**Talk/Presentation about American Missionary Association - ca. 1913**

**by Katherine Hoag Hoyt to Church Group**

Dear Friends,

About what was announced Sunday, I know you will be disappointed, and I feel as though what I have to say may weary you for the gift of expressing my thoughts was denied me, I regret to say, much to my discomfort and to my friends pleasure. But I trust you will bear with me in my attempt to give you in my feeble way something of what the American Missionary Association is doing for the colored people at Wilmington, North Carolina. I chose this field of labor among all the rest, although smaller, because I spent two very pleasant years there (1896-97) 16 years ago as a teacher of the first and second grades.

Just a word about Wilmington before taking up Gregory Institute. It is a city of 30,000 inhabitants, less than one half being colored. The city owes its commerce to the Cape Fear River which affords navigation to the largest freight ocean liners that load with cotton, perhaps six months a year. This gives employment to more than 1000 men.

The situation of Gregory Institute, midway between the business and residential section of the whites and the quarters where most of its patrons live, is most favorable to its activity. It is a day school with an average attendance of 325. It has for many years furnished teachers for the city colored schools and has sent some of its most efficient workers into the country where almost nothing is being done for the colored people. (Ask Mrs. Latham why the A.M.A. are better than the public schools.)

All grades, and there are 12, are filled or overflowing. Manual training for the boys and cooking for girls has been added to the sewing which are important parts of the curriculum. Equipment is good and instruction has been excellent.

The teachers’ home is a roomy brick structure with a fireplace in each room and the nine white teachers find a comfortable home from October until the last of May. Two of this number have spent over 20 years in the service and another is returning for the seventh time.

The consistency of Gregory Normal is drawn chiefly from the best colored families of the city, many of whom have reached a commendable living standard, though there is represented too, the class where the mother bends all day over the washtub, to give her children something she never had.

About one third receive student aid. The older pupils work out this aid by doing something about the home or school. For instance, every Friday night after school, the older girls each had a room to take care of at the Teachers’ Home, sweeping, dusting, wiping windows, floors.

Each pupil who is able pays a certain tuition each month. For lower grades it is $.80 per month and above the fourth grade $1.00 per month. This tuition goes toward the running expenses of the school, the teachers’ salaries being paid by the Association, or in other words, by contributions and donations from friends and churches in the North.

As many of the pupils did not go home at noon they called that the “big recess” and the short recess the “little recess.” Each year bundles of clothing, shoes, any useful articles, and reading matter are sent from friends or churches in the North. The people are very glad to buy these articles which the teachers mark for a small sum. Boxes of toys, etc. are very acceptable at Christmas time.

Besides our regular salary, our expenses (R.R.) (railroad) were paid both to and from our homes. If we went out of the way, we paid the difference.

We visited many of the homes and received some calls at school from the parents.

The government of pupils is harder on the whole I thought and judged from what the others said. One of my pupils who was unusually dull in all of her studies said, “Well, Miss Hoag, there has got to be one dunce in the family—I might as well be that dunce.” They have very sweet voices and so entered heartily in all the songs. They are bright and seem eager to learn and are very patriotic.

I think the boarding schools have more influence on the life of pupils than the day schools, for after school they go home to the same environment and surroundings, while in boarding school each teacher has charge of so many pupils.

Many of their expressions seemed odd to me, even funny. For instance, if one boy hit another he would come in crying saying, “he chunked a rock at me.” In calling on the parents, they were proud or seemed proud to have you call and asked you if “yo all wouldn’t rest your hat?” and “Yo all come again.” The word “I reckon” and “mighty” were very common with them where we use “I think” or “I believe.”

Perhaps some of you are a bit prejudiced or are interested only in a general way in the colored people, but if you had been in the work and even now the more one knows of this work the more one is interested in the education and the advancement of the Negro race, I trust and pray that this may be the case after this meeting and that we may go to our homes feeling a deeper interest in a race which belongs to God the same as our own race. Their souls are the same as ours, no difference to Him. To quote the words of another: “The sun in not injured by shining upon the lowly, neither is politeness degraded when extended to the humble. No man was ever lowered by kindness.”

In closing, please let us all remember if we can’t be teachers, we can help by our prayers and “the mite” we can give, remembering the words of the Master, “In as much as ye did it to the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.”