

## BETHEL SCHOOL

The history of the Bethel community dates back to the days of the Seminole Indians when they came through this section and camped for a few days around the springs near the Shearer's, Rambo's, the Grant's place and the spring near the Minton's. The community was first named Osceola, in honor of the chief of the Seminole tribes.

The first church and school was named "Old Union". This building was used from 1850 to 1868. It was disbanded and the Bethel Church was built around 1870. A one room school was also built near the church. The land the school and church were built on was donated for the Keys and Reeds from adjoining farms. A one room school house was at Bethel in the year of 1880. This house was built upon the same spot on which stands the present structure. Part of the present school ground was given by Benjamin Reed, father of Mrs. D. A. Duff. This new one room school house was a great improvement over the school named "Old Union" which was used before and during the civil war days. This school house was a very crude log building with a fireplace in one end, and a small window on the right. There was a row of window panes placed side by side for about five feet, which was the only lighting system used at that time.

In 1885 there were 85 pupils in attendance with only one teacher. Lunch was carried in tin pails and the drinking fountain was an open bucket with a dipper used in common.

The first teacher at Bethel was Mrs. E. V. Campbell from Bristol who taught two or possibly three schools. She was followed by Miss Hardy Cox, then came Thomas G. Neel. He taught a number of years at Bethel until the 1890's when it became necessary to give him assistant teachers. They were Miss Anna McClellan and Miss Rusha Miller consecutively. Then Mr. C. G. Hillenburg was appointed principal at Bethel for several years followed by Mr. J. A. Crawford and Mr. N. S. Wright.

The school was large and someone envisioned the need of a better building and equipment for Bethel around 1900-1901. A new two-story, four room building was built.

The first school in the new four room building was taught in 1902 by Mr. J. M. Keller, assisted by Miss Nannie Caldwell. Desks were very scarce, so Mr. Keller and the big boys made seats by placing rough planks on nail kegs with the children sitting in rows, letting their feet hang down.

The first high school was taught in 1905-1906 with Frank W. Defriece of Emory, Va. as principal. He had about 25 high school students and instituted the "Honor Roll" system. The first literary society was under Paul W. Worley, organized in 1907 and named the "Franksonian Literary Society of Bethel".

The high school began to grow and in 1909 Bill Remine and Garnett Neel were awarded the first high school diplomas given at Bethel.

In 1910 the frame building was enlarged and with various improvements was used until 1954.

Beginning with Mr. William Stockton in 1879, the principals of the Bethel school were: Mrs. E. V. Campbell, Miss Hardy Cox, Mr. Thomas Neel, Mr. C. G. Hillenburg, Mr. J. A. Crawford, Mr. N. S. Wright and Mr. J. M. Keller.

Beginning with Frank W. Defriece as principal of Bethel High School in 1906, other principals were: Paul W. Worley, Virgil Copenhaver, Drury L. Jones, J. Roy Whitt, S. V. Snodgrass, Karl Browning, E. S. Miller, Frank Suddath, Sam R. Howell, J. B. M. Carter, J. Roy Whitt, Nina Garrett, C. M. Rice, H. D. Denton, W. P. Ryburn, H. D. Denton, W. W. Williamson, James Gumm, George Gumm, Sloan W. Southerland Jr. and James Berry.

In September of 1924, work was in progress on the new high school building which was finished soon as the first of the year 1925. It had four classrooms, a stage and an auditorium.

At the time of commencement in 1925, there were only eight girls who were candidates for diplomas: Leola Clark, Jessie Minton, Lorena Rambo, HESSIE Ray, Beuna Garrett, Mary Annie Paris, Juanita Keller and Nellie Rhea.

In 1952, Howard Wright contracted to the Washington County School Board to add to the brick building, indoor toilets, and two elementary classrooms, and office and a cafeteria. This addition was paid for with money made available to Washington County by Governor John S. Batter and was erected under the supervision of Superintendent K. P. Birkhead (sp) and Board member Mr. J. T. Hayter. Five additional acres of land were purchased from D. A. Suff, daughter of Benjamin Reed.

After erection of the new building, two one room schools were closed with children and equipment being transferred to Bethel. These schools were Shiloh in Sweet Hollow and Cedar Bluff School.

In the fall of 1954, a third bus was added and Mrs. Garnett N. Bonner with her 28 students, were transferred from Larimers to Bethel.

Two other additions were completed in 1958 when the library, two classrooms and a hallway were completed connecting the building with the cafeteria. In 1960 two more classrooms were constructed.

In 1959, Abingdon High School was completed and Bethel became an elementary school.

Note: I retyped this info from an article appearing in the Mtn. View Times, Wednesday November 8-21, 1995.  
Doug Phillippi Class of 1958