

Delta Kappa Gamma Big Bend Chapters Joint Meeting

March 28, 2015

John G. Riley Museum

Alpha Kappa Minutes

Two Alpha Kappa sisters, JoAnne Arnett and Dawn James, and three other Delta Kappa Gamma sisters joined together at the John G. Riley Museum Saturday morning for an informative and intriguing presentation by the museum's founder, Althemese Barnes. Mrs. Barnes founded the Riley House in 1996 upon her retirement from DOE. She researched the oral history of the black Americans who lived in Tallahassee in hopes to preserve and carry on their legacy. Below, are a few of the many interesting facts she shared with us:

John Gilmore Riley was born into slavery in 1857. He became the first black principal in Tallahassee at Lincoln School. He was principal for 33 years. The Riley's house was built in 1890. He had five children. His children never had children. The Riley's house was restored in 1981.

Mrs. Barnes shared with us about the 52 one-room negro school houses in Tallahassee from around 1866-1965. She had pictures of several and would share tidbits she remembered from the oral history she gleaned from the older generations.

She also shared with us about the importance of midwifery. She explained how blacks outnumbered the whites 7 to 3 at the time because there were more slaves than slave owners. Many of the black women were midwives to white families as well.

She spoke of Dr. William Gunn who was the first black doctor in Tallahassee. She explained how many black businesses served both black and white families.

Omega Campbell opened the first black hospital. He would give the women a 15% discount if they promised to give their child part of his name!!

Lastly, she spoke of Rev. CK Steele and how he was involved in the civil rights movement and fought for equality.

She invited everyone to join in the Festival of Freedom. There will be activities from May 1-24. This celebrates the 150th anniversary of emancipation in Florida.

Respectfully submitted by Dawn James