

HISTORY OF BAILEY HIGH SCHOOL  
By Journalism Class

January, 1913

The knell of the Republican Party was tolling over America. A new era under Woodrow Wilson was arising. Changes in national and world affairs were in the making. Similarly, a change was taking place in the lives of the people of the Bailey community: the town was getting its first school!

The death of Rock Springs School, a three-room building a mile from the town of Bailey, had given birth to Bailey School, a two-story frame building with six classrooms downstairs and an auditorium upstairs, sitting on a four-acre tract of land. On each side of the front entrance were cloakrooms, one for the boys, one for the girls--forerunners of the present-day lockers.

Into this modern, roomy building marched three teachers--Principal Whitely, Mrs. A. B. Bissette, and Miss Minnie Brooks--teaching primary, grammar grade, and high school subjects to students of all ages, who sat on boards laid across blocks or nail kegs and learned their reading, writing, and arithmetic to the rhythm of dangling legs.

Mrs. Bissette recalls that there were no grades in those days, no overcrowded rooms, no permanent records, no outstanding extra-curricular activities; but, she adds, there were problems: attendance was poor, fights on the school grounds were not unusual, and sanitary conditions in many cases were appalling. Baths, to many of the youngsters, were summertime propositions; inhabited heads were common sights; and itch was ever prevalent.

Even so, the school moved forward, growing in enrollment and in subjects offered. Miss Lelia Ames came to begin musical instruction, and Miss Ida Brooks started conducting home economics classes in one of the small dressing rooms at the end of the stage, with a two-burner oil stove as her equipment.

May, 1918

What a proud hour for the school and the community! The first graduating class of Bailey High School, seven strong, received their diplomas. All were girls, following the leadership of their first woman principal, Miss Mattie Morgan. The roll call on that particular graduating day could easily have been that of today, thirty-nine years later, so familiar are the names: Lonie Bissette, Zettie Bissette, Gertrude Ferrell, Hazel Finch, Swannie High, Dovie Joyner, Lizzie Underwood.

In those early days, as each year came and went, so did a new principal with the exception of Miss Morgan who remained here three (?) years. In addition to her and Whitely, there were Julian Redfern, Tyler, Miss Lydia Page, Albert Oaks, R. W. Boling, H. D. Pegg, and C. B. Houck serving as principals.

By 1922 the school had enlarged to the point that the 1913 building was no longer adequate. Bailey had inherited High School, and three buses were bringing children in from surrounding areas. The time had come for a new building. During that school year the old building was moved to one side and the present one begun. Houck and his core of teachers taught in this building and wherever there was available space in churches and empty store rooms.

January, 1924

Another milestone in the school's history had been reached. The "floating school" returned to its former grounds but entered a new building, the present one, with L. H. McNeely as principal. Working with him were eleven other teachers with an enrollment of 392.

McNeely ushered in a change in the length of tenure of the school's principals. Prior to him had been nine (?) principals over a period of eleven years. On the other hand, since 1923, there have been but five principals over a period of thirty-three years. Naturally, then, evidences of more progressive efforts began to be seen as principals remained to work in the interest of the school and became citizens of the community.

September, 1925

Bailey became the heir to Mt. Pleasant High School, thus bringing the enrollment