We hope our readers will enjoy reading this history of some of the first schools in the southern part of the parish as much as we have enjoyed collecting it. It has been a lot of fun and brought back many memories, especially looking at the old pictures.

In the early 1900's, five brothers came down here from Pennsylvania, bought all the pine timber around Simms and built a saw mill. The entire country was covered in virgin pine except for small country farms.

The brothers were Charlie Clark, Milton Clark, Ben Clark, B.F. Clark, and Burt Clark.

At that time, a trip south to Louisiana was equal to a trip to a foreign country now. Their mother was very worried. She was sure she would never see her sons again.

The saw mill was built and houses also built for the employers. The families moved in and the problem of no school for the children of the employees at the mill came up.

The Clark Brothers donated lumber to build the school and land was secured to build it on.

We are practically sure the first school opened in 1903. A one-room building was built and taught first grade through seventh grades, but it was soon realized they needed more room and another room and another teacher added.

The first school was built just a little southeast of where Jerry Edwards' home is now.

I recall that we had a pretty severe storm once and it leaned the building over to the south side. The building was not condemned unfit for use, but the resourceful citizens of the community got together and secured some 2' x 6' timbers, propped up the building, and school went right on as before.

We didn't need air conditioning for there were plenty of cracks in the walls and around windows and doors to let in fresh air.

We drew our drinking water from a well.

We didn't need a gymnasium for recreation, we roamed over the hillsides playing hopscotch, pop the whip, and played baseball with homemade ball of yarn string.

We had good teachers and enjoyed going to school.

Teachers had no security whatsoever in those days. If some angry parent decided their child wasn't being treated right, they just went to the teacher and told them to leave, they no longer had a job. It was a rare thing for a teacher to stay a full school term. Sometimes we had 2 or 3 different teachers in one school year.

In recalling the names of the teachers who taught at Simms School, many we don't know full names or the date of their service there. We hope no one will take offence if they are left out, for somehow memoirs are not what they used to be.

We think Mr. Foster was first teacher (1903). He taught first year by himself, but second year had an assistant, Miss Mary Torry. Next, Mr. Smith with Miss Amanda Gates as assistant. Mr. Thompson taught one year, then W.L. Nugent taught all grades by himself, and later served as Sheriff of our Parish. Mr. Luney Smart and Mary Pickles taught together. Mr. Campbell and Pearl Patterson were next; Campbell left, and Miss Francis Crouch from Tennessee came to replace him. Mr. Lynch taught a term. Mr. Edmund Davis, Edwin Davis, and Annice Davis, also Mrs. Edmund Davis taught. Mr. Davis had taught there earlier soon after school opened.

Mr. Wayne Tison, Kate Pendarius, Mr. Seaborn Shaw, who later became Supt. of Parish Schools; Ethel Chandler, Ethel Thompson, Ada Lee Bigner, Jenny Bigner, and Ida Caulson, who was teaching first through six grades when school burned down, about March of 1918 or 1919.

Miss Manye McCollum taught first through sixth grade in old Whitaker store house at Simms.

About 1920 or 1921, a new school was built. Land was donated by my father, John W. Curry.

Some of the teachers who
taught in new building were Mrs. Nugent Opal Worsham, Om Peters, Ettie Thompson. Mrs. Nugent, Miss Opal Worsham, Mr. James Wall, Annie Mae Collins, Mrs. Rashall, and Isala Smith. Elah Shaws and Gladys Jones, Elah Shaws and Hazel Morgan and Miss Lily Beaudreaux.

Isn't it wonderful what can be accomplished when one sets their minds to it. One concerned mother who realized the need impressed on Mr. Delaney the need and suggested he go to school board and ask for the job. It was granted and thus began the first schoolbus from Simms.

The school closed down about 1931, and all the children, grammar and high school students were bussed to Pollock.

In our search for information, Miss Ruth Brown gave us her mother’s (Miss Elizabeth LaCroix) record books. We learned from it there had been a school called Nugent’s School southwest of where Wilson Robertson’s home is now. This school burned and was later built southwest of Spring Hill Church near L and A Railroad. We know this school was in operation from about 1903 to 1918 or 1919.

Some of the teachers who taught there were Earnest Robertson, Miss Bolton, Alice Reed, Monroe Pollard, Ava LaCroix and Grace Lee and Grace Pendarvis.

From Miss LaCroix’s record book we learned there was a Corinth School near where Corinth Baptist Church now stands. This school was in operation in 1908.

Another school called Flanagan School, we aren’t sure of the location of this school, but we think it was near the Oscar Hattaway place. It was in operation in 1908 and 1909.

We learned another school by the name of Prospect School was in operation of 1906 and 1907.

Miss LaCroix taught in each of these schools.

Later a school was opened about 1921, about where the entrance to Pollock Air Base is. This was known as Garnett School. Some of the teachers teaching here were Otis Chelette, Emory Dupree, Ollie Garlington, Eva Martin, Ottie Nugent and Clarence Lincecum. We think this school closed about 1931 or 1932.

We know nothing of the date of this school, but there once was one near where Slick’s Grocery is now. It was known as the Leggett School. It burned and was later built near the Lester Price home and known as the “Gates School”. We don’t know the date it opened or closed.

This concludes our information on the early schools of our area. We have enjoyed collecting it.

Hazel Curry Lemmons
Pinkie Garlington Rayner