



LINCOLN ALUMNI

- ASSOCIATION -

Honoring Our Past. Building Our Future. Serving Our Community.

THE HISTORY OF LINCOLN SCHOOL & LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL TIPTONVILLE · LAKE COUNTY, TENNESSEE

Lincoln School was much more than a school. For nearly two decades, it served as the center of education, culture, leadership, athletics, and community life for African Americans in Lake County during segregation. It produced graduates who became teachers, military veterans, ministers, business owners, civic leaders, and public servants.

EARLY HISTORY

Before Lincoln High School existed, Black children in Tiptonville attended the Tiptonville Colored School, which served grades 1 through 8.

The original school stood on land that had been purchased by members of the local African American community. At a time when public funding for Black schools was limited, local families invested their own money and resources to ensure their children received an education.

THE FIGHT FOR A HIGH SCHOOL

By the late 1940s, Black students who wanted a high school education often had to leave the area or travel long distances because Lake County had no Black high school. Recognizing this need, community leaders approached county officials with a proposal.

The Black citizens who owned the original school property agreed to donate the land to Lake County if the county would build a high school. That agreement became reality in 1949. Local businessman W. C. Haynes Jr. donated lumber for construction, and the new school was built at the corner of College Street and McBride Street in the Baptistville community.

LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL OPENS (1949)

When the new building opened:

- The school's name officially became Lincoln School
- Ninth grade was added first
- One additional grade was added each year
- Eventually Lincoln became a complete Grades 1-12 school

The original wooden building continued housing elementary students while the new brick building served the upper grades.

EXPANSION

By 1953, Lincoln had become a full high school. The campus included:

- Modern brick classroom building



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- Cafeteria
- Gymnasium
- Athletic facilities
- Elementary building

For many Black families, it represented one of the finest educational facilities they had ever experienced.

SCHOOL LIFE

Lincoln School was the heart of the African American community. Students participated in basketball, baseball, school plays, music programs, homecoming, academic competitions, and church and community events. Teachers often served as community leaders and mentors, and graduates frequently returned to help younger generations.

COTTON SEASON

Like many rural schools in West Tennessee during the era, Lincoln's calendar revolved around agriculture. School typically began in July, closed in September for cotton picking, and reopened in November after harvest. Many students spent weeks helping their families in the fields before returning to class.

SEGREGATION

Lincoln existed because Tennessee maintained legally segregated schools. Students learned in separate schools from white students. Despite receiving fewer resources than many white schools, Lincoln's teachers and community emphasized discipline, academic excellence, faith, respect, and community service. Lincoln became a source of tremendous pride.

DESEGREGATION

Following the Civil Rights Movement and federal desegregation orders, Lake County schools began integrating. Key events include:

- 1963: Lake County High School opened as a consolidated high school for Tiptonville and Ridgely
- 1966-1967: Lincoln High School students began transferring to Lake County High School as desegregation progressed
- 1967: Lincoln ceased operating as a high school and became an elementary school under Principal Thomas White
- 1967: The first Black students attended Lake County High School

THE CLOSING OF LINCOLN SCHOOL

In 1969, Lincoln School officially closed. The last principal was James Henry Fenner. Students were reassigned to Margaret Newton Elementary School.

The original wooden elementary building was later burned after it had been emptied. About two years later, the gymnasium was demolished, despite many community members wanting it preserved.



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WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BUILDINGS?

Although much of the campus disappeared, parts remain today. The former high school building became the Lake County Board of Education offices. The cafeteria later became a Senior Citizens Center and Head Start Center.

Today, that surviving brick building at 327 College Street is one of the last physical reminders of Lincoln School's legacy.

TIMELINE

YEAR	EVENT
Before 1949	Tiptonville Colored School serves grades 1-8 on community-purchased land
1949	Lincoln High School established; land donated by Black citizens, lumber by W. C. Haynes Jr.
1950-1953	One grade added each year until Lincoln becomes a full high school
1953	Brick high school building completed
1963	Lake County High School opens
1966-1967	Lincoln High students transfer during desegregation
1967	Lincoln becomes an elementary school
1969	Lincoln School closes permanently

LEGACY

Lincoln School educated generations of African American children during one of the most difficult periods in Tennessee's history. More importantly, it became a symbol of perseverance, a center of community pride, a gathering place for families, a training ground for future leaders, and an enduring reminder of the determination of Black citizens who built educational opportunities when few existed.

Today, former students and descendants continue honoring Lincoln School through the Lincoln Alumni Association and preservation efforts, recognizing that the remaining building is one of the last tangible links to an important chapter in Lake County's African American history.