

Alice: A Name Across a Century

A Legacy of Unity, and a Long Road to Liberty and Justice for All, at

Alice Drive Middle School, Sumter, South Carolina,

1916–2026

A Local Institutional History

Written in celebration of three anniversaries:

the 250th year of the United States, the 110th year since Alice's passing,

and the 70th year of Alice Drive Middle School

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Sumter, South Carolina

2026

A testament of a father's love for his child.

— Local remembrance of Camp Alice,
as recalled in *The Sumter Item*

Hawks RISE.

— Motto of Alice Drive Middle School

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Abstract

This study traces the institutional and social history of Alice Drive Middle School in Sumter, South Carolina, from the origins of its name in the second decade of the twentieth century through to its present identity as a nationally recognized school for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, commonly abbreviated as STEM. As a historian and educator living and working in Sumter, my aim is to demonstrate that the school is best understood not as a single institution possessing one discrete founding date, but rather as the most recent occupant of a name, and indeed of a plot of ground, that have together absorbed well over a century of this region's rich and often painful social history. The name "Alice" begins not with a school at all, but with a young woman, Alice Harby Shelor, whose death from tuberculosis in 1916 moved her grieving father to build a racially mixed sanitarium on a quiet Sumter roadside. That same Harby land would serve, from 1930 until the middle of the 1950s, as Sumter's first municipal airport, before passing at last to the schools that occupy it today, so that a single tract has served the town continuously as a place of public purpose, first healing, then flight, then learning, for more than a hundred years. From the road the name would pass to a segregated white junior high school in the late 1950s; it would survive the desegregation of Sumter's public schools after 1970; it would weather the long and gradual transition from the junior high model to the middle school model; and it would finally come to rest upon one of the most decorated STEM programs in the American Southeast. Across all of these transformations, this paper identifies a single connective irony that binds the whole story together, namely that a name born of Jewish American philanthropy, and attached to one of the genuinely rare interracial medical facilities of the Jim Crow South, came to mark first a segregated and only much later a fully integrated public school. Yet the deepest argument of this study is not one of irony but of legacy. The enduring importance of Alice Drive Middle School to its community lies in what this single tract of ground has come to represent, a place where Sumter has repeatedly gathered across its social and cultural divides, and where, despite real and painful shortcomings along the way, the community moved haltingly but genuinely toward the fullest American ideal, that of liberty and justice for all. That movement from exclusion toward belonging, traced here across more than a hundred years, is a legacy worth understanding and, on the occasion of these anniversaries, worth celebrating. The study also functions, quite deliberately, as a candid reckoning with its own evidentiary foundation, distinguishing throughout between what the surviving public record firmly establishes, what it merely suggests, and what regrettably remains undocumented

and awaits recovery from the physical archives and from the memories of those who lived it. Only by keeping faith with the hard parts of the story can the triumph of the whole be honestly earned.

Author's Note

In the interest of full transparency, the reader should know from the outset that I am not a disinterested outside observer of this institution. I am a social studies teacher at Alice Drive Middle School, and I was honored to be named the school's Teacher of the Year for the 2023–2024 academic year. I have therefore written this history as both a scholar and a participant, with all of the insight and all of the potential for partiality that such a position carries. Where the documentary record names me, I have disclosed the fact plainly rather than cite myself in the third person as though I were a stranger to the story. I have likewise labored to hold my genuine affection for this school in check, and to let the evidence, including the evidence that is unflattering or merely ordinary, speak on its own terms. This edition also draws for the first time on an oral history project I have undertaken among the school's veteran faculty, staff, and alumni; those recollections, cited as the primary sources they are, have begun to recover a history the written record never captured. A personal connection to one's subject is no disqualification in local history; indeed it is very often the reason such histories get written at all. The only real danger lies in concealing that connection, and that I have tried scrupulously to avoid.

1. Introduction: The Problem of a Name

Most institutional histories begin with a cornerstone. They locate a tidy founding moment, whether a charter, a groundbreaking, or a first day of classes, and then they proceed outward from it, treating everything that came before as mere prologue and everything that followed as consequence. The history of Alice Drive Middle School resists that tidy architecture entirely. Its building dates to the late 1950s; its present grade configuration and its defining intellectual mission are products of only the last several decades; yet its name is older than all of these things, and the name is where any honest account of this school must begin.¹ For the word “Alice” did not enter Sumter’s civic vocabulary as the designation of a school. It entered first as the name of a woman, and then of a road, and then of a place of healing and of dying, long before it was ever the name of a place of learning.

To write the history of this school, then, is in truth to write the history of a single name’s migration across one small patch of Sumter ground. That migration carries the institution through very nearly every major theme of twentieth-century Southern social history: the public health crisis of tuberculosis and the philanthropic responses that it provoked; the particular and often precarious position of a Jewish family in the small-town South; the construction of a rigidly segregated educational order during the postwar suburban boom; the eventual dismantling of that order under the pressure of federal desegregation; the pedagogical reorganization of American secondary schooling from the junior high model to the middle school model; and, finally, the late twentieth and early twenty-first century turn toward STEM as the very organizing logic of public education. A school that might appear, to the casual outside observer, to be an unremarkable suburban middle school turns out upon closer inspection to be a remarkably complete cross-section of the century that produced it.

This study advances three interlocking arguments. The first is interpretive, holding that

¹On the construction date and physical scale of the original structure, see South Carolina Department of Education, Sumter District facility assessment materials, which record an original construction date of 1958 and a current building area of approximately 150,156 square feet. The complications surrounding that date are discussed in Section 4 below.

Alice Drive Middle School is best understood as the latest occupant of a name and a site rather than as a freestanding institution, and that its history is therefore properly continuous with the history of Camp Alice, the tuberculosis sanitarium that first gave the road its name. The second argument is thematic, holding that the through-line uniting all of these successive occupants is an irony of considerable moral weight, namely that a name originating in Jewish American philanthropy, and attached to one of the very few medical facilities in the Jim Crow South to admit black and white patients under a single roof, should have passed first to a segregated white school and only afterward to a fully integrated one. The third argument is methodological, and it is woven through the entire work: that a responsible local history must be forthright about the boundaries of its own evidence, and that the gaps in the record for this particular institution, including the once-absent principal roster, the undocumented renovation logs, and the conflicting dates, are themselves historically meaningful, marking as they do the difference between the kinds of pasts that get carefully archived and the kinds that survive only in living memory, if they survive at all.

Above and beneath these three runs a fourth claim, larger than the others and, to my mind, the reason this history is worth telling at all. It is that Alice Drive Middle School holds a legacy of genuine and lasting importance to Sumter, and that the legacy is one of unity and togetherness forged across the community's social and cultural divides, and sustained across time. This is emphatically not a claim that the story is without shadow. The school was born, as later chapters will show, of the state's last organized effort to preserve segregation; a black child once walked a long road each morning to claim a seat the law had only grudgingly opened to him; and the faculty remained divided by race a full decade after the law had joined it. These are not embarrassments to be hurried past. They are the measure of the distance the community traveled, for a redemption that costs nothing means nothing, and the shortcomings are precisely what make the eventual movement toward belonging worth honoring. What this ground has witnessed, across more than a century, is a halting but real journey from exclusion toward the fullest American ideal, that of liberty and justice for all, an ideal toward which this community, like the nation whose founding it now joins in commemorating, has always been striving and has never finished striving. That is the story this

paper means to tell, and to celebrate.

A word on sources and their limits is owed at the very outset, because it conditions everything that follows. The public and digitized record for Alice Drive Middle School is uneven in a way that is altogether characteristic of local institutional history. The deep origins of the name are comparatively well documented, preserved through genealogical records, church histories, and the diligent work of local chroniclers. The modern STEM era is likewise abundantly documented, captured in district communications, in news coverage, and in the school's own publications. It is the long middle of the story, encompassing the founding of the junior high, the integration years, and the slow transition to a middle school, that proves thinnest of all in the written record. Fortunately, that written record is no longer the only witness available. The oral history project undertaken for this edition has begun to recover, from the memories of those who taught and studied here, precisely the decades the archives forgot; where those recollections now carry the narrative, they are cited as primary testimony and weighed with the same care as any document. Where both the record and living memory fall silent, this paper says so plainly, rather than filling the silence with plausible invention. The result, I hope, is a history that is confident in its documented core, careful at its documented edges, and entirely honest about its undocumented interior.

2. The Namesake: Alice Harby Shelor and the Sanitarium on the Road

2.1 The Land Before the Name: Plantation-Era Sumter

Long before it bore any name connected to Alice Shelor, the western fringe of Sumter belonged to the plantation landscape that Boykin's 1825 survey records, and the character of that earlier world is worth establishing at the outset, for it is the first layer of the ground this study traces. The countryside here was worked as plantation land through the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, its mills and fields the property of the planter families whose names dot the old map. The nearest and best-documented of these holdings was Greenswamp, the plantation of the Bradford family, whose lands lay in this same quarter of Sumter and encompassed the mill sites that survive today as

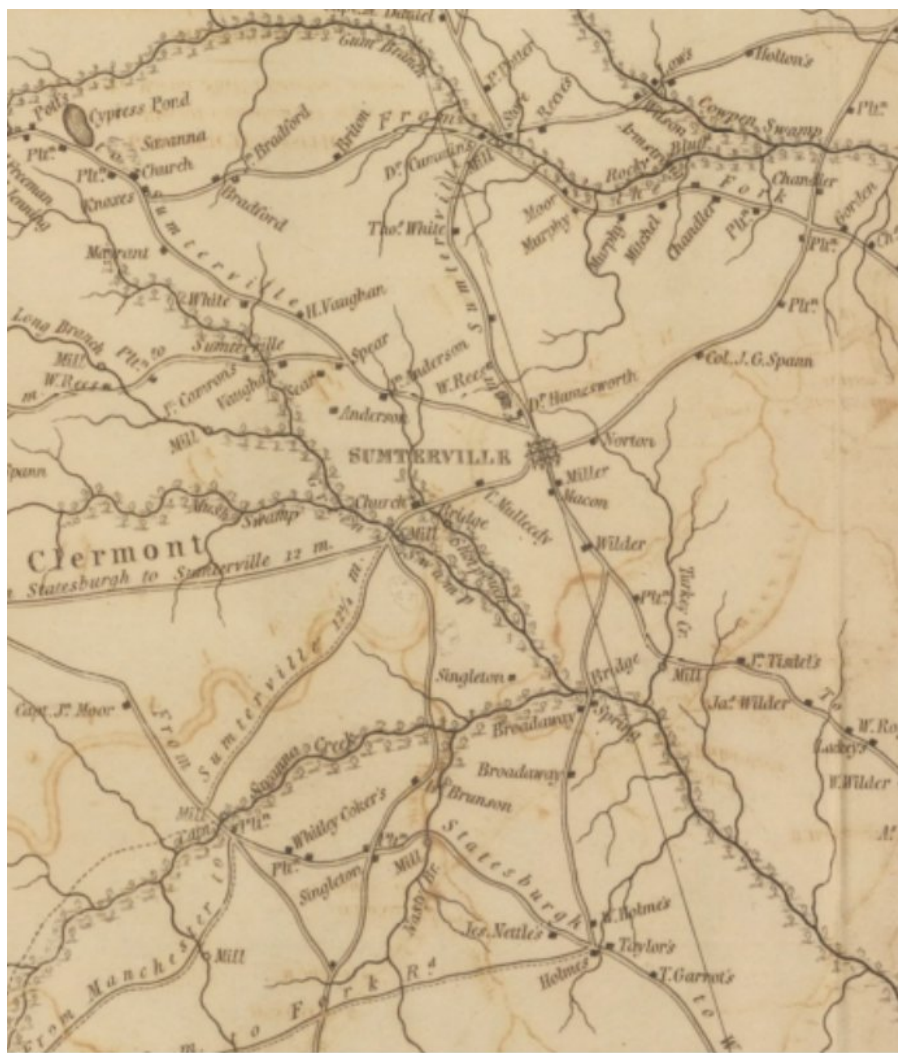


Figure 1: *The Sumter District as surveyed by S. H. Boykin for Robert Mills's Atlas of the State of South Carolina (1825). A century before Alice Drive took its name, this was plantation country on the edge of the village of Sumterville, the landholdings of the era marked by their owners' names across the countryside. The ground that would become Camp Alice, the municipal airport, and the schools lies within this landscape. From Mills's Atlas.*

local landmarks. Richard Bradford, grandson of Gabriel Bradford, who had come to South Carolina from Virginia about 1746 to 1750, was by the 1780s a wealthy planter and large landholder living on these lands; a purchase document signed by Governor Moultrie and two plats, one of 640 acres and one of 200, place him on the ground between 1784 and 1786.² On these lands stood Bradford's grist mill, remembered afterward as Second Mill, and his saw mill, which became the site of the celebrated Swan Lake Gardens, the very features that fix Greenswamp firmly in the geography surrounding the modern school. The great house itself, sketched here by the Sumter artist Elizabeth White, stood vacant for so long in the twentieth century that neighborhood children called it "the Ghost House," and it was subdivided into wartime apartments before its restoration in 1952.

It would overstate the evidence to claim that Alice Drive Middle School stands on Greenswamp's own fields; the surviving record does not draw so precise a line, and this study will not draw one for it. What Greenswamp does establish, beyond any doubt, is the deep character of this ground before the twentieth century remade it. This was plantation country, worked by the enslaved and later by tenant labor, part of the agricultural order on which the wealth of the antebellum midlands was built. That order is the true starting point of the site's long history, the plantation era preceding the sanitarium, the airport, and the schools alike, and any honest account of what this ground has been must begin by naming it.

2.2 *A Death in Asheville*

Alice Harby Shelor was born in Sumter, South Carolina, on November 14, 1883, the daughter of Henry Jefferson Harby and Adeline W. Emanuel Harby.³ The Harbys belonged to Sumter's established Jewish community, a population whose roots in the South Carolina midlands reached

²Brenda Moulton, "Greenswamp Plantation," in *Sumter County Historical Vignettes* (1970). Moulton records that Greenswamp was built by Richard Bradford, grandson of Gabriel Bradford (who emigrated from Virginia circa 1746–1750), that Bradford's grist mill survives as Second Mill and his saw mill as Swan Lake Gardens, and that the plantation was restored by Mr. and Mrs. John Snowden Wilson in 1952 after years of vacancy, during which local children knew it as "The Ghost House"; during the Second World War it had been divided into four apartments. This study cites Greenswamp as the documented plantation-era context of this quarter of Sumter; it does not claim that the school stands on Greenswamp's specific acreage, a link the available sources do not establish.

³Genealogical particulars are drawn from "Alice Harby Shelor Memorial," Find a Grave, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/19451890/alice-shelor>; and from the Singleton family genealogy, which preserves the linked Harby and Camp Alice material. Birth and death dates given here follow the consensus of these records.



Figure 2: *Greenswamp Plantation, the Bradford family's eighteenth-century seat, in a sketch by the Sumter artist Elizabeth White. Greenswamp's lands in this quarter of Sumter included the grist mill remembered as Second Mill and the saw mill that became Swan Lake Gardens, landmarks that still fix the plantation's setting near the ground the schools now occupy. Sketch by Elizabeth White, from Brenda Moulton, Sumter County Historical Vignettes (1970).*

back well into the nineteenth century and whose members occupied a distinctive position in the commercial and civic life of the town. Alice married Robert Shelor, manager of the Sumter Telephone Company, and the couple had two sons, Robert and Henry.⁴ By the standards of her milieu, hers was an ordinary and comfortable life, the kind that leaves few traces in the public record beyond the vital dates of birth, marriage, and the bearing of children.

What lifted her name out of that ordinary obscurity was, sadly, the manner of her death. Alice Harby Shelor died on August 8, 1916, in Asheville, North Carolina, at roughly thirty-two or thirty-three years of age.⁵ She had gone to Asheville, as so many tubercular patients of means did in that era, in search of the mountain air that the medical orthodoxy of the day prescribed as the surest defense against the disease. By the early twentieth century Asheville had become one of the South's principal sanitarium destinations; where the city had counted a single tuberculosis sanitarium in 1900, it would eventually harbor on the order of 130 boarding houses and sanatoria catering to the consumptive.⁶ She did not return. Her body was brought home to Sumter and buried in the Jewish Cemetery, in Lot 34.⁷ That she died in Asheville rather than at home is itself a small but telling datum of social history, for it situates her squarely within the great migratory

⁴Find a Grave, "Alice Harby Shelor Memorial." Robert Shelor's dates are given as 1878–1923.

⁵The death date and the burial in Lot 34 of the Jewish Cemetery follow "Alice Harby Shelor Memorial," Find a Grave, accessed 2026, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/19451890/alice-shelor>; and "Henry Jefferson Harby Memorial," Find a Grave, accessed 2026, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/19451922/henry-jefferson-harby>. A genuine source-internal discrepancy must be flagged here: the memorial dates and the linked Harby memorial give 1916, but the narrative text on the Shelor memorial itself states that she "died in 1918 at the age of 33." Both years would make her thirty-two or thirty-three, given her November 1883 birth. The dated memorial records and the consensus of the genealogical material support 1916, which is adopted here; the 1918 variant is noted rather than suppressed, in keeping with this study's commitment to evidentiary transparency. Such conflicts, surviving within a single source, are altogether characteristic of local history reconstructed from family memory rather than from contemporaneous documentation.

⁶On Asheville's transformation into a center of tuberculosis treatment, including the growth from one sanitarium in 1900 to roughly 130 boarding houses and sanatoria, see "Therapeutic Travel, Part One: Sanitariums," NC Miscellany, North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, January 11, 2010, <https://blogs.lib.unc.edu/ncm/2010/01/11/therapeutic-travel-part-one-sanitariums/>; and, for further context on the region's climate-based therapies, "Western North Carolina's Sanatoria History: A Closer Look at the Fred Kahn Postcard Collection," Special Collections, D. H. Ramsey Library, University of North Carolina at Asheville, <https://libjournals.unca.edu/specialcollections/uncategorized/western-north-carolinas-sanatoria-history-a-closer-look-at-the-fred-kahn-postcard-collection/>. This study cites the comparison only to situate Shelor's journey within the broader geography of pre-antibiotic tuberculosis care; no surviving record specifies which Asheville facility, if any, treated her.

⁷Find a Grave, "Alice Harby Shelor Memorial."

pattern of pre-antibiotic tuberculosis care, in which the well-off traveled to sanitarium towns in the Appalachians and the West while the poor simply stayed home to convalesce or, more often, to die.



Figure 3: *Alice Harby Shelor (1883–1916), the young Sumter woman for whom Alice Road, and ultimately Alice Drive Middle School, was named. Her death from tuberculosis moved her father, H. J. Harby, to build the sanitarium known as Camp Alice. Courtesy of local archival collections.*

2.3 A Father's Grief and Camp Alice

The grief of Henry Jefferson Harby, H. J. Harby as the records render him, took an unusually constructive and public form. Rather than confining his mourning to the private rituals of his community, Harby translated it into an act of civic philanthropy that would carry his daughter's name into the permanent geography of Sumter. The decision was not, by one local account, his alone in its inspiration: a paper preserved in the records of the Fortnightly Club of Sumter holds that Harby was influenced toward the project by "Miss Nina" Moïse-Phelps, a member of one of Sumter's most prominent Jewish families, whose encouragement helped turn private bereavement

toward public works.⁸ Whatever the precise apportionment of inspiration, the result was concrete and lasting. In 1916, the year of Alice's death, Harby built a tuberculosis sanitarium on the corner of what would become Alice Drive and Wise Drive, in what was then the rural and suburban fringe of Sumter; he chose, in the words of a later local chronicler, a quiet location where patients could rest and recover in solitude.⁹ The access road that ran off Liberty Street to reach the facility was named "Alice Road," later Alice Drive, in her memory, and the sanitarium itself became known throughout the county as Camp Alice.¹⁰ It is a critical point for the argument of this study that the name attached first to the road and to the institution of healing, and only four decades later to a school. The toponym was already saturated with meaning, with loss, with philanthropy, and with the fight against a dreaded disease, long before any child sat in any classroom that bore it.

The character of Camp Alice deserves close attention, because it is in its operational details that the deepest irony of this history is seeded. The facility opened with an initial capacity of sixteen beds, divided evenly between eight reserved for white patients and eight for black patients, and by 1942 had expanded to twenty-six beds, sixteen for white and ten for black patients.¹¹ In the context of the Jim Crow South, which was a society organized around the rigorous separation of the races in virtually every institutional setting, and emphatically so in matters of the body, of illness, and of medical care, the very existence of a single facility admitting both black and white patients, and

⁸The attribution to "Miss Nina" Moïse-Phelps derives from a 1972 paper by Robert A. Moise in the book of papers of the Fortnightly Club of Sumter (p. 93), as summarized in the research notes attached to "Alice Harby Shelor Memorial," Find a Grave. The Fortnightly Club paper has not been examined directly for this study and the attribution is reported as it appears in the secondary record; it should be corroborated against the original. The Moïse family was among Sumter's oldest and most distinguished Jewish families; "Miss Nina" should not be confused with the unrelated theatrical director Nina Moise (1890–1968) of San Francisco.

⁹Sammy Way, "Camp Alice created for tuberculosis patients to rest, recover," *The Sumter Item*, April 11, 2026, <https://www.theitem.com/stories/camp-alice-created-for-tuberculosis-patients-to-rest-recover,441706>; and Way, "The 1916 building of Camp Alice, part 2," *The Sumter Item*, April 18, 2026, <https://www.theitem.com/stories/the-1916-building-of-camp-alice-part-2,441953>.

¹⁰Alice Drive Baptist Church, "Our Story," <https://alicedrive.church/get-to-know-us/our-story/>; Way, "Camp Alice created for tuberculosis patients to rest, recover."

¹¹Bed counts and the racial division are drawn from the Singleton family genealogy and from Way, "The 1916 building of Camp Alice, part 2." Alice Drive Baptist Church's history independently records that the hospital had twenty-six beds and "was unique at the time for admitting children and all races"; see Alice Drive Baptist Church, "Our Story."

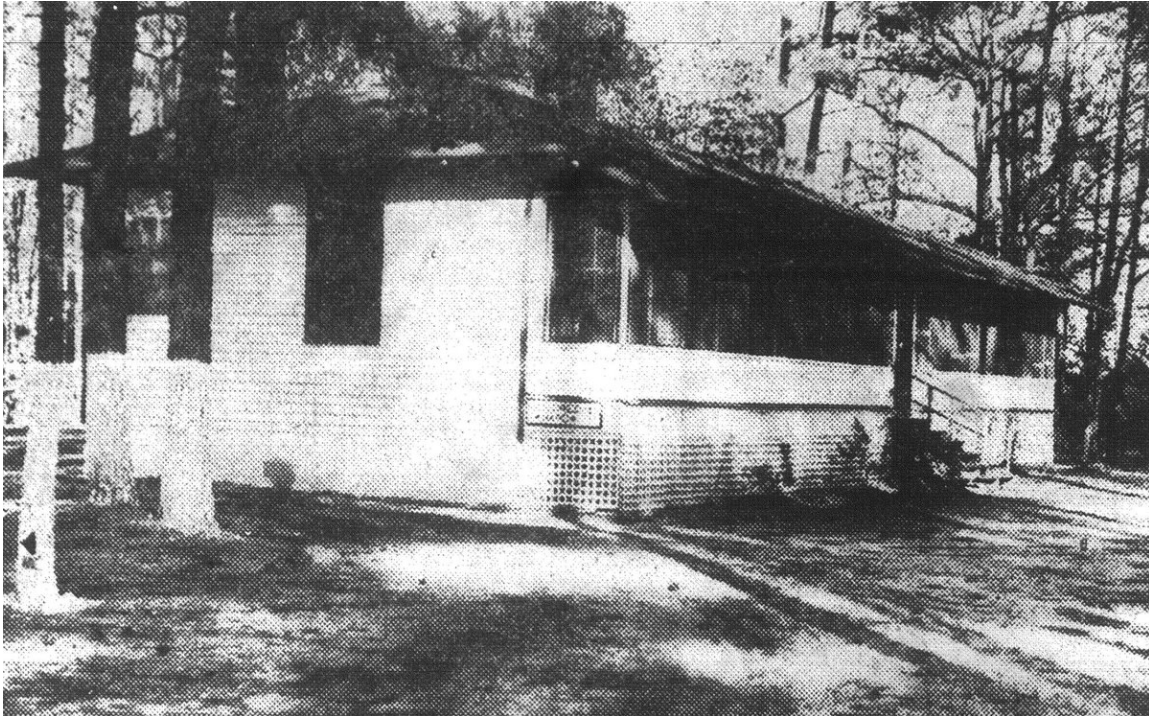


Figure 4: *Camp Alice, the tuberculosis sanitarium H. J. Harby built in 1916 in memory of his daughter. The long, low building with its deep eaves and open, screened sleeping porches embodies the open-air convalescent architecture of the pre-antibiotic era, when rest and fresh air were the whole of the cure. The Sumter Item.*

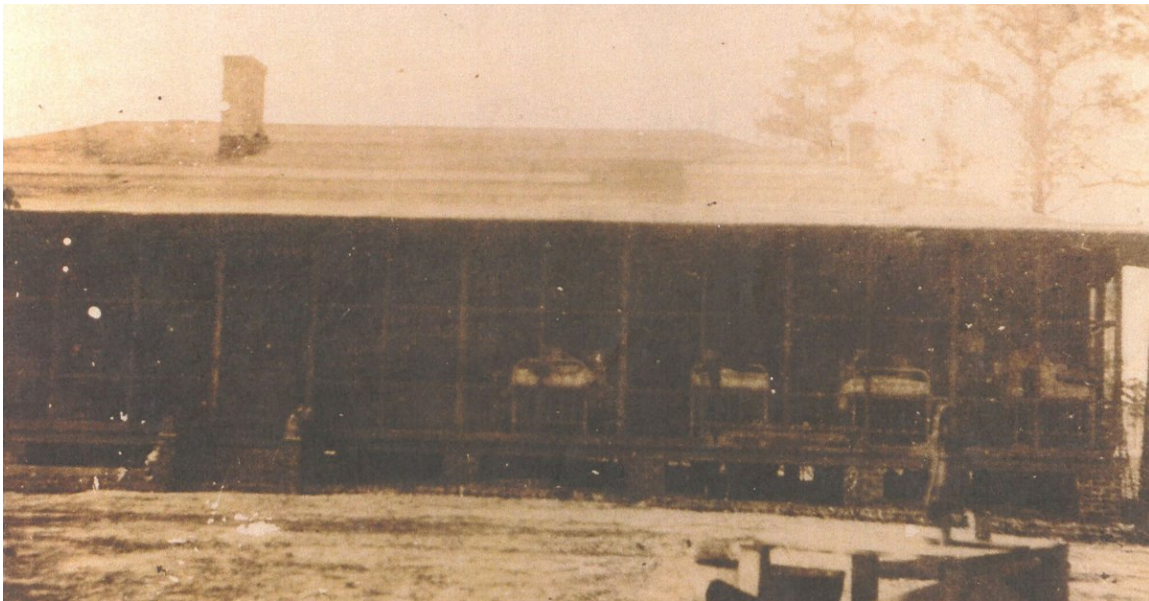


Figure 5: *A closer view of the sanitarium's screened porch, where patients took the rest cure in beds open to the air in all seasons. Camp Alice was, for its day, notable for admitting patients of all races and children among them. The Sumter Item.*

children among them, was genuinely notable.¹² The separation of beds by race was, of course, itself a concession to the segregationist order; Camp Alice was not a colorblind utopia, and it would be an anachronism to describe it as one. The proportions are themselves revealing: the white allotment grew from eight to sixteen beds between the founding and 1942 while the black allotment grew only from eight to ten, so that an institution beginning with numerical parity drifted toward the racial asymmetry of its surroundings even as it continued to admit black patients at all. That it did so, in a county and an era where black access to medical care was systematically constrained, marks it as an institution operating against the prevailing grain, if never wholly outside it.

The therapeutic regime at Camp Alice reflected the state of tuberculosis treatment in the decades before effective chemotherapy. In the absence of any cure, the sanitarium offered the standard armamentarium of the era: rest taken on screened porches open to the air; an abundance of fresh air and sunlight; nourishing food; and, reflecting the limited pharmacology of the day, treatment with gold salts.¹³ Local ministers attended the patients, providing the spiritual support that the era regarded as inseparable from the care of the dying and the convalescent. The whole apparatus rested on a particular and now-vanished medical philosophy: that tuberculosis was to be managed, not cured, through the disciplined application of air, rest, and regimen.

2.4 Administration, Finance, and the Economics of Care

The administration of Camp Alice passed within the Harby family, operating under a trust that H. J. Harby had established to sustain the work.¹⁴ H. J. Harby directed the facility until his death in 1938, after which his son Hal W. Harby assumed management.¹⁵ The nursing care that was the

¹²Alice Drive Baptist Church, "Our Story," which singles out the admission of "children and all races" as the feature that made Camp Alice unusual for its time.

¹³Singleton family genealogy; Way, "The 1916 building of Camp Alice, part 2." On the broader history of the sanitarium regime, this study relies on the operational descriptions in the local sources rather than on the general medical literature. The reliance on rest, air, and sunlight was the orthodox sanitarium prescription of the period; gold-salt therapy reflects the era's experimental and largely ineffective pharmacology, superseded entirely by antibiotic treatment after the Second World War.

¹⁴The trust structure is recorded in the research notes to "Henry Jefferson Harby Memorial," Find a Grave, which preserve a contributor's account (attributed to Ervin Shaw) drawn from a closure letter by E. M. Hall: "Camp Alice was created under a trust by Mr. Harby."

¹⁵Singleton family genealogy; "Henry Jefferson Harby Memorial," Find a Grave. H. J. Harby's dates are December 3, 1858, to December 26, 1938.

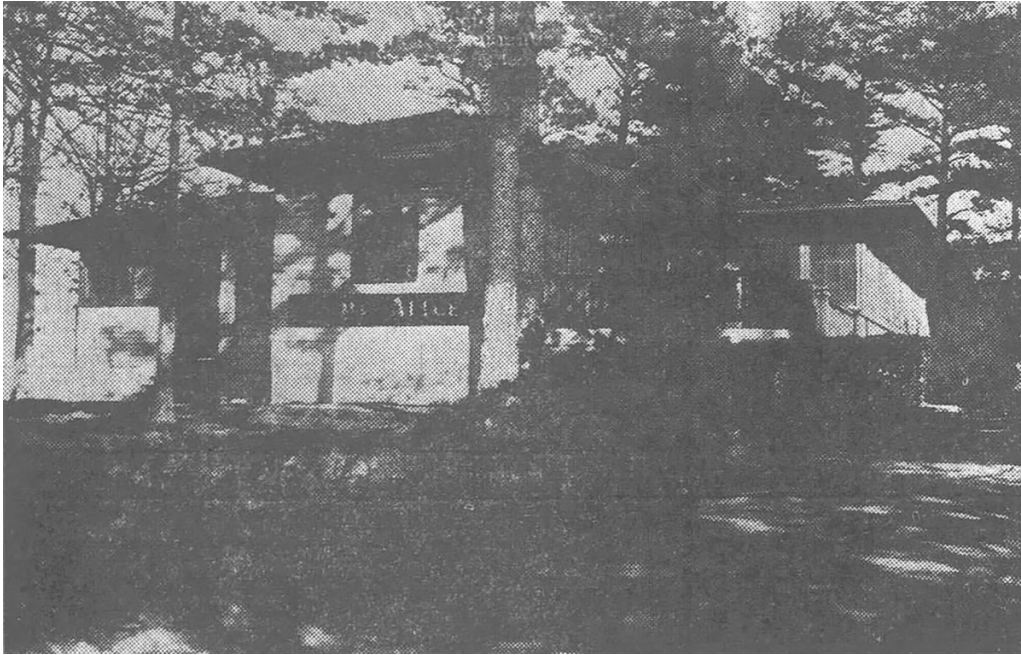


Figure 6: *Camp Alice among the pines on the Harby tract, the “quiet location where patients could rest and recover in solitude” described by a later local chronicler. The sign at center reads “Camp Alice.” The wooded setting on Sumter’s western fringe would, within a few decades, give way first to an airport and then to the schools. The Sumter Item.*

daily substance of the institution’s work fell to Minnie McBride, a registered nurse who served from 1923, assisted by a Miss Gibson; the secretary-treasurer was E. Murr Hall, whose surviving draft of the 1941 closure letter is itself one of the few near-primary documents of the institution’s end.¹⁶ This was, in short, a small institution run on a domestic scale, its personnel few enough to be named individually in the surviving record. This is itself a quiet reminder of the modest dimensions of much early twentieth-century charitable medicine.

The finances of Camp Alice illuminate the precarious economics of pre-antibiotic tuberculosis care. The facility was sustained by a combination of the Harby family’s endowment, community donations, support from the city and county, and grants from the Duke Endowment, the great philanthropic foundation that underwrote a substantial portion of healthcare and education across the Carolinas in this period.¹⁷ The average cost of caring for a patient ran to roughly \$11.25 in

¹⁶Singleton family genealogy; on Hall’s authorship of the closure letter, see the contributor notes to “Henry Jefferson Harby Memorial,” Find a Grave.

¹⁷Singleton family genealogy. The Duke Endowment’s support situates Camp Alice within a regional ecology of Carolina philanthropy.

1933, against an annual operating budget of approximately \$10,000. These figures convey both the modesty of the operation and the real expense, in Depression-era dollars, of sustained institutional care for a chronic disease.¹⁸ The institution was not immune to financial strain, and its final years are recorded with some inconsistency across sources. One account preserved in the genealogical record describes a temporary closure from August 1941 to January 1942 for repairs, with reopening aided by donations from local businesses and, in a detail that vividly fixes the period, labor furnished by the county chain gang.¹⁹ That convict labor should have been enlisted to maintain a charitable sanitarium is a stark reminder of the entangled systems of care and coercion that characterized the early twentieth-century South, in which the unfree labor of the chain gang underwrote even institutions of mercy.

2.5 *The Camp and the State System*

Camp Alice did not operate in isolation. It existed alongside, and was ultimately subordinate to, the larger apparatus of tuberculosis care that South Carolina built during these same decades, and above all to the State Park Tuberculosis Sanatorium near Columbia, the state-operated facility that became the principal destination for the Midlands' tubercular patients. The relationship between the small private camp and the large state institution is captured starkly in the manner of Camp Alice's closure. The contributor notes preserved with H. J. Harby's memorial, drawing on E. Murr Hall's closure letter, record that the camp's board resolved to close the facility on August 1, 1941, "due to most patient being transferred to 'State Park.'" ²⁰ This is a telling detail of institutional history.

The consolidation of tuberculosis care into large state facilities was a process driven by economies

¹⁸Singleton family genealogy.

¹⁹Singleton family genealogy, on the temporary closure for repairs and the chain-gang labor. This account stands in tension with the closure-letter evidence (discussed below), which records a board decision to close the facility on August 1, 1941, owing to the transfer of patients to the state sanatorium. The two may be reconciled if the August 1941 "repairs" closure proved to be effectively the end of operations, or if the accounts simply diverge; the tension is noted rather than resolved.

²⁰Contributor notes (attributed to Ervin Shaw) to "Henry Jefferson Harby Memorial," Find a Grave, quoting the board's decision as conveyed in E. M. Hall's letter. "State Park" refers to the South Carolina State Park Tuberculosis Sanatorium, the state-operated facility near Columbia; on that institution see "SC State Park Tuberculosis Sanatorium," South Carolina Encyclopedia, <https://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/images/sc-state-park-tuberculosis-sanatorium/>. The State Park facility, notably, remained a racially segregated institution throughout its history as a state operation.

of scale, by professionalization, and by the increasing involvement of public health authorities, and it steadily eroded the rationale for small, locally endowed institutions like Camp Alice. The camp's patients were not simply discharged; they were absorbed into the state system. The small philanthropic gesture of 1916 was being overtaken, by 1941, by the bureaucratized public-health state.

There is a further irony embedded in that transfer, and it is worth naming. The State Park sanatorium to which Camp Alice's patients were sent remained, throughout its existence as a state institution, rigidly segregated by race, with black patients having been admitted only upon the opening of a separate division.²¹ Camp Alice, whatever the asymmetries in its bed allotments, had at least housed black and white patients within a single institution. The patients transferred to State Park in 1941 thus moved from a small interracial facility into a larger and far more thoroughly segregated one. It is a small but revealing instance of the way the modernization and rationalization of Southern institutions could, unfortunately, carry segregation forward rather than dissolve it.

2.6 The Closing of the Camp and the Survival of the Name

The closure of Camp Alice on the eve of America's entry into the Second World War proved permanent, and the broader medical revolution of the following decade ensured that no comparable institution would replace it. The development and widespread deployment of antibiotic therapy in the years after the war, namely streptomycin and the agents that followed it, transformed tuberculosis from a chronic, often fatal condition managed through long sanitarium stays into a curable infection treated on an outpatient basis.²² The sanitarium model collapsed almost everywhere across the developed world in these years, and the prospect of reviving Camp Alice collapsed with it. As tuberculosis incidence fell and the need for residential care evaporated, the facility's property was eventually sold, with the proceeds augmenting the Harby endowment for the treatment of lung

²¹On the segregated character of the State Park facility and its separate division for black patients, see "SC State Park Tuberculosis Sanatorium," South Carolina Encyclopedia; and the documentary account in "Tuberculosis Sanatorium," Abandoned Southeast, <https://abandonedseoul.com/2020/02/15/tuberculosis-sanatorium/>.

²²Singleton family genealogy, on the post-war disappearance of the sanitarium model; the general medical context is well established, though this study confines its specific claims to the local record. The board's 1941 closure decision preceded the antibiotic revolution, but the post-war collapse of tuberculosis incidence foreclosed any reopening.

illnesses, so that even in dissolution the institution's charitable purpose was preserved in altered form.²³ The physical site passed to other uses; the name remained.

It is worth pausing on the significance of that survival. Names attached to defunct institutions ordinarily fade, surviving at most as the half-remembered etymology of a street. Indeed, one veteran educator, asked what the name means to people today, answered simply that "it only means to today's population that this road is named after someone named Alice," the deeper story having slipped from common memory.²⁴ The name "Alice" might very easily have suffered exactly that fate, becoming a curious roadside designation whose origin was forgotten within a single generation. Instead, the name was caught up and preserved by the very pattern of suburban development that the postwar decades brought to Sumter's western edge. The road retained its name; the surrounding subdivision and the institutions that grew up along it took the name as their own. When Alice Drive Baptist Church organized in 1956, it explicitly anchored its identity in the school and the historic area, carrying the "Alice Drive" name forward as a deliberate act of local placemaking. Tellingly, the church's own published history opens its account of itself by asking "Who was Alice?" and answering with the story of the sanitarium.²⁵ The name, in other words, did not merely persist by inertia; it was actively adopted, again and again, by the institutions that settled along the road, until it had become one of the load-bearing toponyms of Sumter's western suburbs. That this entire chain of transmission traces back to a young Jewish woman dead of tuberculosis in 1916, and to her grieving father's interracial sanitarium, is the foundational fact of everything that follows.

²³Singleton family genealogy. The site was later associated with other uses, including a venue referenced locally as "Rascals."

²⁴Debora Weston, response to Question 24, Alice Drive Middle School Oral History Project questionnaire, July 17, 2026 (hereafter Weston questionnaire). Mrs. Weston, a faculty member of some forty-seven years who arrived circa 1979–1980, is among the longest-serving contributors to the project; her questionnaire is transcribed and reconciled in the project's records and quoted here with her permission.

²⁵Alice Drive Baptist Church, "Our Story," <https://alicedrive.church/get-to-know-us/our-story/>, which frames the congregation's identity around the question "Who was Alice?" before recounting the history of Shelor and Camp Alice.

2.7 *The Field Between: Sumter's First Municipal Airport*

The Harby land had one more chapter to give before the schools arrived, and it is a chapter that recasts the whole site history of this study. For a quarter of a century, from the eve of the Depression until the middle of the 1950s, the very ground on which Alice Drive Middle School now stands served as Sumter's first municipal airport, so that the continuity this paper traces runs not merely through a name but through the soil itself. The account that follows rests substantially on local and family knowledge preserved in the community and in the pages of *The Sumter Item*, corroborated where possible against independent aviation records; where a particular detail rests on local testimony rather than on a charted document, that reliance is noted, for the earliest and smallest airfields of this era were rarely mapped and often vanished from the official record entirely.²⁶

The airport was a deliberate civic undertaking. In March 1929, the South Carolina legislature authorized the City of Sumter to establish a municipal airport, and an airport committee, having weighed and rejected competing sites at Pocalla and on Wedgefield Road as either less suitable or too costly, settled upon the Harby tract, roughly 153 acres of open land lying about two miles from the city center along Camp Alice Road.²⁷ A five-year lease was signed in September 1929 with Aline Harby Moore, a member of the same family whose name already marked the road, and the field was graded with two runways of roughly two thousand feet, extendable after ditch work toward three thousand, laid so as to permit takeoffs in several directions. It was dedicated on April 26, 1930, amid a large public air show of races, contests, and visiting aircraft, and contemporary

²⁶The narrative in this subsection draws on local and family knowledge of the original Sumter Municipal Airport, preserved in the community and in *The Sumter Item*, and supplied to this study through the author's research among local sources. Its principal actors and institutions are independently corroborated: the South Carolina Aviation Association Hall of Fame confirms Elliott Huger "Billy" Lynam Jr. (1911–2004), records that he soloed in 1932 and opened a flying school at the Sumter airport in the late 1930s, served as an Army Air Corps instructor pilot in the Second World War, and founded Sumter Airways, Inc.; see "Elliott Huger 'Billy' Lynam, Jr.," South Carolina Aviation Association Hall of Fame, https://scaaonline.com/hall_of_fame/elliott-huger-billy-lynam-jr/. The present, active Sumter Airport (FAA LID SMS) north of the city, distinct from Shaw Air Force Base, is likewise independently documented; see "Sumter Airport," Wikipedia. The specific local particulars that follow, including the Harby lease, the runway dimensions, and the 1930 dedication, reside in *The Sumter Item* and in local aviation memory and are reported here as such, pending confirmation against the newspaper's dated archive.

²⁷Local and family knowledge of the airport's establishment, as supplied through the author's research; see the note above. The Harby-family connection to the tract is consistent with the wider documentary record of the family's ownership of the Camp Alice land traced earlier in this section.

accounts pronounced it one of the better small fields in the South. There is a quiet symmetry worth pausing over here, for the very family whose grief had built a place of healing on this land in 1916 now leased that same land, barely more than a decade later, for a place of flight; the Harby name presided over the site's second reinvention as it had over its first.

The field's most consequential years came with the approach of war. On June 23, 1941, the airport was formally handed over for use as a civilian flying school, outfitted with a new hangar and training aircraft, and the Sumter pilot and instructor Elliott Huger "Billy" Lynam Jr. became central to its life, first as flight instructor and later as manager.²⁸ After the attack on Pearl Harbor the field served as an alternate landing ground for cadets from the nearby Shaw Army Air Field until about 1945, a wartime association that very likely lies behind the persistent local memory, encountered elsewhere in this study, that connected the school site to Shaw; the connection was real, but it was the connection of an auxiliary landing field to its parent base, not a claim that the school stands on Shaw itself.²⁹

The airport did not outlast the suburban growth that its own end helped to make possible.

Late in 1945 the field was declared surplus, whereupon Sumter Airways, Inc., chartered that December by members of the Booth and Lynam families, took over operations, offering flight instruction, charter service, aircraft maintenance, and crop dusting from the original site. Sumter Airways carried on at the field until the fall of 1955, when Alice Drive Elementary School opened on the northwest corner of the old airport property, and the school district would later acquire additional land so that Alice Drive Middle School could be built near the very center of the former

²⁸Lynam's role is corroborated by the South Carolina Aviation Association Hall of Fame; see the note above. His deep Sumter roots are further attested by his appearance in the same Singleton family genealogy that preserves the Harby and Camp Alice material, a small illustration of how tightly interwoven these Sumter families and this patch of ground truly were.

²⁹This reading reconciles the Shaw recollection recorded in a questionnaire response (see the Note on Sources) with the documented history of Shaw Field, which was established in 1941 several miles west of Sumter and operates still. The school site's genuine wartime tie to Shaw was as one of the auxiliary fields on which Shaw's cadets could land, an association easily compressed, across the decades, into the simpler and inexact memory that "the school is on the old Shaw field." Oral memory here preserved a true kernel inside an imprecise shell, which is precisely why such testimony rewards patient reconciliation rather than either uncritical acceptance or outright dismissal.

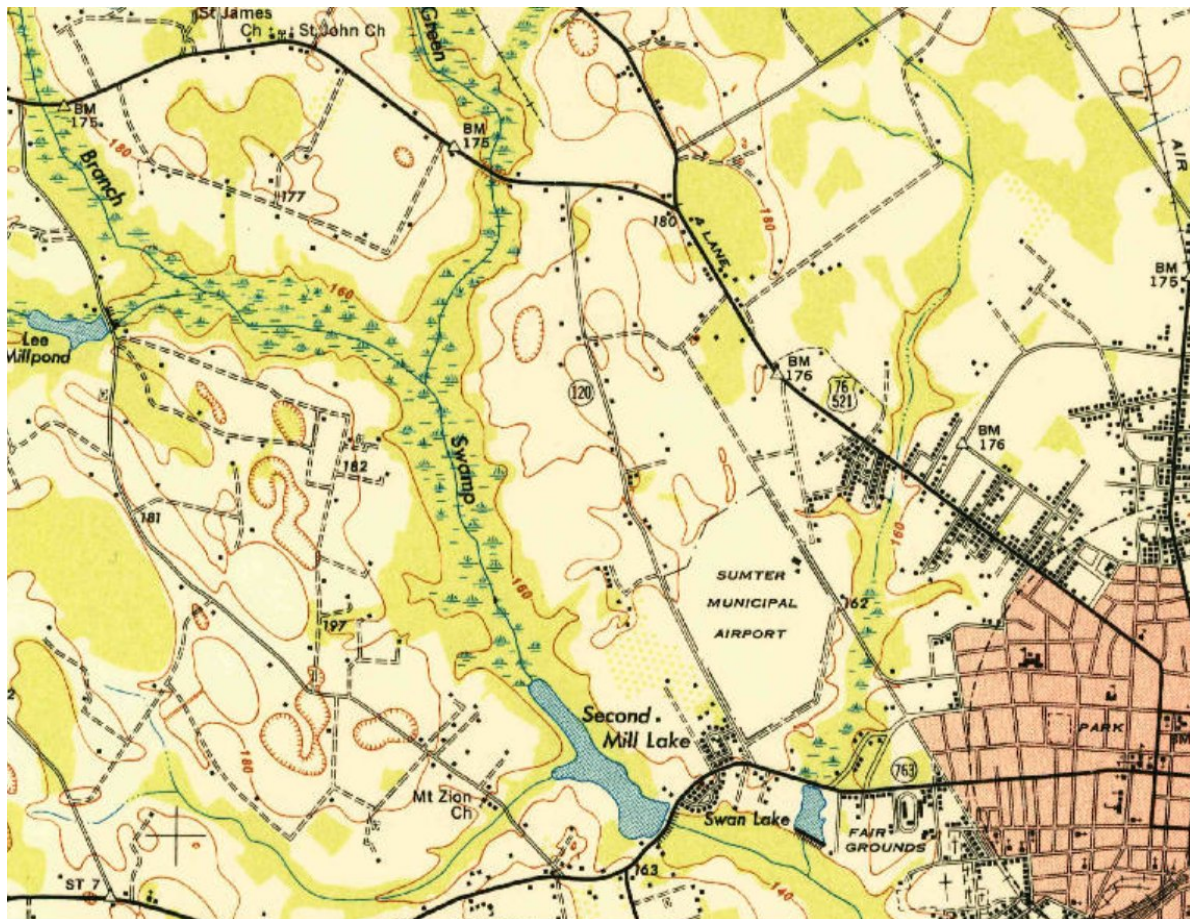


Figure 7: The site in the airport era: a United States Geological Survey topographic map of 1946 labels the “Sumter Municipal Airport” on the western edge of town, on the open ground between the built-up grid and the swamp. At this date the field was still in operation and the old Camp Alice sanitarium still stood nearby, though no longer in use; within a decade the schools would occupy this very acreage. USGS topographic map, 1946.

landing field.³⁰ The timing is almost too neat to be accidental, and it is not: the same postwar residential expansion that made a close-in airport untenable was the expansion that demanded new schools, so that the airfield did not so much disappear as transform, its open acreage passing directly from runways to classrooms. Local residents have long recalled, with the plain accuracy of lived memory, that “an airport was where Alice Drive School is located,” and they have been right all along.

The discovery deepens the central argument of this study in a way I had not anticipated when I began it. I have written throughout of the persistence of a name across a century, but the airport chapter reveals a persistence more literal still, that of the ground itself, which has served Sumter continuously as a place of public purpose since 1916: first as Camp Alice, the sanitarium; then, from 1930, as the municipal airport that carried the town into the age of flight; and finally, from 1955, as the schools that carry its children still. Three times over, on one tract of the Harby family’s land along a road named for a daughter lost to tuberculosis, Sumter built an institution meant to serve the common good. The name endured, as this study has shown; but beneath the name, the land endured too, and that is the deeper continuity.

3. Founding and Early Years: A Segregated School in a Booming Suburb, 1955–1969

3.1 The Postwar Suburban Context

The school that would eventually become Alice Drive Middle School was a child of the postwar suburban boom. In the decade after 1945, Sumter, like countless American towns, experienced an outward migration of population from its historic core toward newly developed residential areas on its periphery. The western edge of town, in the vicinity of the old Camp Alice site, was precisely

³⁰Local and family knowledge, as supplied through the author’s research. That Alice Drive Elementary opened in 1955, established independently earlier in this study, fixes the outer bound of the airport’s life on the site and dovetails exactly with the account of the field’s closure. The replacement facility, the present Sumter Municipal Airport on Airport Road north of the city, was built around 1955, dedicated in 1956, and activated by the FAA in February 1957; it remains the area’s primary civilian airport and is entirely distinct from Shaw Air Force Base.

such an area of growth, and the expansion of the public-school plant followed the movement of families as a matter of course. Alice Drive Elementary School opened in 1955 as a segregated white elementary school, the first educational institution to carry the name and the leading edge of the district's expansion into the area.³¹

3.2 *The Founding Date and the Equalization Era*

Alice Drive Junior High School, the direct institutional predecessor of the present middle school, followed within a few years, and the precise year of its founding is a genuinely vexed question that this study prefers to lay open rather than resolve by fiat. Three witnesses give three slightly different answers. The South Carolina Department of Education facility assessment dates the building's completion to 1958. The alumni-maintained Edmunds High School timeline records that "Alice Drive Junior High School opened" in 1957. And the school's own institutional memory, expressed in its seventieth-anniversary branding of 2026, claims a founding in 1956, a date given independent plausibility by the fact that Alice Drive Baptist Church organized in the school's cafeteria in October 1956, which requires that a usable building already stood.³² These dates are best held together rather than forced into a false precision; a building occupied by a congregation in 1956, opened to students in 1957, and recorded as completed in 1958 is entirely consistent with the ordinary staggered manner in which a school comes into being.

The circumstances of that construction, moreover, situate the school within one of the most consequential episodes in twentieth-century South Carolina history. A veteran faculty member records a piece of local knowledge that the state's own history amply confirms: that in the wake

³¹The 1955 opening of Alice Drive Elementary is recorded in the alumni-maintained timeline at "The History of Sumter High School," The Edmunds High School Website Project, comp. Dave Pettigrew, <https://www.edmundshigh.com/schoolhistory.html>, which lists the school's opening under the year 1955. Its character as a segregated white school reflects the universal organization of South Carolina public education in that era. Precise digitized founding documentation for the elementary school beyond this timeline is not available.

³²The 1958 completion date derives from the South Carolina Department of Education facility assessment materials; the 1957 opening from "The History of Sumter High School," The Edmunds High School Website Project, <https://www.edmundshigh.com/schoolhistory.html>; and the 1956 founding from the school's seventieth-anniversary materials of 2026 ("1956–2026"), corroborated as to a functioning building by Alice Drive Baptist Church, "Our Story," which records the congregation's organization in the school cafeteria on October 21, 1956. These three dates are not necessarily in conflict: a school may open in stages, with a building occupied in 1956 or 1957 and formally completed in 1958. The definitive resolution likely awaits *The Sumter Item* for 1956 and 1957.

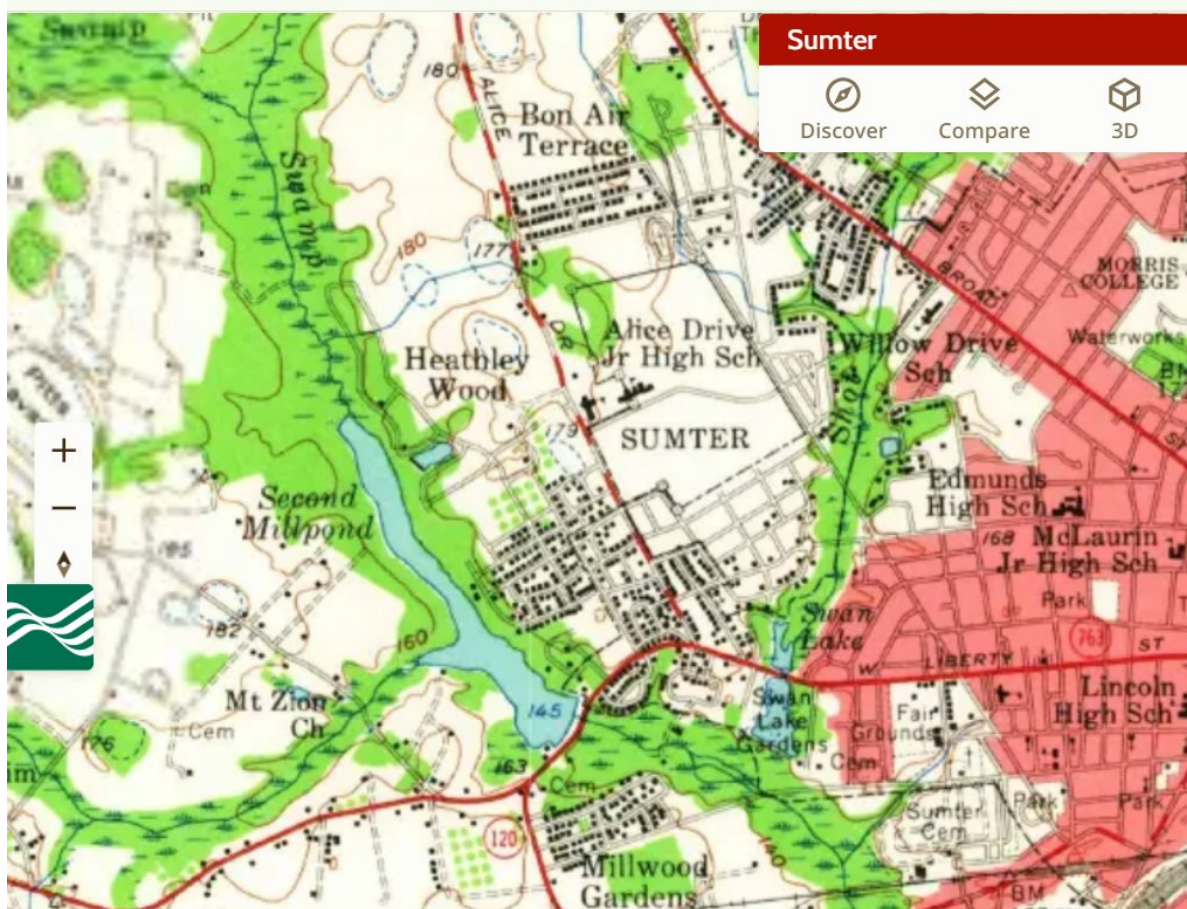


Figure 8: The school in its first year, on the federal record. A United States Geological Survey topographic map dated 1957 plainly labels “Alice Drive Jr High Sch” on the town’s western edge, with Willow Drive School just east and, across the developed grid in pink, Edmunds High School, McLaurin Jr High School, and Lincoln High School, the very institutions whose 1970 merger and feeder relationships this study traces. The map is independent documentary confirmation of the school’s existence and location in its founding year. USGS topographic map, 1957.

of the litigation that would become *Brown v. Board of Education*, South Carolina undertook a sweeping school-building campaign, and that Alice Drive and the nearby Bates school were built during it, along with several others in Sumter, using the same architectural design.³³ This local recollection maps precisely onto what historians call the equalization school program. Beginning in 1951, South Carolina levied its first statewide sales tax to fund a massive program of school construction, an effort to make its segregated schools defensibly “separate but equal” in direct response to the Clarendon County lawsuit *Briggs v. Elliott*, which would be folded into *Brown*.³⁴ Over seven hundred schools were constructed, improved, or expanded under the program between 1951 and 1959, and the new buildings shared, in the words of one study, a distinctly modern idiom of brick, glass block, and walls of windows, and were often “similar in architectural design and materials.”³⁵ There is a sober irony in the finding. The very building that houses Alice Drive was, on this account, a product of the state’s last organized effort to preserve segregation, an effort that failed, and that failed in part because the same *Brown* decision it was meant to appease would, sixteen years later, force the integration of the school it had built.

³³Weston questionnaire, response to Question 26 and attached addendum. Mrs. Weston states that “after the *Brown* vs Board of Education decision, the State of SC, in an attempt to appease this decision, ... went on a building campaign in ‘57.’ Alice Drive and Bates were built along with several others in Sumter, using the same architectural design.” The specific claim of a shared Alice Drive and Bates design should be confirmed against district records or the equalization-school inventory cited below; the broader building campaign it describes is firmly documented.

³⁴On the equalization program, see “Separate But Equal? South Carolina’s Fight Over School Segregation,” Teaching with Historic Places, National Park Service, <http://home.nps.gov/articles/separate-but-equal-south-carolina-s-fight-over-school-segregation-teaching-with-historic-places.htm>; “South Carolina Equalization Schools,” National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/south-carolina-south-carolina-equalization-schools.htm>; and Rebekah Dobrasko, “Equalization Schools in South Carolina, 1951–1959,” National Register of Historic Places historic context, <http://nationalregister.sc.gov/SurveyReports/EqualizationSchoolsHistoricContext.pdf>.

³⁵“Separate But Equal? South Carolina’s Fight Over School Segregation,” National Park Service (over seven hundred schools; “sleek, distinctly modern schools of brick, glass block, and walls of windows”); and “A Move Toward Equality II,” Lowcountry Digital History Initiative, College of Charleston, <https://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/equalization-schools/move-toward-equality-ii> (new schools “similar in architectural design and materials”). The equalization program was aimed principally at building black schools to forestall integration; that a white school (Alice Drive) and a black school (Bates) in the same town should share a standardized design is itself a revealing artifact of a program that distributed common architectural plans across the segregated system.

3.3 *The Junior High School and Its Segregated Order*

Whatever its precise founding year, Alice Drive Junior High opened as a segregated institution serving white students, configured in the standard junior-high pattern of grades seven through nine.³⁶ Its construction was of a piece with the district's broader expansion into the growing western suburbs, the same expansion that had produced the elementary school. A contemporary account from the era of Sumter School District 17 captures the institution in mid-growth: ninth graders were to be retained at Alice Drive Junior High rather than transferred to Edmunds High School, the eighth grade alone enrolled some two hundred pupils, total enrollment at the junior high stood at 574 while the elementary next door held 714, and the district was already planning additions meant to carry the plant toward a capacity of one thousand.³⁷ These are the first hard enrollment figures the documentary record yields for the founding era, and they confirm a school straining against its own walls almost from the beginning.

That same account documents, with unsettling plainness, the dual system within which Alice Drive operated. On the very page announcing the plans for the white junior high, the district set out its intention to convert Bates Elementary into a junior high "for Negro pupils," operating for the first time the following fall, serving grades six through eight from the Bates, Savage-Glover, and Stonehill attendance areas under principal J. W. Stover, while Lincoln High School continued to serve the junior-high pupils of other black attendance areas as space allowed.³⁸ The parallel is instructive and ought not to be passed over. Alice Drive and Bates, one white and one black, were being planned in the same season by the same board, and, if the veteran faculty testimony above is correct, built to the same architectural template. The two schools were mirror images, twin

³⁶The segregated character of the school at its founding is not in dispute; it reflects the universal organization of South Carolina public education prior to the desegregation that followed the 1960s. The grades 7–9 configuration is the standard junior-high model of the period and is confirmed by the Weston questionnaire, Question 6.

³⁷"Ninth Graders Stay at Alice; Some Sixth Graders to Be Moved," *The Sumter Item* (Sumter School District 17 era; exact issue date to be confirmed from the newspapers.com scan). The article supplies the enrollment figures (574 at the junior high, 714 at the elementary), the roughly two hundred eighth-grade pupils, and the planned expansion toward a one-thousand-pupil capacity.

³⁸"Junior High Set for Negro Pupils," *The Sumter Item* (adjacent to the preceding article; exact issue date to be confirmed). Bates, today Bates Middle School, is one of the present-day feeder peers named later in this study; its origin as the district's first black junior high, planned in explicit parallel with Alice Drive's expansion, is documented here.

products of a system determined to remain separate. That they would eventually become sister schools in a single integrated district, both feeding the same high school, is the measure of how far the intervening decades would carry Sumter.

3.4 The School and the Church: An Intertwined Origin

One vivid and well-documented thread illuminates the early life of the school: its entanglement with Alice Drive Baptist Church. In the manner of many new suburban congregations, the church came into being before it possessed a building of its own, and it borrowed the new public school as its cradle. Alice Drive Baptist Church held its initial services in the junior high school's cafeteria and was officially organized there on October 21, 1956, with 107 enrollees; by March 1957 its charter membership had grown to 130.³⁹ The congregation purchased land on nearby Miller Road in 1958, on the very same road on which the school stands today, and retained the "Alice Drive" name as its own, a further act of deliberate identification with the place.⁴⁰ Church classes continued to use the junior high's space into 1959 while the congregation's own buildings were completed.⁴¹

This intertwining of school and church in the school's earliest years is more than a charming anecdote. It documents the way a new public institution functioned, in the suburbanizing South of the 1950s, as a genuine community anchor whose use extended well beyond the instruction of children, serving as a shared civic space pressed into service by the surrounding community as it built out the institutions of suburban life. It also extends the chain of the "Alice" name one further link, for the church's adoption and retention of the name helped to fix it permanently in the local landscape. The school gave the church a home; the church gave the name a second institutional carrier. That the church preserves this origin story in its own published history, while the school's founding survives only in fragments, is itself instructive about which institutions tend to keep and tell their own pasts.

³⁹Alice Drive Baptist Church, "Our Story." The enrollment figures (107 at organization, 130 charter members by March 1957) are drawn from the church's own history.

⁴⁰Alice Drive Baptist Church, "Our Story."

⁴¹Alice Drive Baptist Church, "Our Story."

4. The Building and Its Development: One Core, Many Renovations, 1958–Present

4.1 The Original Core and the Problem of Dates

The physical history of the school organizes itself around a single, well-attested fact: the original building, completed by the state’s reckoning in 1958, remains the spine of the present campus, which now comprises approximately 150,156 square feet, and that core structure has been repeatedly renovated and expanded over the decades rather than replaced.⁴² The facility assessment record from which these figures derive is, for the physical history, the single most authoritative public source, and it is worth dwelling on what it does and does not tell us. It supplies the construction date, the total square footage, and a general characterization of the building’s evolution as one of incremental renovation and addition rather than wholesale reconstruction. It does not supply the dates of individual additions, the scope of particular renovation campaigns, or the architectural specifics of how a junior-high building of the late 1950s was adapted, decade by decade, into a modern STEM middle school. As discussed in Section 3, the tension among the 1956, 1957, and 1958 dates belongs to this same domain of documentary imprecision, and a responsible reading holds all three in view rather than forcing a single answer the evidence does not compel.

4.2 A Timeline of Adaptive Reuse

What the combined record and the recollections of longtime staff now permit is a periodized account of the building’s development, offered here with appropriate caution about its precision. In the planning and construction phase of roughly 1956 to 1958, the junior high was designed and built as part of the state equalization campaign, its timing coinciding with the 1955 opening of the elementary school and the 1956 founding of the church in the historic Camp Alice vicinity. Through the late 1950s and 1960s the building operated with the standard facilities of a junior high of its era,

⁴²South Carolina Department of Education / Sumter District facility assessment materials, recording original construction in 1958 and a current building area of approximately 150,156 square feet, together with the characterization that the structure has undergone “many renovations and additions.”

that is, with classrooms and a cafeteria, the latter shared, as we have already seen, with the nascent congregation.

The decades from the 1970s through the 1990s brought the reorganization into a middle school and a series of renovations and additions whose specifics the public record does not preserve, though oral testimony has begun to supply them: a veteran alumnus recalls that the gymnasium was redone in the late 1990s or early 2000s and that the band room and strings room were plainly newer additions, the first concrete renovation testimony the project has recovered.⁴³ An earlier and now-documented instance of the school's physical adaptation comes from the pages of *The Sumter Item*: the district's business manager, Fred E. Wells, reported to City Council that a faculty parking area had been paved behind Alice Drive Junior High at a cost of \$5,800 to School District 17, with buses and parent pickup rerouted off Miller Road to ease what Wells called the city's single worst school-traffic hazard, a problem so acute that on rainy days some schools saw upwards of five hundred parents arriving to collect their children.⁴⁴

The 2000s and 2010s saw modernization in support of the school's shift to a STEM emphasis, with the national STEM certification achieved around 2015 serving as a useful marker; this period brought incremental updates for technology, laboratory space, and the flexible instructional environments that project-based STEM pedagogy requires, and it is in this era that the building's footprint evolved toward its current scale. In the 2020s and the present, the record indicates ongoing maintenance and targeted updates rather than transformative capital projects, with state and district facility assessments rating the building's condition generally between "Good" and "Very Good," and

⁴³Tanner Curry, responses to Questions 12 and 25, Alice Drive Middle School Oral History Project questionnaire, May 23, 2026 (hereafter Curry questionnaire). Mr. Curry, an alumnus of the 2002–2003 period who also attended Alice Drive Elementary and belonged to Alice Drive Baptist Church, is quoted here with his permission.

⁴⁴"School Traffic Problems Brought Before Council," *The Sumter Item* (Sumter School District 17 era). A closely related *Sumter Daily Item* report of November 12, 1964, treats the same cluster of parking, intramural, and vaccination matters at Alice Drive Junior High, and it is very likely the source of, or a companion to, this coverage; the traffic material is therefore best dated to about November 1964, pending final confirmation against the newspapers.com scan. The article names District 17 business manager Fred E. Wells and Councilman William B. Boyle, identifies Alice Drive Junior High as "the number one traffic safety problem among the city schools," records the \$5,800 cost of the paved faculty lot, and notes the rainy-day figure of "in excess of 500 parents" (an evident transcription of "in excess of") at some schools. Wells, later deputy superintendent of the district and a charter member of Alice Drive Baptist Church, is independently documented, a small illustration of how tightly the school, the district, and the church were interwoven. The piece is a useful primary source both for the building's physical development and for the school's scale in the era.



Figure 9: “School Traffic Problems Brought Before Council.” This Sumter Item report identifies Alice Drive Junior High as the city’s foremost school-traffic hazard and documents the paving of a faculty parking lot behind the school at a cost of \$5,800, with parent pickup rerouted along Miller Road. The Sumter Item, via newspapers.com.

no large-scale named capital project, such as a specific new wing or a bond-funded reconstruction, is publicly detailed for this campus.⁴⁵

4.3 The Building as Argument



Figure 10: *Alice Drive Junior High School in its original mid-century modern form, with the distinctive butterfly roofline, stone-and-glass entrance, and covered walkways characteristic of the schools built during South Carolina’s 1950s equalization campaign. Students gather outside the main entrance. Courtesy of local archival collections.*

The physical history thus yields an interpretive point that resonates with the larger argument of this study. The building was not periodically razed and rebuilt; it was continuously adapted, its original bones repeatedly reclothed to serve successive educational models. This pattern of adaptive

⁴⁵Facility assessment materials, which supply the condition ratings and the “new/less than 1 year” notations for selected components. The standard working spaces of the school, including the gymnasium and cafeteria, appear in Alice Drive Middle School, *Student Handbook 2024–2025* (Sumter School District).

reuse is the architectural analogue of the institutional pattern traced throughout this paper. Just as the name “Alice” was carried across radically different occupants without itself being discarded, so the building was carried across radically different pedagogical eras without being discarded. Continuity of fabric beneath transformation of function is the signature of this institution at every level: in its name, in its site, and indeed in its very walls. The school did not start over; it kept becoming.



Figure 11: A second view of the original junior high building, showing the full sweep of the modern façade and the crowds of students that filled it. The mid-century design would be repeatedly renovated across the following decades rather than replaced. Courtesy of local archival collections.

5. Integration, Reorganization, and the Long Transition, 1960s–2000s

5.1 *Freedom of Choice and the Slow Approach of Integration*

The desegregation of Alice Drive did not arrive all at once in 1970; it approached in stages across the preceding years, and the recollections of a faculty member who lived through the era supply detail the published record has largely lost. In the mid-1960s, she records, the district adopted a “Freedom of Choice” plan, under which several African American students exercised the option of attending the formerly all-white Alice Drive, though their families were required to provide their

own transportation.⁴⁶ She names two she has confirmed: Myra Barton, who lived in the South Sumter community and was carried to school by family and friends, and James Mack, who lived in the Broad Street community and walked to school every day.⁴⁷ That a child would walk that distance daily to claim an education the law had grudgingly opened to him is a detail worth more than a shelf of abstractions about “massive resistance”; it fixes in a single image the courage that desegregation asked of ordinary black families in Sumter.

5.2 1970 and the Making of Sumter High

The most consequential structural transformation came with the full desegregation of Sumter’s public schools. In 1971, the district ended the Freedom of Choice program and fully integrated all of its schools; the preceding year, in 1970, Sumter High School had been formed through the merger and integration of the city’s previously separate high schools, drawing together the legacies of the formerly white Edmunds High School and the formerly black Lincoln High School into a single unified institution.⁴⁸ Within the reorganized district, Alice Drive Junior High served as a key feeder school to the new high school, alongside McLaurin Junior High.⁴⁹

A small but evocative detail captures the way institutional identities were folded together in this era of consolidation, and it happens to be a point on which the documentary record and the oral testimony agree exactly. Both the alumni history and a veteran faculty member independently explain that the blue-and-white colors of Alice Drive Junior High were blended with the red-and-

⁴⁶Weston questionnaire, addendum to Question 26. Freedom-of-choice plans were a widespread Southern response to the *Brown* mandate in the mid-1960s, typically placing the burden of transfer, and its costs and risks, on black families; the pattern Mrs. Weston describes is characteristic of the era. Her transcription preserves the original spelling throughout.

⁴⁷Weston questionnaire, addendum to Question 26. These names are recorded here as a matter of local historical documentation; both individuals exercised a public option under a district program. The walking distance from the Broad Street community underscores the real burden the transportation requirement placed on transferring families.

⁴⁸The 1971 end of the choice program and the full integration of district schools are recorded in the Weston questionnaire, addendum to Question 26. The 1970 consolidation is documented by the Lincoln High School historical marker (Marker 43-47), erected in 2015 by the Lincoln High School Preservation Alumni Association, which records that “In 1970 Lincoln H.S. consolidated with the formerly all-white Edmunds H.S. to form Sumter H.S.”; see “Lincoln High School,” The Historical Marker Database, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=224585>. The merger is independently corroborated by “The History of Sumter High School,” The Edmunds High School Website Project, <https://www.edmundshigh.com/schoolhistory.html>.

⁴⁹“The History of Sumter High School,” The Edmunds High School Website Project; corroborated by the Weston questionnaire, Question 9.

white of McLaurin Junior High to produce the purple-and-white scheme associated with that lineage of schools at Edmunds High.⁵⁰ That two entirely independent sources should give the identical account, down to the arithmetic of mixing red and blue into purple, lends the detail a solidity that neither could claim alone, and it testifies to the way the merging of schools was understood locally as a literal blending of distinct institutional identities into a new whole.

5.3 The Irony Realized, and Its Human Cost

It is at this juncture that the central irony of this study is fully realized, and it deserves to be stated without euphemism. The name “Alice” originated in the philanthropy of a Jewish family and was first attached to a sanitarium that, however constrained by the segregationist conventions of its day, admitted both black and white patients at a time when such interracial medical provision was rare. When that name passed to a school in the late 1950s, it passed instead to a segregated white institution. This was, in racial terms, a genuine regression from the comparatively integrated character of the facility that had first borne the name. Only with the desegregation of 1970 and 1971 did the school’s racial character come into alignment with the more inclusive spirit of the name’s origin. The arc is not one of simple progress; it bends backward before it bends forward. A name born of relative inclusion was claimed by an institution of exclusion and then, more than a decade later, redeemed by integration.

That redemption, it must be added, was neither instantaneous nor painless, and here again the oral record corrects any temptation toward a triumphant narrative. A teacher who arrived at the school around 1979 or 1980, nearly a decade after formal integration, remembers a faculty still sharply divided: there was, she recalls, “a highly tense divide” between the black and white teachers,

⁵⁰Weston questionnaire, Question 9: “AD’s colors were Blue & White; McLaurin’s colors were Red & White. When Red + Blue are mixed, the color became Purple; . . . Purple & White.” The same explanation appears in “The History of Sumter High School,” The Edmunds High School Website Project, which records that the purple-and-white “represented the merging of the two junior high schools,” McLaurin (red and white) and Alice Drive (blue and white). That two independent sources, one written and one oral, give the identical color arithmetic is a small but satisfying instance of mutual corroboration.

extending even to separate white and black faculty Christmas parties.⁵¹ Formal desegregation, in other words, had merged the institution years before it had genuinely integrated the community within it. Yet the same witness records a countervailing sign of deliberate balance: the student council, she notes, seated an equal number of black and white students, as did comparable bodies across the state, a structural attempt to guarantee shared representation even as the adults remained divided.⁵² The two details belong together, for between them they capture the lived texture of integration far better than any single generalization could: an institution structurally committed to equality and yet, in its daily human relations, still working through a division that law alone could not dissolve.

5.4 From Junior High to Middle School

Running through and beyond the integration years was a second, slower transformation, and on its timing the oral record is at last precise where the documentary record had been vague. Earlier drafts of this history could say only that the shift from the junior-high model to the middle-school model had occurred by the mid-to-late 2000s. A veteran faculty member fixes it far earlier and far more exactly. In 1974, she recalls, the reorganization took effect: Bates Junior High became the ninth-grade campus of Sumter High School, while Alice Drive and McLaurin became middle schools serving grades six through eight, a deliberate embrace of what she calls “the middle school concept.”⁵³ The change was no quiet drift but a purposeful reform, and its human consequences registered immediately in the building. The departing ninth graders, she observes, had been “a little more mature and academically inline with the school,” while the arriving sixth graders “brought an

⁵¹Weston questionnaire, Question 10. The response is transcribed verbatim, preserving the respondent’s emphasis. That such a divide persisted among the faculty a full decade after the 1970–71 integration is a valuable and sobering correction to any assumption that legal desegregation produced immediate social integration.

⁵²Weston questionnaire, Question 10 (“SC” in the response abbreviates Student Council). The deliberate racial balancing of student government was a common feature of newly integrated Southern schools in the 1970s, intended to prevent majority domination of elected positions.

⁵³Weston questionnaire, Questions 6 and 8 and the addendum. Mrs. Weston dates the reorganization to 1974–75 and characterizes it as a “major reform,” undertaken because the district “wanted the middle school concept.” She further records a subsequent adjustment: “In 1978, Bates became a Middle School, and McLaurin became the 9th-grade campus.” This testimony corrects the mid-2000s dating offered in earlier drafts of this study and is partially corroborated by a Teacher of the Year notice (see below) that already used the “Alice Drive Middle” designation in the 1990s.

elementary standard to the school,” altering its culture in both directions at once.⁵⁴

That this transition was complete, and the “Alice Drive Middle” name in settled use, well before the 2000s is confirmed from an entirely separate direction. A *Sumter Item* profile of a school Teacher of the Year, the science teacher Bertha Timmons, describes her as teaching at “Alice Drive Middle” and notes that she had done so since 1992, placing the middle-school designation firmly in the early 1990s.⁵⁵ By the district’s own reorganization in 1974 and the plain usage of the local press by the early 1990s, the institution was Alice Drive Middle School in fact and in name, feeding Sumter High alongside its sister schools Bates and, after the opening of Chestnut Oaks Middle School in 1998, a widening set of attendance areas.⁵⁶

6. The Modern Era: STEM Excellence and the Contemporary School, 2010s–2026

6.1 A Profile of the Present Institution

Alice Drive Middle School today occupies its campus at 40 Miller Road, Sumter, South Carolina 29150, and serves a student body that recent sources place between roughly 778 and 841 children in grades six through eight, at a student-teacher ratio of approximately sixteen or seventeen to

⁵⁴Weston questionnaire, Question 8. The observation that the grade reconfiguration changed the building’s culture in both directions, losing the maturity of the ninth grade while absorbing the younger sensibility of the sixth, is precisely the kind of lived detail the documentary record cannot supply.

⁵⁵“[Teacher of the Year profile of Bertha Timmons],” *The Sumter Item* (exact issue date to be confirmed from the newspapers.com scan; internal evidence suggests the mid-1990s). Timmons, a science teacher, is described as having begun her career in 1990 as an adjunct at Central Carolina Technical College and as having taught at Alice Drive Middle since 1992; she holds a B.S. in biology from Francis Marion University and an M.Ed. in educational administration from the University of Southern Mississippi. Her recognition is the earliest documented Teacher of the Year the project has recovered and is discussed further in Section 6.

⁵⁶Weston questionnaire, addendum to Question 26, which records that attendance lines were “adjusted after the opening of the present-day Sumter High School and readjusted upon the opening of Chestnut Oaks in 1998.” The grades 6–8 configuration and the feeder relationship alongside Bates Middle and Chestnut Oaks Middle are well established in the school and district record of the period.

one.⁵⁷ Its mascot is the Hawk, and its modern motto, “Hawks RISE,” signals the aspirational and character-focused culture that the school cultivates; its historical colors of blue and white reach back, as we have seen, to the junior-high era.⁵⁸ In its outward particulars it is a typical American suburban middle school. In its intellectual identity it is anything but typical.

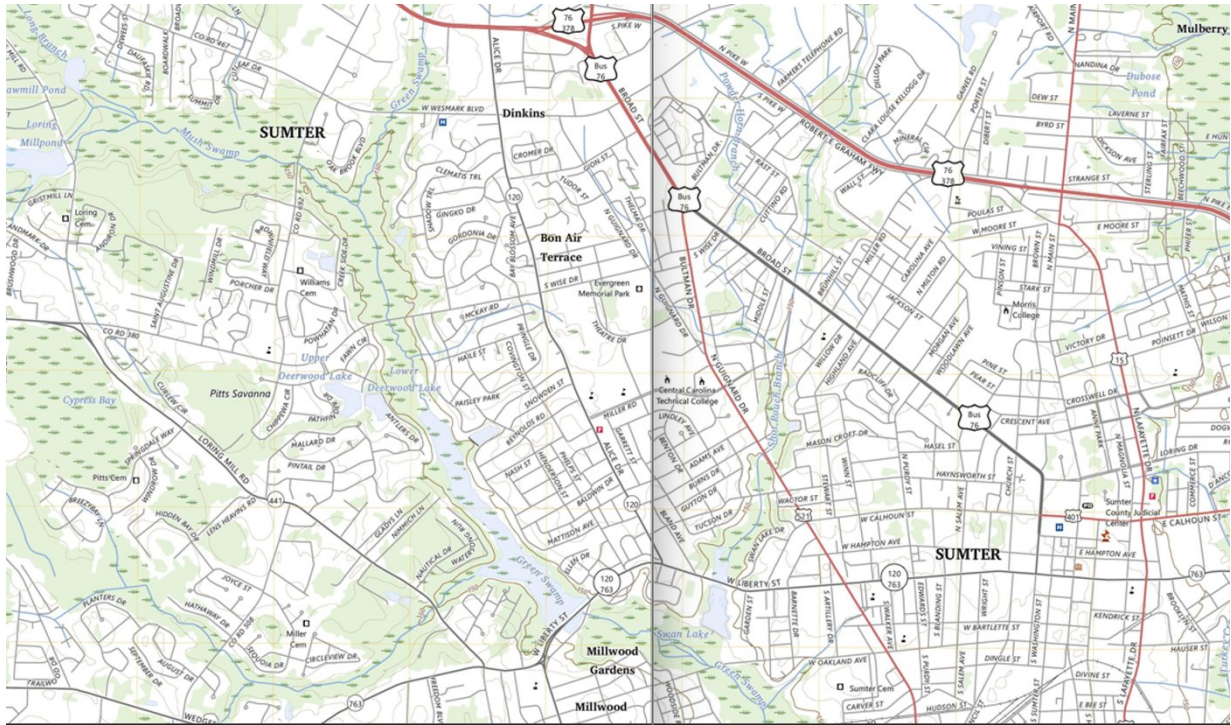


Figure 12: The same ground today. A modern United States Geological Survey topographic map (2024) shows the fully developed western suburb that grew up around the school, its street grid now dense where the 1946 map showed open airport land. Alice Drive runs north to south through the map; the Miller Road and Wise Drive vicinity, once Camp Alice and then the landing field, is now thoroughly residential, and Central Carolina Technical College, one of the school’s modern STEM partners, appears to the east. USGS topographic map, 2024.

The Hawk, then, is no recent branding exercise but a mascot the students themselves chose more than half a century ago, and the manner of its adoption, a design contest settled by a vote of

⁵⁷The official South Carolina school report card lists enrollment of 841 and identifies the principal as Jeannie Pressley; see South Carolina School Report Cards, Alice Drive Middle School (School ID 4301021), <https://screportcards.com>. Aggregators report somewhat lower figures; Niche gives 778 students at a 17:1 ratio, and DonorsChoose gives 783 at a 16.3:1 ratio, the differences reflecting reporting year and methodology. The school describes itself as serving “approximately 800 students.” Figures are reported as a range to reflect this variation. The school is a Title I school within the Sumter School District.

⁵⁸School website materials, including the home page and “About Us” page, Alice Drive Middle School, Sumter School District, <https://adm.sumterschools.net/>. The “Hawks RISE” motto recurs throughout the school’s public communications; the school’s seventieth-anniversary materials of 2026 present RISE as an acronym for the school’s four stated values, Respect, Integrity, Support, and Excellence.

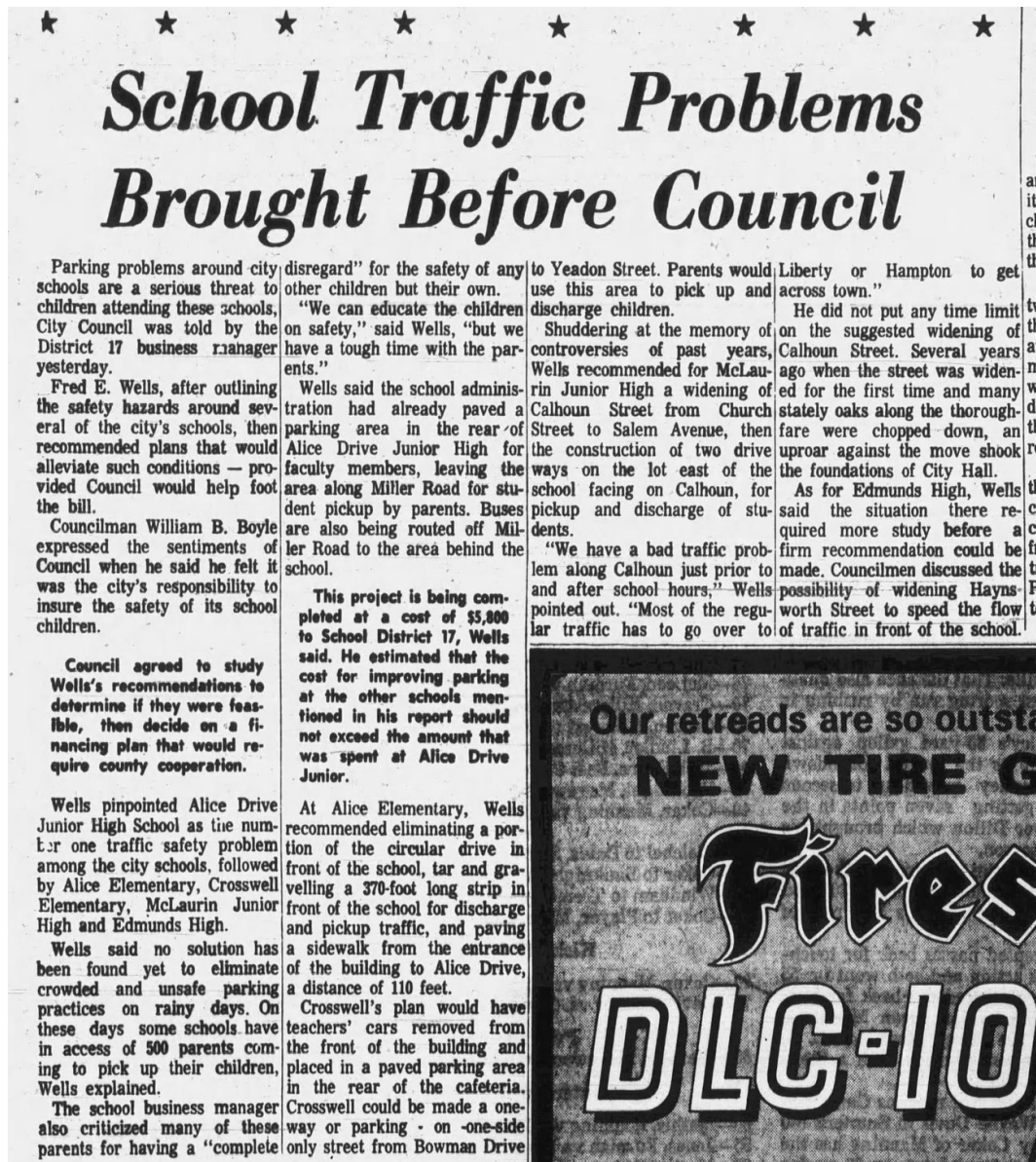


Figure 13: The Hawk mascot reaches back to the junior-high era. In this Sumter Item photograph, Alice Drive Junior High unveils a new school flag, designed by student Marshall Hogon in a schoolwide contest and approved by a vote of the student body; he is joined by student body president Sudie Summers and rising president Mary Ann Strange. The flag's blue-and-gold hawk anticipates the "Hawks" identity the school carries today. Crowson photo, *The Sumter Item*, via newspapers.com.

the whole student body, is itself a small artifact of the civic-minded culture the school has long cultivated.

6.2 The STEM Transformation

The defining development of the school's modern history is its transformation into a STEM-focused institution, a reinvention as thoroughgoing, in its own register, as the desegregation of 1970 or the shift to the middle-school model. The institution achieved national STEM accreditation through Cognia, the nonprofit accreditor formed from the merger of the regional accrediting associations, in approximately 2015, a credential that marked the formal beginning of its modern identity.⁵⁹ What began as a focused initiative, namely an initial offering of five STEM-specific elective classes, grew over time into a comprehensive reorientation of the school's pedagogy, expanding to fifteen STEM electives and, more significantly, integrating STEM approaches across all content areas rather than confining them to a set of specialized courses.⁶⁰ The ambition is captured in the school's own framing of its goal, a rigorous education "for ALL students," a deliberate echo, whether conscious or not, of the universalist language that this history has tracked all the way back to Camp Alice's admission of patients of "all races."⁶¹

The curricular backbone of this transformation is the Project Lead the Way (PLTW) Gateway program, a nationally used framework for project-based STEM instruction at the middle-school level, complemented by the school's Gifted and Talented offerings.⁶² The program's stated emphases, which include critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, communication, and information literacy, are explicitly tied to the competencies of the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate,

⁵⁹On the Cognia STEM accreditation of circa 2015 and the program's subsequent development, see *The Sumter Item* coverage of the school's STEM milestones, together with the STEM and "About Us" pages of the school's website, <https://adm.sumterschools.net/about-us>. The school describes itself as "a nationally accredited STEM school through Cognia."

⁶⁰*The Sumter Item* coverage of the STEM program; school website STEM materials. The growth from five to fifteen electives and the integration across content areas are reported in these sources.

⁶¹Alice Drive Middle School, "About Us," <https://adm.sumterschools.net/about-us>; cf. Alice Drive Baptist Church, "Our Story," on Camp Alice's admission of "children and all races." The juxtaposition is the present author's; the sources do not draw the connection themselves.

⁶²On the adoption of the PLTW Gateway curriculum and the Gifted and Talented program, see GreatSchools, Alice Drive Middle profile, <https://www.greatschools.org/south-carolina/sumter/1015-Alice-Drive-Middle/>, which lists both; and the school's own STEM materials.

the state's framework for defining the skills and characteristics every graduate should possess.⁶³ The school thus positions its STEM identity not as a niche specialization but rather as the very organizing logic of its entire educational mission, that is, as the means by which it pursues the broad developmental and civic aims that the state has set for all its schools.

A further, independently verifiable distinction marks the program's reach beyond the school's own walls: in 2021 Alice Drive was named a middle-school chapter of the National STEM Honor Society, becoming, by the contemporaneous report, the first middle school in South Carolina to earn that designation.⁶⁴ The accumulation of such "firsts," whether first in the state for the honor society chapter or, as discussed below, a claimed first in the nation for recertification, is itself a feature of the school's modern self-presentation, in which priority and pioneering status function as the central idiom of institutional pride.

6.3 Recognition and Recertification

The maturation of the program has been marked by a series of recognitions. In April 2025, on or about the twenty-eighth of that month, the school celebrated the tenth anniversary of its STEM program with an event featuring hands-on activities, student showcases, and the participation of a wide range of community and institutional partners, among them the University of South Carolina Sumter, Central Carolina Technical College, Clemson Extension, the Sumter County Sheriff's Office, the Sumter Fire Department, and mobile educational programs including STARLAB, a Cyber Bus, and a Mobile STEM Explorer.⁶⁵ The breadth of that partnership roster is itself significant, documenting how thoroughly the school's STEM mission has woven it into the civic and institutional fabric of Sumter County, drawing in higher education, technical education, agricultural extension, and even public safety as collaborators in the education of its students.

⁶³Alice Drive Middle School, "About Us," which states the mission of helping all students develop "the world-class skills and life/career characteristics of the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate" through "a rigorous, integrated, and relevant STEM-based education."

⁶⁴"Alice Drive Middle School in Sumter joins National STEM Honor Society," *The Sumter Item*, October 14, 2021, <https://theitem.com/stories/alice-drive-middle-school-in-sumter-joins-national-stem-honor-society>, 371931.

⁶⁵*The Sumter Item*, coverage of the STEM program's tenth-anniversary celebration (on or about April 28, 2025); school and district communications. The roster of partners is drawn from this coverage.

Most striking among the school's distinctions is its claim to be the first middle school in the United States to complete national STEM recertification. This is not merely a journalistic attribution but the school's own official self-description: the South Carolina school report card states plainly that Alice Drive is "the first middle school in the nation to complete STEM re-certification."⁶⁶ Recertification, as distinct from initial certification, is the credential of sustained rather than merely achieved excellence: it testifies to continuous improvement over a multi-year cycle rather than to a single successful application. That a middle school in Sumter should hold this particular national distinction is the clearest possible measure of how far this institution has traveled from its origins as a segregated junior high, and indeed how far it has come from the roadside sanitarium whose name it still carries.

6.4 Honors, Athletics, and Community

The STEM distinctions are complemented by a broader record of recent recognition. The school was named a National Beta School of Distinction for 2024–25; it improved its state report-card rating from "Average" to "Good"; and in the local sphere it was voted the best middle school in Sumter County in the 2023 context.⁶⁷ Beyond STEM, the school sustains the full complement of programs expected of a comprehensive middle school: a Gifted and Talented program; competitive Hawks athletics that have claimed county titles, including in football; and an array of extracurricular organizations including the Beta Club, the National Junior Honor Society, Student Council, and robotics and STEM clubs.⁶⁸ That athletic tradition, like the Hawk itself, runs deep into the junior-

⁶⁶South Carolina School Report Cards, Alice Drive Middle School (School ID 4301021), <https://screportcards.com>, quoting the school's narrative description of itself. The claim is reported here as the school states it; as a superlative of national scope it would, in a definitive scholarly treatment, warrant independent verification against Cogna's own records, and that caveat is registered here.

⁶⁷District and school communications and *The Sumter Item*, on the National Beta School of Distinction designation (2024–25), the improved report-card rating, and the local recognition; report-card data via South Carolina School Report Cards, <https://screportcards.com>. In the interest of balance it should be noted that external aggregators offer a more measured assessment: GreatSchools, drawing on state assessment data, characterizes the school's performance as "average" relative to comparable South Carolina schools, and Niche reports proficiency rates of roughly 32 percent in mathematics and 44 percent in reading. See GreatSchools, Alice Drive Middle, and Niche, Alice Drive Middle School profile. The school's distinctions are real, but its measured academic outcomes are those of a solid rather than an exceptional performer, and a balanced history should hold both facts together.

⁶⁸School website "Athletics" and activities materials, Alice Drive Middle School, <https://adm.sumterschools.net/>; GreatSchools, Alice Drive Middle (Gifted and Talented program).

high past.



Figure 14: *Junior-high football before a full grandstand, a scene from the school's athletic life in the junior-high era. Competitive Hawks athletics, including county football titles, remain a fixture of the school today. Courtesy of local archival collections.*

The texture of the school's community life is captured well in its public-facing presence, including an active social media identity under the handle @ADMHawks, yearbooks produced through Jostens, regular orientations, and ongoing family engagement. All of it remains continuous, in spirit, with the community anchor role the school played in its very first years, when it housed a nascent congregation in its cafeteria. That relationship, remarkably, has since reversed and endured: one long-serving teacher records that Alice Drive Baptist Church has hosted the school's orchestra for summer lessons since 2009, a program that has grown from a mere handful of children into one serving some eighty-five students under eight teachers, and that the church continues to provide the students a venue in which to perform.⁶⁹ The institution that began as a shared civic space in

⁶⁹Michael Baier, response to Question 25, Alice Drive Middle School Oral History Project questionnaire, May 25, 2026 (hereafter Baier questionnaire). Mr. Baier, a member of the school's faculty since 2009, is quoted with his permission. The relationship he describes is a living continuation, in reverse, of the 1956 arrangement recorded in Section 3: where the school once housed the young church, the church now hosts the school's students.

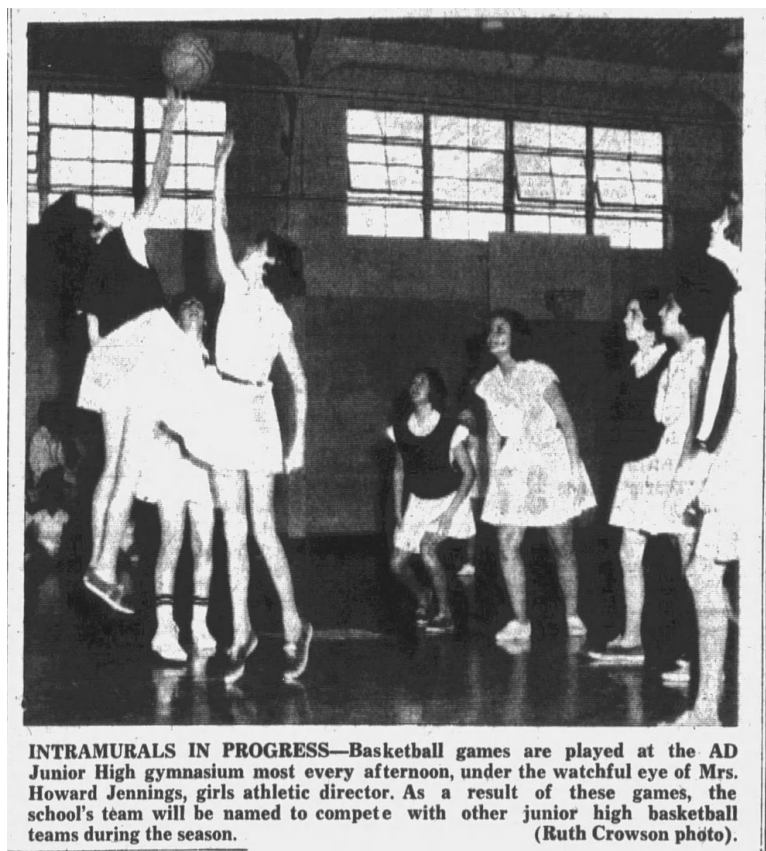


Figure 15: “Intramurals in Progress.” Girls’ intramural basketball in the Alice Drive Junior High gymnasium, played, as the caption notes, “most every afternoon, under the watchful eye of Mrs. Howard Jennings, girls athletic director,” with the school’s competitive team to be chosen from among the players. Ruth Crowson photo, *The Sumter Item*, via newspapers.com.

the suburbanizing 1950s remains, some seventy years later, a central node in the social fabric of its corner of Sumter.

7. Leadership, Staff, and the Texture of Institutional Memory

7.1 *The Limits of the Record and the Recovery of Memory*

Any attempt to write the human history of this institution, including the succession of principals, the long-serving teachers, and the faculty culture across the decades, runs immediately into the limits of the public record, and honesty requires that the limits be stated before the contents. No comprehensive roster of the school's principals across its nearly seven decades has been digitized or made publicly available, and no full faculty succession can be reconstructed from public sources alone. What has begun to change this, for the first time, is the oral history project undertaken for this edition. The recollections of veteran faculty and alumni, imperfect and in places uncertain though they are, have started to restore a leadership history the archives never preserved, and the account that follows draws gratefully on their testimony while flagging, as any responsible use of oral sources must, exactly where memory remains unconfirmed.

7.2 *An Emerging Succession*

The documentary record now yields the earliest principal by name. A South Carolina school directory for 1957–1958, the school's very first years, lists “Alice Drive Junior, Sumter” under principal J. L. Edens, which fixes the founding-era leadership that oral memory could not reach.⁷⁰ From there the oral history project takes up the thread. The earliest leadership recovered from living memory comes from a faculty member who arrived around 1979 or 1980 and who set down, from memory, a sequence of the school's principals and leaders across the decades that followed. Her list, offered with the candor that its own marginal uncertainties acknowledge, records among the

⁷⁰South Carolina public-school directory, 1957–1958, listing “Alice Drive Junior, Sumter, J. L. Edens, Principal.” This directory entry is the earliest documented naming of an Alice Drive principal located for this study, and it independently corroborates the school's operation by the 1957–1958 term, consistent with the founding-date triangulation discussed in Section 3.

principals William Painter, F. Raymond Geddings, and Ellison Lawson, alongside such figures as Wilbur Dorsey, Arnold Jordan, and K. D. Singleton in supporting or leadership roles.⁷¹ From the 2000s the picture sharpens through two further witnesses. An alumnus of 2002–2003 recalls Dr. Bill Coon as principal in those years, with Al Dunn as assistant principal, and records that Coon departed at the close of the 2004–2005 year to open a new school in the Columbia area.⁷² A teacher who arrived in 2009 recalls Rick Avins as principal at that time, describing him as “extremely down to earth” and consistently supportive, before the long tenure of the current principal, Jeannie Pressley.⁷³ A provisional succession thus emerges, now anchored at its very start by the documentary record and filled out from memory where the record fell silent: from J. L. Edens in the founding years, across a mid-century stretch still only sketched by the roster of Painter, Geddings, and Lawson and their colleagues, to Coon through 2004–2005, to Avins by 2009, and to Pressley in the long present. It is an incomplete chain, and this study presents it as such, but it is vastly more than the public record alone could offer, and it marks one of the signal gains of the oral history project to date.

7.3 The People Who Ran the Building

If the principals gave the school its formal leadership, a striking consensus among the respondents holds that its daily life was sustained by a deeper bench of veteran teachers and staff, and that the administration of earlier decades was felt lightly precisely because that bench was so strong. Two respondents, an alumnus and a teacher, independently and warmly single out Lynn Brown of the front office, the one calling her “a ray of sunshine to visitors and kids alike” and the other naming

⁷¹Weston questionnaire, Question 1. The list is reproduced as the respondent wrote it, with the caution, noted in the questionnaire’s own transcription apparatus, that the marginal role labels are a best reading and that several surnames (for example “Raymand”/Raymond, and a name read as “Lawson” that could be “Rawson”) await confirmation against yearbooks or district records. “Singleton” is corroborated by its reappearance in the respondent’s list of recommended contacts. This is precisely the sort of source that oral history exists to capture and that no public document currently supplies.

⁷²Curry questionnaire, Questions 1, 2, and 5. Mr. Curry recalls Coon as a leader who “set high expectations and was very personable with all stakeholders” and notes his later involvement in STEM-focused education; the specific destination school and dates should be confirmed but are consistent with a mid-2000s departure.

⁷³Baier questionnaire, Questions 1 and 2. Avins appears as an assistant principal in the alumnus’s 2002–2003 recollection and as principal by 2009 in the teacher’s account, indicating a rise through the administration across that interval; the exact year he assumed the principalship, and the leadership of the intervening years after Coon’s departure, remain to be pinned down.

her the first person any historian of the school ought to seek out.⁷⁴ The longest-serving witness names Inez Washington as the secretary and bookkeeper who “kept the school running behind the scenes for decades,” alongside the head custodian Herbert Boykin.⁷⁵ The same alumnus offers a vivid roll of the teachers and coaches who, in his memory, gave the school its character in the early 2000s, among them the band director Emmett Anglin, “the highest quality musician and band director in memory”; the social-studies teacher Libby Ortmann, “a true lover and historian of SC History” and a teacher of the highest expectations; the decades-long coach David Wright; and staff members such as Christine Shuler and the late Louise Segars and Charlotte Rowell.⁷⁶ A veteran faculty member, asked who carried the school’s character across the changing decades, answers with the name of the English teacher Claude Warr, and, asked what held her to the school across nearly half a century, offers a sentence that speaks for the whole enterprise of teaching: “I enjoyed the students. They were the same . . . but, different.”⁷⁷

7.4 Teachers of the Year and the Culture of the Place

The recovery of the school’s Teacher of the Year honorees, once a blank in the record, has likewise begun. The earliest yet documented is the science teacher Bertha Timmons, recognized in the 1990s and, as noted above, teaching at the school from 1992.⁷⁸ The more recent and securely documented

⁷⁴Curry questionnaire, Questions 1 and 3; Baier questionnaire, Questions 3 and 5. That two respondents from different eras and vantage points should independently identify the same person as central to the school’s functioning is a strong indication of Mrs. Brown’s significance and of her value as a prospective interview subject.

⁷⁵Weston questionnaire, Question 3; Inez Washington is corroborated as a long-serving and central staff member by the Curry questionnaire, Question 1. The custodian’s given name is recorded as Herbert in the reconciled transcription.

⁷⁶Curry questionnaire, Questions 1, 4, and 20. Spellings are recorded as given and, where the questionnaire’s own apparatus flags them, await confirmation. Mr. Curry’s roster, offered from an alumnus’s vantage, is a rich seam for further interviews.

⁷⁷Weston questionnaire, Questions 20 and 22. The remark is transcribed verbatim; its gentle paradox, that the students were at once unchanging and always new, distills a career of some forty-seven years more economically than any commentary could.

⁷⁸*The Sumter Item* Teacher of the Year profile of Bertha Timmons (see Section 5); a veteran faculty member independently recalls the honoree Gwendolyn Randolph-Sanders from the pre-2014 years (Weston questionnaire, Question 4), a name the project has not yet matched to a specific year. Timmons went on to become principal of Ebenezer Middle School in the Sumter district, a trajectory from Alice Drive classroom to district principalship that she shares with several figures in this study. These recoveries, partial as they are, begin to fill a roster the public record had left entirely blank.

honorees include Chase Ferguson for 2023–2024 and Kayla Kerman for 2025–2026.⁷⁹ A complete list of the school’s Teachers of the Year, like a complete principal roster, remains to be assembled, and the gaps between the documented years should not be mistaken for years without honorees.

What the recollections convey with notable consistency is the texture of the school’s faculty culture, though here too the oral record refuses a simple story. The school describes itself in the language of kinship, a “second family,” and one long-serving teacher affirms that this held true in his experience, at least before the disruptions of recent years.⁸⁰ That same witness is honest about the strain that turnover has since placed on the sense of family, and his candor is itself a useful corrective to the promotional register in which schools usually describe themselves. The careers of the long-serving educators named throughout this section, some spanning decades and one very nearly half a century, trace a line of institutional continuity that runs straight through the great discontinuities of the school’s history, through integration, through the reorganization into a middle school, and through the STEM transformation, suggesting that beneath all of the dramatic structural changes there persisted a stable human community of teachers who carried the institution’s working culture forward across the decades. It is precisely this layer of the history, namely the lived experience of the faculty and the daily texture of the school’s culture over time, that the public record served least well and that the oral history project has proven most able to restore.

⁷⁹Both names appear in the staff testimonials on the school’s home page, Alice Drive Middle School, <https://adm.sumterschools.net/> (“Kayla Kerman 2025-2026 Teacher of the Year”; “Chase Ferguson - 2023-2024 Teacher of the Year”); Kerman’s recognition is also announced by the district on its Facebook page. In the interest of full disclosure, and as stated in the Author’s Note above, the 2023–2024 honoree named here is the author of this study. The fact is recorded rather than omitted, both because the omission of a documented honoree would itself distort the record and because candor about the author’s relationship to the institution is preferable to a silent self-citation.

⁸⁰Baier questionnaire, Question 19. Mr. Baier’s affirmation is qualified and the more valuable for it: he felt closer to colleagues “before covid,” after which heavy turnover made the “family” harder to sustain, a candid observation this study records rather than smooths over.

8. Conclusion: A Legacy of Unity, and a Long Road Toward Liberty and Justice for All

The history of Alice Drive Middle School is, in the end, a study in the persistence of a name and a place across a century of profound social change. It begins with a death, that of Alice Harby Shelor, in the mountain air of Asheville in 1916, and with a father's decision to translate private grief into public philanthropy by building a sanitarium that, against the grain of its segregated era, opened its doors to black and white patients alike. From that sanitarium the name passed to a road; the road's land passed, in 1930, to Sumter's first municipal airport, and then, in 1955, to the schools that stand there yet; and the name itself passed from a segregated junior high, itself a product of the state's last great effort to preserve segregation, through the upheavals of desegregation, reorganization, and pedagogical reinvention, to a nationally distinguished STEM middle school. At every stage the fabric persisted beneath the transformation: the name endured across radically different occupants; the very ground endured as a place of public purpose across healing, flight, and learning; the building endured across radically different educational eras, continuously renovated rather than replaced; and a community of educators endured across the structural ruptures that reshaped everything around them.

That endurance is the outward form of something deeper, and it is the true subject of this study. Beneath the persistence of name, land, and building lies the persistence of a community that has returned, again and again, to this one corner of Sumter to gather across its divides. The sanitarium gathered black and white patients under a single roof when almost nothing else in the Jim Crow South would; the airport gathered the town into the age of flight and, in wartime, into common cause; and the school has gathered, and gathers still, the children of a diverse community into a single enterprise of learning that now declares itself, without qualification, to be for all students. This is the legacy that matters, and it is one of unity and togetherness won across social and cultural lines and sustained across time.

Honesty demands that we name the cost of that unity, for it was neither cheaply bought nor

early won, and the naming is what makes the celebration true. The school was built with funds the state raised in its final campaign to keep the races apart. When desegregation came, a black child walked a long road each morning to claim a seat the law had opened only under pressure, while the transportation his white classmates took for granted was denied his family. A full decade after integration, the faculty still held separate Christmas parties, black and white, even as the student council seated the two races in deliberate equal number. The arc of this history bends backward before it bends forward. But bend forward it does, and the distance traveled, from a segregated junior high to a school that takes “for ALL students” as its creed, is precisely the redemption this history has to offer. A redemption without a fall is only sentiment; this one was earned, foot by foot, by real people on this real ground, and it is the more worth celebrating for having been hard.

It is fitting that this account should be set down now, in a year that gathers three anniversaries into one. The United States marks its two hundred and fiftieth year, and the American ideal it proclaimed at its founding, liberty and justice for all, remains what it has always been, less a possession than a summons, an ideal toward which the nation strives and has never finished striving. Alice Drive Middle School marks its seventieth year, and the ground it occupies marks one hundred and ten years since Alice’s passing first gave this place its name and its first purpose of mercy. The three commemorations belong together, for the small Sumter story and the large American one are the same story in miniature: a striving, imperfect, and unfinished movement toward the promise that all people might belong. The school has lived that striving in its own walls, and in living it has become, for this community, something more than a school. It has become a testament to what a community can become when it refuses, across generations, to stop moving toward that promise.

This study has tried throughout to be honest about what it does not know, and this edition has been able, for the first time, to record how much of what was once unknown is now being recovered. The deep origins of the name and the contours of the modern STEM era were always the best-documented chapters; the long middle of the institution’s life, encompassing the founding particulars, the integration years as they were experienced on this campus, the leadership succession, and the renovation history, survived until recently only in fragments and in contextual inference.

The oral history project has begun to change that, restoring dates the archives had lost, a principal succession the record never kept, the human cost of an integration too easily narrated as triumph, and the names of the teachers and staff who were the institution's true continuity. These recollections are not infallible, and this study has flagged their uncertainties as scrupulously as it has welcomed their gifts. Much remains to be done. A fuller history still awaits the researcher willing to descend into the physical archives: the microfilmed runs of *The Sumter Item* from 1956 onward, the district facilities office with its blueprints and renovation logs, the board minutes documenting the equalization-era construction and the reorganizations of 1974 and 1978, the yearbooks reaching all the way back to the late 1950s, and, above all, the further living memories of the educators, alumni, and neighbors whose testimony has already proven able to restore what the documentary record could not. Until that work is complete, this account stands as what it is: a confident history of a well-documented core, a newly enriched history of its once-silent middle, an honest accounting of the work that remains, and, above all, a grateful tribute to a community that built, on one patch of Sumter ground, an enduring monument to unity across the divides of its age.

A Note on Sources and Method

This study synthesizes the publicly available documentary record for Alice Drive Middle School and its antecedents together with the first returns of an original oral history project, and the two kinds of evidence have proven strikingly complementary. For the origins of the name, genealogical resources, chiefly Find a Grave and the Singleton family genealogy, together with local history journalism, most notably the columns of Sammy Way in *The Sumter Item*, provide a comparatively rich account of Alice Harby Shelor and of Camp Alice. For the modern era, the websites of the school and the district, contemporary coverage in *The Sumter Item* and the regional broadcast outlets, and the various educational data aggregators together supply abundant detail. It was the institution's middle decades, the founding, the integration years, and the long junior-high-to-middle-school transition, that the written record served most thinly, and it is precisely there that the oral history project has contributed most, recovering firm dates for the 1974 reorganization, a provisional principal succession, the persistence of a racially divided faculty a decade after integration, and the documentation of Freedom-of-Choice-era transfer students, none of which the public record supplied.

Several categories of limitation should be stated explicitly. First, certain dates and facts are reported in the sources with genuine inconsistency, and I have flagged these throughout rather than silently reconciling them. The most consequential is the founding year of the school, which the facility assessment, the alumni timeline, and the school's own anniversary branding place variously in 1958, 1957, and 1956; and the death year of Alice Harby Shelor, which the dated memorial records give as 1916 while the narrative of the same memorial says 1918. Second, several categories of record that a fully definitive history would require, including a complete and confirmed principal roster, a complete Teacher of the Year roster, an itemized renovation history, architectural plans, and internal board minutes, are not publicly digitized and were not consulted. Third, certain claims are reported as they reach me and are explicitly flagged as awaiting confirmation: the school's self-described status as the first middle school in the nation to complete STEM recertification;

the attribution of Camp Alice's founding inspiration to "Miss Nina" Moïse-Phelps, known to this study only at second hand; and the specific claim that Alice Drive and Bates were built to a shared architectural design, a local recollection that the broader documented history of the equalization program renders entirely plausible but that should be confirmed against the equalization-school inventory or district records.

A word is owed on method regarding the oral testimony, on which this edition newly relies. The recollections quoted here are drawn from written questionnaires completed by veteran faculty, staff, and alumni who have consented to be quoted. They have been treated as the primary sources they are: valued for the irreplaceable firsthand knowledge no document preserves, and at the same time weighed with due caution for the ordinary fallibility of memory across many decades. Where a respondent's reading of a name or date is uncertain, or where a recollection is secondhand, this study says so in the notes rather than laundering testimony into false certainty. One instance deserves particular mention, because it illustrates the method at its most rewarding. A questionnaire response held that the school stands on the site of the original Shaw airfield, a claim the documented history of Shaw Field, established in 1941 several miles west of Sumter and operating still, plainly does not support. Rather than simply discard the recollection, I pursued it, and the pursuit uncovered the far richer and better-documented history of Sumter's first municipal airport, which did occupy the school site from 1930 until 1955 and which served, during the war, as an auxiliary landing field for Shaw's own cadets. The memory, in other words, had compressed a true and traceable connection into an inexact phrase, and the airport chapter recovered in Section 2 is the direct fruit of taking that testimony seriously rather than dismissing it. Oral history, handled with patience, repays the historian precisely in this way. Finally, as the Author's Note states, I have written as a teacher within the institution I study, a position I have tried to make an asset of candor rather than a source of concealed bias. The notes and bibliography that follow use the Chicago Notes and Bibliography system. I would encourage any reader who wishes to extend this work to seek out the many individuals named by my respondents as worth interviewing, to confirm the airport particulars against the dated files of *The Sumter Item*, and to treat the present study not as a final word but as a

living framework that each new conversation and each dusty archive box will further enrich.

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