

Stephen J. Boykin was born in an unincorporated area in Wilcox County, Alabama c. 1859. He was a self-educated man and worked early in his life as a laborer at a lumber mill. He married Carrie Taylor in 1906 and they raised eight children. Mr. Boykin was dedicated to improving educational opportunities for black students. In 1899, he founded the Normal School near this site in Douglasville, a Bay Minette Community. This was the first school for black students in Baldwin County.

The American Banner, a widely circulated newspaper, was written by Boykin from his home in Bay Minette. The purpose of his writings was to inspire men and women of all ages to do great things. He hoped his message would encourage his family and others to make positive decisions in their lives.

The American Banner was a newspaper primarily written for the black community that sold for \$1 a year. It supported racial pride long before blacks were granted the right to vote. It was written, edited, and published by Stephen J. Boykin in his Douglasville home twice monthly from September 1899 through February 1902. It was circulated in Baldwin, Mobile, Escambia, and Clarke counties. Carrying local news, advertisements, and letters, the content was directed toward black readers. The paper was also supported by local white business owners who advertised in the paper. The paper included such columns as "Race Gleanings" and "Race Notes." Boykin urged his readers to represent their race well, so that others would take note of their accomplishments. He once wrote with great inspiration: "Instead of talking so much about what the Negroes should do, let someone do something and then talk about what the Negroes have done."

Attorney and historian, Samuel N. Crosby discovered evidence of Boykin's contributions while conducting research on local history. Crosby noted that Boykin was an inspirational and outspoken figure in society. Reporting on Crosby's findings in an article published in the Baldwin Times (weekly newspaper) entitled, "A Missing Chapter in Bay Minette History," Jackie Byrd (1986) wrote that not much is known about Boykin, a black man whose name is missing from state history accounts. In addition to being recognized for establishing North Baldwin County's first school (Normal School) for Negro students. He published the American Banner, a black newspaper.

He was the father of eight children, and to this day, the Boykin family is highly regarded and respected in the Bay Minette/ Baldwin County communities. Most of Mr. Boykin's siblings were educators, entrepreneurs, and community leaders.