

# LOOKING BACKWARD

T10-22-44 P. 18

Despite considerable publicity that has been given the fiftieth anniversary of Bonny Oaks School, it is possible the community is shy in appreciation of this important institution.

Dr. Keese, who has fathered the project as superintendent for near twenty years, wrote in the yearbook the "whence and whither" of the many children who have been students. He explained that the detail he had written was for a twofold purpose. And the important purpose has to correct the impression of misinformed persons who have the delusion Bonny Oaks is a school where children are sent for punishment. "It is true," states Dr. Keese, "Bonny Oaks does have discipline, but so does every other well-regulated home and school."

While it is true Bonny Oaks is made up largely of children from homes that have been broken by death or disaster, these children are given loving care and careful schooling and saved from a life that might otherwise be wasted.

Of all city and county welfare agencies Bonny Oaks should make strong and especial appeal to those who care for white and colored children who are saved in soul and in body in this splendid refuge.

Some sage has written that the noblest charity is to prevent a man from accepting charity and the best alms are to show and to enable a man to dispense with alms. Bonny Oaks is the training ground for children to win respect and to respect themselves. Much has been written regarding Bonny Oaks, but the historical sketch on the present yearbook gives the most intelligent review of the institution that has been published. This columnist begs space of The Times to reprint in the hope an aroused interest may result.

## Historical Sketch

The county court of forty years ago was quite a body—large in size and aggressive in spirit. There were forty-two Esquires of prominent standing and vigorous action. A roll-call of them would contain many names familiar and interesting to the "old-timers" of today. So far as the writer knows, Judge Will Cummings, the "baby" member of the day, is the only surviving member.

It was just fifty years ago this next October (1944) when Bonny Oaks had its tangible inception. In the October meeting of 1894, Judge Seth Walker presiding, Esquire J. T. Hill presented a resolution asking the appointment of a committee who would investigate and make suitable recommendations regarding the establishing of a home for the care and protection of juveniles. The need for some such move had been pointed out by Circuit Judge John A. Moon.

The resolution named County Judge Seth Walker, Chattanooga Mayor Ochs, Circuit Judge Moon, Dr. Bachman of the First Presbyterian Church and Dr. P. D. Sims of the health department as advisers of the committee. The judge appointed Esquires J. T. Hill, W. H. Card and J. A. Holtzclaw on the committee.

Pushing through with fidelity and wisdom, this committee asked other counties of the state to join Hamilton County in securing suitable statewide legislation under which any county deeming it necessary might establish and maintain an institution for the youth of its jurisdiction. The procedure and practice of other states and sections were studied and the best of them were incorporated in the legislative act under which Bonny Oaks operates.

The writer cannot assert with certainty, but has the impression that the Tennessee Act was drawn by the late W. G. M. Thomas. Many who look into the law of this day regard it as a model of wise planning. This Act, passed April 17, 1895, provides that if and when a county or municipality shall deem it necessary to establish such an institution that four Trustees shall be appointed by the "Judges of the Court and the Law," and that these four, together with the County Judge, or Mayor if established by a city, shall be charged with the management and direction of said institution. The first Trustees were to be appointed for periods of one, two, three and four years, respectively, and, after that, appointment shall be for a term of four years. Appointments to vacancies shall be for the unexpired term.

At the first meeting of the County Court following the passage of the Act, Esquire Hill introduced a resolution to appoint a committee to take under advisement the establishing of an institution in accordance with the Act. J. T. Hill, W. H. Card and N. W. Wilbur were named. The following meeting, October, 1895, the County Judge was requested to appoint four members to take steps to establish such an institution. Esquires Wallace, Manning, Pearson and Card composed this committee, and the following January, 1896, submitted a signed report requesting Judge Moon and Chancellor McConnell to name four Trustees as provided by law. Five-thousand-dollar appropriation was authorized, and this amount was increased by an additional five thousand in the meeting of October, 1896.

Promptly Dr. J. W. Bachman, Major C. D. McGuffey, Esquire L. W. Bates and Esquire J. S. Bell were appointed Trustees. These, in co-operation with County Judge Walker, organized by electing Dr. J. W. Bachman president and Major C. D. McGuffey secretary. Esquires Bates and Bell were appointed a committee on location. To find a location that would satisfy the exacting demands of this conscientious committee was no easy task—added to that was their well-known habit of obtaining value received for every dollar expended. It is no wonder they required more than a year to visit and investigate numerous proposed sites in various parts of the county. They made reports to the Board at their regular monthly meetings, and in January, 1898, recommended the purchase of the present location. Each passing year demonstrates more and more clearly the wisdom in their caution and final decision.

The location selected was a farm containing two hundred and fifty acres, known as the Captain C. S. Peak farm and occupied at the time by the late W. J. Ingle and family. The purchase price of this two hundred and fifty acres, with all improvements, was fifty-five hundred dollars. Five thousand net to the owner, payable half cash and the balance in one and two years. In July of the following year, Mr. Z. C. Patten bought and presented seventy acres adjoining and gave to the County as a home for white girls.

This tract was known as the Trimble place, girlhood home of Dr. Annetta Trimble. In his letter of acceptance to Mr. Patten, whom he characterized as "one who is so much larger than his fortune," President Bachman wrote: "We shall be pleased to christen your gift 'PATTEN INDUSTRIAL HOME FOR GIRLS.'" The Trimble residence was used for many years, but was de-

stroyed by fire some eighteen years later.

On his seventy-fifth birthday Mr. Patten set aside a Trust Fund in the proceeds of which Bonny Oaks shares. From that source has been afforded otherwise unattainable luxuries and aid to a number of girls in business and professional training. It has helped one girl through college and she is now a very capable teacher in the County School System, and it is also supplementing the scholarship of another girl now in the University of Chattanooga. Following Mr. Patten, it was approximately thirty years before any other special gift was made to Bonny Oaks. Mr. Lapsley G. Walker, in his will, left a small sum to Bonny Oaks which has been placed at interest and the proceeds will be used for further advantage for the boys. Mrs. J. H. Cantrell, in the current year, has left a bequest to Bonny Oaks which probably will be added to the fund already established.

Immediately upon the acquisition of the Peak farm, the Trustees requested Mr. W. C. Kilvington, of the Tennessee Industrial School, Nashville, to help them secure a superintendent. Mr. J. C. Kalleen and wife were employed to take charge, and their daughter (now Mrs. Claude Sprague) was engaged to teach. They moved into the old home and received their first charges on February 17, 1898.

From the inception of the movement the school had the ardent support of The Chattanooga Times and the pen of the late L. G. Walker often fought its battles. He early came on the Board of Trustees and remained until the time of his death. It seems today almost a tragedy that before his death his virile pen did not prepare a history of Bonny Oaks. The writer understands this name "Bonny Oaks" was given the farm by Captain Peak because of the

grove of large oaks around the home. The Trustees adopted it as the official name of the school, and with the formal action of the County Court omitted "Industrial," leaving its official name "Bonny Oaks School."

It would be most interesting if a list of those who have served as Trustees might be made complete. Some records have been lost, however, and that list is impossible. Many of the best citizens of the County have shared that responsibility and honor. A few recalled

from memory were J. W. Bachman, C. D. McGuffey, L. W. Bates, J. S. Bell, L. G. Walker, J. M. Trimble, W. G. M. Thomas, J. H. Early, W. B. Garvin, W. B. Davis, C. M. Willingham, Mercer Reynolds, Mrs. M. M. Allison, Fred Robinson, J. R. Huff.

Because of the lost records a complete list of Superintendents cannot be given. Mr. Kalleen resigned in 1902, and was succeeded by Mr. H. T. Price, who served until 1918. Mrs. Edwards, Mr. Cooper and Mrs. Hayes served brief terms each. In 1921 Mr. J. C. Ward assumed active and vigorous management. He was most aggressive, but the nervous strain of so large a responsibility with no release day or night was too much for a high tension, so his health failed after two years. He was succeeded by his wife for two years, and the present management took charge in 1925.