

History of Education in Center Township

One of our earliest schools of which we have record was located in Knox south of where the courthouse is located. In 1851 fourteen pupils enrolled in the school. This building stood as it was on the boundary line of two types of our early schools as part of the building was made of logs and the rest of the structure was a frame building.

Afterwards a courthouse, a log school, a printing office and an old church each in turn served as a temple of learning. In June 1869 the township trustee purchased the present school grounds, and began the erection of a building which on the account of the lack of funds was not completed for several years. April 11 1874 the town of Knox was incorporated and the school ground and building were deeded to the school trustees.

This building was destroyed by fire in the spring of 1874. The brick structure now in use was then erected. In 1914 the front part of the building was added. A new gymnasium and two classrooms were added in 1925.

In 1894 the number of teachers had increased to six. High School branches were now introduced and in 1895 the first high school graduate was granted a diploma. After much enthusiasm and work on the part of the teachers they succeeded in bringing the High School to the standard required for a commission by the state. The commission was granted in 1901.

Today the school is one of the best of our schools. The parents and teachers are enthusiastic supporters of the Parent Teacher Association. The school nurse has been engaged for several years, and she has received hearty cooperation from the teachers and parents.

The exact location and dates of our very early schools in the county are not available, as short school sessions were held in abandoned log cabins, private homes or rude log cabins. One winter Ridgeway's Kitchen was used, which was located about four and half miles south-west of Knox.

A log cabin was used for two winters and one summer term on the Sam Tucker farm. Later a frame building was erected in 1867 to replace the log cabin. It was three miles north and about quarter of a mile west of Knox. At that time it was called the Tucker School. In 1885 or 1886 it was moved about three quarter west of its present location. It was then named Pleasant View because of the beautiful scenery there. This served as a refuge against ignorance in the community until 1910.

In 1875 the Desardee school frame building was erected about one mile and half west and a little south of Knox.

About 1880 while Garner was trustee it was decided that the old log building with split log seats and shelves on the wall which served as desks, should be replaced by frame buildings. These were replaced by the Cottonwood school which was erected about two and half miles south-west on the Foltz farm in 1878. The Greenback Party was formed and its spreading through the county caused many people to leave their old parties and to become faithful followers of the new party. After a building was erected one mile east of Knox, he named it Greenback school. The Atkins school was built about the same time two miles south of Knox.

In 1882 while Charles McArthur was trustee the Oak Grove school was built north-east of Knox on the Harden farm.

In 1894 and 95 while Jessie Jackson was trustee the Brems school was built five and half miles north-west of Knox in the little village of Jackson Island. This was then named Nickel Plate after the Nickel Plate Railroad. In the last few years it was called Brems. The school has been named the same as the village. The land was given by Peabody who owned most of the land in that section. This building was used until 1925. It was the last of our pioneer schools to close its doors to the children in the community.

For a short time prior to the year of 1909 the children living three and half miles north and west of Knox on the Newtonson Ranch had no way of attending school because of high water. Through the generosity of Mr. Newtonson a small school building was erected on his farm. One winter of school was held there.

For a few years a great movement of consolidation had been spreading through the townships, due to the progress some of the neighboring townships had made after the building of their consolidated township school. In some of these one room schools there were not enough pupils to justify the trustee to hire a teacher. Some of the schools were combined and this caused an overcrowded condition.

Some of our teachers who carried the torch of learning were, Jane Stewart, Mary Wolfram, Jenie Gibbs, Joe McArthur, Abner Grindle, Charles Laramore, Sam Tucker, Charles Rebstock, Fred Naves, Letty and Agnes Bentnam, Chas Laramore, Dan Naves, Mrs. Naves, Nellie Courtright, Fred Hermance, Andy Laramore, Minnie Chister and Vine Peele.

In 1911 a consolidated school building was built west of Knox. In 1914 two class rooms were added, and in 1927 a gymnasium was added which also serves as a community meeting hall, especially for Farm Bureau and Parent Teachers meetings.

Most of the trustee's names are given here.

Robert Bender
Jefferson Hououghton
Wingit Prettyman
Lank Garner
Charles McArther
Joe McCormick
Richard Gibbs
Nathan Rebstock
Jerome Berry
Jessie Jackson
James Hielman
John Horner
George Rogers
Joe Cox
W.J. Robards

Composed by Fern Parks about 1929