

News paper clipping
Found in Jack Greathouse,s scrap book

WILLIAM LOVELL STORY

If Spencer High School's basketball team is successful in its regional tournament games at Clarksburg, they'll pay tribute to an "old timer" who wants the lads of Dick Simmons to "give them the works."

From William Lovell, senior counselor in the division of rehabilitation, State Board of Education-and well known here as a Spencer principal-who wrote Coach Simmons, yesterday came the following;

"It is with pardonable pride that I have followed the success of this year's thirtieth year basketball team. You have splendidly carried forward what we so humbly began, and each of us from the very beginning of basketball at Spencer have felt the warmest personal interest in your present achievements."

Although the game was known in Spencer for a few years before, Mr. Lovell said the 1917-18 season was the first official one for the Yellow Jackets. "I called the boys together." He wrote, "and asked them how about having a basketball team, (this followed our first regular scheduled football season).

"They did not feel that it could be much of a game, but they would try it out and see," the boys replied.

For the first season, Spencer used floor space in the upstairs of the old Woodyard home which stood in front and to the left of the high school building.

Among early regulars were Paul Staats, Hoyt McPherson, Clay Baker, James McQuain, Jay Whoolery, Harry Conley, Elmore Starcher, Dewey Perkins, Glen Davis, Henry Cox, Valjean Roberts, Harold Everly.

The first year the school met such teams as New Martinsville, Clendenin, (state champions), Marietta, Marshall College, Sistersville, Shinnston, Ravenswood, Salem College, West Milford-winning only two of 12 games, and only being badly beaten ounce.

The flu epidemic struck the boys at tournament time, and Spencer was eliminated by Lumberport.

The second year of basketball found the Yellow Jackets playing Cam Henderson's big Salem High quintet (which included Farley Bell of Huntington and "Pud" Hudson, now at Stonewall Jackson); Huntington High which had Johnny Stewart; Clendenin, New Martinsville, Morris-Harvey College, Sistersville, Williamstown and other schools.

That year the jackets won 12 out of 22 games. "Most exciting games," reported Mr. Lovell, "were our 16-12 loss to Clendenin, and victory over Morris-Harvey by scoring four baskets in the last minute of play to come out on top, 31-24.

In the state tournament, the team met Shinnston for the third time and was defeated 32-17.

One of the floors used by the Spencer team was the Armory, over Simmons garage. The Post Office was up the street a few doors and people waiting for their evening mail dropped in to see boys and girls at practice.

“There was seldom less than 100 spectators in the bleachers,” Mr. Lovell disclosed. “Thus the whole town grew up with basketball knowledge and technique in its system. Naturally these fans helped to bring a good crowd out for every game.”

During the winter of 1917-18, a campaign to raise funds for a gymnasium was started at the high school. This led to the building of the present “Ark.”

Accepting no cash gifts, boys and girls at the school worked at all sorts of odd jobs and in 10 days raised \$386. H. J. Simmons provided some trees for foundation blocks and the late Fred Vandle donated the use of his truck to haul in blocks and foundation stones.

Mr. Lovell disclosed, “Then we organized the students into work crews with Hobert Tyson, Fenton West, and Dewey Perkins as work foremen.”

“We carried some lumber on our backs from the planning mill, and got some plumbing material from the old Woodyard building. Fred McIntosh’s Hardware was most generous and kind in giving us good prices and credit on hardware.