

ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY
SEPTEMBER 30

Police On Guard At Matoaka High

On September 30, 1957, a group of students at Matoaka High School walked out in protest over school integration.

CSO: SS.8.25

Investigate the Document: (*Princeton Observer*, September 6, 1956)

1. According to the article in the *Princeton Observer*, how many African American students were attending school in Mercer County when it began in 1956?
2. Where was the “chief source of trouble?”
3. The article states that integration was forced on the country through Federal court proceedings. To what court case is the article alluding?

Think Critically: What do you think schools were like prior to school integration?

Princeton Observer

PRINCETON, WEST VIRGINIA, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1956.

INTEGRATION MAKES HISTORY IN MERCER COUNTY SCHOOLS

**Matoaka Pupils Start Boycott—Crosses Burn in
Princeton—Colored Students in 14 Schools**

Integration made history in the schools of Mercer county as 89 colored pupils attended 14 schools in the county when school began on Tuesday. The students of Matoaka schools are remaining away from classes in large numbers as the Observer goes to press. The county

school board has taken no action as yet. Integration was forced on the county through Federal Court proceedings.

Chief source of trouble was in Matoaka where 28 Negroes, mostly from Glatto, enrolled. A crowd gathered and there was egg throwing. Rev Don Spurlock, Methodist minister, talked to the crowd — and pacified them somewhat.

The parents met in the church that evening and under the leadership of H. V. Slemp, businessman of Matoaka, decided to boycott the school.

On Thursday morning, 131 students attended, of an enrollment of 602; fourteen of the 131 were Negroes. Parents were again meeting at the church.

Crosses Are Burned

There was friction at Princeton High. At 10:30 on Monday night, a cross was burned on the high school grounds and another at 6:30 Tuesday morning. Boys are supposed to have set these crosses, but they were of good materials and expensively made, and it is suspected that adults were behind the stunt. A picket line was formed at the high school on Tuesday morning, but broken up after a talk by Coach Buster Brown.

There were several anonymous telephone calls to the Princeton police asking that they come to the high school, but these calls were unauthorized and police not needed. Mayor Beam instructed the police that calls must be made by Principal McClain.

There was no trouble elsewhere in the county. Princeton Junior High school opened and proceeded without incident or friction, and likewise in the 12 other schools in the county.

There are 17,000 pupils in the county—3,000 of them Negroes. Most of the integration has been in the schools where transportation has prevailed before. The Matoaka Negroes were transported to Bramwell, 15 miles away. The Princeton High school and Junior High school to Bluefield, ten miles away.

Only 89 colored students are enrolled in schools hitherto regarded as white.

Colored Registration

The Negro student registration in the schools was as follows: Princeton High 25; Matoaka High 20; Beaver High 2; Bramwell High 1; Princeton Junior 25; Wade Junior 2; Springton Junior 2; Preston Elementary 11; Ramsey Elementary 8; Bramwell Elementary 2; Pinnacle Elementary 2; and Springton Elementary 1.

There were 475 students at Knob school, three bus loads of children formerly enrolled at Mercer were transported to Knob and no classes will be held in the basement as formerly.

Opening of the Athens schools was postponed a week on account of the new building not completed.