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McFarlane originator of fabled Roosevelt "tradition"

By Pauline Walton Bennett
Roosevelt Class of 1931

After World War I there was a sad wave of segregation of blacks, immigrants, and other minorities. Each

group resisted and took steps to protect themselves, to promote themselves, and to seek ways to preserve their self esteem while enjoying the privileges and happiness of

the main stream.

During one of the worst mayoral campaigns in Gary, students at Emerson demonstrated to force the expulsion of black high school students. Responding parents of Roosevelt Annex (the segregated section of Roosevelt School) asked to have a separate but equal high school with a qualified principal, staff, and curriculum. Fourteen acres on the 25th and Georgia land fill (garbage dump) were allotted.

David Walton considered the offer an insult and approached Alfred "Mac" Hall, the president of the NAACP Gary Branch. A suit was filed. James Bacon was the attorney.

Upon winning, Roosevelt was separated from the integrated school, given the name of Roosevelt High School, the acreage at 25th and Harrison and a new modern high school building.

Frederick C. MacFarlane, the former assistant principal who was administrator of the Annex was named the first principal of the new Roosevelt High School in 1929.

The instructors, students, parents and other community leaders inspired by MacFarlane straight from the graduate school of Columbia University, and imbued with the new rise of pride awakened by the Harlem Ren-

aissance, spent a great deal of time in class rooms where he electrified students with historic accounts of black empires and their accomplishments worldwide. They heard stories not only of Crispus Attucks, Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, W.E.B. DuBois, Benjamin Banneker, but of Toussaint L'Ouverture and Henri Christopher of Haiti, Puskin of Russia, Alexander Dumas and Alexander Dumas Jr. of France, of Mathew Herson, and of DuSable, the stories convinced them that they too could achieve. He further taught them that they who could, should achieve for reputation not only for themselves, but for the race. He asserted that to waste your brain and talent was a sin against the race and against God!

He was continually improving and expanding the curriculum. In addition to state required subjects, he

permitted staff to add courses of enrichment, one such course was Afro-American History which he taught himself in the daytime for students and again at night for adults.

He cooperated to bring in appearances of noted artists, educators and writers into the community and thus encouraged students to stay in school and many in the community to return to school, this prompted MacFarlane to open day school to parents, thus enabling them to study while their children were thus occupied. Of course this improved the parent's opportunities in the job market.

Many Roosevelt students had never been more than thirty miles from home. MacFarlane and staff provided school connected activities that provided opportunities for students to travel to Tulsa, Oklahoma, St. Louis, Knoxville, etc. They visited campuses at Hamp-

ton, Virginia State, Wilberforce, Tuskegee, etc. He broadened their horizons.

MacFarlane not only provided employment in the school for students to enable and encourage them to remain in school, but he sought assistance throughout the city from employers to do the same. He encouraged students to attend the extension classes held in the area by Indiana University and the classes of the Gary Business College. He sought scholarship aid in both major and small colleges for Roosevelt graduates who did well in such places as Chicago University, Langston University, Purdue University, Lincoln University, Fisk University, Hampton and Knoxville.

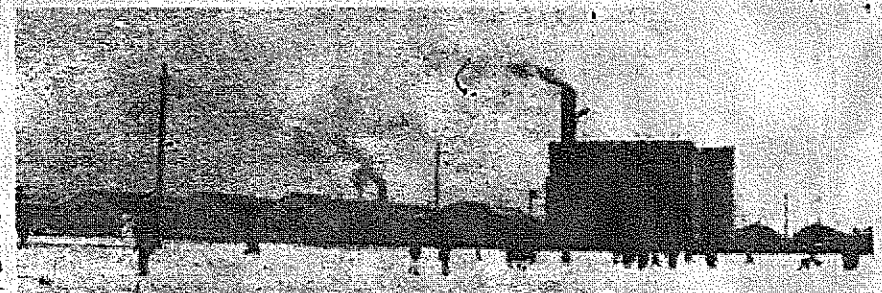
MacFarlane discouraged hate and secularism. He taught self-pride, self-love and self-respect.

At the end of the 1932-33 school year, Frederick C.

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FREDRICK C. MACFARLANE



Remember the East building at dear ole Roosevelt and the lovely portables??

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MacFarlane

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MacFarlane accepted a position as principal of the new Paul Lawrence Dunbar High School in Dayton, Ohio.

The TRADITION of "Pride, Loyalty and Education Excellence" was bred and nourished under "Poppa Mac". That quality has worn

well through the succeeding tenures of H. Theo Tatum, Warren M. Anderson and Robert E. Jones.

Evelyn Baptiste Ferguson was the first graduate of Roosevelt, the year, 1930.

Katie Avery, a member of the class of 1931 wrote the dedication poem in the yearbook to Frederick C. MacFarlane for the first full graduating class in 1931.

"Because we never can his deed repay,
In measure great or small,
We'll give the very best our hearts can give
The endeavors of us all.

'Tis he who always understands our hearts
And we wish him to know
It is to him this book we dedicate,
Our deepest love to show.

All hail, MacFarlane, Almus Pater, Friend!
Thy name shall stand aye,
Deep-rooted as a sturdy, spreading oak,
Near a silent, sunlit bay."