



Nathaniel B. Cooke

Nathaniel B. Cooke, a Clark County native, served as principal of Peake High School from 1939 - 1968. He is most remembered as a pillar of the Black community. He served at a time when Black teachers and administrators were treated as Gods, and Mr. Cooke certainly lived up to expectations. He efficiently ran the Peake Schools and was well-respected in the

community at large. Some mused that Mr. Cooke was considered the mayor of the West End because of his close ties with Arkadelphia Police Chief Broomfield and his ability to work with the community and law enforcement. He was known to not bring many people into his inner circle even though he worked with them closely at school. Yet, he held each of his employees, the students, and their parents to high standards. When the new Peake High School was built on Pine Street, there was not enough money allocated for furnishings. Mr. Cooke, knowing that the Class of 1961 had left unused funds in an account because of a canceled field trip, decided to approach the class president about donating money to the school. Mr. Cooke contacted Orlander Macon, the president of the class, and other class officers for permission to use the money to assist with furnishings for the new Peake Building. The officers were in agreement to make the donation. In appreciation of their donation, Mr. Cooke made the commitment that a picture of the Class of 1961 would be placed in the lobby of the new Peake building on Pine Street. Since integration, attempts have been made by administrators to remove this picture. However, these attempts were met with opposition from Buffalo Alumni. Therefore, the picture of the Class of 1961 is still displayed in the new Peake School on Pine Street.

Mr. Cooke was born on November 9, 1903 to Ellis and Mattie Cooke, and he received his early formative years of education in Antoine, Arkansas. He was sent to Morehouse Secondary School in Atlanta, GA for high school. After graduation from secondary school, he attended Morehouse College, Atlanta, GA where he received his Bachelor of Arts Degree. After graduating from Morehouse, he taught school for the Curtis, AR rural school for ten years. He earned his Masters of Science Degree from Atlanta University, Atlanta, GA.

Mr. Cooke was an Elder of the West End Presbyterian Church and Clerk of the Session in Arkadelphia, AR. He was married to Geneva Cooke, and had one son David and one daughter, Mrs. Brenda Cooke Martin.

He departed this life on June 6, 1973 as the result of an automobile accident in Saline County, Arkansas.