in education. After meeting with Washington, Rosenwald decided his philanthropic focus would be on the education of African Americans in the South.

According to Hoffschwelle (2012), a business partnership and friendship were formed between Rosenwald and Booker T. Washington. In the early stages of this partnership, Rosenwald visited Tuskegee Institute. Rosenwald learned of the meager funding black schools in the South were receiving. Oftentimes, children were taught in churches because there was no school building. For those communities which did have buildings, the buildings were described as dilapidated structures, many of which lacked books and needed materials (Hoffschwelle, 2012).

In 1912, Rosenwald donated funds to help build schools near Tuskegee University after hearing of a local community in which members had been selling pies for nine years to earn money to build a school for the children. He matched the previously collected funds so that the school could finally be built, a common practice for Mr. Rosenwald (Hoffschwelle, 2012; Klugh, 2005). His goal was to empower and engage people from all

walks of life. Matching funds allowed communities involved in the building of schools to have a sense of ownership.

Hoffschwelle (2012) explained that the one- or two-room Rosenwald schools usually served children in multiple grade levels. The buildings were typically rectangular in shape and characterized with long, narrow windows. The community schools had gable roofs, which are shaped with two sloping sides and gables at the ends (Hoffschwelle, 2012). These community schools served as a source of pride. African Americans wanted to ensure their children received an education. A Rosenwald School would have a significant impact on Susie Weems, along with thousands of other African American children born during Reconstruction.

Statement of the Problem

There is a lack of racial and gender representation in the body of literature on early childhood educators. During slavery and Reconstruction, African American women were tasked with educating the children in their communities. Regardless of the obstacles these women faced, they persevered and laid the foundations for impactful early childhood education and social change. This study contributes to the paucity of literature on African American women who were early childhood educators and their impact on the education of children in their communities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative narrative case study was to explore the life experiences and contributions to early childhood education of Dr. Susie Weems Wheeler. Dr. Wheeler was a pioneer African American early childhood educator and administrator during and after the Civil Rights Era. This study was conducted to describe the

determination and philanthropic attributes Dr. Wheeler exhibited in her quest for education for all.

Research Questions

The central question of this study was, "What were Dr. Wheeler's contributions and philanthropic efforts to the advancement of early childhood and elementary education in the state of Georgia?"

The following four sub-questions led this study:

1. What experiences led Dr. Wheeler to become an educator?
2. What was the role of Dr. Wheeler in the education of children in the state of Georgia from 1954 to 1968?
3. What were the various administrative positions held by Dr. Wheeler?
4. How did the positions held by Dr. Wheeler further support her philanthropic endeavors?

Research Justification

This historical study of a pioneer in education was conducted to add to the body of available literature surrounding African American women who laid foundational groundwork in early childhood education. According to Aldridge and Christensen (2013), many women in education have never received their due credit for their contributions. This is especially true for women from marginalized communities and women of color. Dr. Susie Weems Wheeler provided contributions that were significant in early childhood education in the state of Georgia. As her granddaughter and as an educator, it was important to me on a personal level to complete this project so that Dr. Wheeler would receive the recognition she deserves for her seminal work in early childhood education.

Significance of the Study

This study began with a desire to know the story of a woman born during a time when African Americans were treated as separate and lower-class humans in the United States of America. Dr. Wheeler, an African American woman, was inspired to become a teacher by her first-grade teacher. Later in life, she became an administrator for African American schools when schools were still segregated. Dr. Wheeler forged through difficult barriers for African- American women. The data gathered for this study was meant to add to the missing voices of the women of color who laid the foundation for the children in their communities to receive an education. Even during the tumultuous time frame of the Civil Rights Era, there were educators who overcame obstacles and persevered. There stories deserve to be studied and shared, thereby adding to the body of literature on early childhood and elementary education pioneers.

Assumptions of the Study

The assumptions of this study were as follows:

1. There would be participants with first-hand knowledge of Dr. Susie Wheeler to participate in this historical research study.
2. Interviewed participants of the study were Dr. Wheeler's family members and her former colleague.
3. The study participants would have been young adults between the ages of 21 and 35 during the Civil Rights Era.

Limitations of the Study

This narrative case study had the following limitations:

1. There was a limited number of participants, as many of Dr. Wheeler's colleagues are now deceased.
2. This study was based on an incomplete set of records.
3. The availability of primary documents on the life of Dr. Wheeler was limited.
4. The events reported on in this study occurred more than 70 years ago, so it may be difficult to fully understand the circumstances of that time.
5. Because this case study was built around one individual, findings cannot be generalized to other women.

Definition of Terms

African Americans- refers to people who were born in America and are of African descent (Robinson, 2017).

Civil Rights Era- The classical phase of the civil rights struggle, which began with the Brown vs. Board of Education court decision and ended with the passing of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (Hall, 2005).

segregation- the separation or isolation of a race, class, or ethnic group by enforced or voluntary residence in a restricted area, by barriers to social intercourse, by separate educational facilities, or by other discriminatory means (McFarlin, 2015).

integration- in this study, refers to when students of all races were allowed to attend schools together (Martin & Brooks, 2020).

negro- a term used in the past to refer to African Americans.

Jim Crow Laws- laws in the South that were used to segregate based on race. Jim Crow laws were prevalent between the times when Reconstruction ended, and the Civil Rights Era began (McFarlin, 2015).

Rosenwald Schools- schools that were a manifestation of the extensive effort of Booker T. Washington to build schools for African American children in the south post-emancipation. At the behest of Washington, Julius Rosenwald, a businessman from the north offered matching funds for building these community schools. (Klugh, 2005).

Jeanes Supervisors- African American teachers who served as superintendents of African American schools during segregation (Krause, 2003). Sometimes referred to as Jeanes Teachers, they were named for Anna Thomas Jeanes, a Quaker woman from Philadelphia who established *The Negro Rural School Fund* in 1907 (Hine, Brown, & Temborg-Penn, 1993). The fund, which was commonly called the Jeanes Fund, was established to improve small rural schools for African Americans in southern states. African American teachers were trained using contributions from the Jeanes Fund.

Reconstruction- time -period following the American Civil War, ranging between the years of 1865 and 1877, during which Black people fought for political representation and equality (McFarlin, 2015).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 of this research study includes the introduction, background information, rationale for conducting the study, study purpose, problem statement, research questions, research justification, significance, limitations, delimitations, and definition of terms.

Chapter 2 is a literature review of education in the pre- and post-civil rights era and research of African American women in early childhood education. Chapter 3 consists of the study methodology, and Chapter 4 shows findings from the study. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the research study results, implications, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter covers a review of literature on the history behind the education of African American children in the South during Reconstruction, during the pre-Civil Rights Era, and during the Civil Rights Era. This history helps to frame Dr. Susie Wheeler's life experiences, because she began school as a first grader during segregation. Her experiences in life were guided by what took place during the historical times mentioned in this review. Reconstruction and segregation periods in American history were explored as they set the foundation for the activism in which many African American educators participated. During the pre-Civil Rights Era and the Civil Rights Era, many African Americans joined professional organizations which had been established to further the cause of social reform. This chapter explains these organizations and their causes.

African American women who forged through barriers to fund and offer education to the children in their communities were reviewed. Many similarities between these African American women and Dr. Susie Wheeler were noted. Rosenwald schools, schools created in African American communities by their own community members, were built during the pre-Civil Rights Era. The two men who convened to create and help fund this massive project, Booker T. Washington and Julius Rosenwald, were studied and reviewed. One of the notable Rosenwald schools was the Noble Hill School. It was the first Rosenwald school built to certain specifications in Northwest Georgia and had a

tremendous impact on Dr. Susie Wheeler's life as a child, as a professional educator, and as a philanthropist.

Reconstruction and The Civil Rights Act

Slavery ended in the United States due to the Emancipation Proclamation and the subsequent Civil War (McFarlin, 2015). Following the abolishment of slavery in 1865, the United Sates entered an era referred to as Reconstruction (McFarlin, 2015). Reconstruction framed a time during which African Americans clamored for educational opportunities (McFarlin, 2015). According to Walker (2005), it was known among African Americans that the key to being successful members of society was to learn to read, write, and complete mathematical tasks. This commencement toward education for African American communities was cumbersome in progression due to lack of funding for adequate school buildings and school supplies.

The Civil Rights Act of 1875 was instituted to further support the release of slaves. This act declared that every person born in the United States regardless of their race was considered a citizen of the United States and therefore entitled to equal treatment under the law (Robinson, 2017). Initially, African American children and White children attended schools together in some communities in the south prior to *Plessy v. Ferguson*. However, with the plummeting state of the economy in the South and many southerners' personal emotions regarding the outcome of the war, Robinson (2017) stated that anger towards African Americans was prevalent.

Plessy v. Ferguson and Segregated Schools

A ruling in the groundbreaking court case *Plessy v. Ferguson* gave foundational support for the separate but equal argument in the South (McFarlin, 2015). Homer A.

Plessy, an African American man who was self-described as one eighth African American and seven eighths White purchased a train ticket in New Orleans and selected a seat in a Whites only section of the railway car (Hoffer, 2014). When Plessy refused to move to the colored section, he was arrested and placed in jail. Plessy then reportedly hired lawyers to wage a complaint against the judge about the ruling being unconstitutional, according to Hoffer (2014). The defense claimed the separation of African Americans and Whites violated Plessy's constitutional civil rights, underscoring the verbiage in the thirteenth and fourteenth amendments (Hoffer, 2014; McFarlin, 2015).

The *Plessy v. Ferguson* court case was a test case and a depiction of activism orchestrated by a group who called themselves the "Comité des Citoyens" in New Orleans (Hoffer, 2014). It was known that courts rarely made judgements without a cause. The Comité des Citoyens, a society of Creole men, decided that one avenue to obtain a judgment about whether separation by race was constitutional, was to stage an arrest of a passenger who looked White, but was African American (Hoffer, 2014). Plessy was selected as the defendant in this case because of his fair complexion. The members of the Comité des Citoyens believed that it would be impossible to impose Louisiana's Separate Car Act on railroad cars when one's racial makeup could not be easily identified (Hoffer, 2014).

The group wrote in one document,

> At all events, it is imperative duty of oppressed citizens to seek redress before the judicial tribunals of the country. In our case, we find it is the only means left us. We must have recourse to it or sink into a state of hopeless inferiority. (Hoffer, 2014, p. 3).

Funds were raised by the African American community to support this test case, and the funds were used to hire lawyers and a police officer to make the arrest. The judge

in *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruled that Plessy's civil rights had not been violated, because seating in social events was not considered a civil right (Hoffer, 2014; McFarlin, 2015). The final ruling in this case set the foundation for the implementation of Jim Crow laws (McFarlin, 2015).

Jim Crow laws that were implemented in the southern areas of the United States were instituted as a means for White people to maintain a level of self-imposed superiority over African Americans (Robinson, 2017). This Jim Crow time frame was described as "a racial caste system shaped the lives of United States citizens, discriminating against Black Americans" (McFarlin, 2015, p. 235).

Booker T. Washington, Julius Rosenwald, and Rosenwald Schools

In 1856, Booker Taliaferro was born in Franklin County, Virginia, to a mother who was enslaved (Deutsch, 2011). His father was unknown but was believed to be one of the slave owners from a nearby plantation. Booker would later write that he never knew his exact birthday, and he was envious of children who knew the details of their birthdate. He lived in a house just steps from the enslavers who forced labor upon his mother and siblings.

As a young boy, Booker was required to accompany the enslaver's daughter, a teacher, to and from her job (Deutsch, 2011). His job was to bring the horse back to the plantation for work during the day. Before making the trek back to the plantation, Booker would sometimes peek into the classroom. He was entranced by the children as he watched them learn from the teacher and their books. Booker was not allowed to be taught how to read or write, so this glimpse into learning sparked his interest.

When he was just nine years old, Booker was present to hear that his family was now free due to the Emancipation Proclamation. Overjoyed and yet somewhat cautious about what lay on the road ahead, his mother made plans to join her husband in Malden, West Virginia. As young Booker worked for his stepfather in the salt mines, he heard people speak of this wonderful institution in which African Americans were accepted and given an education (Finkelstein, 2014). It was around this time that he added his last name, Washington. Washington made a personal goal to attend Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute. Following his time working in coal mines for his stepfather, Washington was hired to work for a white woman who had extremely high standards for cleanliness in her home. Though she was described as difficult to work for, she supported his learning and encouraged him to attend Hampton, just as his family did.

Washington was permitted to enter Hampton with an interesting version of an entrance exam (Deutsch, 2011). He had to clean a classroom. His work on the plantation and in the former job he had just left prepared him for this exam. He cleaned with such fervor that not a speck of dirt could be found by the professor who was charged with grading his performance. Booker T. Washington was admitted into Hampton Institute, he and paid for his education with labor. He worked diligently on his classwork and performed well during his years at Hampton.

Upon earning his degree in education, Washington returned home to Malden and stepped into his career as an educator (Deutsch, 2011). Though he enjoyed serving his community, it is reported that he felt teaching would not be his final career path. In addition to working as an educator, Washington was encouraged to participate in public

speaking engagements, a skill which would prove to be one of many of his talents as he progressed in the field of education.

In 1879, Washington was invited to speak at Hampton's commencement ceremony by the founder, General Samuel Chapman Armstrong (Deutsch, 2011). Subsequently, he was invited to join the faculty at Hampton by Armstrong. In 1881, Washington was recommended by Armstrong to become the principal of a school in Tuskegee, Alabama, which was being founded to train African American teachers (Deutsch, 2011; Generals, Jr., 2013).

Figure 1. Booker Taliaferro Washington. (Source: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, DC).

Booker T. Washington, shown in Figure 1., was described as a charismatic and energetic gentleman, qualities which served him well as he traveled to churches and homes to encourage African American families to enroll their sons and daughters in his school (Deutsch, 2011). The new school had received funding from the state for teacher's salaries, but this funding would not stretch to cover the building and materials needed. Washington pressed forward and built a farm that he felt would help to sustain the school. He worked with students to run the farm and clean the needed areas. The curriculum that would be taught at Tuskegee would mirror that of Hampton Institute. Vocational training and academics would be the emphasis of an education within the school.

As he rose to fame as an accomplished orator, Washington's views on racial matters were met with opposition by numerous members of the African American community (Deutsch, 2011). To many in society, it seemed that Washington held education in higher regard than social equality. Opposers in the African American community, such as W.E.B. DuBois, felt that Washington's emphasis on industrial education for African American and being complacent with their current social status was not the direction in which they wanted to venture. According to Deutsch (2011),

> In the light of unfolding events, some blacks acknowledged feeling uneasy about Washington's apparent willingness to accept inferior social status, reduced access to The Ballot Box, and even worse on their behalf. They began to distance themselves from Booker T Washington, and one of them, W.E.B. DuBois, would derisively dub the speech "the Atlanta Compromise," a name it has retained in many minds. (p. 53)

During these years in which Tuskegee was gaining traction and Washington was becoming known as a powerful speaker, Julius Rosenwald, a Jewish man residing in Chicago Illinois, was working as the vice president of Sears, Roebuck, and Company (Deutsch, 2011). Prior to his time at Sears, Roebuck, and Company, Rosenwald had

owned his own clothing company. During his adolescent years, Rosenwald, much like Washington, had work experiences which built the foundation for the type of entrepreneur he would become.

Julius Rosenwald, pictured in Figure 2, and his five siblings were raised in a middle-class home in Springfield, Illinois (Deutsch, 2011). His father worked as a salesman in his in-laws' shop. Unlike Washington, Julius had the opportunity to attend school. At the age of sixteen, he left formal schooling to work as an apprentice for his uncles in their retail store. The knowledge he gained working for his family and learning how to run a business would help him for the remainder of his life.

Figure 2. Julius Rosenwald. (Source: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, DC).

In Chicago, Illinois, Rosenwald and his cousin opened a men's clothing store, Rosenwald and Weil (Deutsch, 2011; Finkelstein, 2014). The year was 1886. The store was quite successful as a brick-and-mortar facility, but the practice of purchasing items through the mail was becoming increasingly popular (Deutsch, 2011). When Rosenwald was contacted by his brother-in-law with an opportunity to purchase shares in Sears, Roebuck, and Company, he pondered over the idea. This chance to be a partner in a flourishing mail order retail business was one he seemingly could not pass on. Sears, Roebuck, and Company also owed Rosenwald & Weil funds for an order of suits they had fulfilled.

According to Deutsch (2011), Rosenwald served as vice president until the retirement of his business associate, Richard Sears, in 1908. He stepped into the role of president of this massive company during that same year and while he and his family lived a lavish lifestyle, Rosenwald also began giving to charitable causes. Deutsch (2011) and Finkelstein (2014) explained that Rabbi Emil Hirsch from Temple Sinai encouraged members of the temple to share with those in need.

It was the summer of 1911, and Washington, while traveling, was fulfilling his consistent goal of searching for benefactors who would support Tuskegee (Deutsch, 2011; Finkelstein, 2014) and the funding of schools for African American children in the south. According to Generals, Jr. (2013), "the goal for Washington was to spread education throughout the south by way of Tuskegee graduates and trained teachers and by advocating publicly funded schools for blacks in the rural south (p. 90). Both Booker T. Washington and Julius Rosenwald were supporters of the YMCA movement, so their meeting seemed destined to happen. They met at a YMCA luncheon in Chicago, Illinois.

Rosenwald and Washington, with similar beliefs in supporting others, conferred about the best way to support the plight of African Americans, particularly in the south. Washington shared about African American communities in the south that were saving up money to build a local school for their children. At that time, African Americans were required to pay taxes, and federal funding went to schools for White children.

Deutsch (2011) explained that Rosenwald, who had already pledged to donate funds towards YMCAs, was open to hearing about Tuskegee. When asked by Washington to serve as a member on the board, Rosenwald mentioned he would need to see this school before deciding. After visiting the Tuskegee, Rosenwald agreed to donate towards community schools for African Americans if the communities would raise money as well. The local school systems agreed to get on board with this novel program as well, offering the majority of the funding for building these schools which would come to be known as Rosenwald schools.

Although his name was associated with the schools against his will, as Rosenwald was known to be quite modest about his philanthropic endeavors, the African American communities offered more funding toward these schools than the money they received from the Rosenwald fund (Feiler, 2021; Deutsch, 2011). In addition to monetary donations, African American communities donated land, labor, and supplies to help build and sustain the schools for their children.

As shown in Figure 3, there are many Rosenwald schools that were constructed in the south. A total of 4,978 schools were built by the time the program ended in (Feiler, 2021). “Of the original 4, 978 Rosenwald schools, about 500 survive; around half of those schools have been restored” (Feiler, 2021, p. 9).

The Rosenwald Fund began to adjust from building schools to supporting adults in higher education. Hoffschewelle (2012) noted that the Rosenwald fund became a type of fellowship program which provided grants for authors, singers, dancers, and other professionals to further their education. James Weldon Johnson, author of what is now known as the Black National Anthem, Lift Every Voice and Sing, and Langston Hughes were just a few of the fellows who received support from the Rosenwald Fund. Washington passed away in 1915, just a few years after the program had begun (Deutsch, 2011). Rosenwald wrote a clause in his agreement stating that all the money from the Rosenwald Fund should be used within 15 years of his passing. He passed away in 1932. The fund continued to be used for building properties until it was depleted.

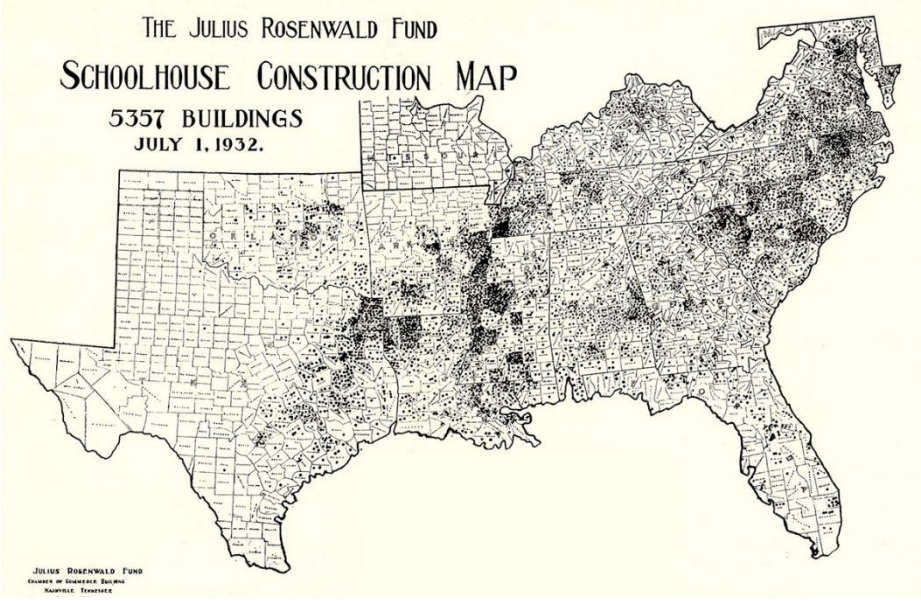

Figure 3. Schoolhouse Construction Map for Rosenwald Schools. (Source: Fisk University Julius Rosenwald Archives.)

Prior to the creation of the Rosenwald Fund, a fund to build schools for African American children in the south was launched by a woman named Anna Thomas Jeanes. The *Negro Rural School Fund* was established in 1907 by Quaker heiress Anna Jeanes to improve small rural schools for African Americans in southern states (Hine, Brown, & Temborg-Penn, 1993, p. 632). Through this fund, numerous African Americans became teachers and supported the learning of children in their communities. School administrators would apply to receive grants from the fund when they needed financial support for the schools that were for African American children.

Dr. Wheeler was in the first group of students to attend a Rosenwald school for her community, Noble Hill. She attended Noble Hill from first through seventh grade. Noble Hill School would have a profound impact on her life as she continued her academic journey and made her decision to become a teacher.

African American Educator Organizations

Walker (2005) explored the resistance of African American educators in Georgia in the 1930s. Across the nation, and especially in the South, African American children were only able to attend school in community-based schoolhouses (Martin & Brooks, 2020; Walker, 2005). These school structures were not comparable to schools for White children. Typically, they were dilapidated shacks with no running water and only one or two rooms in which groups of multiple aged children were expected to be taught (Walker, 2005). Walker stated that the teachers' salaries were far beneath the pay received by white educators and due to the lack of funds, the school term was much shorter in length than schools for White children.

Loder- Jackson (2015) noted, “Black teacher associations typically originated at the state level in the post-Reconstruction Era South in response to the erosion of hard-fought political gains and increasingly violent resistance to Black political and educational advancement” (p. 36). Organizations such as the American Teacher Organization (ATA) and the Georgia Teachers and Educations Association (GTEA) were formed by African American educators to support the advancement of education for African American students (Walker, 2005). Historically, African American educators were documented as bystanders in the fight for equal education. However, Walker (2005) and Klugh (2005) described the constant organization and planning that took place among African American educators and within African American communities. It was clear that the educators in the ATA and GTEA knew about the institutional racism that still plagued their communities. Black teachers’ associations held meetings in the hopes of bringing better educational opportunities to their communities.

Support from those who were not African American was also evident in literature describing the fight for equitable education. Many of the advocates feared being fired or other punishment for supporting the education of African Americans. However, Walker (2005) explained that whether their support was overt or covert, it did not waiver. The organizations’ efforts were fruitful in that there was an increase in the number of schools for African American children in the length of the school term and in attendance (Walker, 2005). Dr. Susie Wheeler was a member of the GTEA and the NAACP. She worked diligently in these organizations to advocate and to keep her community informed of the latest legal decisions that would directly affect them.

African American Educators in the South

Enslaved African Americans sought an education, even though it was deemed illegal for them to be taught how to read or write. There are stories of an enslaved woman by the name of Milla Granson, who taught children how to read in a midnight school within their living quarters (McCluskey, 2014). According to Favors (2019), W.E.B. Dubois once said:

> For the South believed an educated Negro to be a dangerous negro. And the South was not wholly wrong; for Education among all kinds of men always has had, and always will have, an element of danger and revolution, of dissatisfaction and discontent. (p. 1)

Regardless of the dangers which accompanied this quest, many African Americans in the South worked relentlessly to obtain an education and to provide an education for their children, because it was their belief that this was the best weapon against inequality (Givens, 2021).

According to Givens (2021), African Americans knew that education was a freedom tool. This was made abundantly clear by the lengths at which others went to stifle the African Americans' right to an education. In the latter decades of the 1800s, more than 600 schools for African American children were burned (Givens, 2021). McCluskey (2014) stated,

> In the intervening years, the recalcitrant attitudes of white Southerners who underfunded and even burned down black schools, made initiatives to educate black children even more crucial. Such opposition spurred among the black masses a resolve and a hunger for education. (p. 4)

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) were created as a means for African Americans to receive higher education degrees, since they were not allowed to enroll in predominantly white institutions (PWIs) (Favors, 2019). HBCUS were known

for empowering students from marginalized groups, many of whom became activists in the community. Favors (2019) explained that many White Americans were not threatened by higher learning opportunities for African Americans, unlike the racial violence that was bestowed upon other places such as churches and schools. Many of the noted African Americans who worked diligently to provide opportunities for African American youth to receive an education were men and were very well-known by both members of all races.

Drs. Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, and Carter Woodson held their places among the scholarly elite. However, the African American women who were pioneers and activists in the education field rarely received their due recognition for their diligent efforts to offer an education to African American youth. These assiduous educators worked to ensure racial uplift through educating the youth and being vocal about the inequities African Americans endured (McCluskey, 2014).

Female Pioneers in Education

There were multiple female early childhood educators whose work was at the forefront of education and yet never received their due credit for their prodigious contributions to the field (Aldridge & Christensen, 2013). As the Progressive Era is studied and reviewed, men such as John Dewey and Booker T. Washington are highlighted as pioneers. However, there were also brilliant women who sowed the seeds for equitable education for children of color and children in impoverished areas whose notable contributions are not highlighted.

Lucy Craft Laney

Lucy Craft Laney, the founder and principal of Haines Institute, was born in Macon, Georgia, in 1854 (“Lucy Craft Laney,” 2004; McCluskey, 2014). Her father, who

purchased his own freedom, also purchased her mother's freedom. Laney's mother continued working for her former slave owners, and Laney was permitted to learn to read, presumably due in part to her mother's freedom and relationship with the family.

Laney attended Atlanta University, but she was only allowed to enter the teacher training courses, as African Americans were not permitted to attend the university's regular college classes (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). Laney believed strongly in racial progress. She stated that it was the burden of African American women to lead and teach African American children. An outspoken advocate for women's rights and the equal treatment of all human beings, she was invited to speak at numerous engagements (McCluskey, 2014). worked with W.E.B. DuBois to highlight the living conditions of African American families living in Georgia.

Laney studied diligently to become a teacher and served as an educator in North Carolina and in Georgia ("Lucy Craft Laney," 2004). According to "Lucy Craft Laney" (2004), at the age of 29, she opened a school in Augusta, Georgia, with a modest five pupils in attendance at its inception. Laney's predominant focus was on educating young women, but she also accepted male students in her school.

As the student numbers increased, the school's location transitioned multiple times ("Lucy Craft Laney," 2004). During a visit to a convention during which Laney lobbied for funding of her school, Laney met Francine Haines, the secretary of the Women's Department of the Presbyterian church (McCluskey, 2004). Haines had garnered support and was able to solidify the funding of Laney's vision for a larger compound for the school. Laney, so inspired by Ms. Haines' support, named her school

Haines Normal and Industrial School. Figure 4 shows a classroom from Haines Normal and Industrial School.

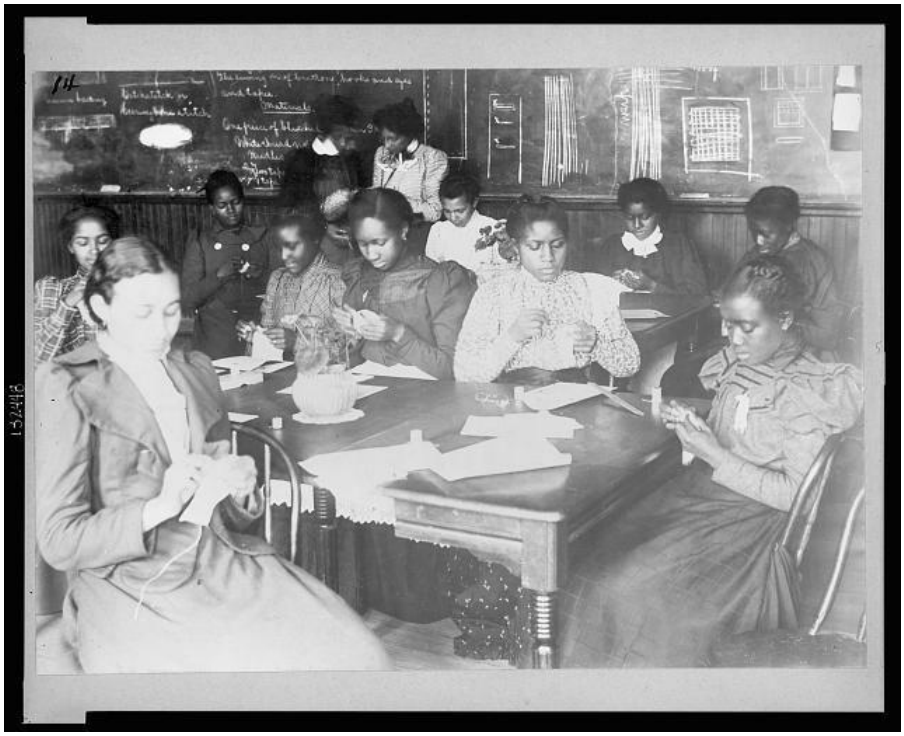

Figure 4. Sewing class at Haines Normal and Industrial Institute, August, GA. (Source: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs)

Today, Laney's contributions to the education of children in the South are well-documented. Haines Normal and Industrial School closed and was demolished in 1949, according to "Lucy Craft Laney" (2004). However, the high school built in the same location is named Lucy. C. Laney High School to commemorate her tireless efforts in the field of education.

Mary McLeod Bethune

One of Laney's apprentices was Mary McLeod Bethune, an educator, diplomat, and activist who founded a school which is now an accredited university (McCluskey, 2014; Thomas & Jackson, 2007). She was born in Mayesville, South Carolina, to parents

who were formerly enslaved. Mary was their first child to be born free. She was extremely intelligent as a child and was given the opportunity to attend Scotia Seminary, a school for African American girls in North Carolina, on a scholarship.

After witnessing the fate of African American children who lacked the educational opportunities that she had, Bethune was motivated to support children from impoverished families by helping them to get an education (McCluskey, 2014). She married Albertus Bethune, and following their marriage, they moved to Florida.

Bethune set her sights on Daytona Beach, Florida, as the location for the school she wanted to establish. Daytona Beach was home to wealthy families and affluent Northerners who would come to visit in the summers. Bethune was cognizant of the building of the Florida East Coast railway, and Daytona was on the path for this railroad (McCluskey, 2014). It was known that there would be a plethora of work opportunities; therefore, many black families moved to this area. The workers, referred to as day laborers, had children who would need to obtain an education. Bethune felt this was her chance to establish a school.

McCluskey (2014) stated that with just one dollar and fifty cents, Mary McLeod Bethune founded the Daytona Literary and Industrial School for Negro Girls. This school's initial focus was to provide girls with academics and vocational skills. However, over time, Bethune's focus shifted towards that of Dr. W.E.B. DuBois' beliefs that education could serve as empowerment. During her time as a teacher, Bethune worked tirelessly to raise funds for better housing and all the needed materials to run the school. Bethune was once quoted:

> We burned logs and used charred splinters as pencils, and mashed elderberries for ink. I begged strangers for a broom, a lamp, a bit of cretonne to put around the

> packing case which served as my desk. I haunted the city dump and trash piles behind hotels, retrieving discarded linen and kitchenware, cracked dishes, broken chairs, pieces of old lumber. Everything was scoured and mended. This was part of the training- to salvage, to reconstruct, to make bricks without straw. (McCluskey, 2014, p. 60.)

Although the Daytona Literary and Industrial School for Negro Girls was established with minute resources, Bethune was skilled at fundraising and bringing people of all races together to support the school. McCluskey (2014) explained that philanthropic work in which Bethune engaged in proved to be the requirement for the school's growth and sustainability. Gaining the financial support of such proprietors as Thomas White, whose family owned the White Sewing Machine Company and James Gamble of Proctor and Gamble, Bethune's school continued to flourish with increased enrollment. In 1923, The Daytona Literary and Industrial School for Negro Girls "merged with the Cookman Institute of Jacksonville Florida, a school for boys" (Thomas & Jackson, 2007, p. 362) and was named Bethune-Cookman College.

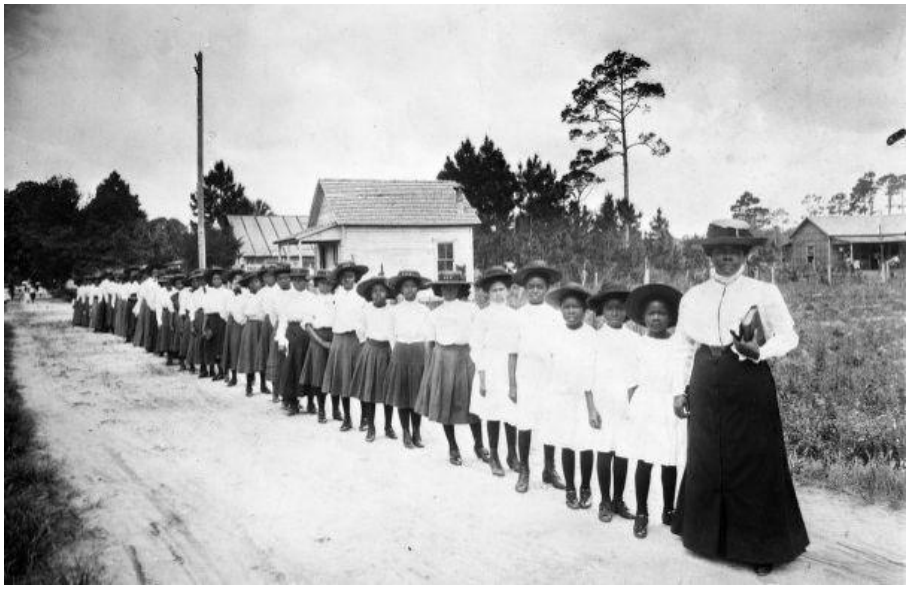

Figure 5. Mary McLeod Bethune with a line of girls from the school, Daytona, FL. (Source: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, DC.)

In addition to fulfilling her calling as an educator and a philanthropist, Bethune was appointed to the position of Director of Negro Affairs by President Franklin D. Roosevelt (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). She had an ability to speak candidly and respectfully, and this led to her recognition at the national level (McCluskey, 2014). Bethune was affiliated with the numerous organizations that sought to advance the lives of African Americans in the United States. She served as the President of the National Association of Colored Women, and she was a founding member of the National Council of Negro Women (McCluskey, 2014; Thomas & Jackson, 2007).

Nannie Helen Burroughs

Nannie Helen Burroughs was a suffragist, an intellectual, an educator, a profound orator, and an activist. She was born in Orange, Virginia, to parents who were enslaved. When Burroughs was a young child, both her father and sister passed away. Burroughs and her mother moved to Washington, DC, in search of greater educational opportunities. She matriculated through M Street High School, where Mary Church Terrell was once employed as teacher and Anna Julia Cooper once served as the principal. Burroughs had intentions of becoming a teacher and although she possessed the required education to qualify for a teaching position, she was not hired by the District of Columbia school systems. Burroughs believed she wasn't offered a teaching job because of her darker complexion (McCluskey, 2004).

Burroughs worked in other positions to make ends meet but made a firm decision to open a school in which no politics would be involved (McCluskey, 2014). She had an opportunity to speak at the annual National Baptist Convention in 1900, and her speech, entitled *How the Sisters are Hindered in Helping,* was about the lack of opportunities for

women to engage in leadership roles within the church (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). She rose to fame following this speaking engagement. McCluskey (2014) noted, “such eloquent oratory ignited her career as a public speaker, while her witty and candid writing style led to more freelance columns in several black newspapers” (p. 105).

After much persistence, the National Baptist Convention and the Women’s Convention, an auxiliary of the National Baptist Convention, supported Burroughs’ efforts to found the National Training School for Women and Girls in 1909 (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). The school started with just seven students, and Burroughs ensured the curriculum would encompass concepts each girl would need to be successful (McCluskey, 2014). Burroughs once pronounced, “We believe that an industrial and classical education can be simultaneously attained, and it is our duty to get both" (McCluskey, 2014, p. 106). Although she shared similar tenets of other African American school founders around that time, Burroughs did not seek monetary support from white philanthropists, like those from whom Mary McLeod Bethune secured funds (McCluskey, 2014). Thomas and Jackson (2007) noted that the school was funded by independent community members and organizations.

Burroughs, shown in Figure 6, continued to give speeches in which she explained how African Americans must do things for themselves, rather than depend on others for help. Additionally, she spoke in support of women’s right to vote, and she was “especially concerned about the racial divide between black and white women” (McCluskey, 2014, p. 4). She thought the most recognized African American women were chosen as leaders by white women, and this leadership decision should be determined by members of African Americans communities (McCluskey, 2014).

For some 50 years, Nannie Helen Burroughs directed The National Training School for Women and Girls, which was renamed the National Trade and Professional School in 1939 (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). Her Christian beliefs were intertwined with her skills in leadership, organization, writing, and speaking (McCluskey, 2014). It was astounding for others to witness her tenacity in keeping the school open during recessions and attempts by male-led organizations to take the school over. Burroughs led the school until her passing in 1961. According to Thomas and Jackson (2007), the school is now a private school named the Nannie Helen Burroughs school, and children are learning the same Christian principles that she fought to instill in the curricula at The National Training School for Women and Girls.

Figure 6. Nannie Helen Burroughs. (Source: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, DC).

Lucy Sprague Mitchell

Lucy Sprague was born into a wealthy family in Chicago, Illinois. Her relationship with her parents, and specifically with her father, during childhood would have an impact on her future professional life (Antler, 1987). Upon completion of her college degree, Sprague was hired as the dean of women at The University of California at Berkeley (Aldridge & Christensen, 2013). In this position, Sprague was able to positively impact women and hone her research work. Additionally, she spent time with her niece, Polly, and it was through this interaction that she began studying children and taking notes about how children remember things (Antler, 1987).

At times, Sprague struggled with feelings of lacking in her personal life, because of her persistent professional work (Antler, 1987). However, she met and married Wesley Mitchell in 1912. After Lucy left her position at The University of California, her cousin, Elizabeth received a healthy inheritance after her parents passed away and was eager to donate towards a meaningful cause. Lucy had been mulling over an idea to found an organization that would "coordinate and sponsor experiments" (Antler, 1987, p. 219). Elizabeth offered to donate up to $50,000 annually to her younger cousin, Lucy, and the Bureau of Educational Experiments (BEE) was established. Though it was commonplace for women from wealthy families to financially support certain educational ventures, Antler (1987) stated:

> Lucy Mitchell in contrast saw her role as going beyond philanthropy. The BEE embodied the diverse currents in Lucy's prior educational work in New York and her developing ideas about new directions for experimental education. She invested the full force of her idealism in the Bureau, serving its cause through active involvement as a worker, administrator, and leader. (p. 225)

The BEE was at the leading edge of progressive education, yet Sprague Mitchell did not receive the same notoriety as her male counterpart, John Dewey (Aldridge & Christensen, 2013). Rather than conducting traditional laboratory experiments, extensive note taking was employed by the teachers at the BEE (Aldridge & Christensen, 2013). This qualitative research was unconventional and profound because the children were being studied in their natural environment. According to Christensen (2008), Sprague Mitchell was the first person to use naturalistic coding themes in qualitative research.

Through the use of an autonomous curriculum, the children were encouraged to play in groups collectively or solitarily (Aldridge & Christensen, 2013). Their classroom toys included wooden figurines and a plethora of outdoor equipment. Sprague Mitchell's belief was that children's learning should begin with their most immediate environment. The Bureau of Educational Experiments later became the Bank Street College of Education and featured a faculty that was implementing developmentally appropriate practices prior to the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) creation of guidelines for them. According to their website, Bank Street College of Education is still serving teachers and students, and the focus remains on social justice, advocacy, and fostering inclusive communities. It is evident that although her story is not as well-known as certain other pioneers in education, Mitchell's impact on early childhood education will continue through the legacy she left behind.

Anna Julia Cooper

Another educator, Anna Julia Cooper, was also making a remarkable impact on education and social reform (Aldridge & Christensen, 2013). When she was eight years old, slaves were set free due to the Emancipation Proclamation in 1963. Anna began her

educational journey at that time and noted that she had dreams of becoming a teacher at a very young age. She began at St. Augustine's College and Normal school, where she not only received an education, but worked as a tutor at nine years of age. In her quest for higher education, Anna chose to leave St. Augustine's College and Normal school. She attended Oberlin College in 1881. There, she and four other young women of color chose to follow a four-year course that was typically slated for men (Aldridge & Christensen, 2013; Hine, Brown, & Terborg-Penn, 1993). This choice displayed the intelligence and bravery that Cooper was known to possess.

Cooper was hired as an educator at the famous M Street High School in Washington, DC (Aldridge & Christensen, 2013). During her time as a faculty member there, Cooper lived with a family that housed several other women who were Oberlin graduates. One of those teachers was Mary Church Terrell, a fellow early childhood education pioneer. In support of education for the local community, Cooper worked to open a day nursery and a kindergarten. She was invited to speak at various events, allowing her to develop into a powerful orator.

Cooper felt as if she needed to serve as an advocate for women and children (Hine, Brown, & Terborg-Penn, 1993). The Black Women's club movement was gaining traction during the early 1900s, and Cooper worked with numerous clubs to advocate on behalf of those in need. It is abundantly clear that she was a lifelong learner, as Cooper pursued and earned her Ph.D. in education at the age of 67. Her education began at a modest, ungraded school in Raleigh, North Carolina, and her final Ph.D. work was completed at the Sorbonne, in Paris. Dr. Cooper became the fourth African American woman to earn a Ph.D.

Dr. Anna Julia Cooper fought for women to have equal rights and access to educational opportunities. She believed that women could reach the same educational heights as men, and she voiced her thoughts in her writings and in her speeches. Additionally, Dr. Cooper was a staunch supporter of her African American community and the plight for equal treatment in the United States. Her book, *A Voice from the South: By a Black Woman of the South* (1892) was a collection of essays that noted disparities in the African American community.

Mary Church Terrell

Dr. Cooper's Oberlin College classmate and colleague, Mary Church Terrell, significantly impacted early childhood education for children in African American communities as well (Aldridge & Christensen, 2013). Mary Church was born in Memphis, Tennessee in 1863, the year the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect. Her parents, who were formerly enslaved, were successful in their business ventures. Church's mother owned a hair salon, and her father was considered one of the wealthiest Black men in the south. At the age of six, Mary's mother elected to send her to Antioch Model School in Yellow Springs, Ohio, because she felt that the schools for children of color in their area would not provide the best education. Antioch was believed to have housed the first kindergarten for African Americans. An intelligent and diligent student, Mary excelled at her studies. However, she experienced racism at a young age as the only child of color in her class at the Model School. Mary knew her calling in life would be to speak out against oppression.

Church attended Oberlin High School and subsequently Oberlin College for her bachelor and master's degrees (Aldridge & Christensen, 2013). She opted to follow the

classical course at Oberlin College, as did Anna Julia Cooper. This course was two years longer than the literary course, which was the typical course that women would follow. It also included foreign languages. Mary completed the course of study and began working as a teacher.

Her position at M Street High School connected her once again with her former classmate, Anna Julia Cooper. Worth noting, Mary and her father, although they were close, did not share the same views about a woman's place in society (Giddings, 1984). Mary wanted to be in the workforce and advocate for African American children to receive a proper education. Her father wanted her to be a wife and rear children.

Mary taught at Wilberforce University, and then Washington Colored High School (Aldridge & Christensen, 2013). She could fluently speak four foreign languages and was becoming an accomplished writer. She married Robert Terrell and was expecting their first child when she heard of the lynching death of a childhood friend, Thomas Moss. The lynching, which happened in Mary's birthplace, Memphis, Tennessee, would be a catalyst for Mary's decision to begin speaking out against the horrendous treatment of African Americans. Terrell began working to establish women's clubs for African American women.

The National Association of Colored Women was formed in 1896, and Terrell served as the first president. The goal of the organization was to support educational and social reform. The members put extensive time and effort into offering free kindergarten to children in African American communities. Terrell also served as a founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. These organizations

created a movement that would be the foundation for the civil rights movement in the 1960s.

Susie Weems Wheeler

Dr. Susie Weems Wheeler was born as Susie Lee Weems. Her parents, though not formally educated, encouraged her to seek her education. She was among the first class of students to attend a new Rosenwald School in their community named Noble Hill school. Susie enjoyed attending school, and she was not pleased when she had to miss school to work on her family's farm. She was inspired by several people to continue her education, and she would prove to be successful in her work as an educator and as an advocate and activist for her community.

Early Life

Susie Lee Weems was born February 24, 1917, in the Pine Grove community of Georgia. This rural community is situated near Cartersville, Georgia, a sprawling city located an hour north of Atlanta. According to the 1920 U.S. Census, Susie, her two older siblings, and her parents self-reported their race as mulatto, a derogatory term that was formerly used to describe a person who was biracial (Document 1; Document 2, p. 3).

Susie Lee, as she was affectionately called as a young child, was a rambunctious little girl who enjoyed her childhood with her siblings. Her father was a tenant farmer and her mother worked as a laundress and a housekeeper. In her own words, Dr. Wheeler described her family as being "disadvantaged", stating that her parents both had an elementary-level education. Her mother could read, but her biological father was unable to read (U.S. Census Bureau, 1920). They were very diligent workers and even as a child,

Susie Lee worked by picking cotton on the farm with her father, a task she thoroughly disliked (Interview 3, p. 2; Document 1).

Education

Upon moving from Pine Grove to Cassville, Georgia, Susie attended Noble Hill School, a Rosenwald school. Dr. Wheeler gave background information on Noble Hill School in her autobiography, Learning to Live and Achieve (Document 2). She explained:

> A Rosenwald School for Black students was erected in the Cassville, Georgia community of Bartow County in 1923. It remained in operation until 1955. The school was the first in northwest Georgia to be built with Rosenwald matching funds. It was the first in Bartow County built by a standard school plan for Black students (p. 54).

Noble Hill School was built in 1923 with funds from the community and the Bartow County Board of Education and matching funds from the Rosenwald Fund. The builders included Mr. Webster Wheeler (Figure 8) who in future years would become Dr. Susie Wheeler's father-in-law, and Mr. Daniel Harris.

Figure 7. Mr. Webster Wheeler, the builder of Noble Hill School.
(Source: Noble Hill- Wheeler Memorial Center)

While attending Noble Hill School, Susie Lee was inspired to become an educator by her third-grade teacher, Mrs. Myra Williams. Her mother also played an integral role in her journey to becoming a teacher. Dr. Wheeler would later describe the community support that helped Noble Hill run smoothly for the African American children in the county as follows:

> When you think of it, my memories of this school are examples of many, many noble efforts of so many people. Not only the teachers, but the parents of the students. The students' parents cut and delivered the firewood for the three pot-bellied stoves in the school. On rainy days, many parents brought the children to and from school in wagons and buggies. The students loved the rainy days because that meant they would get rides to school (Document 2, p. 5)

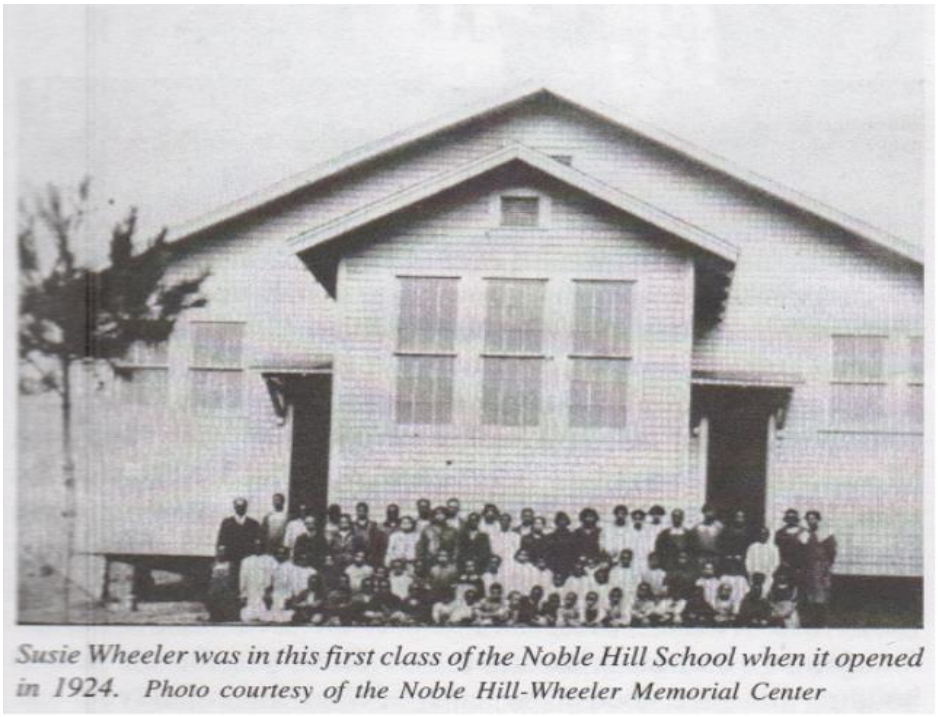

Figure 8. Picture of S. Wheeler and other students at Noble Hill School in 1924. Source: Noble Hill- Wheeler Memorial Center.

In the African American community, some have said that segregation was not a completely negative situation. In a newspaper article she wrote, Dr. Wheeler stated, "I remember when separate schools for races divided our resources which greatly affected the quality of schooling offered to all. In a sense, however, there was more motivation for learning" (Document 2, p. 59).

Although materials were scarce, there were noted benefits. Dr. Thomas Scott asked Dr. Wheeler about the increase in black history lessons while she attended school during segregation. She responded that while the African American schools may not have had the printed materials, they learned Black History through oral stories from their teachers. Dr. Wheeler completed high school at a boarding school to which she had to

travel by bus. She performed superbly in high school and earned the honor of valedictorian of her graduating class (Interview 3, p. 13).

Summary

From Reconstruction to the Civil Rights Era, formerly enslaved African American community members and educators aggressively sought education for the children in their communities. At the federal level and at the state level, laws that continued to oppress African Americans were passed. The resilience of these pioneer educators is evident in their stories. There are still other stories of early childhood educators who were pioneers in their field.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

To accurately report the life experiences of Dr. Susie Wheeler, the researcher employed a qualitative research approach to this study. Creswell (2013) described qualitative research as an approach which delves into the social and political view of individuals. The qualitative researcher will examine the lives, settings, and experiences of the participants. According to Creswell (2013), "Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 44).

Qualitative research is subjective and exploratory in nature, and it highlights phenomena which may otherwise be overlooked (Creswell, 2014). A qualitative research approach was a good fit for this study because the first-hand accounts and rich descriptions of Dr. Wheeler's contributions to education and civil rights were not quantifiable.

The central question of this study was, "What were Dr. Wheeler's contributions to the advancement of early childhood and elementary education and her other philanthropic efforts?"

Four sub-questions led this study:

1. What experiences led Dr. Wheeler to become an educator?

2. What was the role of Dr. Wheeler in the education of children in the state of Georgia from 1954 to 1968?
3. What were the various administrative positions held by Dr. Wheeler?
4. How did the positions held by Dr. Wheeler further support her philanthropic endeavors?

Research Study Approach-Narrative Case Study

This study combined a case study and a narrative inquiry approach. The case for this study is Dr. Susie Wheeler, while the narrative describes her life story and contributions. According to Creswell (2014), "case studies are a design of inquiry found in many fields, especially evaluation, in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals" (p. 14). Case studies are characterized by rich stories about a specific person, event, or organization (Patton, 2015).

Creswell (2013) noted:

> Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (case) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interview, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes.

A narrative inquiry approach was implemented to construct and gain a deeper understanding of Dr. Susie Wheeler's life story and contributions to early childhood education in Georgia. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described narrative inquiry as a way of understanding experiences in life. We, as humans, are storytellers by nature.

> "For us, life-as we come to it and as it comes to others-is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities." (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 17).

In utilizing this approach, the researcher must be a thinker and a listener (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Savin-Baden and Van Niekirk (2007) explained that narrative inquiry "tends to be positioned within a constructivist stance with reflexivity, interpretivism and representation being primary features of the approach" (p. 460).

Philosophical Assumptions

Creswell (2013) explained that initially in the research process, the researcher must look inward to determine her own beliefs and values. One's worldview and philosophical assumptions provide the framework for the research she will undertake. Philosophical assumptions provide the framework through which researchers begin their research projects (Creswell, 2013). Creswell underscored that individuals should bring their own core values, beliefs, and philosophical assumptions to the research process. Creswell (2013) listed and described the following four philosophical assumptions: (1) The ontological assumption focuses on the nature of reality, and the notion that multiple realities exist among the researcher and the participants in a study. Interviews give the participants a voice to share these multiple realities; (2) The epistemological assumption holds that the researcher must become immersed in the participants' lives and personal spaces. This immersion supports the construction of knowledge from a subjective standpoint; (3) The axiological assumption is highlighted when qualitative researchers admit to their own personal values and biases; and (4) The methodology is the procedure of qualitative research. The researcher builds the study by following the analyzed data.

The researcher ascribes to a transformative worldview. A transformative paradigm or worldview is a philosophical assumption that focuses on addressing issues of marginalized groups, oppression, and how these social issues are linked to political

issues. Mertens (2015) noted a transformative worldview holds that research inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political change agenda to confront social oppression at whatever levels it occurs. The transformative paradigm aligns with the qualitative research approach because it focuses on inequities displayed in society and, in many instances, the research serves as a push for action or political change based on the findings of the data from interviews, field notes, and observations (Creswell, 2013).

Research Site

Since this was a historical case study of Dr. Susie Wheeler, who is deceased, there was not a site for this research project. However, the researcher traveled to Noble Hill-Wheeler Memorial Center, which houses most of Dr. Wheeler's writings. Most of the historical documents and photographs used as data for this project were retrieved from Noble Hill- Wheeler Memorial Center in Cassville, Georgia.

Research Participants

This research project is a case study of Dr. Susie Wheeler. The target participants consisted of all individuals with first-hand knowledge of Dr. Wheeler and her legacy. Since Dr. Wheeler was born in 1917 and died in 2007, there were not many participants with fist-hand knowledge of her life. The researcher intended to interview more participants but was limited by participants' declining health and deaths. The curator of the Noble Hill- Wheeler Memorial Center who agreed to be interviewed passed away prior to data collection. A judge who worked closely with Dr. Wheeler during the process of restoring Noble Hill school was unable to participate due to health concerns. Hence, data was collected from only two individuals who were able to participate. The first participant was Dr. Wheeler's only child, Daniel Wheeler, Jr. Mr. Wheeler is a retired

computer programmer and entrepreneur. He is 72 years old. The second participant was Dr. Thomas Scott, Professor Emeritus of history at Kennesaw State University. Dr. Scott worked with Dr. Wheeler for years as he studied the background of education for black children in the south.

Sampling Procedures

Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants for this study. Patton (2015) explained "information- rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (p. 53). Mr. Wheeler and Dr. Scott knew Dr. Susie Wheeler and were purposefully selected due to their extensive knowledge about her.

Recruitment Procedures

The researcher is the child of Mr. Wheeler, so a verbal request for an interview was made. Mr. Wheeler then suggested that the researcher contact Dr. Thomas Scott for an interview. The researcher searched online for Dr. Scott's contact information and sent an email explaining the goal of the project and requesting an interview.

Selection of Historical Documents and Artifacts

The researcher also contacted the curator at Noble Hill- Wheeler Memorial Center in Cassville, Georgia to request access to historical documents and artifacts about Dr. Wheeler. Historical documents and artifacts were selected by the researcher with the support of Ms. Joy Hill, the former curator of Noble Hill- Wheeler Memorial Center. After agreeing to meet the researcher at the Noble Hill, Ms. Hill began selecting scrapbooks and memoirs of Dr. Wheeler's. Ms. Hill also located the only known copy of Dr. Wheeler's dissertation. Dr. Wheeler's autobiography and personal writings were

housed in Mr. Wheeler's basement. These items were given to the researcher for data collection.

Data Collection

This study incorporated the following data sources: individual interviews, document reviews and field notes. These sources provided an in-depth examination of Dr. Susie Wheeler's life experiences and her impact on the field of education. Interviews were conducted in group or individual format and provide the researcher with first-hand accounts of a phenomenon that they are studying. Historical documents are original pieces of work that were written in the past. They are documentation of what transpired and are considered primary sources. Historical documents can be personal items such as diaries and letters. Public and professional documents are also historical documents that can add rich and detailed information to a study. Field notes offer detailed information about things observed by a researcher.

Interview Participants

Data was collected through interviews of Dr. Wheeler's only child and her former colleague. The participants for this study were Mr. Daniel Wheeler, Jr, Dr. Wheeler's son, and Dr. Thomas A. Scott, professor Emeritus of History at Kennesaw State University. The interview sites were designated by the participants. Mr. Wheeler chose to be interviewed at a rehabilitation center near his home, since he was recovering from surgery. His interview lasted approximately two hours and was conducted on two different days. Semi Structured interview questionnaires were used because the researcher knew a general amount of information about Dr. Wheeler, but more was needed to complete her life story. Interview questions (see Interview Protocol: Appendix

C) were provided to Mr. Wheeler prior to the scheduled interview. The interview was audio recorded to allow for transcribing afterwards. The researcher recorded field notes during the interview to describe the gestures Mr. Wheeler made while responding.

Dr. Thomas Scott selected the site for his interview. This interview was conducted in his office at Kennesaw State University and was audio recorded. The researcher was also given access to a digitized copy of Dr. Wheeler's audio-recorded interview with Dr. Scott in March of 2000.

Historical Documents

Initially, the researcher contacted the curator of the Noble Hill-Wheeler Memorial Center in Cassville, Georgia, Ms. Joy Hill, to discuss the project and what documents and artifacts would be needed. The researcher worked with the gatekeeper, Ms. Hill, to determine which documents would be most beneficial in finding the answers to the research questions. The researcher traveled to the center to pick up the documents that were offered and were deemed to be safe to move since they were bound in spiral notebooks, binders, and hardcover scrapbooks. The historical documents and research participants' interviews are listed below in Table 1.

Table 1: Participants and Historical Documents

Sources of Data	Description
Interview Participants	a. Daniel Wheeler, Jr. b. Dr. Thomas Scott
Documents: Primary, Public domain sources	a. Dr. Wheeler's Autobiography- Learning to Live and Achieve b. Dr. Wheeler's dissertation- *An Historical Study of Strategies for Change in the Bartow County School System from 1965-1975.* c. U.S Census (1920) d. Jeanes Supervisor Newsletter binder

Documents: Primary, Private sources	a. Friendship Force photo album b. Noble Hill scrapbook c. Role of Supervisor and Curriculum Director in a Climate of Change d. Jeanes Supervision in Schools
Documents: Secondary Sources	a. Dr. Susie Wheeler's Interview, March 2000 (interviewed by Dr. Thomas Scott) b. Newspaper scrapbook

Field Notes

To obtain thorough data, the researcher recorded field notes while conducting Mr. Wheeler's interview and while reading the historical documents. These field notes aided in gathering deeper information from the data collected. Recording field notes allowed the researcher to be immersed in the sources for this study.

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis process was used in this study to gain a deeper understanding of Dr. Susie Wheeler's life experiences and contributions to Early Childhood Education. Braun and Clarke (2006) defined thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 6). The data collected for this study included interviews and historical documents such as scrapbooks with newspaper articles, scrapbooks containing letters written to and from Dr. Wheeler, Dr. Wheeler's dissertation, titled *An Historical Study of Strategies for Change in the Bartow County School System From 1965-1975*, Dr. Wheeler's autobiography, and a textbook titled *Jeanes Supervision in Georgia Schools.* Additionally, field notes were taken by the researcher during the analysis process.

Thematic Analysis

"Themes in qualitative research (also called categories) are broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea" (Creswell, 2013, p. 186). The recorded interviews of Mr. Wheeler and Dr. Scott were transcribed (See Appendix D and Appendix E for interview transcripts). A six-step method for conducting thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to analyze the data collected for this study. The researcher began by reviewing the data thoroughly. The goal was to find patterns in the data. Next, the researcher began establishing codes. Once the codes were reviewed, some of the codes were clustered together, and themes were generated. The initial codes were reviewed once again, to ensure that an overall picture of the data was being conveyed through the themes. The themes were named, and the final report of the themes was written.

Restorying

Restorying was the second method used for data analysis in this study. According to Creswell (2013) "*Restorying* is the process of reorganizing the stories into some general type of framework" (p. 74). The researcher compiled the data, focusing on the key elements in literature. Time, setting, and plot are used to organize and then retell the story in a chronological format. This project was based on historical facts, therefore the *restorying* method of organizing the findings using story elements was a good fit for analyzing the data.

Trustworthiness and Validity

According to Mertens (2015), "triangulation involves checking information that has been collected from different sources or methods for consistency of evidence across

sources of data" (p. 271). Triangulation was used in this study to ensure that the data collected was dependable and consistent. Triangulation was implemented by examining primary and secondary sources, transcribing, coding interviews, and reviewing Dr. Wheeler's personal writings.

Member checking was used to ensure the validity of the findings in this study. Mertens (2015) described member checking as a practice in which the researcher verifies the data being collected by connecting with the participants and sharing the findings. After conducting one-on-one interviews, transcribing, and coding, sub-themes and themes were shared with Mr. Wheeler.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher applied to the university's International Review Board for approval of conducting the study. The study was deemed as Not Human Subjects Research, and thereby was not subject to FDA regulations. A letter of approval to move forward with the study was emailed to the researcher. (See Appendix A)

The rights of the interview participants were respected. The researcher requested and was allowed access to documents housed in Noble-Hill Wheeler Museum from the former curator, Ms. Joy Hill, and the current curator, Ms. Valerie Coleman. Currently, there is limited information available on African American women in early childhood education and their impact on the education of students during segregation and integration. This study was conducted to document the life experiences of Dr. Susie Wheeler and her role as an educator and activist during the turmoil of the Civil Rights Era.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is an African American woman and keenly aware of the systemic marginalization of women of color in society. The researcher is an educator, and very similarly to Dr. Wheeler has served as a teacher and as an administrator in education. The researcher is also Dr. Wheeler's only granddaughter. She was influenced by her grandmother at a young age to always aim to learn new things. The researcher attended a book talk by Dr. Tondra Loder-Jackson, the author of the book *Schoolhouse Activists*: *African American Educators and the Long Civil Rights Movement* (2015). The researcher was moved by the untold stories of educators who were involved in the Civil Rights Movement on a private level and began to wonder if her grandmother was an educator who had also been secretly working to further the movement within her community. This book talk was the launchpad for the researcher's decision to study her grandmother, Dr. Susie Weems Wheeler.

Currently, the researcher is an instructor of Early Childhood and Elementary Education at a university in Alabama. Previously, the researcher was the director of an early childhood development center in an urban area of a city in Alabama and an educator in public school systems. The drive to bring awareness to the social issues that plague public school systems, specifically those in high poverty areas, was also what inspired the researcher to study women who were change agents.

The researcher requested access to documents housed in Noble-Hill Wheeler Memorial Center by contacting the gatekeeper, the curator of the museum. The researcher contacted Daniel Wheeler, Jr., Dr. Wheeler's only child, to request permission to study Dr. Wheeler's personal writings. No ethical concerns nor requests for anonymity were

made by participants. The researcher applied to the university's International Review Board for approval of conducting the study.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter discussed the research design and methodology used in the study. The study was conducted using the qualitative tradition of research inquiry. A narrative case study approach was used to explore Dr. Wheeler's life history and her philanthropic efforts that led to the advancement of education for African American children in the state of Georgia. Next, the philosophical assumptions were explained. Though there was no research site, the place the researcher visited to collect data was listed and described. The target population and sample were reviewed, and the procedure for selecting a sample was described. The recruitment procedures for this study were explained. The processes for collecting data and analyzing data were noted. The plans for establishing trustworthiness and the researcher's role were explained. Ethical considerations were clarified. The next chapter will present the research findings.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this narrative case study was to explore the life experiences of Dr. Susie Weems Wheeler, a pioneer African American educator and administrator, during and after the Civil Rights Era. The research question that guided this study was "What were Dr. Wheeler's contributions to the advancement of early childhood and elementary education and her other philanthropic efforts?"

The four sub questions for this study were as follows:

1. What experiences led Dr. Wheeler to become an educator?
2. What was the role of Dr. Wheeler in the education of children in Georgia from 1954 to 1968?
3. What were the various administrative positions held by Dr. Wheeler?
4. How did the positions held by Dr. Wheeler further support her philanthropic endeavors?

These research questions were addressed using primary and secondary data sources. The data sources were analyzed using thematic analysis and *restorying* methods and themes that were generated during data analysis are presented in Chapter 4.

Summary of Participants

Participant one was Mr. Daniel Wheeler, Jr. Mr. Wheeler is the son of the late Mr. Daniel Wheeler, Sr., and Dr. Susie Weems Wheeler. Daniel Wheeler, Jr. experienced

many things in life due to his mother's position as a pioneer educator. He was the first Black student to integrate Cartersville High School in 1966. Mr. Wheeler received a wonderful education in high school, preparatory school, and college and is a former computer programmer and entrepreneur.

Participant number two was Dr. Thomas Scott. Dr. Scott is professor emeritus of history at Kennesaw State University, located in Kennesaw, Georgia. He worked with Dr. Wheeler extensively and has maintained records of interviews with her, as well as historical papers. He currently serves as a part-time campus historian for Kennesaw State University.

Summary of Historical Documents

Historical documents for this study were gathered from Noble Hill-Wheeler Memorial Center and from the home of Dr. Wheeler's son, Daniel Wheeler, Jr. Dr. Wheeler wrote an autobiography titled *Learning to Live and Achieve*. It was printed in 2003, and it shares her personal family history, community service, and notable achievements. Dr. Wheeler was a meticulous record keeper. She saved the newsletters she typed and disseminated to teachers in her district when she served as Area Jeanes Supervisor. These documents shared important information about the surrounding schools and her expectations as a leader in their school district. Photograph albums depicting her work as a member of The Friendship Force and her work on the restoration of Noble Hill school were also used in this study. Two published administrator books that belonged to Dr. Wheeler were included to gain an understanding of her role as a Jeanes Supervisor and curriculum director.

Overview of Field Notes

The researcher took field notes while conducting interviews and reading over the historical documents that were collected for this study. As the researcher was writing the field notes, the researcher simultaneously reviewed the central question of the study and the sub questions. This was done to ensure the data collected was relevant to this case study. The field notes allowed the researcher to organize the findings and determine initial codes.

Summary of Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis was conducted using two methods. Interviews of the two participants and field notes were analyzed using six thematic analysis stages described in Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis involves transcribing the interviews, familiarizing yourself with the data, coding, generating themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming the themes, and writing the findings. Historical documents, the most available sources of data for this study, were analyzed using the *restorying* method of analysis. "*Restorying* is the process of reorganizing the stories into some general type of framework" (Creswell, 2013, p. 74).

Themes

Four themes were generated from the data analysis of interview transcripts, historical documents, artifacts, and anecdotal notes about Dr. Susie Wheeler. They included: 1) Community, 2) Philanthropy, 3) Advocacy, and 4) Leadership. A summary of themes is in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Summary of the themes, sub-themes, and sources

Themes	Sub-themes	Source

1. Community	1. Family 2. Community and education	Interview 3 Document 2
2. Philanthropy	1. Friendship Force 2. Noble Hill Wheeler Memorial Center	Document 2 Document 5 Document 6 Interview 1 Interview 2 Interview 3
3. Advocacy	1. Community advocacy 2. Early childhood education advocacy	Document 2 Document 4 Interview 1 Interview 2 Interview 3
4. Leadership and Postgraduate studies	1. Jeanes Supervisor -pre civil rights era 2. Curriculum Director- Civil rights era 3. Post-graduate studies- post civil rights era	Document 2 Document 3 Document 4 Document 7 Document 8 Interview 1 Interview 2 Interview 3

Table 2: List of sources

Interview 1- Daniel Wheeler, Jr.
Interview 2- Dr. Thomas Scott
Interview 3- Dr. Susie Wheeler (interviewed by Dr. Scott)
Document 1- US Census Bureau 1920
Document 2- Dr. Susie Wheeler's autobiography, *Learning to Live and Achieve*
Document 3- Jeanes Supervision in Schools
Document 4- Role of Supervisor and Curriculum Director in a Climate of Change
Document 5- Friendship Force photograph album
Document 6- Noble Hill scrapbook
Document 7- Newspaper scrapbook
Document 8- Dr. Susie Wheeler's dissertation, *An Historical Study of Strategies for Change in the Bartow County School System from 1965-1975*

Theme 1: Community

The first theme that was generated from data analysis was community. Dr. Wheeler's decisions in life were guided by the love she had for her community, and her

efforts had a lasting impact on her community. She was born in Bartow County, lived, and worked in Bartow County, and she was laid to rest in Bartow County after her passing in 2007 (Document 1 and 2).

Sub-Theme 1: Family

Dr. Wheeler's connections to her community were grounded in family. Her family passed down land, and land ownership was helpful for many African American families. According to Dr. Wheeler, her family inherited land from previous generations. She explained how her grandfather acquired eighty acres of land:

> He was given a plot of land by the Edwards family, because my grandmother's mother was an Edwards before she married a Douglas. My great-great grandfather was an Edwards, and he came from the Nashville area after slavery. I guess he came with some (former) owners, and he bought this plot of land. It became the first part of the Smith's family estate. (Interview 3, p. 4)

The right to vote was given to African Americans who owned a certain acreage, and Dr. Wheeler discussed in detail that her grandfather was extremely proud of his ability to vote. "I always remember my grandaddy saying that he was so proud that he was one of the first black men in the community that could vote" (Interview 3, pg. 5). Dr. Wheeler's ties to her community were also strengthened by her service and dedication to her church, New Hope Missionary Baptist Church. She stated that her grandfather was a deacon at the church, and she maintained her membership in the church throughout her lifetime (Interview 3, p. 6).

Sub-Theme 2: Community and Education Career

In the beginning of her career in education, Dr. Wheeler worked as a teacher in her community. Though her first interview for a teaching position did not yield a job due to her young age, Dr. Wheeler explained that she was happy that she didn't get the job

(Interview 3, p. 16). Her mother had driven her out of their local area into Cobb County, Georgia for this position. When she returned home, she was hired as a teacher at the Adairsville Elementary School, a local community school (Document 2).

Though her pursuit of her college degree and post graduate degrees would take her out of her community and sometimes out of the state, Dr. Wheeler would always return to her community (Document 2). Her decision to accept a role as Jeanes Supervisor was also centered around the community. She explained:

> If I took courses I could begin the work as a Jeanes Supervisor. But that work would carry me to south Georgia, and I had been accustomed to the hills and mountains of north Georgia. I didn't want to go there. Also, my husband was going to get out of service, so I certainly didn't want to be that far away where I couldn't work. So Dr. Robert Cousins, who was in charge of Negro education at that time, was one of the persons who did the interview with me. He said to me, "If you will go and take the course, the first course at least, for supervision, at Atlanta University, this summer- that was the summer of '45- I'll see if I can't help you to get a job at Cartersville. I'll talk to Bartow County in Cartersville about a Jeanes Supervisor" And that he did. That was the year that I taught at Cartersville, at Summer Hill, in sixth grade for one year and went back the next summer to Atlanta University, took the second course and, by that time, Dr. Cousins had arranged with Cartersville and Bartow County to employ a Jeanes Supervisor. (Interview 3, p. 19)

Dr. Wheeler's work as a Jeanes Supervisor, Area Jeanes Supervisor, and curriculum director of the Bartow County School District fostered her ties to her community (Interview 3). Furthermore, her work to renovate and transform her former school, Noble Hill, into a heritage museum ensured Dr. Wheeler's name would forever be engrained in the community that she loved (Document 2 and 6).

Theme 2: Philanthropy

Philanthropy encompasses caring for others and working in society for the greater good. Dr. Wheeler participated in multiple philanthropic endeavors during her time as an educator and in retirement. It was noted that Dr. Wheeler committed to service as a

member of The Friendship Force. Furthermore, her commitment to service in her community was evident in her efforts to restore Noble Hill school. Dr. Wheeler donated her time and funds, and she also participated in fundraising opportunities to help finance the massive restoration project.

Sub-Theme 1: The Friendship Force

Dr. Wheeler worked as a member of President Jimmy Carter's Friendship Force following retirement from the Bartow County School System (Document 2, p. 41). The Friendship Force was a non-profit organization founded in 1977 by Reverend Dr. Wayne Smith. President Jimmy Carter and First Lady Rosalyn Carter supported Dr. Smith's vision for the organization. The mission of The Friendship Force was to make connections with people from other cultures and foster friendships. Members of the Friendship Force known as domestic ambassadors would engage in home visits with families in other countries (Document 2, p. 41).

Dr. Wheeler and her husband, Mr. Daniel Wheeler, Sr., traveled and donated their time and efforts to build relationships with their host families as ambassadors with the Friendship Force (Document 2, p. 41). In a newspaper article written by Dr. Wheeler, she described a visit to Seoul, Korea. She explained that during their visit, the host family taught them about their Korean culture. Dr. Wheeler (1981) stated:

> We had realized the purpose of the Friendship Force which states: "Friendship Force is not only an exchange of people: it is also an exchange of ideas, values, attitudes, and lifestyles." It requires flexibility and adaptability but can result in a most exciting experience (Cartersville Daily Tribune).

The Wheelers would travel to places such as New Castle, England, Berlin, New Zealand, and Brazil during their time in the Friendship Force.

Sub-Theme 2: Noble Hill-Wheeler Memorial Center

In addition to serving as a member of the Friendship Force, Dr. Wheeler set her sights on a new philanthropic endeavor-restoration of Noble Hill School, later renamed Noble Hill-Wheeler Memorial Center (See Figures 9 and 10). The school she attended as a child, Noble Hill, was in severe disrepair and Dr. Wheeler felt it was up to the community to save this piece of history. A newspaper article quoted Dr. Wheeler's sentiments about rebuilding Noble Hill. Dr. Wheeler shared,

> It is true that the name came from the noble efforts of so many to build this school in 1923, Susie Wheeler said. And now there are similar efforts to save the school and transform it into a museum of Black history (Document 7).

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Possible historical site

The front of the Noble Hill School in Cassville is under construction at present. The side view of the building is a reminder of the original framework built in 1923. This school was the first funded Rosenwald building for black students in Northeast Georgia. (PHOTO BY WILLIAM BRAMLETT)

Figure 9. Noble Hill school in 1986. (Source: Noble Hill Wheeler Memorial Center).

Figure 10. Noble Hill-Wheeler Memorial Center (After Restoration).
(Source: Noble Hill Wheeler Memorial Center).

Dr. Wheeler worked with the first African American Supreme Court justice in the state of Georgia, Judge Robert Benham, to begin the efforts to restore her beloved Noble Hill School (Document 6). When the decision to restore and preserve the school was made, it was owned by Mrs. Bertha Wheeler. She donated the land and the school for restoration (Document 2). Consequently, Noble Hill was renamed to include the Wheeler surname in recognition of Mrs. Bertha Wheeler, and the original builder, Mr. Webster Wheeler. The name of the newly restored heritage center was listed as the Noble Hill-Wheeler Memorial Center.

Funding for Noble Hill restoration

State Sen. Nathan Dean, on behalf of Rep. Boyd Pettit and Gov. Joe Frank Harris, recently presented a $2,000 check to be used in the by the Board of Trustees for the Noble Hill School restoration project. The funds will be used to complete the museum to be housed in the school building as well as renovations to the building and site. Dr. Susie Wheeler, a trustee, and Willie Wofford, chairman of the board, stand next to Dean along with Robert Beavers, trustee; Millie Wilkins, former student; Nathaniel Harris, trustee, Pauline Heard, former student; Dan Wheeler, trustee; Ruth Wheeler, former student; and Hubert Womack, contractor for the project. (PHOTO BY BESA TRENOVA)

1987.2.10

Figure 11. Dr. Wheeler accepts donations for the restoration of Noble Hill. (Source: Noble Hill Wheeler Memorial Center).

Dr. Wheeler worked relentlessly to raise funds for this restoration project. Her philanthropic work included personal monetary donations and persistent effort in fundraising within her community (Document 7). She stated, "We wrote grants; we asked for donations; we had fundraisers ourselves; and we contacted as many of our former students as we could for assistance" (Interview 3, p. 31).

Donations were given by local businesses and a grant was received from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (Document 6). The Noble Hill-Wheeler Memorial Center was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987 and was officially opened to the public in 1989 (Document 2). It is furnished with Depression-era artifacts, photographs, videos, and historical information about schools for African American children from the early 1900s. A replica of one of the original classrooms remains to this day. A pot-bellied stove, wooden desks which seated two children, and the original chalkboard remain in this replicated classroom (Document 2).

In 2007, Dr. Thomas Scott, a professor from Kennesaw State University, nominated Dr. Wheeler for the state of Georgia's Governor's Award for Humanities. This award honors individuals that have made significant contributions to the civic or cultural vitality of the state. Dr. Wheeler was grateful to receive this award and attended the ceremony just a few months prior to her passing (Document 6).

Theme 3: Advocacy

Advocacy emerged as a theme based on interview responses and Dr. Wheeler's autobiography. Dr. Wheeler advocated for the African American community as an educator and as a civil rights activist. She worked diligently to communicate across racial lines. Her membership in organizations provided Dr. Wheeler with the support needed to affect change in her community. In Daniel Wheeler, Jr.'s interview (See Appendix C), he discussed an incident from his childhood that led him to believe his parents were activists during the civil rights movement. A cross was left burning in their front yard. Dr. Wheeler and her young son were the only ones at home at the time, and she reported the horrible intrusion to the police. Her son, Daniel Wheeler, Jr., explained,

> It was probably due to her being involved in those organizations and just the general tenor of that time Cross burning I'm trying to see I Guess from across the street people had seen it initially RC and them What is is is there was a car that kept circling the block And Mom was uncomfortable because I was standing out there staring at it everytime it went around. (Interview 1, p. 2)

Although it was not discussed afterwards, Mr. Daniel Wheeler, Jr. never forgot that event.

Sub-Theme 1: Community Advocacy

Dr. Wheeler served as an advocate for children in her community by working as a teacher in Cartersville, Georgia. When meetings were being held to discuss the

integration of schools, Dr. Wheeler would attend these meetings which were rumored to have been filled with numerous individuals who strongly supported segregating schools based on race. Her son, Daniel Wheeler, Jr., stated, "she always wanted to be sure that we were and as We I say uh people there in Bartow County were represented uh to get advantage of whatever we could" (Interview 1, p. 1).

Furthermore, Dr. Wheeler was a member of many organizations in which she could work as an activist. According to Chirhart (2005), Dr. Wheeler joined the GTEA and was also a member of the NAACP in Cartersville, a decision that was quite risky.

> Wheeler knew that she could be fired for joining the NAACP, but she also recognized that Cartersville's history of black activism would protect her. As a Jeanes Supervisor and a GTEA and NAACP member, Wheeler used her position to inform the black communities in her district about campaigns and efforts for educational improvement. (Chirhart, 2005, p. 203)

Sub-theme 2: Early Childhood Education Advocacy

Findings showed that Dr. Wheeler's advocated for early childhood education in two ways: a) establishing a library, and b) establishing a community center and a daycare for African American children. Daniel Wheeler, Jr., explained that Dr. Wheeler also worked to establish a library in their community (Interview 1, p.1). In her autobiography, Dr. Wheeler wrote, "The Faith Cabin Library was the first public library for African-American children and adults in Bartow County" (Document 2, p. 33). She worked on this project with the local teachers' association while she was the Jeanes Supervisor for the area, and her office was housed in the building as well. The library, which is still open today, moved and was renamed for the street on which it is now located.

To support early childhood education in the African American community, Dr. Wheeler helped to establish the first community center and daycare for African American

children (Document 2, p. 33). She stated that her son, then four years old, had attended an early childhood center on Spelman College's campus, and it piqued her interest. Dr. Wheeler's advocacy for children is evident in her work on both establishments.

Theme 4: Leadership

The fourth theme that was generated from the findings is Dr. Wheeler as a leader. She was a leader in many levels. Dr. Wheeler started her teaching career at Adairsville Elementary School in Bartow County, Georgia, became a Jeanes supervisor, and rose through the ranks to curriculum director of her district, Bartow County Schools in Bartow County, Georgia (Document 2, p. 28). She became an educator before earning her college degree. Though a college degree was not required to teach during those times, the pursuit of her undergraduate degree allowed her to be nominated for a leadership role in education (Interview 3). Dr. Wheeler was selected to be a teacher leader early in her professional career. During her years as a Jeanes Supervisor, she learned and was trained to lead schools in an organic manner, thereby allowing for a seamless transition into the position she would hold until her retirement- Curriculum Director (Document 2).

Sub-Theme 1: Jeanes Supervisor

Following high school, and while working as a teacher on a county license (Interview 3), she earned her Bachelor of Science Degree in Education from Fort Valley State College. While attending Fort Valley, Dr. Wheeler was selected as a candidate to study for the position of Jeanes Supervisor. Jeanes Supervisors were hired as leaders over Rosenwald Schools, which served African American children (Hine, Brown, & Temborg-Penn, 1993). Some described Jeanes Supervisors as the superintendents of the Black Schools prior to integration.

Jeanes Supervisors were hired under The Negro Rural School Fund, which was referred to informally as the Jeanes Fund. Anna T. Jeanes, a Quaker woman who supported the educational plight of African Americans, was a philanthropist and provided funding for southern schools (Sessoms et al., 1975). Dr. Wheeler received a job offer for this prestigious position from the Director of Negro Education in the Georgia State Department of Education. Her position was provisional, as she needed to complete the required training at Atlanta University (Document 2, p. 28).

In this role, Dr. Wheeler served 14 schools and was known as the Area Jeanes Supervisor because of the schools' locations in multiple counties.

> Federal programs. We were responsible for that; we were responsible for them to improve the classroom teaching; we were responsible to work with the parents to help them to cooperate and make their schools better- just total improvement of education for the children and for the community. (Interview 3, p. 21)

As indicated in Document 2, Dr. Wheeler served as the Georgia Jeanes Association President from 1968 to 1970. Dr. Wheeler served as the president of the Georgia Association of Curriculum and Instruction and as a board member for the Georgia Association for Curriculum and Supervision. Dr. Wheeler pressed forward and became a national board member for the Association of Curriculum and Supervision. Following the completion of her master's degree at Atlanta University, Dr. Wheeler earned a specialist degree from the University of Georgia, and finally her doctorate in Education from Atlanta University. Obtaining the position of Jeanes Supervisor served as a launching pad for earning further degrees in education and allowed additional opportunities for her to serve in leadership roles. Dr. Wheeler explained:

> My job as a Jeanes Supervisor opened many doors of opportunity. From this job experience, I was encouraged to participate in numerous educational conferences

> and workshops and to complete requirements for advanced degrees in education. It also provided me with numerous leadership opportunities and a chance to travel. (Document 2, p. 29)

Following the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling (Walker, 2005), segregation of public schools in Bartow County ceased and Rosenwald Schools were closed. Jeanes Supervisors were no longer required (Interview 3).

Sub-Theme 2: County Curriculum Director

Dr. Wheeler continued her leadership role after public schools were integrated. Dr. Wheeler was hired as the first African American curriculum director of Bartow County Schools and worked to oversee the integration of the district in 1964 (Document 2, p. 29). Among Dr. Wheeler's possessions was a book titled *Role of Supervisor and Curriculum Director in a Climate of Change* (Document 4). Her role as curriculum director in a newly integrated school system would bring certain challenges. According to this manual,

> Currently the schools are a major battleground in the conflict between Negro determination and the backlash of resentment among some whites. Desegregation strategies of educators often clash with maintenance of customary educational concepts, such as the neighborhood school. Again, schoolmen and boards of education have inherited a bitter social conflict. Fought both in the streets and in the courts, the civil rights conflict spills over inevitably into the nation's schoolrooms. Intercultural education, too often neglected, becomes imperative. (p. 13)

As the first African American curriculum director of Bartow County Schools, Dr. Wheeler supported the desegregation of Bartow County Public Schools. She worked to ensure a smooth transition as the children from predominantly Black communities were bussed to their new schools. (Document 8). Dr. Wheeler continued her leadership roles following her retirement from the school system in 1979. She served as the president of the Cartersville-Bartow County Retired Teachers Association (Document 2).

Summary

This chapter discussed themes that were generated from the data collected for this study. The four themes that describe Dr. Wheeler's life and contribution to early childhood education in Georgia are: 1) Community, 2) Philanthropy, 3) Advocacy, and 4) Leadership. These themes and subthemes were introduced and discussed in this chapter. Quotes from participants and documents were embedded, and these descriptive components emphasized each theme. The participants' responses, documents, artifacts, and Dr. Susie Weems Wheeler's personal words and writings provided extensive findings for this project. The next chapter is a discussion of these findings.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this narrative case study was to explore the life experiences of Dr. Susie Weems Wheeler, and pioneer educator during the Civil Rights Era. The previous chapters included a review of the literature surrounding the Civil Rights Era, African American women who were pioneers in the field of education, Booker T. Washington, and Julius Rosenwald. Sources of data about Dr. Wheeler's life were collected and analyzed. The findings included four themes. Chapter 5 consists of the following: (a) summary of findings; (b) answers to the research questions which guided this study; (c) implications of findings; (d) recommendations for future research; (e) limitations of the study; and (f) conclusion.

Research Questions

The central question for this narrative case study was: What were Dr. Wheeler's contributions to the advancement of early childhood and elementary education and her other philanthropic efforts.

The sub questions that guided this study were:

1. What experiences led Dr. Wheeler to become an educator?
2. What was the role of Dr. Wheeler in the education of children in Georgia from 1954 to 1968?
4. What were the various administrative positions held by Dr. Wheeler?

5. How did the positions held by Dr. Wheeler further support her philanthropic endeavors?"

Summary of Major Findings

The themes that emerged from interviews, newspaper clippings, Dr. Wheeler's Autobiography, pamphlets from Noble Hill, and Dr. Wheeler's dissertation were Community, Philanthropy, Advocacy, and Leadership. Dr. Wheeler's early experiences in education helped to shape her life. The community theme included information on her family, her upbringing, and her initial education and career. The foundation that Dr. Wheeler's parents and community laid for her was one of diligence and resilience. These attributes would serve her as well as an adult. She chose to remain close to her community as a young professional in her administrative roles and as a retired educator. In her retirement, she continually gave back to her community.

The first theme was community. Community was extremely important in Dr. Susie Wheeler's life. Her parents, Percy and Cora Weems, inherited land, and their family farmed using this land. Dr. Wheeler was born in Cassville, Georgia, and remained near her birthplace until her passing. A heritage museum she helped to restore still exists near Dr. Wheeler's birthplace. This museum contains memorabilia from Dr. Wheeler's life, and it carries on her legacy.

The second theme was philanthropy. Dr. Wheeler's philanthropic endeavors included serving as an ambassador in the Friendship Force, an exchange program which sought to promote cultural acceptance. She also worked diligently to preserve African American history in her community by working with stakeholders to restore her childhood school, Noble Hill. Now named the Noble Hill-Wheeler Memorial Center, the

former school is a heritage center and serves as a meeting place for some professional groups and a museum.

Advocacy was generated as the third theme in Dr. Wheeler's life. Dr. Wheeler, like many of the other African American educators of her time, was an advocate for children in her school and her community. She served as a classroom teacher from 1937 to 1945, while simultaneously earning her college degree and constantly encouraged her students to perform their best. She was an advocate in her role of Jeanes Supervisor. Dr. Wheeler met with the president of the GTEA and others to work towards providing equal opportunities for Black children in the districts she led. Her advocacy for children in her community was evident in the writings she saved, and her legacy will continue to live on through her life story.

The fourth and final theme was Dr. Wheeler's leadership and post-graduate studies. Dr. Wheeler served in several leadership positions and earned several post-graduate degrees. After earning her bachelor's degree from Fort Valley State in 1945, Wheeler earned a master's degree from Atlanta University (now known as Clark Atlanta University) in 1947, an educational specialist degree from the University of Georgia in 1976, and a doctorate from Atlanta University in 1977. Though she had served in several leadership positions prior to earning her terminal degree, Dr. Wheeler was determined to complete it. Though the literature supported that leadership was a common theme among early childhood educators, many of the women who were highlighted were leaders at the federal level (McCluskey, 2014; Thomas & Jackson, 2007). Mary McLeod Bethune was an advisor to a president (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). However, the theme of being a leader within one's community was a new finding from this study. Dr. Wheeler had

opportunities to serve in capacities at the state level, but she chose to remain in the community that had made a significant impact on her life (Document 2).

Answers to the Research Questions

The central research question for this study was: What were Dr. Wheeler's contributions to the advancement of early childhood and elementary education and her other philanthropic efforts? Findings of this study revealed that Dr. Susie Wheeler made significant contributions to education and to her community. Dr. Wheeler worked in several leadership roles, which allowed her to contribute to the advancement of early childhood education within the African American community, and subsequently, the entire Bartow County school district. With the establishment of the first daycare for children of color and the first public library for the African American community, her contributions were substantial. These findings support the role of African American women in the advancement of early childhood education during Reconstruction and the pre- and post-Civil Rights era (Walker, 2005).

Sub-Question 1: What Experiences Led Dr. Wheeler to Become an Educator?

Findings of this study showed experiences that guided Dr. Wheeler's path in education included: a) influence from her favorite teacher at Noble Hill School, b) influence from her mother, c) possible teaching opportunities. Dr. Wheeler's path in education can be linked to her initial formal school interactions with her favorite teacher at the Noble Hill school in Cassville, Georgia. Findings revealed that in the first grade, her loving and supportive teacher inspired her to become a teacher.

> My first grade teacher- Myra Williams was her name- was the one who inspired me to become a teacher. I loved her for what she did and how she treated her students and what she did for all of us. That's how I got into education as a result of what she did. (Interview 3, p. 10)

Dr. Wheeler also mentioned in her writings that her mother made sure she received the education she needed, which included attending a boarding school for high school (Document 2). Dr. Wheeler, emboldened by successfully passing the initial certification test to become a teacher, decided to further her career in education by obtaining a college degree and further postgraduate degrees (Interview 3). As she matriculated, opportunities for new positions in education arose for Dr. Wheeler, and she worked diligently in those positions (Interview 3).

Sub-Question 2: **What Was the Role of Dr. Wheeler in the Education of Children in Georgia From 1954 to 1968?**

The Civil Rights era refers to a post-Reconstruction time, during which Jim Crow laws were prevalent in the south. African Americans continued to fight for equitable educational opportunities. During this time, Dr. Wheeler served as Jeanes Supervisor and Area Jeanes Supervisor. It was her responsibility to ensure the needs of the children were being met at the schools in her districts. She kept records of updates to the school buildings and ensured other schools in the area were aware of the progress in neighboring counties. Similar to the community support used to build Rosenwald Schools, it seems that school renovations also fostered a sense of cohesiveness within the African American communities. In a typed newsletter dated March 25, 1949, Dr. Wheeler described the renovation of one of the schools.

> Many things of interest have been occurring at the Pine Grove School during this month. First of all there was a new school building ready for occupancy. The children and teachers worked diligently washing the windows, oiling the floors and cleaning the grounds before moving. The community people joined in and helped with the moving. (Document 7)

Sub-Question 3: What Were the Various Administrative Positions Held ny Dr. Wheeler?

In her 42-year career span, Dr. Wheeler served in several administrative capacities. After teaching for less than a decade, the opportunity to work as a Jeanes Supervisor arose. Dr. Wheeler accepted the Jeanes Supervisor position when she was offered the position that covered the areas near her hometown. As a Jeanes Supervisor, Dr. Wheeler served as what many referred to as the superintendent of Black schools. At the nascence of integration, Dr. Wheeler was hired as the curriculum director for Bartow County Schools. In this leadership role, she supported the other members of the administration in the successful unifying of the district's Black and White schools. As described by Dr. Wheeler in her dissertation titled *An Historical Study of Strategies for Change in the Bartow County School System From 1965-1975*, the desegregation of the county was seamless due to several factors.

> The orderly development of the phases of the desegregation process was enhanced by the involvement of the community, directly and indirectly, in the system of communication, the conscious efforts of the leadership to build positive relationships and mutual respect among members of the staff, students, and community. (Document 8, p. 80)

Though the district was integrated under her leadership, she credited the collective district level administrators with the successful merger of schools for Black and White children. Dr. Wheeler retired in 1979, following serving as the curriculum director for 15 years.

Sub-Question 4: How Did the Positions Held by Dr. Wheeler Further Support Her Philanthropic Endeavors?

Dr. Wheeler's work as a teacher, Jeanes supervisor, and curriculum director kept her grounded in the field of education. Her philanthropic work in the Friendship Force was directly related to her desire to be a lifelong learner. Furthermore, just as she broke through barriers while supporting the school system during integration, Dr. Wheeler broke through cultural barriers as an ambassador for the Friendship Force.

In her role as an educator, Dr. Wheeler recognized the importance of obtaining an education. So, when she realized her very first school as a child was in danger of being torn down and erased from history, she began the process of restoring it. This was a huge undertaking, as it involved the need for massive funding and time. However, she rose to the challenge and worked alongside several community members to begin the restoration process.

Implications

Implications for Early Childhood Education

1. Teachers should inspire their students to learn and develop. Exposure to early literacy is key in helping children to become readers.
2. Families should provide their children with early childhood education opportunities.

Implications for Teacher Training

1. Preservice teachers should be presented with early childhood educators, such as Dr. Susie Weems Wheeler, who were pioneers in their field and whose voices have been silenced.

2. The curriculum for classes that cover theorists in education should be expanded to include people from marginalized populations.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should focus on women who were pioneers in the field of early childhood education. The researcher recommends the following:

1. Research other African American women in Georgia who ensured the children of their communities received an education.
2. Conduct further research on Rosenwald Schools that have been restored.
3. Explore the role of philanthropy in the African American community.
4. Conduct research on the curriculum that was used in Rosenwald schools.
5. Research the influences from known African American scholars on the curriculum implemented in Rosenwald schools.
6. Explore how Jeanes supervisors deviated or aligned with Booker T. Washington's industrial approach to education.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the life and contributions of Dr. Susie Weems Wheeler. The findings showed that Dr. Wheeler's early life experiences were similar to the experiences of children born during the Pre-Civil Rights Era. Schools were segregated, and the schools for African American children received significantly less funding than those for White children (Feiler, 2021). These findings are in agreement with experiences of other women of color during the Pre-Civil Rights Era, as described in the literature review (McCluskey, 2014; Thomas & Jackson, 2007). Though a smaller school had been built in the community where Dr. Wheeler lived as a child, it was in

extreme disrepair. When local teachers and school officials heard about the opportunities for the Rosenwald Fund, they found builders and raised funds to build their own community school. Cassville Colored School was replaced with Noble Hill school, and Dr. Wheeler was in the first-grade class during the first year Noble Hill opened.

Some of the significant findings revealed new knowledge about Susie Wheeler's life and contributions to Early Child Education in the state of Georgia during the Post Civil Rights era. The findings revealed that Dr. Wheeler founded the first daycare for African American children in the Cartersville, Georgia area. Community as essential in Dr. Wheeler's life and career, and this was one way of her giving back to her community. Furthermore, the findings indicated that Dr. Susie Wheeler became the first African American curriculum director in Bartow County, Georgia, after segregation was deemed illegal and schools for African American children were closed. In this role, Dr. Susie Wheeler opened the door for many other African American educators to be leaders in their communities and schools.

Researcher's Personal Reflection

Dr. Susie Weems Wheeler had a profound impact on my life, as her granddaughter. I was inspired to become a teacher and to be a lifelong learner. Her perseverance resonated with me in my long journey seeking my degrees in the field of education. This study is the beginning of a journey, as there is much more research to be done to ensure the voices of the unsung educators in history are heard. Dr. Wheeler's legacy will continue to live through the generations of Wheelers who know her story and read her numerous personal writings. Her legacy will live on in Cassville and

Cartersville, Georgia, as community members and visitors visit Noble Hill-Wheeler Memorial Center.

Chirhart (2005) noted that leaders such as Lucy Craft Laney had passed away by 1938, and new leaders were starting to emerge. The torch had been passed to the next pioneers in education in African American communities. It is vital to know the stories of the early childhood educators who strived for equal education opportunities for children. This study contributes significantly to the limited body of literature on women of color who were early childhood educators during the Civil Rights Era. Dr. Susie Wheeler's name should be included with pioneers in the field of early childhood education.

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APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM
Office of the Institutional Review Board for Human Use

470 Administration Building
701 20th Street South
Birmingham, AL 35294-0104
205.934.3789 | Fax 205.934.1301 |
irb@uab.edu

NHSR DETERMINATION

TO: Wheeler, Alisha D.

FROM: University of Alabama at Birmingham Institutional Review Board
Federalwide Assurance # FWA00005960
IORG Registration # IRB00000196 (IRB 01)
IORG Registration # IRB00000726 (IRB 02)
IORG Registration # IRB00012550 (IRB 03)

DATE: 02-May-2021

RE: IRB-300006608
Dr. Susie Weems Wheeler: A Narrative Case Study of a Philanthropic Educator during The Civil Rights Era

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The Office of the IRB has reviewed your Application for Not Human Subjects Research Designation for the above referenced project.

The reviewer has determined this project is not subject to FDA regulations and is not Human Subjects Research. Note that any changes to the project should be resubmitted to the Office of the IRB for determination.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact the Office of the IRB at 205-934-3789.

The 2018 Requirements at 45 CFR 46.102(l) provide a definition of "research" and identify scholarly and journalistic activities that focus directly on specific individuals as one of four categories of activities deemed not to be research. The definition of "research" and the relevant category of activities deemed not to be research are described as follows:

(l)Research means a systematic investigation, including research development, testing, and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge. Activities that meet this definition constitute research for purposes of this policy, whether or not they are conducted or supported under a program that is considered research for other purposes. For example, some demonstration and service programs may include research activities. For purposes of this part, the following activities are deemed not to be research:
(1) Scholarly and journalistic activities (e.g., oral history, journalism, biography, literary criticism, legal research, and historical scholarship), including the collection and use of information, that focus directly on the specific individuals about whom the information is collected.

APPENDIX B

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS FORM

Analysis guide questions:

1. What experiences led Dr. Wheeler to become an educator?
2. What was the role of Dr. Wheeler in the education of children in Georgia from 1954 to 1968?
3. What were the various administrative positions held by Dr. Wheeler?
4. How did the positions held by Dr. Wheeler further support her philanthropic endeavors?

Document	**Location/ Gatekeepers**	**Data Obtained**
Newspaper Clippings (Scrapbook)	Noble Hill/ V. Coleman	• Dates for renovation of Noble Hill • Awards and accomplishments
Jeanes Supervision	Noble Hill/ V. Coleman	• Explanation of Jeanes supervisors
Autobiography	Daniel Wheeler, Jr.	• Personal information • Philanthropy • what guided her life journey
Dr. Wheeler's interview	Dr. Thomas Scott	• Background information • administrative roles
Dr. Wheeler's Dissertation	Noble Hill/ V. Coleman	• Dr. Wheeler's philosophy of education • Roles Dr. Wheeler fulfilled

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Information to be completed by interviewer:
Interviewer Name: Alisha Wheeler Date: 01/22/2021 Participant: Daniel Wheeler Location: Aspire Rehabilitation Center

Introduction:

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to gain insight into Dr. Susie Wheeler's contributions to the field of education. What we say today will be recorded and transcribed. Please feel free to share your feelings and opinions during this interview. You are free to leave the interview at any time.

Are you ready for us to begin?

Section 1: Background Information

1. What some of your most memorable childhood experiences with your mother, Dr. Wheeler?
2. In what ways did your mother influence your education?

Section 2: Community service

1. Are you aware of any civil rights organizations in which Dr. Wheeler served as a member?
    a. In what ways did Dr. Wheeler's membership in organizations affect her professional career?

b. In what ways did Dr. Wheeler's membership in organizations affect life at home?

Section 3: Philanthropic endeavors

1. Are there any philanthropic endeavors of Dr. Wheeler's that you would like to share?
2. What impact did Dr. Wheeler's engagement in philanthropy have on you as a child or as an adult?
3. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW – DANIEL WHEELER, JR.

Interviewer: Are you aware of any civil rights organizations in which Dr. Wheeler served as a member?

DW: The American Association of University Women (Pauses, looking up towards ceiling)

Interviewer: Any other ones…

DW: Association of University women okay any other ones not the one she started the American Association of when is she started I think She was also a member of the uh uh Was it the board of The The uh I'm trying to remember the correct name for it but it was the Civil Rights Institute for the black teachers in Georgia and Dr. Horace Tate was the Uh I don't know if you've ever heard of him But Horace Tate was the president of that for many years uh He He in fact visited our house a a number of times Uh Let's see Dr Tate You had uh That group that Narvie Harris was with Uh then there was the uh uh (pausing and looking down) Georgia Teachers Education Association That was that was that all kind of mixed together

Interviewer: Okay

DW: and then uh I guess the insurance board for the state of Georgia

Interviewer: The insurance board

DW: Uh Huh the Uh Let's see (rubbing chin with finger) She was also a founder of the Bartow County Library Association which was the first black library in the Cartersville area Uh She She had kept an office there There There was also the um Let's see (looking down) of course you know Delta Sigma Theta and then uh she was also a member of the school board of Cartersville of uh Bartow County which was predominantly white and it was also under her direction that the schools in Bartow County were integrated

Interviewer: Ok Oh that's good to know

Interviewer: In what ways did Dr. Wheeler's membership in these organizations affect her professional career?

DW: Uh it always put She She always wanted to be sure that we were and as We I say uh people there in Bartow County were represented uh to get advantage of whatever we could.

Interviewer: Ok and when you say We were represented in Bartow County do you mean African Americans.

DW: African Americans yeah She made sure she was a She had a she had a place at the table.

Interviewer: Ok That's good So the next question I have for you was In what ways did Dr. Wheeler's membership in these organizations affect life at home And I know we talked a little bit about this previously when the cross burned in your yard Was that in reaction to her being in the organizations.

DW: It was probably due to her being involved in those organizations and just the general tenor of that time Cross burning I'm trying to see I Guess from across the street people had seen it initially RC and them What is is is there was a car that kept circling the block And Mom was uncomfortable because I was standing out there staring at it every time it went around

Interviewer: You were staring at the car.

DW: yeah staring at the car.

Interviewer: How old were you then..

DW: I was probably between uh 12 and 15 I don't know something like that May have been somewhere in that area But uh I just uh I kept watching it I watched it I watched it and finally finally the police came and put it out took it away so other than that That was it you know

Interviewer: So do you know if your mom or dad called the police or did the neighbors call the police.

DW: I'm pretty sure it was the neighbors and Mom and Dad uh I'm trying to see if dad was Dad even home at the time I'm unsure he may have been at work cause you know he worked in the evenings.

Interviewer: Are there any philanthropic endeavors of Dr. Wheeler's that you would like to share.

DW: Well They They being the When they formed the board to restore Noble Hill school she made sure that she involved other businesses in the area such as Walmart uh Made sure that they were gonna contribute and also that uh uh she could have a fundraising base from that.

Interviewer: OK and what was she fundraising for …

DW: The fundraising was for the restoration of the school The School itself had fallen into significant disrepair after it closed. It closed in 55 I believe.

Interviewer: Ok and um any other um philanthropic endeavors that you were aware of.

DW: She was on the Friendship Force with Jimmy Carter That was about making connections with people from around the world.

Interviewer: What impact did her engagement in those philanthropic efforts have on you as a child or as an adult.

DW: Well She always taught me to strive to do the best I could with anything I could But also that to not limit my potential by not participating She always wanted me to That's why she didn't have a big problem when I went away to school Dad did but she didn't because she realized this was going to increase my potential.

Interviewer: that makes sense So you kept that with you as a child but also as an adult

DW: right yep.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you want to add about Dr. Wheeler or her work.

DW: She was Jeanes Supervisor and she used to have schools in Calhoun Georgia um she had a school in of course Bartow County with uh and also Adairsville Adairsville is the northern point of Bartow County Uh there were community schools in Pine Log Emerson some little places like that you may not even be aware of which is out there near where DJ grew up and then out there where Faye and uh Cheryl and them grew up in Rolling Springs there was another conclave of Black folks you know so you had them all over.

Interviewer: Ok Did you have anything else you wanted to add at all before we close the interview.

DW: Yeah when I was growing up That I saw uh With mom and mom being a teacher she used to go to a lot of meetings and she went would take me in a lot of cases cause you know Dad was working too So I had to alot of times I spent time in Tuskegee I spent time at the University of Kentucky when she was up there for a while In fact which was ironic because you know a lot of lot of people have the same attitude about the University of Kentucky as in Alabama that people have for uh for Tuscaloosa because they didn't outwardly recruit black folks So that was the thing But we went there.

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW- DR. THOMAS SCOTT

Interviewer: Thank you for agreeing to do this interview today Dr. Scott.

TS: Sure You know I interviewed your grandmother back in 2000 and um the archives when JoyEllen comes over she can tell you more about it but the archivists digitized the interview you know and so it is online.

Interviewer: Oh it's online.

TS: You know so all you gotta do is Google interview with Dr. Susie Weems Wheeler. And it should come up. This is the transcript it's not the Uh We've got the I'm sure we've still got the tape If you'd like the tape I'm sure the archives can do it for you

Interviewer: Thank you I would love that Were you aware of any details regarding the child development center that Dr. Wheeler founded in Cartersville.

TS: I had not heard of that.

Interviewer: Can you share anything about her role as a Jeanes Supervisor

TS: Yes well she talks about it a little bit in the interview that I told you about, but it's kind of this is the age where nothing's equal But they do everything a superintendent did whether they get credit or not And then she talks in the interview that she she had to recruit teachers and basically hired and fired, and um dealt with the lunch programs and all kinds of things And then of course with the integration she comes into the office and curriculum director central office.

Interviewer: OK.

TS: Dr. Wheeler was the first Jeanes Supervisor for Bartow County Um she talks in the interview where was she at this time She was Jeanes supervisor for about twenty years so that would be back to the 40s I guess so Yeah she got her college degree during World War II while her husband was overseas So fortuitously and that gave her time to finish up

She was already teaching but didn't have a college degree which is the way it was back then for a lot of teachers but she got her degree and then she took a course I guess in the summer of sixty of forty five at Atlanta University and it was a course that prepared you to be a Jeanes Supervisor and then she took the second course the next summer I guess but at any rate she could've completed the program that first summer but they wanted to send her to south Georgia and she didn't want to go to south Georgia and so I guess the person that was in charge of the Black schools in the state of Georgia said um you know finish it The interview is more accurate than what I'm telling you but he basically said finish it up and um I think I can get you into Bartow County and so he came through And so she became the first for Bartow County but she also did it for Gordon County and Paulding County

Interviewer: OK I was unaware of that.

TS: Yeah so she had three counties and rural schools and so there was like 18 or 19 , 20 schools that she was responsible for at one time and then I guess right when equalization is taking place uh they started consolidating all these schools together so there were by the end there were just like 3 or 4 where there had been 18 or 19 Jeanes Supervisors were vitally important.

Interviewer: I love hearing the specifics about this specific role and that there is an interview That is surprising to me.

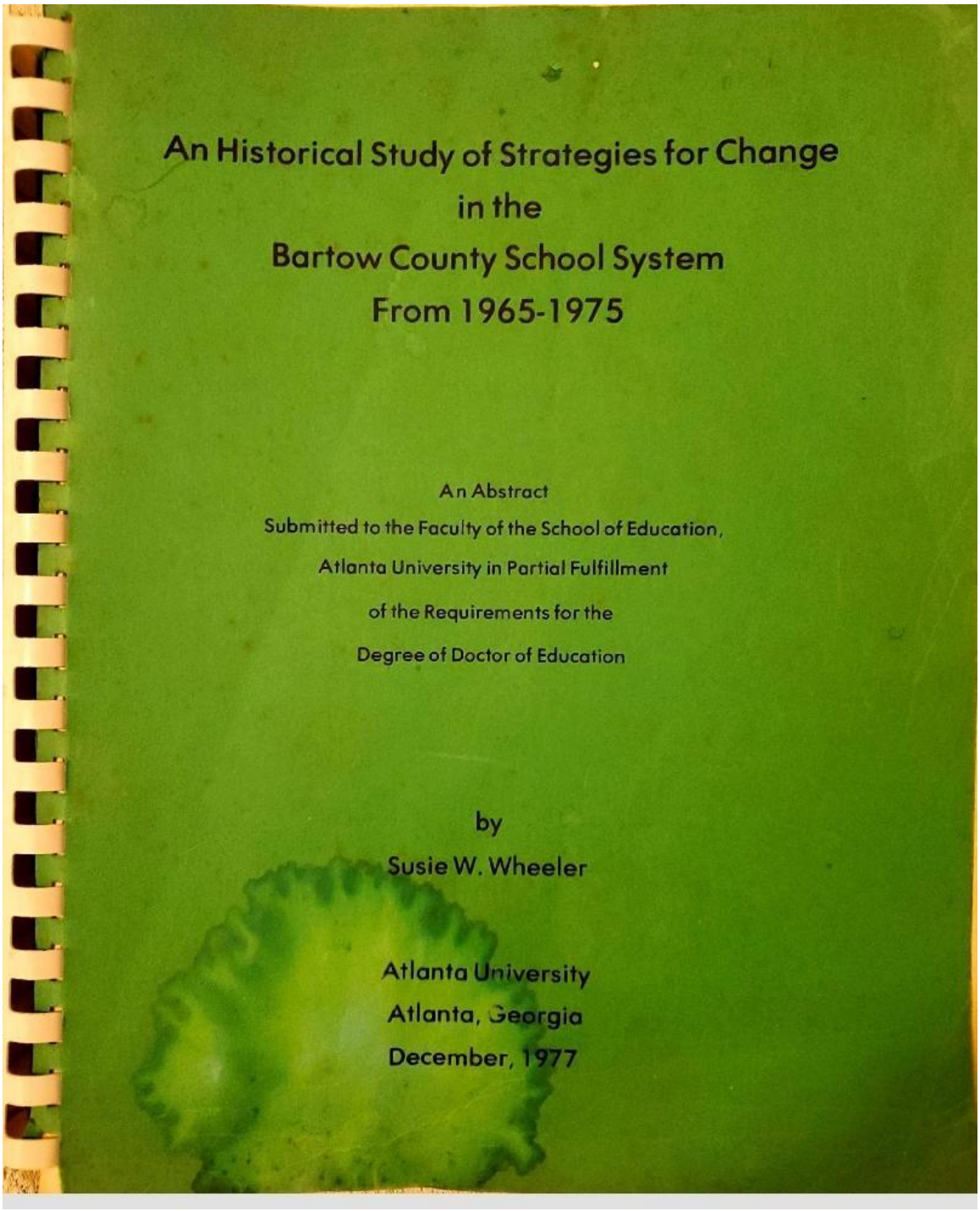
TS: I think that's the nice thing about oral histories in that they grow in value as time goes on I think.

Interviewer: I agree completely.

TS: Let's go over to see JoyEllen to see if we can get the interview with Dr. Wheeler.

APPENDIX F

DISSERTATION COVER- DR. SUSIE WEEMS WHEELER



An Historical Study of Strategies for Change in the Bartow County School System From 1965-1975

An Abstract
Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Education,
Atlanta University in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Education

by
Susie W. Wheeler

Atlanta University
Atlanta, Georgia
December, 1977

APPENDIX G

AUTOBIOGRAPHY COVER- DR. SUSIE WEEMS WHEELER

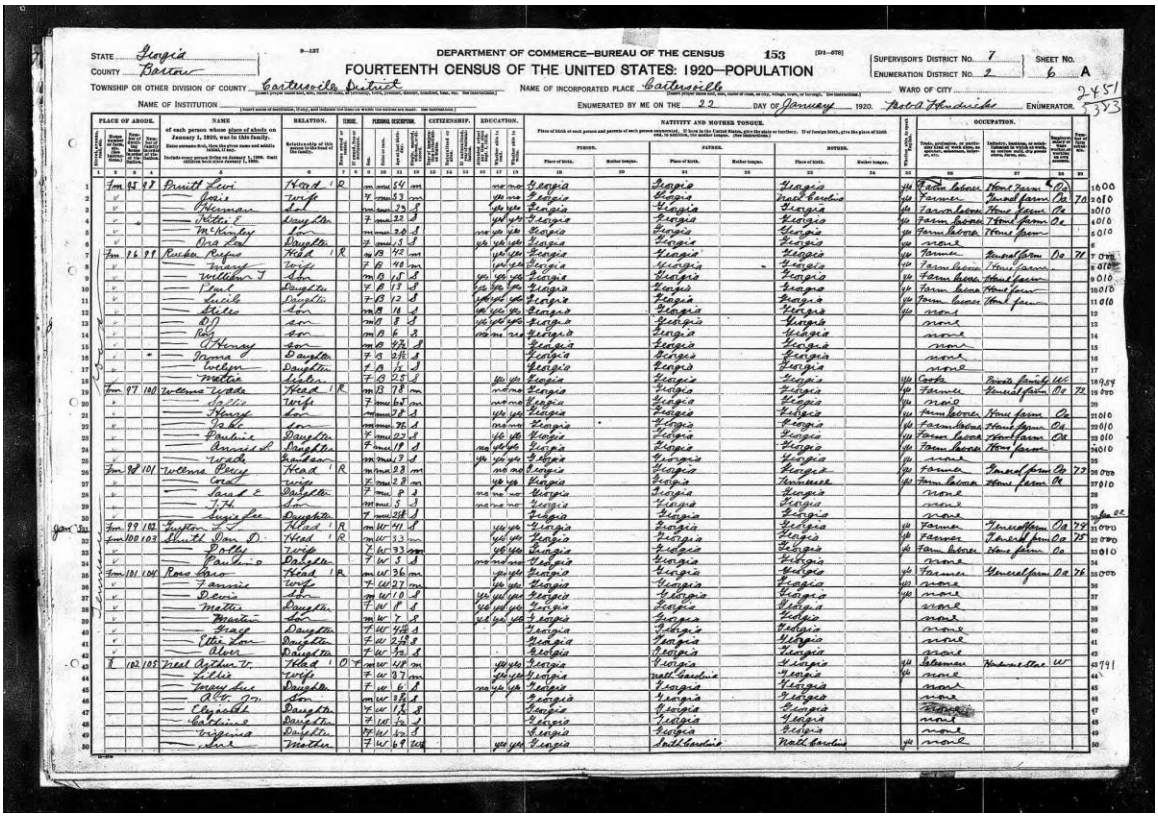
Learning To Live and Achieve

My Life!
My Hopes!
My Dreams!

Dr. Susie Weems Wheeler

APPENDIX H

U.S. CENSUS 1920



STATE Georgia — COUNTY Barrow — TOWNSHIP OR OTHER DIVISION OF COUNTY Cattesville District — NAME OF INSTITUTION —

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE—BUREAU OF THE CENSUS 153

FOURTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1920—POPULATION

SUPERVISOR'S DISTRICT NO. 7 — ENUMERATION DISTRICT NO. 2 — SHEET NO. 6 A — NAME OF INCORPORATED PLACE Cattesville — WARD OF CITY —

ENUMERATED BY ME ON THE 22 DAY OF January 1920. Reed A Hendricks ENUMERATOR.

	PLACE OF ABODE			NAME of each person whose place of abode on January 1, 1920, was in this family.	RELATION	TENURE	PERSONAL DESCRIPTION			CITIZENSHIP	EDUCATION		NATIVITY AND MOTHER TONGUE						OCCUPATION			
													PERSONS		FATHER		MOTHER					
													Place of birth	Mother tongue	Place of birth	Mother tongue	Place of birth	Mother tongue				
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	
1		85	87	Truitt Levi	Head	R	m	wid	64	mos			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	Farm laborer	Home farm	O
2				Josie	Wife		f	mar	53	m			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	Farmer	Owned farm	Da
3				Herman	Son		m	sing	23	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	Farm laborer	Home farm	Da
4				Nellie E	Daughter		f	mar	22	d			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	Farm laborer	Home farm	Da
5				McKinley	Son		m	mar	20	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	Farm laborer	Home farm	
6				Ora Lee	Daughter		f	mar	18	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	none		
7		86	88	Rucker Rufus	Head	R	m		43	m			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	Farmer	Owned farm	Da
8				Mary	Wife		f		48	m			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	Farm laborer	Home farm	
9				William J	Son		m		18	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	Farm laborer	Home farm	
10				Paul	Daughter		f		15	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	Farm laborer	Home farm	
11				Lucile	Daughter		f		12	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	Farm laborer	Home farm	
12				Miles	Son		m		11	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	none		
13				DJ	son		m		8	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia			none		
14				Roy	son		m		6	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia			none		
15				O Henry	son		m		4	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia			none		
16				Nora O	Daughter		f		2	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia			none		
17				Evelyn	Daughter		f		1	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia			none		
18				Mattie	Sister		f		25	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	Cook	Private family	W
19		87	89	Williams Lyda	Head	R	m		73	m			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	Farmer	Owned farm	Da
20				Sallie	Wife		f		64	m			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	none		
21				Henry	Son		m		28	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	Farm laborer	Home farm	Da
22				Jake	Son		m		26	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	Farm laborer	Home farm	Da
23				Pauline	Daughter		f		22	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	Farm laborer	Home farm	Da
24				Annie L	Daughter		f		18	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	Farm laborer	Home farm	
25				Wade	Grandson		m		7	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	none		
26		88	101	Williams Daisy	Head	R	m		23	m			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	Farmer	Owned farm	Da
27				Ora	Wife		f		28	m			Virginia		Virginia		Tennessee		yes	Farm laborer	Home farm	Da
28				Sarah E	Daughter		f		3	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia			none		
29				Ida	Son		m		5	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia			none		
30				Virginia Lee	Daughter		f		2	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia			none		
31		89	102	Hopkins Jno	Head	R	m	W	41	d			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	Farmer	Owned farm	Da
32		102	103	Elliott Wm D	Head	R	m	W	33	m			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	Farmer	Rented farm	Da
33				Dolly	Wife		f	W	33	wid			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	Farm laborer	Home farm	Da
34				Paulino	Daughter		f	W	3	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia			none		
35		101	104	Rose Isaac	Head	R	m	W	36	m			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	Farmer	General farm	Da
36				Fannie	Wife		f	W	27	m			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	none		
37				Dora	Son		m	W	10	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	none		
38				Mattie	Daughter		f	W	8	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia			none		
39				Martin	Son		m	W	7	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia			none		
40				Grace	Daughter		f	W	4	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia			none		
41				Ollie Lou	Daughter		f	W	2	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia			none		
42				Alma	Daughter		f	W	1	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia			none		
43		102	105	Neal Arthur T	Head	O	m	W	48	m			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia		yes	Salesman	Hardware	W
44				Lillie	Wife		f	W	37	m			Georgia		North Carolina		North Carolina		yes	none		
45				Irene Lee	Daughter		f	W	6	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia			none		
46				Arthur Jr	Son		m	W	3	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia			none		
47				Edgeable	Daughter		f	W	1	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia			none		
48				Catherine	Daughter		f	W	12	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia			none		
49				Virginia	Daughter		f	W	10	s			Georgia		Georgia		Georgia			none		
50				Nora	Mother		f	W	69	wid			Georgia		North Carolina		North Carolina		yes	none		

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT OF DR. SUSIE WEEMS WHEELER

(BY THOMAS SCOTT)

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

NORTH GEORGIA ORAL HISTORY SERIES

NO. 3

INTERVIEW WITH DR. SUSIE W. WHEELER

CONDUCTED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT

FRIDAY, 3 MARCH 2000

Kennesaw State University Oral History Project
North Georgia Oral History Series, No. 3
Interview with Dr. Susie W. Wheeler
Conducted by Dr. Thomas A. Scott
Friday, 3 March 2000
Location: Home of Dr. Wheeler, Cartersville, GA

THOMAS SCOTT: Dr. Wheeler, let me begin by asking you where you were born and when you were born?

SUSIE WHEELER: I was born in Bartow County out in what was then known as the Pine Grove area, the lower level of the Pine Grove area. We called it something else that I don't think of at this minute. I was probably about two years old before my parents moved to the Cassville area.

TS: Where was Pine Grove exactly? Was it the northern part of the county?

SW: Yes, it is the northern section going up 411. There is an area that one goes to the People's Valley area and the other one is 411 and it's in that little corner there.

TS: Would this be 411 toward Rome or 411 toward Chatsworth?

SW: 411 toward Chatsworth is the place where I was born. The house is there no more.

TS: Would this be beyond Rydal and that way?

SW: It's going toward Rydal.

TS: Before you get there.

SW: Yes, but it's not that far out of Cartersville. Out where you've probably noted the mobile home areas out there on 411. It's just a little less than half a mile from that place in that corner where that road forks.

TS: And so you spent two years there. Were you living on a farm at that time?

SW: Yes, my father was a tenant farmer. It was a farm not around the house, but across from the house where the tenant lived.

TS: Why did he move into Cassville?

SW: I wonder sometimes why did we get there also. My mother's father had this area that was close by to where we moved. When we first moved there I think we went to

the home of an aunt, the aunt for which I am named. Her name is Susie, and I was named Susie for her. We spent about two years there with her before we moved to the house that was not too far from where she was. We lived there until that house was destroyed by fire.

TS: While you were living in it?

SW: Yes. I was away in school during that time but the family did live there.

TS: Wheeler is your married name; what is your maiden name?

SW: My maiden name is Weems.

TS: When you moved into Cassville what was your father doing then?

SW: He still was a tenant farmer. He farmed, but he had this land very near him, all around us. We chopped cotton and picked cotton . . .

TS: Oh, you had to work too?

SW: Yes. Indeed so. During that time. All work.

TS: So you know all about chopping cotton.

SW: Yes. And I disliked completely. I said I never hope to do any more once I left.

TS: I can understand that. Did your mother work outside the home?

SW: Yes, she worked outside the home as a laundress lady who worked, when we had the Atco laundry she worked in that laundry.

TS: For the Atco community?

SW: In the Atco community, but she had to commute from Cassville to that place.

TS: That was the mill village community?

SW: Mill village community. She also worked as a maid in the home of the Pittards, Mrs. Sam Pittard still remains alive, and that was in the home place where she worked.

TS: This is in Cartersville?

SW: Cassville.

TS: In Cassville.

SW: And after that she did her final work with . . . oh dear, I can't think of the little motel area that was very near our house and that is where she worked up until the final days of her . . .

TS: Was this a motel on U.S. 41?

SW: No. 41 Highway. Not far from our house. Because after our house burned, my grandfather gave to my mother a plat of land to build on. A home was built on this new property, and this new property was over to the new 41 that was going into the Cassville area.

TS: The new U.S. 41 was just being built about the 1940s, I guess, wasn't it?

SW: Yes.

TS: So the old 41 then, where did that run?

SW: The old 41 ran by that house where we lived; it's called the Mack Johnson Road.

TS: And that's in Cassville?

SW: In Cassville. My grandfather owned about eighty acres of land in that general area even though the house we first lived in was not a part of his property. The one we first lived in with the aunt became a part of his property after her death. In fact, my grandmother's niece [owned] the home we lived in.

TS: Do you know how your grandfather acquired that land?

SW: Yes, there's a good story about this. In fact, we have done this in a little history of the Smith family. We told about how . . .

TS: Your mother was a Smith.

SW: My grandfather was a Smith; my grandmother was a Douglas, Emma Douglas. So it's Thomas Smith who was married to Emma Douglas.

TS: And then your mother's name was. . . ?

SW: Cora Smith.

TS: Cora Smith Weems.

SW: Well, it became Cora Smith Weems Canty.

TS: C-A-N-T-Y?

SW: Yes, my father passed away when I was eight years old. Five years later my mother was married to Oscar Canty, and that's how she became a Canty.

TS: Well, I interrupted your story of how your grandfather acquired the land.

SW: Yes. He first was given a plot of land by the Edwards family, because my grandmother's mother was an Edwards before she married a Douglas. My great-great-grandfather was an Edwards, and he came from the Nashville area after slavery. I guess he came with some [former] owners, and he bought this plot of land. It became the first part of the Smith family's estate.

TS: Do you have any idea how he got the money to pay for it?

SW: No, I've never heard how he got that. I'm always going back to this reference, because sometimes time has helped me to forget.

TS: Is this something that you researched and wrote about? You're holding a book on the Smith family.

SW: The family did with my help. In the meantime we have it in the archives now. So we have it on the record. This was started by a son that was raised by my mother from seven months old. It was her brother's child, and his mother had passed away, so he was raised just like a brother to me. Even though I only had one blood brother, he became my second brother and was the one who started the family idea that we needed to put it into some form, so that we could refer to it at later times.

TS: The family history. What was his name?

SW: His name was Bennie Reuben Smith. He passed away early, like in his late forties, but he has two daughters that live in Atlanta, very successful daughters that live in the Atlanta area. One is an attorney.

TS: Great. I don't believe we said on the tape what year you were born.

SW: I think we didn't.

TS: Oh, you're trying to bypass that. [chuckle]

SW: No, I don't mind telling that. After sixty-five most people don't mind telling their age. I was born February 24, 1917. Just had a birthday.

TS: I saw those birthday cards on the table; I thought that might be the case.

SW: That's the birthday cards that came. And the Valentine flowers that are about gone now came from my son and his family.

TS: Well, great. It sounds as though your family was middle-class or reasonably well-to-do with that land. Or maybe terms like middle class don't mean much in a farm community.

SW: No, we were poor like others, but then we were blessed in another way that we did have family that was landowners. I always remember my granddaddy saying that he was so proud that he was one of the first black men in the community that could vote. Because at that time unless you were a property owner you could not vote. So I guess we were classified as just a poor family, but maybe by some other standards we could have been something else.

TS: But he registered to vote.

SW: He registered to vote and was so proud of it.

TS: As he should have been. There were a number of things that were part of the law that really tried to discourage, particularly African-Americans, from voting in those years and that was one. If you owned forty acres of land you would be eligible to vote, assuming you were paying your poll tax.

SW: And you asked how he got his land. The first land I believe that he had was given to him by my mother's great-grandfather, Edwards, Charles Edwards was the great-grandfather.

TS: This is the one that came from Tennessee?

SW: Yes.

TS: And he bought the eighty acres and then he gives . . .

SW: No, he did not buy the eighty acres. He only bought a number of acres that he could have to build himself a home.

TS: I see.

SW: Susie Edwards was his daughter who lived in the home with him. He became a preacher and a teacher in the family.

TS: Now, which one is this that becomes the preacher?

SW: Charles Edwards, who was the father of my grandmother's mother.

TS: Father of your grandmother's mother.

SW: Right. Her name was Rebecca Douglas, Rebecca Edwards Douglas.

TS: Which denomination was he?

SW: Baptist. And the whole family became Baptist people. Granddaddy became a deacon in the church that still exists and I yet belong to.

TS: And what's the name of it?

SW: The name of the church is New Hope Missionary Baptist Church. It's in the Cassville area, and I've maintained my membership there.

TS: What was the school where he taught?

SW: The school was a building that was just below Noble Hill in that same general area there. It was between what is now the church and Noble Hill. Cassville School I think it was, Cassville Colored School.

TS: He must have had a little education if he was a teacher.

SW: Evidently so. He came out of the Tennessee area, and we never had a whole lot of information concerning the backgrounds there.

TS: What about your parents? How well educated were they?

SW: My parents had just elementary education. I'm not certain exactly what grades even, you know, grades kind of varied during those years; so I'm not sure; but they were not highly educated people. They were just elementary.

TS: Who encouraged you to go ahead with your schooling?

SW: Well, I think my mother. She encouraged me to do anything that I could and to do it well. That was always her emphasis, you know, whatever you do, do your very best with it. And I give the credit to going on with my

education to my step-father who was Oscar Canty. He had done some studying in the junior high school area, I believe, and loved poetry. He used to read it to us often after we came to the point that we would accept him in the home. At first we didn't want him, because we did not want our mother to marry. It didn't matter with me, it mattered to my sister and my brother--I had one sister and one blood brother.

TS: Were you the oldest one?

SW: Youngest.

TS: You were the youngest. And the older ones were upset by it.

SW: Oh, the older ones were upset by the marriage. They didn't want to accept him, but we did, and he lived a good long time with us.

TS: What kind of poetry did he like?

SW: Well, he quoted a lot of poetry that was done by African-Americans.

TS: Oh, like Langston Hughes?

SW: Langston Hughes and that group of people.

TS: Fantastic.

SW: A lot of that sort. He did not limit it to that, you know. He would read a lot, but he would read some of it to us.

TS: Well, this is the time of the Harlem Renaissance; is he reading the things that are just coming out at that time?

SW: That's true. He was reading those and those that had already been out. It impressed me very much, because I liked poetry. Going on to school after elementary school meant coming to Cartersville here at Summer Hill, and Summer Hill at that time was only through the ninth grade. That's all it was in 1930. Of course, I stayed here for the eighth grade and the ninth grade, and then I had to go away to boarding school. This boarding school that was recommended to my mother from the principal of our school here in Cartersville was in Griffin, Georgia. The name of that school was Cabin Creek High School. It's no longer there. It was sponsored by the Baptists of that area around Griffin.

TS: Let's talk about that for a minute, but let's talk first about Noble Hill. Noble Hill must have been built just about the time that you were ready to go to school, wasn't it?

SW: Yes, 1923. We began my schooling in New Hope Baptist Church that was just below that until the school could open about mid of that term. Then that's when we transferred from there to that school.

TS: So you had a brand new school to go to.

SW: Brand new school. We were so proud. In fact, Noble Hill was the first school built to any architectural design for schools for African-Americans in Bartow County.

TS: Why don't you tell the story about it being a Rosenwald school and what that meant.

SW: Well, a Rosenwald school at that time was considered a school center that had some funding from the Rosenwald fund. I had a cousin, I believe it was, who lived in Thomasville, Georgia and she was the one who knew about the Rosenwald fund and was responsible to bringing that information to the Cassville community. That's how an application was made and funding was received. The funding at that time was like $1,500.

TS: Which was a lot.

SW: A lot of money. The community and the county had to match the funding. I'm not sure. We'll have to look back on our . . .

TS: The exact amount?

SW: Yes, for the exact amount, because what the county and the community did were to match the funds.

TS: Fifty-fifty?

SW: Fifty-fifty. It was interesting what happened, how that came about. Individuals gave, county gave. Funds were raised by fish fries and other kinds of activities in the community, and many of the things during the building time were contributions of community people. I know my grandfather contributed some of the materials.

TS: Like some of the lumber?

SW: Lumber that was needed for that. Some others did some other things as well.

TS: I guess there are a lot of in-kind contributions. Were local artisans working on building the building? Carpenters and so on?

SW: Yes. That was true.

TS: I did a little research before I came today and found out that the Rosenwald fund started in 1912 in Alabama. I guess it's in the '20s when it really started becoming very widespread. But by the end of the '20s, if I remember correctly, about one-fifth of all of the black schools in the South were built with Rosenwald funds, at least in part.

SW: Yes.

TS: But you said that the county school board also put some funds into it?

SW: Yes, they did. I don't remember exactly how much, but a part of it was done by the county. In fact, it seems to me that the county made certain that the matching amount was available. Exactly how much that was at this point I wouldn't like to say.

TS: But at any rate, everybody put in a little bit.

SW: That's right.

TS: Who paid the salaries of the school teachers? Maybe you wouldn't have known that at the time.

SW: I think Bartow County was paying them. During that time, you know, there was one rate of pay for whites and another one for blacks.

TS: How much did they make, do you think?

SW: I'm not really sure. I can only tell you that when I started I made $25.00 a month.

TS: And that must have been the '30s by then.

SW: Yes, it was late '30s.

TS: Was it a big difference between what the white teachers made and what the black teachers made back in the '20s at Noble Hill?

SW: That I'm not certain about, but I do know this; whatever was made was based on your certification. We could begin teaching on a county license by taking a test for that.

That's how I started.

TS: Before you went to college? Or after?

SW: Before.

TS: The county license was for people who hadn't been to college primarily, wasn't it?

SW: I believe so, because you could get a one year certification or two year certification and so on up the line.

TS: But you wouldn't get paid very much without the education.

SW: That's right.

TS: What about your teachers at Noble Hill; did they have any college at all?

SW: Yes, they were college grads. My first grade teacher--Myra Williams was her name--was the one who inspired me to become a teacher. I loved her for what she did and how she treated her students and what she did for all of us. That's how I got into education as a result of what she did.

TS: You just saw her and wanted to do the same.

SW: That's true.

TS: That's great. You went six years at Noble Hill?

SW: Seven years at Noble Hill. At that time seven grades in the county schools. Later on it became eight.

TS: Seven grades and two teachers?

SW: Seven grades and two teachers.

TS: How did they do that? Did they have grades one, two and three in the same room--you only had two rooms there. Or how did they do that? Was it like grades one through four in the same room?

SW: One through three, and the preschool was also in the one, two, three room. Then the four through seven in the next grade room.

TS: So I guess each grade had its assignments, and they'd go up and recite to the teacher. Is that the way it worked?

Or how did a teacher manage four grades in the same room?

SW: I think they taught one grade at a time; they divided the time so that all of them would have equal opportunity.

TS: If you're in the fourth grade, and they're doing the fifth grade lesson, are you reading your assignments?

SW: Doing our assignments or carrying through with some studying for the next day. Something of that sort.

TS: I see. But by the time you get to the seventh grade you're probably hearing it for the fourth time. Or did you just tune it out?

SW: I think we tuned it out pretty well, and yet I think also we learned from each other, because if you listened to what was being taught to the next grade you probably learned something that you could utilize when you got to that point.

TS: Did the older kids help the younger kids with their lessons?

SW: Yes, they did, particularly in the primary grades. I remember that third graders helped second graders or first graders, that sort of thing. I'm not sure that we did too much of this in the upper grades. But I do know this, that our recitations were always made as a class group standing in line. Especially did we remember the spelling area, because it was there that she turned them down, we called it. If somebody missed the word below you, and you could spell the word, then that person went below you. [laughter] It was always interesting about who was going to be at the head of the line.

TS: Very competitive.

SW: Very competitive.

TS: You went to Summer Hill in the eighth and ninth grades?

SW: Eighth.

TS: Just one grade.

SW: Eighth grade and ninth grade, two grades.

TS: Summer Hill was in Cartersville, right?

SW: Yes.

TS: And was that city school system or county?

SW: City school system. There was some arrangement between the two systems. Since we had no high school for blacks in the county, the Cartersville School System would take care of that.

TS: So you didn't have to pay tuition.

SW: No.

TS: So it must have been the county if there was tuition.

SW: Yes.

TS: How was it at Summer Hill? Did you have one teacher per grade when you got there?

SW: One teacher per grade and we had some very strong teachers too that were there. I always remember a teacher that I had who taught science and mathematics. I thought she was the meanest teacher I had ever had, and yet that teacher taught me more. I respected her more after I got out of this school than I did any of the other teachers, because of the fact that she really saw to it that we did what was required of us.

TS: She didn't put up with any nonsense.

SW: She did not. She was a good musician, and she practiced her music but no half doings.

TS: Well, she knew what you needed to succeed in the world and was determined that you learned it.

SW: She did. She was a gifted person. In fact, she was invited--I learned this much later--that she was invited to Washington to perform because of her skills in that area. She was from the Griffin area, and I think that was one of the reasons that we were referred to that area because of her concern.

TS: Do you remember what her name was?

SW: Beatrice Morgan.

TS: What was the principal's name?

SW: J.S. Morgan. I think that's John Stanley.

TS: Was this husband and wife?

SW: Husband and wife.

TS: I was thinking that Morgan was the name of the principal.

SW: Yes, J.S. Morgan.

TS: I think you gave the name of your first grade teacher but let's make sure we've got it, that inspired you so much.

SW: Myra Williams.

TS: Yeah, I'm pretty sure that you mentioned that. Were those your favorite teachers, Mrs. Morgan and Mrs. Williams?

SW: Well, Mrs. Morgan wasn't favorite . . .

TS: Well, I mean, later on.

SW: At that time, but definitely Mrs. Williams was my favorite teacher. Out of all I could remember she was my favorite teacher. I had a very likable science teacher in high school, so I do remember that person too.

TS: Did you carry your lunch to school with you in those days?

SW: Yes, we carried our lunch at Noble Hill. It seems like we had a lunchroom at Summer Hill. I believe we did. We didn't have to carry our lunch. We had lunches, but that's the pay we had to make was to pay for our lunches.

TS: I see. How many kids went on to junior high back then?

SW: I would think about a third of a class. Sometimes maybe as low as a fourth of a class, but it wasn't too much. You didn't have too many of them going on to school.

TS: Most were going out to work.

SW: Out to work. On the farm and things of that kind.

TS: Tell the story now about how you got down to Griffin. How did you hear about the school down there?

SW: I think I said the principal and his wife told my mother about the school, the Cabin Creek High School in Griffin, Georgia that they would recommend that she would send me to that school. In fact, they highly recommended to her that I be sent on to school somewhere. Some of the students from Cartersville would go to Marietta, but there was no boarding area there. That was one of the

reasons that they suggested that I would be sent there. In fact, during those two years in Cartersville I had to spend the week with an aunt and then go home on the weekends. I walked home on the weekends from Cartersville to Cassville.

TS: What was it, five miles?

SW: Five or six, one. Sometimes I finally had to do the latter half of it alone, because the two students who started first with me had found other means of moving back home, getting to and from home than I had. So I always remember that.

TS: That's a long way to walk.

SW: It was then, but we had fun. It was a social hour usually for us, particularly this group. It was about six or eight in the group that went as far as about half way, to go out to the other area, to the western area there, and we would have fun doing this.

TS: Well, did you ever think about going to school in Atlanta like at Spelman I think had a high school connected with it or Booker T. Washington would have been in existence by then.

SW: Some of my classmates went to these schools, but my mother always had in mind I would go to a boarding school, to this Griffin school, and that's why I went there.

TS: Was the school in downtown Griffin or was it out, kind of out in the suburbs or out in the rural areas?

SW: Well, it was not a rural school, it was closer downtown. Not definitely downtown but close to the downtown area.

TS: So you graduated from high school in Griffin?

SW: In Griffin in 1935.

TS: Just say a few words about that high school. What kind of advantages did it have that you may not have had in Cassville or Cartersville?

SW: Well, one advantage was learning to live with other people, that was number one; and I think another advantage, it wasn't so large that you were not recognized as an individual student. It was that kind of school. I think that we had some very dedicated teachers that gave us a broad background in education.

TS: I gather you had a college preparatory curriculum that you took.

SW: I think we did. My science teacher was a Simon. He wanted me so badly to go to Clark College. But going to high school, paying room and board, was too much for my parents to try to send me on. For that reason I got out ready to go to teaching from high school.

TS: Let me ask another one or two more questions about your high school and the kinds of classes and courses that you would take; when you were in your English classes in high school, did you read the same kind of poets that your stepfather was reading to you?

SW: Yes, many of them. It was an advantage, because I had heard of some of them, because I also did a little of that here in Cartersville before that. And we took a year of Spanish and had a teacher who had come out of the Texas area, very fluent. Of course, we enjoyed this, because we learned how to say some things that otherwise we wouldn't. We got the little accent that he could put to it, and it was just great.

TS: So you could speak Spanish with a Mexican type accent.

SW: That's true. We could very definitely do that, and we felt so proud of that. We thought that was over other people who might have taken Spanish.

TS: I had heard before that one of the advantages of a segregated school in those days was that you probably got more black history in a history class than you would had you been in an integrated school.

SW: That was true. Even though we might not have had too much in print, but we did get the oral history that was shared by our teachers. So we did do more of that in that sense.

TS: When you got through high school you didn't have the money to go directly to college. So is that when you got a county certificate to start teaching?

SW: Yes. That was when I first taught I didn't even have a certificate; I was asked to come to Calhoun, Georgia to complete the term of a sixth grade teacher who became terminally ill. It was like completing a four-month period that I did there. When I came back home then, that's when I decided to take the county license test for a job in Bartow County. Of course, that's exactly what happened; I did get the job in Bartow County. And I

always remember this: the first time my mother carried me to see if I could get a job, it was in Cobb County, and it was down at Acworth, I believe at that time. Of course, I had just finished high school, and the trustee boards that we all had during those years interviewed me. They finally told my mom, "She's just too young to try to handle these boys and girls, with one teacher with grades one through seven. Just too young." Disappointing, but I guess I was glad in the end that this did not happen.

TS: I just interviewed a lady last week who went to that school in Acworth. She's a little bit older than you are but she had attended that school. She was born in 1907, and she went to that school in Acworth. Her name is Mrs. Gragg. She was telling me all about that school last week.

SW: Yes, right.

TS: You had mentioned earlier that you started out making $25.00 a month; was that in Calhoun?

SW: Yes, I think I got $25.00 there also. It's been so long I don't even remember, but it was the $25.00 that . . .

TS: So this was in Bartow County then when you were . . .

SW: Yes, it was Bartow County that I remember the $25.00.

TS: And which school was that in?

SW: I went to the Adairsville School, and taught there for eight years.

TS: Is this before you went to college?

SW: I started before I went to college. Then when I started teaching and I found out that every year in college the salary was increased--that gave me the need I guess I had for saying you better move on to try to see if you can get as much salary as you can. So I began taking classes in the summer--those who came on the field--and just kept on doing this, moving up all the way as time moved on. I really didn't complete my college education until 1945.

TS: So you started teaching in '37. So the eight years that you're a teacher in Adairsville you're gradually taking classes each summer . . .

SW: Yes. On the field and whatever.

TS: What do you mean "on the field?"

SW: During that time, and I think it's true now, the classes were brought to certain areas. A college class was taught . . .

TS: So you could do that in a regular school year.

SW: A regular school year as well as going over the summer.

TS: Was it a nine month term in Adairsville?

SW: When I started it was not. Let's see, was it? I'm not really certain about that one, but I know it wasn't long that if not that it became nine months. Because Adairsville didn't get out of school to do the farming at that time.

TS: What about at Noble Hill. I guess that was pretty much a rural community. Was that a nine month term or was it more of a . . .

SW: No, seven, two.

TS: Seven, two. So you did get nine months, it just wasn't consecutive.

SW: That's right.

TS: Well, that's good. That was a lot more than what a lot of rural schools did.

SW: Well, we did seven and two.

TS: Where did you go to college?

SW: I finally ended up going to Ft. Valley State College. But I had gone to the summer schools in Atlanta, and then there was a college in Forsyth, Georgia.

TS: That's what became Ft. Valley, wasn't it?

SW: Well, it was a part of it, I think, and probably did become. I never did know if it did. But anyway, that was where I would do my summer studies, some of my summer studies.

TS: Some of them. Some in Atlanta and some in Forsyth.

SW: Some in Atlanta and some at Forsyth and then on to Ft. Valley.

TS: That was my understanding that the school moved from Forsyth to Ft. Valley.

SW: That's probably true, it probably did. Ft. Valley. And the final year I was offered a scholarship to go to Ft. Valley State for the year '44-'45. In the meantime I had gotten married; we didn't talked about that

.

TS: No, when did you get married?

SW: I got married in 1941.

TS: What was your husband's name?

SW: My husband was named Dan W. Wheeler, Sr. It was actually Daniel Webster Wheeler, was Sr. when our son was born. After we were married in '41, in June, in '42 he was called into the service, and he went away in service. That was another reason I decided I could go and spend a year at Ft. Valley State; because he was in service. At that time, his final area of service was in Hawaii and didn't get back until I had completed that year. When I completed that year, that's when I did my final--the nine years I said that the final was here in Cartersville at Summer Hill where I had completed my junior high school.

TS: Was your husband in the Army or the Navy?

SW: He was in the Army, Air Force. Never to fly but in the Air Force, staff.

TS: Were you all aware of the Tuskegee Airmen back then? Was that. . . ?

SW: Yes, we were aware, because one of the sons of Beatrice and J. S. Morgan was killed as a flyer from here. So we were quite aware of that area.

TS: What did your husband do in the Air Force? Was he like a mechanic. You say he didn't actually fly in the planes.

SW: No, he was a record keeper, something of that nature. He was a corporal.

TS: So that allowed you to finish your bachelor's degree.

SW: Yes.

TS: Did you have any children by that time?

SW: No.

TS: So that was an advantage then, I guess in terms of getting through school.

SW: That was an advantage.

TS: Let me ask you one or two other questions about Adairsville before we move on beyond that. I know in 1937 the state appropriated funds for free textbooks for the first time, and also I've heard stories in lots of communities where it was really unfair on the textbooks that the new books would always go to the white schools and then after they were worn out they'd go to the black schools. Was that your experience in Bartow County?

SW: Yes, that was my early experience in Bartow County. I don't remember exactly the year when that changed, but I do remember that it did change.

TS: Oh, it did?

SW: It did change. Students were given new books, not the passed on ones.

TS: Well, apparently in Atlanta it lasted all the way up until the 1950s, at least that the books were handed down.

SW: Yes.

TS: Well, you graduated from Ft. Valley right about the time that World War II was ending. Then what did you do then?

SW: Well, I was interviewed for a job as a Jeanes supervisor, but that required that I take training for that. My training was offered to begin that summer after I finished Ft. Valley State. If I took the courses I could begin the work as a Jeanes supervisor. But that work would carry me to south Georgia, and I had been accustomed to the hills and mountains of north Georgia. I didn't want to go there. Also my husband was going to get out of service, so I certainly didn't want to be that far away where I couldn't work. So Dr. Robert Cousins, who was in charge of Negro education at that time, was one of the persons who did the interview with me. He said to me, "If you will go and take the course, the first course at least, for supervision, at Atlanta University, this summer--that was the summer of '45--I'll see if I can't help you to get a job at Cartersville. I'll talk to Bartow County in Cartersville about a Jeanes supervisor." And that he did. That was the year that I taught at Cartersville, at Summer Hill, in sixth grade for one year and went back the next summer to Atlanta University, took the second course and, by that time, Dr. Cousins had arranged with Cartersville and Bartow County to employ a Jeanes supervisor.

TS: You were the first Jeanes supervisor for Bartow County?

SW: For this area. First I didn't know if I wanted to do that or not; but there was a little incident at school that caused me to make that decision.

TS: What was that?

SW: The incident was that during the time athletics was going on, teachers would sell and do their little part for the school at the games. Two or three teachers were always together to do this. When my time came about the rain came and the game was canceled. We thought we should have the next game that came up. But the next game coming up was Marietta's game, and it was always well attended. The question was, would it be fair for us to have that day or for the group who it had been given to already. We had to vote on it, and the principal voted with that other group. It was the best thing that ever happened to me, because it made me decide, yes, I'm going to take this course and take this Jeanes supervisor. That's how I got into Jeanes supervision. I went that summer. By that time my husband had returned, and he decided that he would take the grant to go to barber school that was in Atlanta also. So that just worked out real well for us.

TS: Why don't you talk a little bit about what a Jeanes supervisor did.

SW: Well, a Jeanes supervisor was responsible for working with the rural black schools to improve them in any way that she could--I think most of us were ladies at that time--and that was really our responsibility. In fact, sometimes we said we kind of served as the black superintendent.

TS: You know, I had read that, that they were almost like superintendents.

SW: That's right, we were given that kind of responsibility.

TS: What all were some of the things that you would do when you would go to the different schools?

SW: Well, we were responsible for seeing that they got the textbooks they needed; we were responsible to help them with any lunch programs that were coming about at that time; we didn't have so many lunchroom but we did have lunch foods that were distributed to schools.

TS: Federal programs?

SW: Federal programs. We were responsible for that; we were responsible for helping them to improve the classroom teaching; we were responsible to work with the parents to help them to cooperate and make their schools better--just total improvement of education for the children and for the community.

TS: What were some of the special problems of that era? We're talking now about the late '40s and into the '50s. Were there still a lot of the public health problems that once existed like hookworm and pellagra and those kinds of things?

SW: I never heard too much about that in our community, but we were responsible to see that the health of the children and the school environment were such that it would not interfere with their education. So we had to work with the health department and have the nurses to come in and give the injections and whatever was necessary. That was our responsibility to see that it was done.

TS: Did you have any authority over who the teachers were, over hiring the teachers?

SW: Yes, we did. That was one of the things. We recommended the teachers to the superintendent, and we really were the ones who went out and found the teachers that we wanted in particular in the schools.

TS: Where did you do your recruiting? Was it like at the colleges in the area?

SW: Yes, we recruited. I got information from colleges very often, and we recruited with anybody, any group that dealt with teaching. We went to them to ask them for recommendations and that sort of thing, explaining the kind of person we needed in the schools.

TS: I guess we should have spelled Jeanes: J-e-a-n-e-s?

SW: That's correct.

TS: I believe it was a lady from Philadelphia or somewhere that started I guess . . .

SW: Jeanes supervision.

TS: That gave the money originally or something to start this program?

SW: Anna T. Jeanes was the person.

TS: I believe she was Quaker, wasn't she?

SW: A Quaker.

TS: How many schools were under your supervision?

SW: When I started I had thirteen in the county and one in Cartersville. So there were fourteen schools that I worked with.

TS: Wow. That's a lot of travel.

SW: Yes, a lot of travel.

TS: Did you have your own automobile to go around?

SW: Yes, my husband had taught me how to drive much, much earlier; so I could drive.

TS: How were the roads at that time?

SW: Where my schools were, the roads weren't bad. They were in good shape. So I never had a real problem of that.

TS: Were they mainly dirt roads or paved roads by that time?

SW: Most of them were paved for the most part where the schools were. I can't think of any real problems I had with transportation.

TS: Did you get an allowance for travel?

SW: Yes, we did. We got an allowance for travel. I don't even remember how much the mileage but so much per mileage.

TS: Well, I guess as a Jeanes supervisor, you were making a lot more money than as a regular teacher, weren't you?

SW: Yes, yes.

TS: When was it that salaries became equitable without regard to race in Georgia? Was it always that way when you were teaching?

SW: No. I don't remember exactly when the change came, but I certainly remember that as long as I was teaching in the county schools that was the case. So evidently it changed somewhere in the early '40s or mid '40s or something of that kind.

TS: Was the teacher retirement system in place by this time?

SW: I hadn't heard very much about it if it was.

TS: You hadn't? So you didn't have a retirement plan until when?

SW: Until the state began to promote retirement funds.

TS: Do you remember about when that was?

SW: I sure don't. I guess I could recall somehow.

TS: Well, we can find out somewhere else, I guess, on that. I was just wondering if you had any real stories about that. When did you decide to work on a doctorate? Or did you decide to get a master's first and then a doctorate?

SW: Yes. Well, my master's idea started when I started the course on Jeanes supervision. I just kept going on, because I felt that I needed to know more about what education was all about and to voice its concern and to keep improving and advancing. That's when I decided to continue my work at Atlanta University working towards the master's degree.

TS: And you were going to get a master's in some kind of education . . .

SW: Yes, elementary education, I believe it was.

TS: By the way, looking back on it, did you feel like you had a really good education at Ft. Valley or were there deficiencies in it? How would you rate the education you received?

SW: Well, I thought the education at Ft. Valley State was certainly beyond medium; it may not have been superlative but it was beyond medium. I was very pleased with it. One of the things I think that I was so pleased with that I had an opportunity to work with people throughout the state and outside of the state as well in the educational process.

TS: Our county manager in Cobb County, David Hankerson graduated from Ft. Valley. I did an interview with him, and he was very pleased with the education that he got there. What about at Atlanta University, how was that?

SW: Well, now, I thought that Atlanta University's training was superior. I always did think it was superior, and I never had any regrets of anything that I was exposed to at Atlanta University.

TS: Any teachers who stand out from your graduate training that had an influence on you? Or maybe by that time you're so mature that you don't need that kind of a mentoring influence anymore.

SW: Well, I always remember the person who encouraged me to go on towards the doctorate and her name was Dr. Barbara Jackson. When I went back to work on my education doctorate, I had already done the degree before that. The reason I did that with that six-year certification was because I was one of those persons who always felt I'd like to have the highest possible salary that was offered to me. It was because of that that I went to the University of Kentucky. I had a scholarship offered through the Southern Education Foundation, and I spent that full year with my son who was four years old then. We spent that full year at the University of Kentucky in Lexington.

TS: Oh. Your husband stayed down here, and you went to Lexington.

SW: My husband stayed here. At that time he had developed a business that he was responsible for. So he stayed here and would come often. We would come back and forth during that year.

TS: What was his business?

SW: His business was he had a barber shop and a beauty parlor. He had taken on some other responsibilities. He was a pretty good carpenter. His daddy was that, and he had taken the training for that that the Army offered. So he did both of those things. Then he even worked awhile with the railway; so he could travel on the railroad without paying any . . .

TS: Was it the GI Bill that paid when he went to barber school?

SW: GI Bill did all of it.

TS: So you had one son at that time.

SW: Yes, born in 1950.

TS: So this will be 1954 that you're up at Lexington. You said he was four years old, didn't you?

SW: No, he was fourth grade.

TS: Fourth grade, oh. This is 1960?

SW: '59-'60. I guess he was fourth, fourth grade I thought.

TS: Sounds about right. So 1959 and '60 you were at the University of Kentucky, and this is where you got your six-year certificate?

SW: Yes, my six-year certification came from there. At that time the University of Georgia didn't accept us, you know. Of course, we didn't go there. But then later on when the state began to offer not just a certificate but a degree, accept a degree in--what do we call it, that six year--Education specialist.

TS: Specialist, right.

SW: So when it came up that the state offered the specialist degree, then I decided I wanted that degree too. But when I checked with the University of Kentucky at Lexington I found out that it would take me longer to change my certificate to a degree there than it would if I would go to the University of Georgia. And the University of Georgia at that time was accepting all of us, as such, and I could do this by weekend classes or summer classes. The only thing I had to do was establish residency. So I decided to do that.

TS: Okay, so now we're beyond '61, I guess.

SW: Yes, this is about '76.

TS: Oh, '76.

SW: Yes, we'd been out, it was a good length of time before that decision was made. That's when I went there and completed my work for that specialist degree.

TS: Okay, from '61 to '76 or '59-60 you're at University of Kentucky. Now what did you complete there?

SW: The certification for the six-year.

TS: And then what is it you get at Georgia? What's different about what you get at Georgia?

SW: Well, at that time, in '59-'60, the state of Georgia was not accepting the specialist degree as such, it just said certification. So that's when I went on to Georgia, I went there to get the degree, not just the certificate. But I got the pay for it, the state of Georgia paid for the six-year certification at that time.

TS: And then after you finished that, is that when you started working on your doctorate?

SW: Yes. I came the summer, I think, that I finished. By the way, I'll always remember this; I didn't go back to be a part of the graduation. The reason I didn't do this, I thought, I'm not going to do this because when I was working for the six-year certification, Georgia didn't want me then, I won't bother now. [laughter] That was just a little idea; I'm not going back to do that.

TS: Right.

SW: But that's when I came on and started the same summer, I believe. The reason I went back to get my doctorate was I wanted to write the story of the integration of Bartow County schools, because I thought we had done a superior job and that I'd like to record it. So that's why I went back there. When I talked about Dr. Barbara Jackson--it was she who said to me when I was working on this and taking some of the courses that were necessary, "I think you ought to move this towards your doctorate." It was for that reason that I went on and began working with this all during the total period to write the history.

TS: You'd written a paper for Dr. Jackson, and she's saying let's expand that?

SW: That's right.

TS: What year did you get your doctorate?

SW: '78.

TS: And the integration of the Bartow County system was about ten years before that?

SW: Right. '68. Let's see, '67-'68, I believe.

TS: Marietta was also '67. Why don't you tell the story that you wrote about in your dissertation. What made it such a successful experience, do you think?

SW: Well, I think it was the way in which it was conducted. We had a superintendent at that time, Carl Merrill, and he was listed as one of the most influential people in Bartow County of the twenty people. Of course, I was listed there too as one of those persons along with him. And I think it was a fact that he moved integration in a very smooth fashion without community disturbances and

very peacefully. What I thought was it was fairly done. All the schools became integrated, all the trustee boards at that time became integrated at every school. He had taken me to his office and integrated the Bartow County school superintendent's office with a secretary. So he led the way in that sense before he tried to work on the other part of integration. And I just think it was done professionally. Well.

TS: His name was Merrill?

SW: Carl A. Merrill.

TS: What was your title? Were you a Jeanes supervisor until this time?

SW: No, we had changed our names to curriculum director. So I was working as the curriculum director for Bartow County Schools. In the meantime, I worked also with two other systems as a part of my Jeanes supervision.

TS: What were the other two systems?

SW: One was Gordon County which it's only school was at Calhoun. The other was Paulding County and it had one school, Matthews High School. Bartow County had then integrated all of its black schools into one school, so I had these four schools to work with and not the little rural schools.

TS: Was Matthews in Dallas?

SW: Dallas.

TS: And you say all the black schools were merged together before integration.

SW: Yes, prior to integration. Three I think it was.

TS: Into a consolidated school.

SW: Yes. '55 they were consolidated in Bartow.

TS: When integration took place, did the black school continue in existence as an integrated school?

SW: Yes. I believe it had been an elementary school, grades one through eight. I believe it became a middle school after integration. The principal that was there remained as the black principal of that school, but it was integrated.

TS: That's unusual.

SW: We thought it was unusual, but it was done so well.

TS: What happened to Summer Hill High School? Did it close down at that time or did it become a middle school?

SW: Summer Hill, as I remember, became a middle school, I believe it was, and partly was integrated, but it was not attended that much; enrollment was not that great, I don't think, as I can remember.

TS: Was integration something that was universally wanted by African-Americans or was there any resistance from African-Americans to the change?

SW: I don't think there was resistance from African-Americans; some people were a little fearful of what would happen, but other than that I don't think there was that much resistance.

TS: I had heard before that some of the students felt that the segregated schools at least gave them a kind of a nurturing environment where they were protected where sometimes in integrated schools they felt like they had kind of been thrown to the wolves, maybe.

SW: Perhaps that was true. In the meantime, the only thing that I say that we might have suffered was the fact that the black teachers in all black schools were like parents for children. The families sort of turned over parent responsibility to these teachers. That was lost when integration came. And that probably was some feelings that were expressed at times, you know; that no longer did they feel that someone was there who really cared for them deeply. That's possibly the only thing I know.

TS: Do you think there was a difference in teaching style of white teachers compared to black teachers?

SW: Well, I think so in many ways, but I believe that black teachers worked harder to become a part of the school program, because of the fact that they had been separated prior to this and had been taught, I guess, that white teachers were better than they. They wanted to make sure that that was not true.

TS: What about from the white community? Was there any resistance to desegregation in Bartow County or did they accept it readily? How would you describe it?

SW: Well, I'm sure that there was some resistance, but it

didn't surface to hinder what was going on. I thought that was the success of the whole thing that even though there may have been resentment that it didn't surface.

TS: You think this was because of strong leadership from the top?

SW: I think it's strong leadership caused this to happen; I think we had a strong board of education too that had been convinced that this was the way we should go. And you know, there was another thing that came up: the school systems that failed to follow the federal regulations lost funds, and the school systems who moved ahead gained funds as a result. I think that was another kind of thing that made some school systems move ahead. And I'm sure we were like that here, because it was made known that we have gained this amount of funds as a result of what we have done, and we'll get some more if we continue. And that's the way it was.

TS: Was Bartow County under a court order to desegregate or did they do it voluntarily?

SW: I don't think we were under court order. No more than what was expected through the federal government.

TS: Everybody knew it was coming.

SW: Right.

TS: But they did it before they had to. How long did you remain as a curriculum supervisor?

SW: I started as a curriculum supervisor for the system of Bartow County in '61 or '62, and I remained there until I retired in '79, I believe.

TS: So you finished your doctorate, and then one year later you retired?

SW: That's right, that's true. One year later.

TS: Let's talk for a few minutes about what you've done with the Noble Hill Wheeler Memorial since you retired, because that was I guess in the '80s that the effort started, wasn't it, to save the old school?

SW: Yes. Well, my first effort was to see if I could get my grandfather's home place on the National Register. When I inquired through the state of Georgia and the Department of Natural Resources what I should do, the first thing they said I should do was to get someone from

that department to come and look at the home place that I was trying to get on the register. When this person came from that department and looked at this house and, by the way, she is the person who is in charge of the Herndon House now, Carole Merritt.

TS: Yes.

SW: Carole was with the Department of Natural Resources at that time. When she came and looked at this house, she said we've done too much to it for it to be considered a part of the National Register, because there were things like siding. So when she finished telling me that I told her I would like to take her to see this school that at that time looked like pictures showing that it . . .

TS: It's in bad shape.

SW: The pictures showed that it's in bad shape. When she looked at that she said, "Now, this can be brought up to be placed on the register perhaps." That's how we got started. In the meantime, Chief Justice [Robert] Benham had carried his son up there to see what a rural school looked like years ago. He was concerned about the whole area and talked to me concerning this. We decided to get together and bring a group together to talk about preserving that old building. That's how we got started.

TS: Now Justice Benham, what was he at that time? He was not on the State Supreme Court yet, was he?

SW: Not yet.

TS: Was he a Superior Court Judge?

SW: Superior Court Judge, I believe, at that time.

TS: Okay, so he's the mover and shaker along with you in getting this started?

SW: Yes, he was. He was right there along with it. Later on, you know, he couldn't participate too much because of his new positions. So he worked with us at a distance sort of as an advisory sort.

TS: So you all set out to save the old school then.

SW: That's what we did.

TS: What did you have to do? Who owned the property at that time?

SW: My sister-in-law [Bertha W. Wheeler] owned that property and lived next door to this school. We began talking to people who had some concerns or who had been former students of the center, and we decided to bring us all together and sit down and talk about this. Out of this setting came the discussion about what we needed to do, how we'd get about it, how we'd try to divide up the property if we could, and how we would move beyond this. We met at my sister-in-law's house that was next door. We approached her then by saying, "Are you willing to sell us the building?" And she said, "Let me think about it." We decided then we would meet again soon and talk about it. She came up at the second meeting with her decision. She said, "I'm going to give the building in memory of my husband and my father-in-law who was the builder that built it." Of course, we then jumped for that. We made decisions about what we were going to have to do, how we would get started, and all the things that would be necessary, and how we'd get some funding for it. Our funding first was everybody was going to give a donation for postage to contact people and that sort of thing. I thought at the first one we gave one dollar each. Anyway, we didn't have too much money, but we had enough postage to get in touch with people, and it just grew from that. Who would do some volunteer work, and who could we get in touch with to ask about other funding, and all of that. It grew from that start.

TS: Who all helped fund it? Was it Georgia Humanities Council?

SW: Department of Natural Resources, I believe, and then we wrote grants; we asked for donations; we had fund raisers ourselves; and we contacted as many of our former students as we could for assistance.

TS: It reminds me so much of your stories of how your school was built in the first place.

SW Yes, very much, very much.

TS: How long did it take before you managed to renovate the building?

SW: I think we started in '82. Then we really didn't get too much done until '84 and '85. In fact, we didn't open it until '87; so along that line--five years before we really got going; so we had a lot of things, fund raising and everything else and volunteer service to do a lot of the work. Bartow County joined in with us to help us with this whole idea.

TS: Good. I'm trying to remember, I've been taking my classes up there for a long time. What year did it actually open to the public?

SW: '87.

TS: In '87? Yes, I've probably been taking classes just about that long out there.

SW: Yes, not too long after that.

TS: Well, tell me a little bit about the services you provide through the Noble Hill Wheeler Memorial?

SW: Well, the services we try to provide is open to all the communities around us for tours, for meetings, and particularly for students, young class students--we decided to ask the third grade classes and the seventh or eighth grade classes, wherever they taught Georgia history in the systems and then some of the class from the social science division to come annually on a tour of the center. We didn't say others couldn't come, but we just targeted those groups.

TS: Right.

SW: That's what we've done for our students, and we've had good response. We've asked organizations to hold their meetings there, and we've had traveling exhibits that we could advertise and let people know about. Just a number of other little things we've gone through to make sure that the center does attract people in the area and get more knowledge about what our heritage was like.

TS: Well, it's certainly a wonderful thing that you've done with the school to have it open to the community. You're also active in the Etowah Valley Historical Society I know and have been for a long time. Are there other organizations that you're involved in now?

SW: Well, American Association of University Women, I've been a member of that for a good, long time; Delta Kappa Gamma is another group that I work with.

TS: Is that an educational sorority?

SW: It's an education association, more like an association. The Retired Teachers, of course, that I still work with; the Bartow County Library Board which really was one of the things that I worked with very, very early starting our little center on Jones Street here in the Summer Hill area.

TS: Is this the Summer Hill area around here?

SW: No, this is not the Summer Hill area. The Summer Hill area is more of a hill area along there, that way.

TS: About how far from here?

SW: It's about three blocks to begin with, about three blocks and then it covers a good area that is identified as Summer Hill.

TS: The other side of Cherokee Street, is that the way you're pointing?

SW: Cherokee Avenue. No, I'm pointing more to North Bartow Street that goes around that way.

TS: Oh, okay, yes, I know where Jones is.

SW: You know where Jones is, Jones intersects Church Street.

TS: Yes, I know exactly where you're talking about.

SW: This area was known as the West End area; so that makes the difference and Summer Hill.

TS: Well, how many children do you have?

SW: One.

TS: Just the one.

SW: Two grandchildren. And they're all in Birmingham.

TS: Well, that's not too far away.

SW: Not too far, two and a half hours if you're driving.

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APPENDIX ??

AUTOBIOGRAPHY COVER- DR. SUSIE WEEMS WHEELER