

PUBLIC SCHOOL

The subject of popular education, within the territory which now comprises the State of Illinois, was discussed twenty-two years before the State was made a territory. The famous Ordinance of 1787 recognized the importance of education for everyone. To encourage this principle, educational provisions were made by this National Ordinance and were later incorporated in an Act of Congress, adopted April 18, 1818 to enable the State of Illinois to be created. These provisions provided that section 16 in every township should be used for school purposes, that 3% of the sale of public lands should go for the education and that one entire township should be appropriated to the use of a "seminary of learning." Since that time the permanent school fund has been increased in various ways.

The first Governor, Mr. Bond, recommended that certain steps be taken in education. It was not until the second session in January, 1819, that the Legislature followed his suggestion and provided for the appointment, by the County Commissioners in each County, of three trustees in each township. These men were to lay out section 16 in lots of not more than 160 acres nor less than 40 acres. These lots were to be leased for 10-year terms for the purpose of creating revenue for school purposes. In 1825 a law was passed which provided for a system of free schools. This law was only the first of many and it contained only general provisions. Some of these were: (1) Schools to be open to white citizens between the ages 5 and 21. (2) Gave County Commissioners court power to organize districts which should contain not less than fifteen families each. (3) The affairs of each district were to be managed by the board of trustees who could levy a tax for school support.

In 1828 the sale of the 16th section and the seminary township was authorized. The law was expanded in 1837; but it was not completely revised until 1841. The office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction was made a separate office in 1853. This bill also directed the State Superintendent to frame a bill for the unification of the school system of the state. Mr. Ninnian Edwards was the first Superintendent and his recommendations were incorporated in a law passed in 1855. This law embraced all of the essential principles now in force.

Since the school laws prior to the 1840's were in a chaotic condition, education in Clinton County, as well as over the State, was a matter of private enterprise. Schooling was provided by tutors, private schools, or the grouping of families to secure an education for their children.

The first legal action taken to establish the common school system in our county was in 1825. James Outhouse was appointed County School Commissioner to dispose of section 16 as provided under the Act of 1828. He resigned without performing this duty and in 1832, Zophar Case, Sr. was appointed to this office. He executed the duties of his office competently, and the present system of education in the county is said to have grown from his capable efforts.

Mr. James Wightman was the first County School Commissioner elected and O. B. Nichols was the first County Superintendent of Schools.

The residents of Lookingglass Township built a small log building near the center of the Township in 1829. The Township erected a log school house on Section 24 and established a school in 1844 which was taught by Joseph Ostendorf.

The first school in New Baden was a frame building located on the site where Mrs. Martha Graminski's home now stands. This building was torn down and a brick structure was erected. The first teacher was Mr. Chinn. Early teachers in the first school were: John Weber, John Morlock and John Monken. After the mine opened in 1897, this school building was turned into a residence and a new school was built which is known as Washington School.

The Washington School was built near the turn of the century. The original building was two rooms. Within a few years two rooms were added above these. The next addition called for the building of the two north rooms, one on the lower floor and one on the upper floor. After the fire in 1926, the old gym and the rooms above it were added. Construction was begun in 1954 on a new addition consisting of a gymnasium, two shower rooms, cafeteria, additional furnace room, first aid room, two rest rooms, and a lobby; the cost, \$126,000.00. It will be ready for occupancy at the beginning of fall term in 1955.

The first school records available are from 1909. The following Board of Education was serving at this time: President, F. A. Billhartz; Secretary, Fred Heithaus; Members, Henry Wangler, Louis Goldbeck, Henry Bassler, Henry Singler, and Ed Harpstreith. The teachers employed were: William Ullrich, principal; Henry Griesbaum, assistant principal; Joseph Kiefer, Room 3; Millie Gaffner, Room 2; and Francis Meiner, Room 1.

The present board members of New Baden Elementary School District 68 are: LeRoy Brede, president; J. W. Bann, secretary; George Rathmann, Bernard Hempen, Alfred Brown, George Hertenstein, and David Riding. Present faculty members are: Herall C. Largent, principal; Ferd Kaufman, Room 4; Miss Marion Morgan, Room 3; Mrs. Charlene Peters, Room 2; Mrs. Frances Thorpe, Room 1; and George Barton, music.

In minutes of a board meeting held June 4, 1909, the Board of Education voted to pay all bills against the school for the graduation of the High School Class; the first recorded graduate was Golda Haskins. A motion was made and carried to award her a High School Diploma, May 31, 1912, in a ceremony befitting the occasion; this diploma was from a two year high school.

The school burned on April 19, 1926. The renovated building with its additions was dedicated Wednesday, December 29, 1926. Elementary and high school classes resumed shortly thereafter. The Certificate of Recognition for a four-year course was in 1928. The members of the first High School Board of Education for District 72 were: Tony Gildig, president; Henry Hempen, vice-president; John Dagit, secretary-treasurer; Bert Baird, and Dr. J. W. Hardy.

Present members of High School Board of District 72 are: William Beine, Jr., president; Theodore Medcalf, Leonard Fiedler, Earl Gildig, Edward Krausz, Charles Cook, Robert Schomaker, and Herall C. Largent, secretary. Present faculty members are: Fred Widicus, Curtis Kinney, William Daters, Miss Chrystal Maddex, George Barton, and Herall C. Largent, principal. Mr. Largent is Superintendent of Schools and has served since 1950. Custodians for the grade and high school building are Arthur Nagele and Oliver Baehr.

The New Baden Community High School offers an excellent academic curriculum. At the present time, the only vocational field offered is in business education.

Science: General Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics

English: English I, English II, English III, English IV

Mathematics: General Mathematics, Algebra I, Geometry, Advanced Algebra, Trigonometry

Music: Band—4 years, Boys Chorus—4 years, Girls Chorus—4 years, Mixed Chorus—4 years

Social Studies: World History, United States History, International Government, Sociology, State & Local Government

Business Education: General Business, Typewriting, Shorthand, Office Practice, Bookkeeping, Advanced Shorthand

Physical Education—4 years

Competitive Sports: Baseball, Basketball, Track, Tennis

Extra-Curricular: Student Council, National Honor Society, Yearbook, Newspaper, Girls Athletic Association, Drama, Class Organizations

In 1819, the County Commissioner was empowered to appoint three trustees in each township to obtain financial support for the schools as provided by law. These trustees appointed the Township Treasurer to handle the funds of the schools. In 1952, a seven-member County Board of Trustees was elected and in 1954, the office of Township Trustee was abolished. The school boards now appoint a treasurer. Mr. O. W. Billhartz serves as treasurer for the elementary and high schools.

A Parent-Teachers Association was organized January 19, 1928 under the superintendency of Mr. Krug. This organization was disbanded January 30, 1934. A new P.T.A. was organized in the 1953-1954 school year for the Washington School. Mrs. Imogene Cook was the first president of this group and Frank Towell is serving as president at the present time.