

Historical mini-series

Finding space in the early 1900's

The Douglass Schools have provided for the community for 130 years. Over these years a number of attempts have been made to chronicle the history of our schools.

In 1983 B. (Pete) Schreiner wrote a "Brief History of the Douglass Public Schools 1870-1983". The information is interesting and shows the importance of the school system throughout the century.

Now in 2000, the history will come alive for our community as the Bulldog Growl's mini-series "An Historical Look Through B. (Pete) Schreiner's Writings" takes the reader through our history. The final few installments will bring the Douglass History up to the present. Your help is wanted! As you read the mini-series, should you have information to add or stories of the past, feel free to e-mail your ideas to jkeller@usd396.net. I hope you enjoy this series and good reading.

Jim Keller, Douglass Public School Superintendent

1900 – Early Building Needs

From 1900-1902, A. J. Martin was principal. His class of 1901 was the first to have four years of high school work.

During the first week in February, 1912, the old school house which had been built in 1883, was condemned. The next morning the students went to school in the following places:

| | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| 2nd & 3rd | Verna Clay (teacher) | Skating Rink |
| 4th & 5 th | Lillian Welwood (teacher) | “ “ “ |
| 6th & 7 th | Lucy Woods (teacher) | “ “ “ |
| 8th | Rose Haver (teacher) | Legion Hall |

High School was held in Woodman Hall

The next Fall:

High School was held in the basement of the Methodist Church.

2nd thru 7th grades were held in Skating Rink.

8th grade was held in the Legion Hall.

Primary and first grade went to school, both spring and fall, in the North one-half front of the House Hardware Building.

On December 2, 1912, all classes moved into the new school building, which had been completed. From the beginning of the Subscription School until the year 1936, all activities at various times were held in the following Buildings:

Chicken Coop {supposedly located in very early years, in the city park, prior to the building of the "Barn", which the City called the Pavilion.

The "Pavilion" was also located in the City Park. When first built, it had no enclosed features. Some time, date not known, sides and ends were added so the pavilion could be heated and activities held inside.

Other buildings and areas which have been very important in the history of the schools were the Congregational Church, Christian Church, Methodist Church, Opera House, Legion Hall, Masonic Building, Dunagan Theatre, and the Manual Training Room, which was located southeast of the present Elementary gymnasium.

In the summer of 1928, a wing of three rooms were added to the Manual Training Building. The rooms were to be used for a drawing room, agriculture laboratory and boys' dressing room. The boys dressing room was twenty-four by thirty feet, with an additional ten by twenty feet for showers; the laboratory was twenty-four by thirty feet, and the drawing room was twenty by twenty-four feet. Steam was installed in both the old Manual Training building and the new addition.

The community and the Douglass School District should be very proud of the relationships that have existed between the patrons and the schools. The patrons have always been ready to do their best to help the schools when help is needed.

In 1935, the community received a notice from the office of the district Congressman, that the construction of a community building had been approved. The building was completed in 1936, by the use of W. P. A. funds. The school and community now had a beautiful building in which the activities of the school and community could be held. At this time, the Community Building had the best and largest basketball court in the county, and the Butler County Tournament was held there for a number of years.

As the community and school grew, there was a need for a better building to house the activities of the district and the Board was considering the establishment of school meals. Also the student body had outgrown the Manual training rooms. In 1933, a bond issue was voted upon and passed, which enabled the district to build a Gymnasium, Cafeteria and a shop for Industrial Arts. The two Manual training buildings were sold to the highest bidders. The new three-room addition to the Manual Training complex was moved to a lot behind the Hilyard Funeral Home, to be used as a place for storage purposes.

As the population of the school grew, there was a need for expansion, and in 1956 five (5) elementary classrooms and restrooms were added. In 1958, with permission of the School Board, I contacted representatives of the Federal Government, and made application for money to build two new elementary classrooms. The application was approved, and the two rooms were added to the other elementary rooms south of the foyer of the gymnasium. These two rooms did not cost the patrons any money, except for their share of Federal taxes paid by the citizens of the country.

As the population continued to increase, more room was needed to provide facilities for dividing the elementary grades. In 1959, four elementary classrooms were added to the south. In 1967, four more classrooms and an office complex were connected to the east side of the previous elementary rooms. In 1971 the Junior High Building, which included four classrooms and an Elementary Music Room, were constructed. The Junior High students were moved into this new addition to provide more room for the High school students.

With the passing of time and the wear and tear as a result of hundreds of students, the old 1912 building was about to see its demise. The building had been strengthened years before by metal rods extending through the building and the huge cornice, which had

originally been around the top edges of the building, had been removed for safety reasons. While I had occupied the Superintendent's office, the west wall had separated approximately two inches from the second floor.

A very extensive and well-planned campaign was inaugurated to convince the patrons that a new high school was needed. The campaign was successful, for the patrons approved the bond issue. The high school was built on donated land, located at First Street and Highway 77. In 1972, the same year that the new High School was built, a metal Vocational Building was constructed.

In 1978, an addition was added to the High School, which was for the purpose of housing the Music and Art Departments. In 1982, a temporary classroom was built to house two elementary classes. This was a quick way to relieve the over crowded classes in the brick elementary school. It might be of interest to the reader to know that the heat provided over the years was from the use of coal. At one time gas and coal were used to heat the school buildings. At that time the school used one ton of coal per day for about five months, plus the natural gas. In 1940, this system was replaced.

"Gas will be used to heat the school building this year. The school board purchased a Webster gas heating unit to replace the coal system. This system is all automatic. If the water or gas goes off, the mechanism shuts off to keep from causing an explosion. In case the electricity is shut off, the furnace is fired by hand. Three pilot lights, two ordinary and one safety, are necessary to light the eighteen big burners. The thermostat, which regulates the unit automatically, is on the second floor in the school building. Plans are being made to paint the boiler room white and aluminum. Mr. Sprague is making a new work bench, and the old coal bin is to be used for storage." Commenting and smiling happily, Mr. Sprague said, "this more uniform system of heating will save D.H.S. extra expense. Also, I won't have to get up at three and four o'clock in the morning during cold weather."