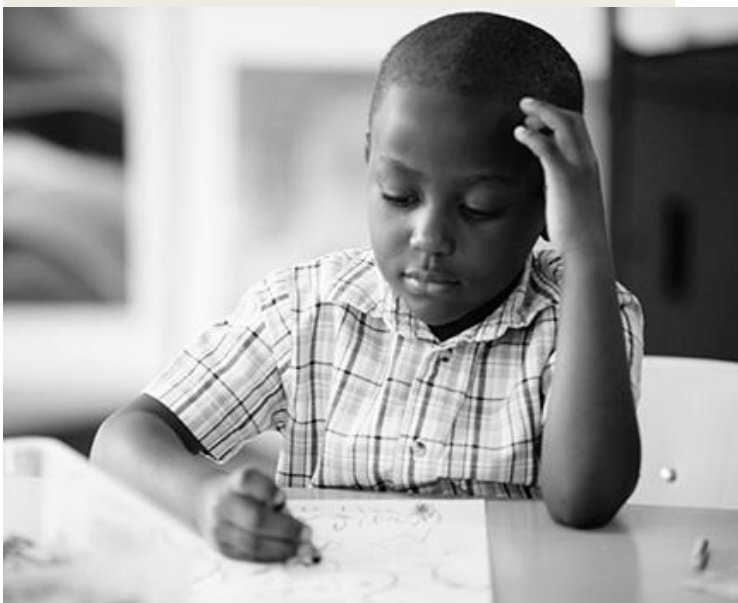


# Restoration of the Historically Black Lincoln School Building - “Recognizing our Heritage”

The Lincoln School Building was a one room school house constructed in 1880. The children were educated there until the school was closed in 1954 when public school segregation was declared unconstitutional. The building has been vacant since 1954. . Since that time two or three attempts have been made to restore it to circa 1950's condition.

The building is structurally sound and has a cast-in-place concrete floor. The windows are presently boarded up. Plaster needs repaired and the metal ceiling needs restored. The entire interior needs to be painted.

Recently an “open house” was held to show the public the interior of the building and the potential of this historic place. Several of the CCBG group talked to the children who took the tour. The young people asked questions that clearly showed that there is very little understanding by today's students, black or white, about the times and conditions that lead to segregation of Canton, Missouri schools.



## The community needed to do the following:

1. Secure the building so the structure will be “mothballed” according to the U.S. Department of Interior Standards.
2. Update the restoration plan and develop cost new estimates.
3. Begin acquiring interior period furniture and building features for the restoration effort.
4. Develop plans for usage of the building.

## Scope of community involvement and discovery:

The roof shingles, soffit and all the trim were replaced in November of 2010 with funds raised by the Canton Community Betterment Group. The windows have been boarded up. The new front entry doors have been acquired and they will be installed complete with new metal hardware. The building is now stabilized to withstand continued deterioration.

The CCBG developed a plan for restoration of the structure to include tuck pointing of the exterior bricks, replacement of the windows, restoration work on the metal ceilings and plastered walls. The interior will be painted. Currently, period student desks have been acquired and the CCBG is in search of a teacher’s desk, a work table, chairs, a heating stove, a clock and window shades.

The projected cost of bringing the building back into usable condition is between \$50,000 to \$60,000.

The Lincoln School once again will be of service for the education of our community. Culver-Stockton College and the public school’s secondary and elementary classes will use the facility as a history teaching lab to help students understand our past and the lessons that can be learned.





Lincoln School in Canton, MO may teach children again.



## Lincoln School in Canton to become historic site

By **BEV DARR**

[Hannibal Courier-Post](#)

Posted Jan 17, 2010 @ 02:22 AM



This is Lincoln School in Canton, which taught black students from 1881 to 1954, the end of segregation. A restoration committee plans to see it become the Lincoln Colored School Historic Site. CONTRIBUTED

Canton, MO —

From 1881 until the end of segregation in 1954, Canton's black students attended the small one-room Lincoln Colored School, where one teacher taught all eight grades

Older students had no opportunity to continue their education until 1946, when they began riding buses to Douglass School in Hannibal. At the beginning of the 1946-47 school year the Canton and Hannibal school districts made an agreement that Canton would pay tuition and transportation for black high school students to attend Douglass School. This continued until the 1953-54 school year, when segregation ended by order of the Supreme Court.

Through the years, Lincoln Colored School had only three teachers, beginning with M.L. Clay, who taught only one year. His salary in the 1880-81 school year was \$35 a month. In June 1881, Charles W. Lear took over. He taught the school for 16 years. According to Colman Winn's "History of Canton," published in 1980, when the school closed in 1954, the last teacher, Bertie Nickerson, continued to teach. She taught in other schools for three years, then was re-employed for two years at the Canton Public Elementary School as a special education teacher, becoming the first black teacher in Canton's integrated schools.

The brick schoolhouse has remained standing, and now a restoration committee plans to restore it as the Lincoln Colored School Historic Site.

Dr. Scott Giltner, assistant professor of history at Culver-Stockton College and spokesman for the restoration committee, said it is owned by the City of Canton and would be staffed by a team of volunteers.

Explaining his interest in the project, Giltner said, "African-American history is my main area of interest. I found the history of the school interesting and wanted to get involved in something that can benefit the education of the community.

"When I talk to people who went to the school or remember the school, they say despite the conditions, they got a heck of an education. ... At its peak the school had about 36 students."

The restored school will be a walk-through museum, offering the history of African-Americans, racial segregation and civil rights in the area, Giltner said, along with an example of a one-room schoolhouse. The committee is seeking help from living alumni of the school, along with pieces of memorabilia, especially photographs that could be borrowed to be copied

Anyone with information to share about Lincoln Colored School is requested to contact him at CSC at (573) 288-6382 or Sharon Upchurch at (573) 288-6478.

The schoolhouse could become an education resource center with classroom activities for area students, “which would bring to life this important part of our heritage,” Giltner said. Original furnishings, period artifacts and temporary exhibits would create the atmosphere of the school.

In September the committee hosted an open house at the school, providing information about the restoration plans. “The first person who came through went to first grade in 1948, she helped us,” Giltner said. “She looked at our artist’s rendering and corrected some things.”

The first project will be to raise money to have the roof and windows replaced, he said. “Once we have those done, we can work on the inside. We are looking for grant money and trying to raise funds. The parent organization (for the project) is the Canton Community Betterment Group.” Donations may be made to that organization. He may be contacted for details.

Later, Giltner said, “we will have a grand opening event and have people come in and tell their stories.”

School opened in 1866. Before Lincoln School was constructed for the 1880-81 school year, black students began attending school 14 years earlier, Giltner said.

“In 1866, the city realized they had to have some type of school for African-Americans. They rented a building, and the AME Church across the street helped the city open the school in 1866 in downtown Canton.

“The school opened and closed several times, due to a lack of funds.” By the end of the 1870s, after a petition drive for a new black school, “the city took action,” he said. “The city had an election and proposed a mill tax. The city told the voters the cost would not exceed \$800 for constructing the building, and the city donated the land and built Lincoln School.”

After it was closed in 1954, “the school board donated it to the city at some point,” Giltner said, “and the city used it for storage.”

Black schools shared similar conditions in many places, he explained. “The school boards did not often pay for new materials for African-American students. They gave them old materials. A lot of time it was up to the parents and teachers (to help provide them).”

Eleanora Tate, an award-winning author and former Canton resident, attended first grade at Lincoln School and wrote extensively about her experiences in books such as her *Front Porch Stories at the One-Room School*. She wrote that “thinking back, I’ve grown proud of Lincoln School, for that is where my roots began and my roots have grown deep.”

The restoration project shares that purpose, Giltner said, “to help the city and region reconnect with those roots by restoring the school, opening up its doors and its history to the public and giving this important place a new purpose.”

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