

The Museum News

The official newsletter of the Pearl River Community College Museum Patrons' Organization

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Pearl River Community College Museum receives portrait of former Superintendent

Pearl River Community College Museum received a portrait of the school's second superintendent, Will Jacobs, from members of his family.

Jacobs was superintendent of Pearl River County Agricultural High School from 1911-17. Under his leadership the school began obtaining a reputation throughout the state and nation.

By the end of Jacobs term, the school had become recognized as a leader in rural education in the United States, having been the subject of two national magazine and newspaper articles and a visit by the United States Commissioner of Education (equivalent to the present day Secretary of Education).

"We had little knowledge of Will Jacobs' background," said Ronn Hague, director of the PRCC Museum. "We knew from Poplarville's early newspaper, *The Free Press*, that his previous job was Superintendent of Louisville City Schools, but we didn't know what happened to him after that."

All that changed as a result of a "Google" search and a telephone call. Hague found telephone numbers for a Will Jacobs, Jr. and a Will Jacobs, III. That led him to Jacobs Jr.'s widow, who put him in touch with the family.

Rebecca Jacobs Barlow, Will Jacobs' daughter, her twin brother, Robert Jacobs, and another sister, Sarah Jacobs Woodrow, all of Jackson, visited the PRCC Museum specifically to bring a portrait of their father, and to see the school he had helped build. The three Jackson Jacobs and an older sister in Texas are all that remain of the nine Jacobs children.

Will (not William) Jacobs, from Watertown, Tennessee, was born May 28, 1880, and educated at Peabody College, the University of Nashville, and the University of Wisconsin. Before he took the Superintendent's position at Pearl River County Agricultural High School (now Pearl River Community College), he was a

(See *Portrait* on page 3)

Former PRCC Alum makes generous contribution to museum

Jean Baughman Templeton of Huntsville, Ala. came to Pearl River Community College to see and hear the chimes she had donated in memory of her aunt and uncle. The chimes, in the bell tower of the new Malone Chapel on the Poplarville campus, were donated during the drive to raise the \$750,000 needed to build the facility.

Templeton, who was a cheerleader at PRC in 1954-55, and her youngest son were given a tour of the campus by PRCC President Dr. William Lewis, which included a tour of the museum. Several days later, the museum received a check to help with remodeling and operating expenses.

"I was totally surprised," said Ronn Hague, the museum's director. "Quite pleasantly surprised," he added. "We really needed the money to complete our remodeling. The bank account was getting pretty low, and we still had things we needed to do. We really appreciate Mrs. Templeton's generous gift and will put it to good use."



Jacobs family presents portrait to PRCC Museum. Kathryn Moody, (left) member of the Pearl River Community College Museum Advisory Board, receives a portrait of Will Jacobs, Pearl River County Agricultural High School's Second Superintendent, from three of Jacobs four remaining children. (Left to right) Moody, Rebecca Jacobs Barlow, Sarah Jacobs Woodrow, and Robert Jacobs.

Pearl River Community College Museum wins national award

Pearl River Community College Museum can be proud that in the first four years of its existence, it has claimed a national award from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH). The 100 year-old AASLH organization has been active in preserving the nation's history, and this year marks the 60th annual awards program.

The museum received the prestigious Certificate of Commendation for its production of "The Pearl River College Story: a historical documentary" on DVD. The documentary was viewed by a panel of judges in a regional adjudication. Carole King, Regional Awards Chair and Director of "Old Alabama Town," said in a notification letter, "This year the competition was especially difficult but your project proved to be outstanding against some tough judges! The committee was impressed with the depth of archival research available for your project and with how the documentary presented the information in a user-friendly format."

Ronn Hague, PRCC's museum director, will go to Pittsburgh September 24, 2005 to receive the award for the museum.

Museum suffers no loss during Katrina

On August 29, 2005, when Hurricane Katrina came ashore and traveled up I-59, it brought with it devastation and death. Hurricane Camille is no longer the benchmark for hurricanes. Katrina has taken its place. Now, along with the Hurricane Camille exhibit, the museum will also feature a Hurricane Katrina exhibit in the

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Pearl River College: Little Known Facts and Information

(This article is a result of research done for *100 Years of Educational Excellence: The Pearl River College Story*)

Will Jacobs PRAHS Second Superintendent

Will Jacobs, Sr. was born in Watertown, Tennessee on May 28, 1880. Jacobs, a teacher, married Cornelia Grissom Bass of Linwood, Tennessee. Jacobs had previously accepted a position in Laurel, Mississippi when he asked for Miss Bass' hand in marriage. After they were married on August 29, 1906, they left for Mississippi and Jacobs' job as principal of West End School. Jacobs stayed in Laurel for only one year when he was offered the Superintendent's position at Louisville City Schools. Jacobs stayed there from 1907 until May 1911 when he accepted the position of Superintendent of Pearl River County Agricultural High School (PRAHS). Jacobs replaced T. M. Kelly, PRAHS' first Superintendent.

Jacobs, at 31, came to Poplarville at the end of a long, dry spell. When the agricultural high school law was declared unconstitutional in 1909 because it did not provide equal accommodation for African American children, PRAHS was put in a difficult place. Poplarville businessmen came to the new school's rescue, signing a banknote for enough money to last the school until a new agricultural high school law was passed. When the new law was passed in March of 1910, the Board of Trustees began looking toward the future by hiring architects to design a much needed administration/classroom building and a girls' dormitory. Construction was begun on the administration/classroom building (later named Jacobs Hall) in 1911, and the girls' dormitory was let for bid the following year.

When Jacobs was announced as the new superintendent, PRAHS Board of Trustees member M. N. McCoy received a letter from J. C. Hardy, President of Mississippi Agricultural and Mechanical College (present day Mississippi State University). He wrote:

I have just learned that Prof. Will Jacobs of Louisville, Miss., has been elected as principal of your Agricultural High School there. Your pupils are to be congratulated on securing the services of such a man as Prof. Jacobs. I was in his school at Louisville two weeks ago and made a thorough investigation of his work.

I regard him as one of the best school men in the state.

This was not the last recommendation that Jacobs would receive. Jacobs had been superintendent for less than a year when the school was visited by Dr. Phalindar P. Claxton, the United States Commissioner of Education and the equivalent to the present day U. S. Secretary of Education. The Poplarville newspaper's explanation for Claxton's interest in PRAHS was "... this visit was brought about by our great State Supt. Of Education. Mr. Powers said that he met Dr. Claxton in Jackson and asked him where he was going. The Doctor said that he was going over to the A. & M. College to study our system of Agricultural Education. Prof. Powers told him if he wanted to study an agricultural school that was reaching right out to the people, for him to just come right down

to the Piney Woods of South Mississippi and visit the Pearl River County A. H. S. This Dr. Claxton agreed to do provided Mr. Powers would come with him, and to this Mr. Powers readily agreed." ("A.H.S. Notes." *The Free Press*, April 11, 1912)

In an address to the students, Commissioner Claxton, a farmer himself, was reported to have said that the time had come to fit the school to the child rather than the reverse. Powers said that of the state's 19 agricultural high schools, Pearl River was the best.

These accolades did not go unnoticed. Leaders in Jackson became aware of the tremendous strides that Pearl River County Agricultural High School was making.

In 1911, During Jacobs' first year and the school's third session, Pearl River County began the task of consolidating its county schools. Prior to consolidation, students were receiving their first eight grades in one room schools scattered throughout the county. This problem was not confined to Mississippi rural schools but was prevalent throughout the United States in the early twentieth century. Consolidation had been tried in places, but with little success, so it was remarkable that Pearl River County had a working system of consolidated schools as early as 1914. These consolidated schools were situated in new buildings, many of them brick and under the leadership of a principal who was college educated, which was unusual in that day.

By consolidating the schools, the county developed a progressive system of education that benefitted the students, placing them in centers of learning where they were taught by better trained teachers under the leadership of a college educated principal. Transportation to and from school was provided. Wagons and later "trucks" were used to transport the children. This consolidation program earned the county national interest from the nation's educators. The State Superintendent of Education was particularly proud of Pearl River County's progress, and he often brought national visitors to see the county's system of schools.

The success of this county-wide system of consolidated schools and the county's progressive agricultural high school could largely be attributed to the forward-thinking residents of Pearl River County. Not only did they support this program, they fostered it. The agricultural high school was the talk of the local residents; they took great pride in its accomplishments and the success it was having in the lives of their children. They willingly took on the extra tax burdens in order that the county's children could have a better life through education.

The students followed their parents thinking, yearning for a quality education and the rewards they knew such an education would bring. Jacobs and his teachers were promoting this desire to learn. One example of this was John Lumpkin. When Lumpkin came to PRAHS, he was older than his peers by several years and had received little prior education. The first graduation held May 23, 1912 included a declamatory (speech) contest that was held the morning of the graduation exercises. John Lumpkin earned the first prize, a gold medal. Poplarville's newspaper said "... it might be well to state that Mr. Lumpkin was practically grown and having little education when he entered this school, had the pleasure and distinction of carrying off the first gold medal ever offered a pupil of this institution." ("A.H.S. Closes Term, Six Graduates Receive Diplomas, Brilliant Exercises Held." *The Free Press*, May 23, 1912.) This desire to learn did not go unnoticed by the interested educators who came to Mississippi to observe the educational advancements the southern farming state was making.

One such visit was paid by Dr. Wallace Buttrick, the Secretary of the General Educational Board of the Rockefeller Foundation, who visited in early April, 1914. He later wrote an article for *Outlook* magazine concerning his visit. (See *Jacobs* on page 4)

Gene Gatwood will be autographing his new book, *Dobie's River*, in the museum from 1:30 PM until game time during Homecoming activities. Books will be available in the museum for \$27.95.

MAB elects new chairman

The Museum Advisory board met on Thursday, August 25 at 3 p.m. in the museum for its regular quarterly meeting. During the meeting, Barbara Highstreet was elected chairman to replace Kathryn Moody, who resigned recently citing health reasons.

Also, during the meeting, Ronn Hague, museum director, gave a report on the current remodeling project. According to Hague, the remodeling project is on track and should be ready for the homecoming festivities on October 15.

Hague also reported a combined balance of \$20,279.45. This amount includes \$9,595 in the special fund (Dobie Holden exhibit), \$4,375 in the Brownstone Fund, and \$6,309.45 in the general fund. Remodeling expenses to date were \$2,195.51.

Annual Museum Patrons' Organization Meeting to be held

The annual meeting of the Museum Patrons' Organization will be held on October 15, 2005, immediately following the Alumni Luncheon in a location to be announced at the luncheon. The annual meeting will be held to elect five members of the Museum Advisory Board, replacing five who were elected for a one-year term. These new MAB members will be elected for a three-year term according to the organization's by-laws. (To read the Museum Patrons' Organization by-laws, go to www.prcc.edu/museum/) Printed ballots will be made available for convenience.

During the meeting a new budget for fiscal year 2005-2006 will be presented. The meeting will also feature the presentation of the American Association for State and Local History award which the museum won for the DVD, "The Pearl River College Story: a historical documentary."

Because of time constraints, please make your way to the meeting as soon as the Alumni Luncheon and Meeting is adjourned to give everyone time to visit the museum and visit with friends before the game begins.

Have an article of clothing, a catalog, photos, or other memorabilia you would like to share? The PRCC Museum is always looking for items of interest from the past. Call 601-403-1316.

The Pearl River Community College Museum depends solely on contributions for new exhibits, improvements, and preservation supplies. We have no other funding source except you. Make your contribution to the museum today! Cut out this form and send it with a check payable to the PRCC Development Foundation (write "museum" in the *for* space on your check).

I would like to contribute \$_____ to (check one)

Historical Marker for the College

General Fund

I would like to purchase _____ DVD(s) "The Pearl River College Story" (\$25 each), winner of the AASLH Certificate of Commendation

I would like to purchase _____ timeline(s) (\$2 each)

I would like to purchase _____ copie(s) of The Historic Buildings of Pearl River College (\$15 each)

I would like to become a member or renew my membership. (\$25 per year single membership, \$35 per year for 2 members of the same household.)

Katrina *(continued from page 1)*

future. The story, however, is yet to be written at Pearl River Community College and in its six-county supporting district.

The museum fared well during the storm. The only damage suffered was a leaking roof that dripped water on an unoccupied area of the exhibit hall. The next day, the windows and doors were opened and the drying process began. The museum is now ready for visiting and will be opened with school on Sept. 19.

Many Pearl River College Alumni suffered loss during the storm. Some suffered minor roof or window damage or lost their entire houses. Some of those affected are museum patrons.

For the sake of history, you might want to write down your personal experiences during and after Katrina. As these are experiences are collected, the museum will put them together in a book to be placed in the museum, so that others who come after will be able to read these accounts and get a feel for the destruction of the storm.

Portrait *(continued from page 1)*

teacher in Tennessee, the principal of West End School in Laurel and the Superintendent of Louisville City Schools.

At the peak of his term at Pearl River County Agricultural High School, close friend Theo Bilbo, Mississippi's Governor, asked Jacobs to become the first Director of the Mississippi Industrial and Training School at Columbia (now Columbia Training School). Jacobs later moved to Jackson, where he became the head of the state office of the Federal Housing Administration. He died in March, 1957.

"His son and daughters were able to fill in all the blanks surrounding the mystery of what happened to him after he left here," said Hague. "The story has another side. We were able to fill them in on the important work that Jacobs did in helping PRC gain national recognition and helping the county gain the Model County School program."

The Model County School program, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, was an experiment to improve rural education in the nation. Pearl River County competed with nine other counties in Mississippi for the program. The program ran from 1916 until 1920. It made such an impact among educators that many national figures came to Pearl River County Agricultural High School to observe the program.

Please fill in the following information:

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Ph. _____ - _____ - _____

Alumni? Yes No Years attended _____ to _____

Please allow 2 weeks delivery for items ordered. Please include \$3 for postage. Mail this order/donation to:

Pearl River Community College Museum
101 Highway 11 North
Poplarville, MS 39470
visit us at www.prcc.edu/museum/

Jacobs *(continued from page 1)*

The article, some three pages in length, praised the foresight of the people of Pearl River County and Mississippi officials for their encouragement.

University of Mississippi professor, J.C. Fant, in a letter requesting that Will Jacobs attend the High School Conference at the University in mid-June of 1914, wrote in a post script: "Dr. Buttrick is praising your school throughout the nation . . . I wish you could have heard him eulogizing your school at Louisville, Ky., last week." A week after visiting Pearl River's agricultural high school, Buttrick appeared at the Southern Educators Conference in Louisville, Kentucky, and highly praised the educational system at PRCAHS. Buttrick "stated publicly that he had visited schools in most every state in the Union and in other parts of the world but that our school came nearer the Ideal School than any other school that he had ever seen." ("A.H.S. Notes." *The Free Press*, April 30, 1914.) Buttrick was not only impressed with the A.H.S. but with the consolidated schools in the county as well. The newspaper wrote "It seems to us, if our judgment may be trusted, that we have one of the finest school systems to be found anywhere. People have come into our county this year from most everywhere to study our educational progress." (*Ibid.*)

At the Educator's Conference in Louisville, Kentucky, Mississippi State Superintendent of Education W. H. Smith recommended that the conference develop a Model County School program as an experiment in rural education. Buttrick spoke up and offered that the Rockefeller Foundation would fund such an experiment if it was held in Mississippi. It took better than one year for the details of the experiment to be ironed out, and, in the fall of 1915, nine counties bid on the experimental Model County School program—including Hinds, Jones, and Harrison counties. The Pearl River County delegation was led by Professor Will Jacobs. Two weeks later, Pearl River County was named the Model County School.

The Model County School program began on January 1, 1916. The program provided for a county agent, a home economist, a county school doctor and nurse, and an assistant superintendent of education. In 1916, a summer "school" program was begun. In two-week segments, corn and tomato clubs met, culminating with a two-week adult continuing education camp. That first summer, the agricultural high school's dormitories housed many of the 1,000 campers.

In the midst of this wonderful Model County School experiment that was gaining national attention, Will Jacobs answered the Governor's call to another position. Theo Bilbo became governor for the first of his two terms in 1916. He was an education-minded governor who listened to progressive thinkers, so he turned his attention toward providing for the state's orphans and state's young offenders with the Mississippi Industrial and Training Institute in Columbia. Jacobs was appointed the new school's first director.

Jacobs stayed at the Columbia school for seven years, from 1918 until 1924. By this time, the Jacobs household had grown. When a fifth child was born in 1921, it put a greater burden on Jacobs' educator's salary. In 1924, Jacobs decided to better provide for his growing family, and he moved to Jackson, Mississippi to take a job as a general agent with the Great Southern Life Insurance Company.

For a three-year period, Jacobs worked with the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) serving as the state office's head for a year and a half.

During Will Jacobs lifetime, he became a Mason and was Chairman of the Board of Deacons at First Baptist Church in Poplarville, made Shriner and was a charter member of the Columbia Rotary Club. He was also on the Board of Trustees of the Children's Home Finding Society, the Salvation Army and the Baptist Hospital. In Jackson, he became a life member of the Board of Deacons of First Baptist Church and was a member of the Board of Trustees of Universities and Colleges of Mississippi.

The Jacobs had nine children: Mattie Sue (born June 30, 1907), Will, Jr. (born April 27, 1909), Katherine (born January 9, 1912), Roland Bass (born September 13, 1918), Harry (born October 1, 1921), Frank (born July 18, 1924), Sarah Elizabeth (born April 11, 1929), Robert and Rebecca (born September 23, 1930).

The Jacobs family lived at 936 Morningside Drive in Jackson. Will and Cornelia celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary there in 1956. Will Jacobs died in March 1957.

The Museum News is a publication of the **Pearl River Community College Museum Patrons' Organization**. If you wish to receive a subscription to this publication, you must be a member of the Museum Patrons' Organization. Membership dues are \$25 annually. For more information, call Ronn Hague at (601) 403-1316.

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