

The Story

This nearly forgotten event happened in 1962 when several Lumbee students first enrolled in the Lumberton City School System. Although Indian people residing in Lumberton paid municipal taxes, their children could not attend the "all white" schools. Instead, they traveled each day to Magnolia High School or Piney Grove Elementary: two Indian schools administered by the Robeson County School System.

Over many months leading up to 1962, a small group of Indian citizens persisted in their efforts to persuade school officials to do the right thing: open the schools to the Indian children of Lumberton. An important symbol of their victory happened in 1963 when Rita Emanuel became the first Indian to graduate from Lumberton High School.

ISWS is a small reminder of the educational setting in Robeson County before the final days of school segregation in North Carolina.



Top: Dick Holmes, Rita Emanuel and Lloyd Locklear

Below: Sarah Howzer and Tommy Thompson

Learn more

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Photos of Piney Grove School and Magnolia School are from the Elmer Hunt Collection, UNCP Mary Livermore Library

Indian Students, White Schools

In the early 1960s, a group of Lumbee parents fought for the rights of their children to benefit from the same schools that were provided to white students in Lumberton, NC. Indian Students, White Schools tells of this time from the perspectives of former students.

Funding is made possible by a grant from the North Carolina Humanities Council.



Rita Emanuel
(Class of 1963)

"I needed to do this for my people. I decided that I was going to work to the best of my ability. I had an English teacher who told me if I ever had a hard time, she would help me."



Tommy Thompson
(Class of 1963)

"We never thought about it, or at least I never thought about it. We're just people. I am not sure that I would have enjoyed hearing somebody say, 'Did you know so-and-so is this?' I would have said, 'Well so what? Are they nice people?'"



Lloyd Locklear
(Class of 1967)

"I told Mr. Gay, the principal, that I wanted to attend school at Lumberton High. He gave me a cold look and said, 'I really don't like that. I wish I could give you a test because I don't think you are smart enough.' I thought, I'm going to show you."



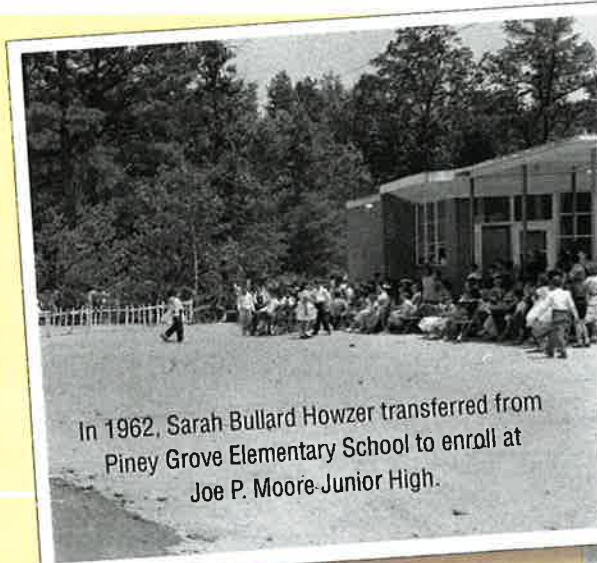
Richard Holmes
(Class of 1963)

"We didn't know they were coming to the school. It was a non-event to me. I had gone to school with the same students from kindergarten to high school. They were like any other new students."

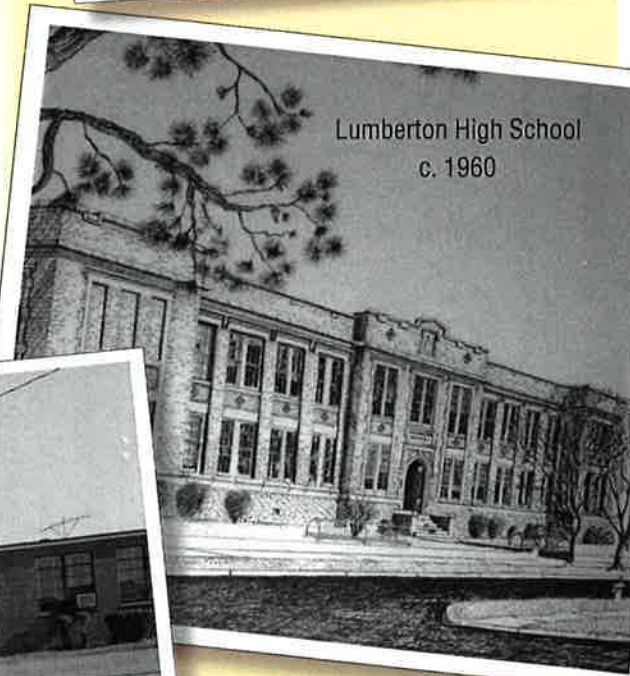


Sarah Bullard Howzer
(Class of 1967)

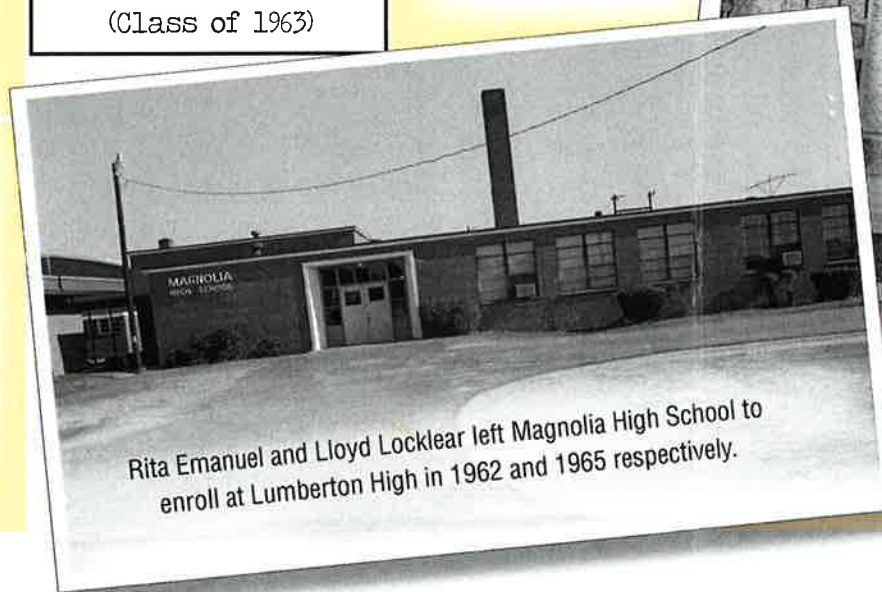
"I soon became belligerent. The only thing that made me comfortable in the school was Glee Club. I loved music; I could read the notes."



In 1962, Sarah Bullard Howzer transferred from Piney Grove Elementary School to enroll at Joe P. Moore Junior High.



Lumberton High School
c. 1960



Rita Emanuel and Lloyd Locklear left Magnolia High School to enroll at Lumberton High in 1962 and 1965 respectively.