

The Richland Institute

by Gordon Warren

It was not until after the Civil War that the area of Pulaski County traversed by the railroad was developed to any significant extent. In pioneer days rivers provided the means of transportation. The Wire Road following the telegraph line from St. Louis to Springfield was one of the early routes developed during the war. Following the war Congress enacted legislation subsidizing the "Atlantic and Pacific Railroad Company" (by means of land grants) to make it possible for the rail line to be built and thus provide transportation to the area. Dixon, Crocker, Richland and the stops in between were all "children" of the railroad. The histories of these communities are similar as will be remembered by citizens who recall the series of anniversaries held in 1968 and '69. However, Richland has a unique historical feature not shared by the other towns of the County. It was the first seat of a formal educational institution.

In the earliest days fathers and mothers taught their children as their abilities would permit. Sometimes older men would hold subscription schools in their homes. When a person fresh from school moved in they would be employed to conduct classes in a private home. In 1857 the Waynesville Academy was incorporated, a

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Henry Warren, Secretary.

James A. Tyree, President.

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building site was chosen, and lumber put on the grounds, but the building was never erected. The material was sold at auction.

In 1869 Richland was established and soon several business buildings had been constructed and trade was being conducted but before a single home had been erected a provision was made for the education of its youth. The "Richland Institute" was begun early in 1870. It was an academy erected by a private stock company in which almost every member of the community had an interest. Captain Davis, Captain Warren, Dr. James Tyree and Rev. J.A. Bradshaw were leaders in the movement. With about \$4,500 cash from stock sales and much donated labor a two story frame building surmounted by a tower was erected. It was the first public building in the county with a tower and a bell. While operating on private funds the attendance was about 100 students. During part of the year public funds would be available and at this time the attendance would swell to about 200. Some years later when funds became available for public schools the Academy Building was rented by the school district and continued to be used for school purposes. Thus Richland has a proud heritage in the field of education.



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