

# HISTORY OF SPENCER SCHOOL DISTRICT

BY LABAN WHITE

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Notes and Comments  
Edited by Laban White

In this and two later issues of the Times Record "The School Column" will contain a brief history of the Spencer Public Schools from the formation of the Independent District to the present time. This history was prepared by the Superintendent of the local schools for another purpose about a year ago and is being published in this column by request.

It is believed that the sketch will be of interest to the "older inhabitants" because it will recall to memory many persons with whom they were familiar in the "good old days" that are gone; and to the younger generation because from it they will be able to trace out the progress and development that has taken place in the schools. So far as the writer of the sketch has been able to learn, this is the first effort that has been made to collect from the records a connected account of the schools and the people connected with them. If you find any interest in the first installment, it would be a good plan to file it and the two later installments away for future reference and use.

## A BREIF HISTORY OF SPENCERPUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Spencer Independent School District was formed by an act of the Legislature, passed February 16, 1872. This act largely the result of the efforts of Mr. H. T. Hughes, the Delegate from Roane County. That the people of the district were heartily in favor of such action is indicated by their promptness in calling an election to choose the first board of education. This election was held on the third Monday in March, at which William R. Goff, A. A. Smith and A. G. Bailey were chosen to serve for the terms of three, two and one years respectively. On May 5 following the Board organized by electing A. A. Smith president and J. G. Shilling, secretary.

At this meeting the secretary was directed to take the enumeration of youths and to prepare a list of real estate and personal property taxable in the district. His report at a later meeting showed the number of school youths to be 47 males and 43 females. If his report showed the amount of taxable property, it is not recorded. The first record of such valuation is for the year 1877, when the total amount was \$57,142, but for the next year the amount had decreased to \$53,957. The second enumeration- that for 1878-also showed a falling off, the number being 43 males and 36 females

A log building of one room that had been used for school purposes by the magisterial district prior to 1873 was made use of by the independent district the first year. The teacher for that year was H. A. Nash, who later asked for an assistant, when the Board

chose G. W. Baker for the place. The length of the term was set for four months, but was later changed to three, owing to the lack of funds.

The second year the Board purchased a acre lot on the North side of Main Street (property now owned by Messrs Giles Edwards, H. W. DePue and G. W. Holswade) and erected thereon a one room frame building, to which an additional room was built in 1877. Charles Preston was selected as teacher the second year for the term of four months. As no assistant was employed and the funds were increased by tuition for certain students from outside the district, the term was lengthened to five and one half months. Mr. Preston was chosen as teacher for the next year for a term of six months, but it became necessary to employ an assistant, and consequently the term had to be shortened.

The first recorded vote on the question of school levy was for the year 1878, and stood, For levy, 31; Against levy, 11. This is the largest proportional vote against school levy recorded, The smallest was in 1909 when the vote stood, For levy 303; Against levy 0.

It would be interesting, especially to those persons who have reached the age when they enjoy looking back on the “good old days” thus to follow these records in detail through the entire forty three years since the formation of the independent district; but the word limit placed on this article by the editor and the time limit given the compiler will not permit. So, in order to cover the field, it becomes necessary to do some cataloguing and summarizing. And we begin with the “human factor”—the officers of the Board of Education and the school principals.

YEAR	PRES. of B. of E.	Sec. B. of E.
1872	A. A. Smith	J. G. Schilling
1873	Washington Huddleston	“
1874	“	“
1875	“	A. G. Bailey
1876	A. A. Smith	“
1877	Washington Huddleston	R. G. Hall
1878	“	J. G. Schilling
1879	“	“
1880	“	“
1881	“	“
1882	G. F. Cunningham-D.W. Chapman	A. G. Bailey
1883	“	“
1884	“	“
1885	D. W. Chapman	“
1886	“	“
1887	G. W. Hundley	“
1888	“	“
1889	P. C. Adams	“
1890	John F. Murphy	“
1891	John Walsh	“
1892	“	“
1893	John Walsh- Wm. Woodyard	“

1894	R. W. Hamrick	“
1895	“	“
1896	H. F. Goff	“
1897	“	“
1898	Washington Huddleston	E. H. Bailey
1899	“	“
1900	W. L. Starkey	W. H. Bishop
1901	J. E. Bowyer	“
1902	Orville McMillian	“
1903	“	“
1904	J. M. Cleavenger	Raymond Dodson
1905	Orville McMillian	
1906	“	“
1907	P. C. Adams	“
1908	C. O. Staats	C. D. Springston
1909	O. J. Chambers	“
1910	J. M. Harper	“
1911	C. D. Springston	H. C. Ferguson
1912	Edward Corder	“
1913	C. D. Springston	“
1914	John M. Baker	“
1915	S. B. Thompson	“
1916	D. W. Petty	“

The school principals and superintendents, their length of service and the number of assistants are as follows:

H. A. Nash, 1872-3, one assistant part time  
Charles Preston, 1873-5, one assistant, second year  
Samuel Farrar, 1875-6, one assistant  
I. R. Pell, 1876-7, one assistant  
L. D Starkey, 1877-8, one assistant  
J. A. A. Vandale, 1878-81, one assistant  
G. F. Cunningham, 1881-2, one assistant  
Edward Corder, 181882-3, one assistant  
I. H. Lynch, 1883-4, one assistant  
Henry Smit,. 1884-5, one assistant  
William Bishop, 1885-6, two assistants allowed, but records show only one employed  
M. F. Lewellen, 1886-7, two assistants allowed, but records show only one employed  
O. M. Chambers, 1887-8, one assistant  
M. F. Lewellen, 1888- 90, one assistant  
Edward Corder, 1890-1 one assistant  
R. A. Douglas, 1891-3 two assistants  
E. R. Ray, 1893-4, three assistants  
E. Hermans, 1894-5, three assistants  
M. D. Helmick (res.) O. J. Chambers, 1895-6, three assistants

T. L. Davis, 1896-1900, three first two years; four last two  
W. R. Gorby, 1900-5, five first two years, six, last three

SUPERINTENDENTS;

C. W. Lee, 1905-6, seven

W. S. Morris, 1906-9, seven

F. E. Ashburn, 1909, 10, eight

C. B. Cornwell, 1910-11, nine

Laban White, 1911, 12, 13, 14, 15, respectively

Among the various evidence of the growth and improvement of a school system, are the buildings. As stated above, the school opened in a one-room log building and was moved into a one room frame building erected the next year. The school continued in this building until 1887 when the building was destroyed by fire, and the M. E. Church house was rented for the use of the school the following year. The records for 1888 show that a bond election was held on May 22 for the purpose of raising funds to build a new school house; but, in spite of the fact that the result was favorable, no later mention is made of such election, nor of the proposed bonds to be sold. On September 27 of the same year J. M. Leshner and H. C. Camp were given a contract to build a three room school house for the sum of \$830 to be paid out of funds raised by levy that year and the two following years. An addition to this building was made in 1891, and it was used until 1896, when it met the same fiery fate as its predecessor. It seems, however, that a new building was to be erected even if the fire had not occurred, for in 1895 on March 18 an election to decide the question of issuing \$8000 worth of bonds resulted in favor of such bonds by vote of 129 to 8. The lot on which the old building had stood was sold the following year for the sum of \$750. With the money thus secured, the Board of Education purchased the two acre lot now used for the Graded School and erect a two story brick building of six rooms. To this building four rooms have been added since. In 1911 more room was needed and bonds for the sum of \$16000 were voted to secure such additional room. Of this amount \$14,500 was used to purchase the present High School building and the remainder was used to alter and furnish the building. By 1915 the attendance in the High School had reached the capacity of the building and the attendance in the High School had exceeded the capacity of that building and the attendance in the Graded School had exceeded the capacity of that building by 125. So the question of issuing additional bonds for the sum of \$35,000 was submitted to the voters of the district at an election held May 15, which resulted in favor of such bonds by vote of 261 to 93. With the funds thus provided it is proposed to install a sanitary heating and ventilating plant at the Graded school building and to construct a modern three-story brick building on the present High School lot, this building to be used by the High School and such rooms of the Graded school as are necessary to relieve the congestion in that building.

Two other evidences of growth are the enumeration of pupils and the valuation of property. The enumeration has grown steadily from 79 in 1873 to 848 in 1914, an increase of nearly 1100 percent. The property valuation shows a much greater per cent of increase. The assessed valuation in 1878, six years after the formation of the independent district, was \$53,957; in 1914 it was \$2,195,881, an increase of over 4000 per cent.

GRADED SCHOOL NOTES  
BY  
L. J. FERGUSON

There are a few boys and girls missing school that should be in school. Some are new families who have just moved in and perhaps feel they should become acquainted before they start to school, others think that they do not have good enough clothes, or sufficient books, and still others have no reason at all for staying out. We will appreciate it if the townspeople will cooperate with us by telling us of any boys or girls that are not in school and should be that they know about. Two families have been found that can not afford to buy clothes, and it will be appreciated by us if you will help us supply them, by giving any garment or garments they your children (6-16) have discarded that are reasonably good. Call the Graded school by Bell telephone and the garments will be sent for and properly distributed.

It is the intention of the grade teachers to emphasize all the studies about equally, and not to put all the work on one branch at the expense of the other studies, but to try to give the pupils a balanced knowledge. We may seem to give too easy or too hard lessons to the boys and girls, as the case may be, but it is the intention to give them sufficient drill and review especially in the fundamental operation of arithmetic, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, and then fractions before they go further in the text.

The water used at the graded building is carried from different places, and to make sure whether it is free from disease germs we are having some of it analyzed at the Experiment Station at Morgantown..

The telephone calls will be sure to be heard for two boys alternately look after that work.

Rupicola 1927

Depicting the events of the "HOUSE ON THE CLIFF"

Published by Senior Class

Editor-Dorothy McVey

Manager-Ernest Faulkner

Director- Leslie D. Moore

HISTORY SPENCER HIGH SCHOOL

It is recorded that Spencer High School had its inception as an institution of learning in September of the year nineteen hundred and eleven. Since that time, the high school has had a remarkable growth. Beginning with just a handful of students, the high school has reached, during this year, a gross enrollment of more than three hundred students. The first class was graduated in 1914, there being seven to receive their diplomas. However, in 1913, one student completed the requirements for graduation from a first class high school, and was graduated informally. In 1926, there were fifty- four to receive the much coveted diploma. If all goes well, the class of 1927 will be the largest class ever to have graduated, fifty-six being the total number of hard working applicants.

The first high school instruction was carried on in the Harry C. Woodyard property which was located on the Cliffs, to the front and not far distant from the present high school building. This property was the home of a so called Junior High as well as the newly established Spencer High School. It soon became apparent that a building was inadequate to the needs of Spencer's growing school population, and as a result, a bond issue of \$35,000.00 was proposed and carried in 1916, calling for a new high school building. The present building resulted from this foresight on the part of the Board of Education, and is serving more than four hundred students at the present time.

Spencer High School has many fond traditions. The name of its school paper, "The Cliff Dweller," originated from the beautiful cliffs which grace the campus of the high school. The high school year book, "Rupicola," had its origin from the location of the high school building upon the cliffs. "Rupicola," means, according to Webster to whom we go when in trouble, "the house on the cliffs." Spencer High has won many honors in various inter-scholastic circles in West Virginia. For six years, the State Girls' Basketball Tournament was held in the high school gymnasium. At each tournament, Spencer was represented by an unusual team, winning laurels along with Wheeling and other noted teams of the state. In 1926, Spencer attended the National Tournament, held at Youngstown, Ohio, and gave a remarkable account of themselves. The boys, too have an enviable athletic record throughout the "little" mountain state." In fact, Spencer High boasts of a creditable state-wide reputation in all lines of endeavor, and, within its domain, it boasts of the embodiment of all that is beautiful and sublime in the lives of young men and women.